

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

**The Ridgeway School**  
Wroughton

LEA area: Swindon

Unique Reference Number: 126451

Headteacher: Mr Thomas Axon

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Reporting inspector: Martin Pavey  
17650

Dates of inspection: 18 – 22 October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708537

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Inverary Road Wroughton Swindon SN4 9DJ
Telephone number:	01793 846100
Fax number:	01793 815065
Appropriate authority:	Swindon
Name of chair of governors:	Christine Gale
Date of previous inspection:	May 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Martin Pavey, RgI	KS4	Attainment and progress Teaching Leadership and management Efficiency
Brigid Quest-Ritson, Lay Inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Curriculum and assessment (S) Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and community Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Valerie Blackburn	Science	
John Brigden	Art	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Anthony Fiddian-Green	Religious education	Curriculum and assessment (S) Curriculum and assessment (S) Curriculum and assessment
John Fletcher	Mathematics	
John Mallinson	English History (S) Sixth form	
Andreas Markides		Special educational needs SEN Unit Equal opportunities Curriculum and assessment (S)
Roger Moyle	Physical education	
Helen Olds	History	
Caroline Orr	Modern foreign languages	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources (S)
Terence Payne	Music	
Clive Potter	Information technology	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources (S)
	Design and technology	
Barry Smith	Geography	

Note: (S) = supporting inspector for a subject or aspect

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates Ltd  
51 St Andrew's Road  
Cambridge  
CB4 1EQ

01223 578500

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## MAIN FINDINGS

### What the school does well

- It achieves good results, at all levels. Results in the vocational GNVQ advanced subjects are good.
- Teaching is good at all stages. There is little unsatisfactory teaching.
- The school provides a good curriculum, with excellent sport and extra-curricular activities.
- Careers education and guidance are very good.
- The school provides very well for pupils' social development and has good systems for guidance and welfare.
- There are very good links with the community.
- Leadership of the school is very good, as is development planning.
- Financial planning is excellent and daily administration is very good.
- The school is well supplied with resources for learning.

### Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Behaviour is not always good in Key Stage 3 and there is some bullying among younger pupils.
- II. The key skills of speaking, number, and information and communication technology (ICT) are not strongly developed in subjects across the curriculum in Key Stage 3. The curriculum in ICT is not covered in enough detail in subjects across the curriculum in Key Stage 4.
- III. Provision for the education of pupils with hearing impairment is unsatisfactory.
- IV. Standards in music in Key Stage 3 and history in Key Stages 3 and 4 need improvement.
- V. There is not enough time for the teaching of religious education (RE) in Key Stage 4.
- VI. Long lessons lead to some problems of pace and concentration, especially for younger pupils.
- VII. Provision for multicultural education is not well co-ordinated across the school.
- VIII. The school has not achieved common practice in co-ordinating the setting of targets for individual pupils in the different subjects.

**The school has more strengths than weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.**

### How the school has improved since the last inspection

Overall, improvement has been satisfactory since the last inspection. The school has maintained its high achievement in examinations, at all levels. Good results in advanced GNVQ subjects now join the record of high achievement in the sixth form. Attendance has improved. The curriculum has further improved and now provides more vocational courses in the sixth form. Good teaching continues at all levels. Systems for the guidance and welfare of pupils have been much improved. Leadership from the governors, headteacher and senior staff is now very good. The school retains its high standard of efficiency, and this has been further developed during the recent period of grant maintained status. Value for money remains good. The school has met all the key issues for action given in the last inspection report.

Some aspects have not developed well. Though generally good standards of behaviour have been maintained, there are some problems of behaviour in Key Stage 3, which were not reported in 1995, and there is now a definite element of bullying among younger pupils. The school has been very open about this and has introduced good policies and meetings to redress the problem. The good multicultural provision noted in the last report is not now apparent. The quality of provision for pupils with hearing impairment has declined since 1995. The school states that it cannot now afford to give these pupils the extra support they need from its own



resources.

The school sets clear targets for the achievement of pupils. It has a good capacity to maintain and develop its existing high standards.

### Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by fourteen, sixteen and eighteen year olds in national tests, GCSE and A/AS level examinations in 1998. 'Similar schools' refers to schools with similar proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals.

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

In 1998, pupils achieved well above average results in the national tests, at the end of Key Stage 3, in all the core subjects of English, mathematics and science taken together. Results in English were above, but close to the average. In mathematics and science, results were well above average. Results in these subjects were above the average for similar schools. Results in GCSE were above the national average and in line with those achieved in similar schools. Results in A level were well above average, and high results were achieved in the advanced GNVQ subjects also.

Over the three years to 1998, results in the tests at the end of Key Stage 3 have been well above average in all subjects, for both boys and girls. Over this period, GCSE results have remained at around 60 per cent for the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A\*-C grades, well above average. Results in all subjects have been above average, except in history where they have been around average. Compared with the performances of the same pupils in other subjects, the best results in 1998 were in French, home economics, information systems, business studies and geography. In this comparison, history, sports studies and English language did least well. Results in most A level subjects have been above average for performance in the top grades A and B in recent years, and almost all candidates have passed. In the GNVQ advanced examinations, art and business studies have achieved very good results, and again all candidates have passed, many with merits and distinctions. In 1998, 70 per cent of sixth form leavers went on to higher education.

### Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	Teaching is effective in the great majority of subjects, at all levels. It is particularly	Music. There is some unsatisfactory teaching in modern foreign languages.

Years 10-11	Good	good in religious education (RE). RE, English, science, History drama, design and technology.
Sixth form	Good	RE, English, drama. Effective in all subjects
English	Very good	
Mathematics	Good	

Teaching is good, at all stages. Throughout the school, teaching is satisfactory in 26 per cent of lessons, good in 43 per cent, very good in 23 and excellent in 4 per cent. It is unsatisfactory in 4 per cent also. Most of the unsatisfactory teaching is in Key Stage 3, where it accounts for some 8 per cent of lessons at this stage. There is some misbehaviour in lessons at this stage and an element of unsatisfactory teaching in modern foreign languages and music. There is little unsatisfactory teaching in Key Stage 4 and none in the sixth form. Teaching improves at each stage. The amount of teaching which is good or better is 58 per cent in Key Stage 3, 78 per cent in Key Stage 4 and 83 per cent in the sixth form.

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

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#### Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Satisfactory. Some behaviour in Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory, but behaviour in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form is good. Older pupils co-operate well in class and their relationships with staff are friendly and constructive.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance is around the national average. Punctuality is satisfactory most of the time, but not always.
Ethos*	Good. Pupils are keen to learn, especially in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Relationships are generally good, though some bullying persists among younger pupils. The school is strongly committed to high standards of conduct and achievement.
Leadership and management	Good overall. The governors, headteacher and senior staff provide very good leadership. Departments and years are well led. Planning for school development is very good.
Curriculum	Good. The school provides a broad curriculum, with a particularly good choice of vocational subjects in the sixth form. Provision for sports and other activities is excellent.
Pupils with special educational needs	Good. These pupils are valued members of the school community and are well taught in small groups and mainstream lessons. The management of their curriculum, assessment and welfare is good. The education of pupils in the unit for hearing impairment is unsatisfactory because they do not get enough support.
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. For moral and cultural development it is good, and for social development it is very good.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Satisfactory in the provision of teaching staff, their professional development, and accommodation. Good in the provision of resources for learning.

Value for money

Satisfactory in the provision of assistant staff in most respects, but there are not enough assistants to support the pupils with hearing impairment adequately. Good. Results are above average. Teaching and the curriculum are good. The range of opportunities is very wide.

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

## **The parents' views of the school**

### **What most parents like about the school**

IX. Parents appreciate the school's good standards of work and high results.

X. The school gives them a clear understanding of what is

XI. Parents value the extent and quality of the activities

XII. The great majority of their children like school.

### **What some parents are not happy about**

XIII. Parents are anxious about the amount of

XIV. Parents with children in the unit for

Inspectors agree with all these views. Generally, the school is a welcoming and orderly place, with a good atmosphere. However, there is some bullying, mostly rough behaviour, among younger pupils, and behaviour is not always good in the earlier years. These problems are far less in Key Stage 4. Behaviour and relationships are very good in the sixth form. The aspects which parents are not happy about are key issues for action in this report.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

The Governors and senior staff should:

XV. Provide training for staff and for pupils joining the school in Year 7:

- a) to improve pupils' good behaviour in class, responsible behaviour towards one another and their readiness for independent study when they join the school, and so create the conditions
- b) to improve pupils' competence in the key skills of speaking, number and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in all subjects across Key Stage 3, as the basis for increased progress in Key Stage 3 and further improvement in their attainment in Key Stage 4;

XVI. In order to do this:

apply existing policies for behaviour more effectively in Key Stage 3;

agree and publish policies for the development of key skills;

provide necessary resources, for example access to computers;

monitor and evaluate the growth of pupils' responsible attitudes to learning and each other, and the improvement in their use of key skills. (*paragraphs 27, 28, 31, 32, 77, 91, 96, 125, 138, 154, 156*)

XVII. Take urgent steps to improve the education of pupils with hearing impairment by:

XVIII. providing more intensive and better-informed specialist support in mainstream classes;

XIX. making better use of pupils' residual hearing through the better use and maintenance of their individual and wireless hearing aids;

XX. providing systematic training and support for subject teachers in meeting the special needs of these pupils;

XXI. continuing to foster throughout the school an ethos of high expectations for these pupils.

(*paragraphs 244 – 252*)

XXII. Raise standards in:

XXIII. music in Key Stage 3 by providing a broad and balanced curriculum, fully implementing the National Curriculum Programmes of Study, leading to an improved participation in music in Key Stage 4 and in the extra-curricular programme;

XXIV. history in Key Stages 3 and 4, particularly by the sharing of good, professional practice and ideas amongst teachers. (*paragraphs 205, 206, 207, 212, 226, 230, 231*)

XXV. Provide sufficient time for the study of religious education (RE) in Key Stage 4 so that the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus are met. (*paragraphs 92, 174*)

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

XXVI. the present length of lessons, which is leading to a slackening of pace towards the end of the 75 minute sessions in a number of subjects; this issue is now under review by the school; (*paragraph 53*)

XXVII. the relative lack of provision for pupils' multicultural education in the daily life of the school; (*paragraph 73*)

XXVIII. the co-ordination of pupils' experience of information and communication technology (ICT) in subjects across the curriculum in Key Stage 4; (*paragraphs 154, 156*)

XXIX. the co-ordination of information derived from the assessment of pupils' work, to increase the effective setting of targets for individual improvement. (*paragraphs 65, 66*)

## INTRODUCTION

### · Characteristics of the school

1. The Ridgeway School is an 11-18 coeducational comprehensive school of 1480 pupils, including a sixth form of 232. It is in Wroughton, three miles south of Swindon, a large village which now adjoins the town. Pupils come from an area which includes some parts of Swindon as well as a number of villages. The school houses a unit for pupils with hearing impairment. These pupils are integrated in the daily life of the school.
2. There are 766 boys and 714 girls. The sixth form is exactly balanced between boys and girls, but Year 11 contains twenty more boys. There are 46 pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, 3 per cent of the total, a figure broadly in line with the average for schools in English counties, but below the average for all schools. Thirty pupils come from homes where English is not the first language. The socio-economic backgrounds of the school's families are generally in line with the national average. Pupils come from a wide range of educational, social and economic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, 8.4 per cent, is below average.
3. On entry to the school, the average attainment of the pupils is above the national level. There are 161 pupils on the register of special educational needs (SEN). This is a figure of 11 per cent, below the national average. Four of these pupils have Statements of Special Educational Need, well below the national average. The great majority have moderate learning difficulties and a small group has emotional and behavioural problems. In addition, all pupils in the unit for hearing impairment have Statements of special need.
4. The school has a brief statement describing its vision. This is to educate for success. Supporting the vision are three main objectives, to create learning conditions of high quality, to encourage high

achievement within the capabilities of the pupils and to optimise income in order to be efficient and effective in expenditure. These objectives are further supported by five guiding principles concerning respect, good order, striving for excellence, developing a passion for learning and the involvement of pupils in their own learning.

5. The school set itself a target to achieve 63 per cent of GCSE passes at grades A\*-C in 1998. This figure was based on an assessment of pupils' potential and was achieved exactly. For 1999, the school set a target of 65 per cent and achieved 61 per cent. There is an extensive target-setting process for individual pupils.
6. Since the last inspection, the school achieved grant maintained status and has now adopted foundation status. Its population has risen by 145. The number of pupils with statements of SEN has declined. The school's characteristics are otherwise unchanged.

## Key indicators

### Attainment at Key Stage 3<sup>1</sup>

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:		Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1998	142	122	264
National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science	
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	97	100	102	
	Girls	103	87	85	
	Total	200	187	187	
Percentage at NC	School	76 (*)	72 (73)	71 (85)	
Level 5 or above	National	65 (56)	60 (60)	56 (60)	
Percentage at NC	School	26 (*)	50 (54)	42 (47)	
Level 6 or above	National	35 (23)	36 (37)	27 (29)	
*results not available					
Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science	
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	91	96	103	
	Girls	98	84	89	
	Total	189	180	192	
Percentage at NC	School	72 (75)	72 (65)	73 (87)	
Level 5 or above	National	62 (59)	64 (63)	62 (61)	
Percentage at NC	School	32 (43)	39 (35)	41 (44)	
Level 6 or above	National	31 (28)	37 (37)	31 (29)	

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

### Attainment at Key Stage 4<sup>2</sup>

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:		Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1998	132	107	239
GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G	
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	79	119	123	
	Girls	72	100	104	
	Total	151	219	227	
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	63 (62)	92 (94)	95 (99)	
	National	44.6 (43.1)	89.8 (88.5)	95.2 (94.1)	

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and percentage of <i>such pupils</i> who achieved all those they studied:	Number	% Success rate
School	0	n/a
National		n/a

### Attainment in the Sixth Form <sup>3</sup>

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 who were entered for GCE A/AS examination in the latest reporting year:	Year	Male	Female	Total
	1998	40	58	98

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	22.2	20.4	21.1 (17.7)	7.0	2.1	4.4 (3.4)
National	n/a	n/a	17.6 (17.1)	n/a	n/a	2.8 (2.7)

Number entered for the IB Diploma, and percentage of <i>such students</i> who achieved this qualification:	Number	% Success rate
School	0	n/a
National		79.1

Number in final year of approved vocational qualifications and Percentage of <i>such students</i> who achieved these qualifications:	Number	% Success rate
School	29	100
National		72.5

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

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



## Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year: 1997-98			%
	Authorised	School	8.9
	Absence	National comparative data	7.9
	Unauthorised	School	0.8
	Absence	National comparative data	1.1

## Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year: 1998-99		Number
	Fixed period	68
	Permanent	3

## Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	27
	Satisfactory or better	96
	Less than satisfactory	4

## PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

### EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

#### 6. Attainment and progress

*\*Throughout the report, 'similar schools' refers to schools with similar proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals.*

1. On entry to the school, the average attainment of pupils, measured in nationally validated tests, is above the national level. The school contains the full range of ability, but there are more pupils of higher ability, and fewer of lower, than average.
2. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, attainment has been well above the national average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, taken together, both in 1998 and over the three years 1996-1998. Over these three years, the performance of both boys and girls has been well above average, with boys achieving slightly higher results in relation to the national average boys' performance than girls in relation to theirs. Compared with similar schools, attainment in these tests across all three subjects was above average in 1998. Performance in mathematics and science was well above average, but performance in English was below. Results in 1999 were in line with previous high performances in English and mathematics, but rather below these levels in science. Generally, results have maintained their high levels over recent years.
3. In the GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4, in 1998, 63 per cent of pupils achieved five or more passes at grades A\*-C, a result well above the national average. Results at this level were well above average over the last three years also. The proportion gaining five or more passes at grades A\*-G was close to the average in 1998, but above average over the last three years. In 1998, and over three years, boys' results have been well above average in terms of the total points scored, while girls' results have been above average. Over a five-year period, the average points score per pupil has remained steady, while the national trend has been rising. Compared with similar schools, results in 1998 were well above average for five or more passes at grades A\*-C, but broadly in line for the points scored across the whole range of grades. Results in 1999 maintained the high levels of previous years.
4. Over recent years, GCSE results at grades A\*-C have been rising in English, English literature, design and technology subjects and drama, with a particularly sharp rise in art results in 1999. All other subjects have maintained their performance over this time, though French and economics results fell at this level in 1999. In terms of overall performance in GCSE, the strongest performances in recent years have been in science, design and technology, French, geography, RE, business studies and drama. There were strong performances also in English, English literature, mathematics, art, economics up to 1998, the GCSE examination in ICT and the relatively small sets in music. German and PE results have been above the national average, but have been below the levels achieved by these candidates in their other subjects. History results have been around the national average, but well below the levels achieved by history candidates in their other subjects.
5. In the sixth form A level examinations in 1998, and over the three years 1996-1998, the average points score for students taking two or more subjects has been well above average. Results reached their highest level in 1998, when the pass rate of 98 per cent was well above the national average. Results in 1999 maintained the high levels of previous years. Subjects achieving good results in recent years include English literature, mathematics, chemistry, French, geography and general studies; also, religious studies and music for relatively small numbers of students. Some subjects have not produced candidates in every year, and it is therefore difficult to identify a pattern in their results. Such subjects include design and technology and sociology; also history, psychology and PE, though performance has been less good in

these subjects than others, when there have been candidates. Students achieved above-average results in the vocational GNVQ advanced qualifications in 1998. All candidates passed in all subjects, while more than half those taking art and design, and business, gained distinctions. Similar high results were gained in 1999.

6. Towards the end of Key Stage 3, overall attainment in lessons and in pupils' written work is at least in line with the levels expected nationally and often above them. Attainment is above the expected level in mathematics, science, geography, design and technology, French, German and physical education (PE). It is around the expected national level in English, history, art, religious education (RE) and information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum. Attainment is below expected levels in music. Generally, towards the end of this stage, pupils have a good knowledge of the various subjects and can apply this knowledge well. For example, in a Year 7 geography lesson, pupils had a clear knowledge of maps, plans and scales. In a Year 8 science lesson on the speed of light and sound, pupils calculated accurately and achieved higher than expected results. Year 9 pupils have often gained a good knowledge of detail, for example, in a French class when all pupils had a clear knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary being taught.
7. Although there are examples of the good use of key skills across the curriculum in Key Stage 3, for example, in the geography lesson described above, the development of skills in speaking and number is not well promoted in this stage, and skills in ICT are not well developed in some subjects. This is partly because policies to enhance these skills have not been introduced across the curriculum, but mainly because teachers quite often have a problem in maintaining a positive atmosphere in lessons during this stage. Behaviour is sometimes unsatisfactory and pupils are not always prepared to co-operate with the teacher or one another. The climate is not always right for the development of these skills, which depend on pupils' willingness to share, listen and perform on their own or together. At this stage, pupils lack the training to do this, and because they lack this, they sometimes tend to behave indifferently towards one another, so making the development of co-operative skills the harder. Despite this, pupils make generally satisfactory progress across the key stage.
8. Towards the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is generally above or well above expected levels. Subjects in which it is well above include English, science, GCSE classes in RE, and art. In other subjects attainment is above average, although it is below in history and ICT skills across the curriculum. Generally, attainment is higher comparatively at the end of Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3, indicating good progress across the key stage. For example, pupils in a Year 10 economics lesson achieved higher than expected levels of knowledge about how demand and price interrelate. They recalled information rapidly and learnt new concepts securely. Among many other examples, in a Year 11 art lesson, knowledge of technique and of cubist artists was higher than expected, and pupils produced careful drawings, proving good knowledge of the subject.
9. Towards the end of the sixth form course, attainment is above or well above expected levels for the various courses, both A level and GNVQ, in a majority of subjects. It is in line with expected levels in modern foreign languages, history, music and PE. In no subject does attainment fall below expected levels. Generally, attainment is high. For example, a Year 13 geography class showed greater than expected knowledge of geology and physical processes in their study of Chesil Beach. Students in a Year 13 lesson on health and social care showed very high standards of understanding and argument in their discussion of ethical issues.
10. In English, attainment in tests at the end of Key Stage 3 over recent years has been well above average, though results are somewhat lower than in mathematics and science. Standards in lessons are around expected levels, but improve towards the end of the key stage, confirming satisfactory progress. Standards in GCSE and A level examinations are well above average. Speaking skills, by the end of Key Stage 3, are no higher than nationally expected. Listening in all lessons is also in line with average levels. Reading is at or slightly above expected levels. The standard of writing is above nationally expected levels. By the end of the key stage, pupils of all levels of attainment are writing in a good range

of styles. Skills develop well in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.

11. In mathematics, attainment in tests and examinations is well above average levels. Most pupils in Key Stage 3 are competent in working with numbers and undertake investigations well. In Key Stage 4, the highest attainers work accurately with algebra, while most can represent equations graphically. All pupils calculate area and volume accurately. There are very high levels of attainment in Sixth Form A Level groups. Students are competent in all branches of mathematics and are confident in their ability. Standards of algebra are high. Students use their knowledge well to solve problems.
12. In science, attainment is well above average in tests and examinations, at all stages. Pupils attain at least the expected levels at the end of each key stage, and attainment is often higher. Pupils in Key Stage 3 develop a good understanding of each aspect of the subject, though the standard of written work at this stage ranges from excellent to poor. In Key Stage 4, pupils have acquired better standards of presentation and a comprehensive understanding of the topics they study, as a good base for further study in A level work. Sixth form students attain higher levels than expected in each of the three subjects.
13. Target-setting for GCSE, A level and advanced GNVQ examinations is well established. The school set itself a target to achieve 63 per cent of GCSE passes at grades A\*-C in 1998. This figure was based on an assessment of pupils' potential and was achieved exactly. For 1999, the school set a target of 65 per cent and achieved 61 per cent. There is an extensive target-setting process for individual pupils in terms of the grades they should be expected to gain. However, the setting of objectives to achieve these grades for individual pupils, identified, for example, in the marking of written work, is not done well by all departments.
14. Progress in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory overall. Pupils enter the school with a level of attainment generally above the average, and attainment is also at this level at the end of the stage. In lessons at this stage, progress is satisfactory in around 45 per cent of lessons, good in 45 per cent, and unsatisfactory in some 10 per cent. The only subjects with any number of unsatisfactory lessons were modern languages and music. In French, there were four lessons with unsatisfactory progress, two in Year 8 and two in Year 9. These were caused by unsatisfactory teaching. Pupils could not make adequate progress because planning and pace were not good enough, and conditions were similar for a Year 7 German class. In music, pupils made unsatisfactory progress in two lessons, and poor progress in two, because their lack of interest brought poor behaviour. Three of these lessons were in Year 9.
15. Otherwise, progress is positive in Key Stage 3, and in many subjects it is good in most lessons. For example, a Year 9 English class made very good progress in a lesson on suspense fiction, responding well to clear teaching and stimulating ideas. Year 7 pupils made good progress in a lesson taught by an ICT specialist. They were interested, and benefited from the teacher's good knowledge of the subject.
16. Progress is good in Key Stage 4. Pupils enter the stage with attainment at least in line with the expected levels and end the stage with attainment firmly above. This is seen in their high or very high GCSE results. Progress is altogether surer than in Key Stage 3. In lessons at this stage, it is satisfactory in 25 per cent of lessons, good in 50 per cent and very good in nearly 25 per cent. There is very little unsatisfactory progress. In most lessons, pupils make rapid, secure gains in knowledge and skill, helped by clear and well-informed teaching. For example, in a Year 11 French lesson, pupils made very good progress in the revision of vocabulary on camping, thanks to very clear planning and use of worksheets and the overhead projector by the teacher. Year 10 pupils made good progress in canoeing on the school pool. They made good use of the excellent facilities and were completely clear what they had to do to improve their techniques. A pupil with hearing impairment made good, confident progress also.
17. Progress continues to be good in the sixth form, where students maintain the high attainment seen in GCSE and achieve well above average A level results. In lessons at this stage, the great majority of progress is good or very good, and there is no unsatisfactory progress. For example, Year 12 students

made good progress in a GNVQ business education lesson, profiting from the teacher's direct knowledge of industry in their preparation for a visit to a local car factory. Year 13 students in GNVQ leisure and tourism made good progress in preparing a report containing tourism information. They were able to get all the help they needed from their well-informed teacher. Year 13 psychology students made very good progress in a lesson on memory, thanks to positive, engaging teaching and some very relevant activities to test how the memory recalls certain types of fact.

18. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress, at all stages. For example, three pupils in a Year 8 English lesson made satisfactory progress in writing and in understanding what happened in their reader, *Frankenstein's Aunt*. They enjoyed the story, which was well presented to them by the teacher and their support assistant. In a Year 9 English lesson, one pupil receiving individual support made satisfactory progress in spelling and writing, well-supported by the assistant and by clear and helpful leadership by the class teacher.
19. Pupils in the unit for hearing impairment make satisfactory progress, in general, in their work in the unit and when given specialist support in mainstream classrooms. For example, a pupil in a Year 11 business studies class profited from the class teacher's good knowledge, pace and purpose, well-supported by the learning assistant. An example of good progress was seen in a Year 10 English lesson, when the pupil was greatly helped by the class teacher's good techniques. The teacher's clear speaking, position, well-delivered instructions and the positive involvement of the pupil combined to help him make good progress. However, such occasions are few, and in general pupils with hearing impairment make unsatisfactory progress. Teachers lack expertise and a high enough appreciation of what these pupils can do.
20. Since the last inspection report, the school has maintained its previous high levels of achievement at all stages and has further added to these in the good results now achieved in the advanced GNVQ examinations. Generally, pupils' good progress has been maintained, but that of pupils with hearing impairment has not.

## 26. **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

21. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good overall, but there are marked differences between both key stages and the sixth form. In Key Stage 3, a wide range of attitudes to learning was seen in lessons. The majority of pupils are willing to concentrate and get involved. They react positively to work which is at the right level for them, and respond well to praise. In a Year 7 information and communications technology (ICT) lesson, for example, pupils were enthusiastic and ready to follow instructions. In a Year 8 physical education lesson they evaluated one another's performance. High levels of serious concentration were evident in a Year 9 personal and social education (PSE) lesson when pupils demanded accurate information and wanted to make sure they had understood correctly. However, there is a significant minority of pupils who are uncommitted to work and who make little effort to cooperate in class. They are restless in lessons. For example, in a science lesson involving the use of ICT, pupils lost concentration and wasted time by talking and swinging on chairs. The pace of lessons affects the way these pupils respond. Their levels of attainment are also relevant. In lower sets, concentration wanes towards the end of lessons.
22. Because not all teachers can rely on good standards of behaviour at this stage, pupils are not always as involved in lessons as they should be, and so do not get enough chance to accept responsibility for their own role in the lesson. Passivity then sometimes leads to inattention and further poor behaviour. Pupils do not therefore have as much chance as they might to practise and develop their key skills in speaking, number and ICT. Across all subjects at this stage, they are not given enough specific challenges to be answerable for their progress in these skills. Such a climate of responsibility would do much to improve their behaviour and therefore the quality of their learning and progress at this stage.

23. Pupils in Key Stage 4 have much better attitudes to their studies. They settle well, listen sensitively to one another and are ready to ask questions and to seek help or clarification. Pupils work hard and persevere with tasks set. They respond well to positive teaching. Pupils can be trusted to work safely with equipment; for example, in science, food technology and PE lessons. They are proud of their work and determined to please. Pupils often take a full part in lessons and enjoy learning. For example, in an after-school Year 11 German lesson, pupils learnt well and enjoyed celebrating a birthday too. There is only an occasional passive response, and little disruption.
24. Students in the sixth form are focused, interested and well-motivated. They prepare themselves well and help teachers to move lessons forward. In many lessons, students learn well from one another, for example, in a GNVQ lesson on leisure and tourism, when students presented information to one another and criticized their presentations very constructively. Good note-taking skills were evident in a Year 13 science lesson. Students show initiative. For example, in a Year 13 geography lesson they found sources of information and followed up clues effectively. In a Year 12 art lesson they asked probing questions to make the most of their teacher's experience.
25. Standards of behaviour are satisfactory overall. However, there is a difference here, again, between behaviour in Key Stage 3 and that in the rest of the school. Although the behaviour in lessons of most pupils in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory, a sizeable minority do not behave well. During the inspection, examples of unsatisfactory behaviour in this key stage were seen in mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography, history, modern foreign languages and music. On these occasions, pupils are restless and noisy; they fiddle with pens and paper, and cannot keep quiet when told to do so. This type of behaviour is more noticeable when the pace of lessons is slow and the teaching less confident. In Key Stage 4, the standard of behaviour in lessons improves and is generally good, although there are occasional problems in lower sets. The behaviour of sixth form students is very good. They are mature and friendly, polite and helpful. Standards of behaviour, as pupils move around the school, vary. The majority of pupils have pleasant manners, but there is a certain amount of rough and rowdy behaviour, characterised by pushing and shoving at lesson changeovers, break and lunchtimes. Most rough behaviour involves younger pupils. It leads to instances of bullying, mainly physical, though verbal bullying also occurs. Younger pupils interviewed during the inspection confirmed that bullying exists, but older ones reported that they were largely unaffected by it. Inspectors found that most bullying is rough, rather than malicious, behaviour, and that the school is very keen to diminish it. More severe bullying is confirmed, on rare occasions. Further up the school, bullying is much less of a problem. The number of permanent exclusions is low for a school of this size, but fixed-term exclusions are higher than average. The number of fixed-term exclusions is falling.
26. The quality of relationships is good overall, and improves in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. It is rendered less positive in Key Stage 3 than at other stages by some poor behaviour and bullying. Generally, though, pupils and students get on well with one another. There are also good relations between pupils and members of staff across the school and especially in the sixth form. When opportunities are provided for such work, pupils cooperate effectively in pairs and groups. Many good examples of this were seen in PE lessons in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form; also in the vocational GNVQ sixth form lessons, for example, in Year 12 business education, when students cooperated very well in reviewing their Young Enterprise presentations and planning the next steps in their company's development. Pupils from ethnic minorities mix easily and are well-integrated into the life of the school.
27. Pupils' response to the provision for their personal development is good overall. It improves as they move through the school: it is variable in Key Stage 3, good in Key Stage 4 and very good in the sixth form. Although there is some lack of interest and initiative in the lower part of the school, some pupils are ready to accept responsibility from an early stage. For example, half a Year 7 tutor group volunteered with alacrity to act as guides at an open evening for prospective parents. The school council includes representatives from all year groups and is run by sixth form students. It discusses such issues as how to deal with litter around the school and how to organise a drop-in centre where pupils who have been bullied can seek help from sixth formers. Pupils and students greatly appreciate the extra-curricular activities provided. Large numbers take part, especially in sport. Pupils and students contribute to the

local community, both within the school itself, where sixth form students help younger pupils, and in the wider community; for example, through the work of the Youth Action Group with elderly residents. There is much charitable fund-raising, including a sponsored activities day. Large sums are raised for local, national and international charities.

28. Pupils with special educational needs are interested in their work, concentrate well in lessons and co-operate well in class. They are able to take turns and show respect for other pupils' ideas and contributions. Their relationships with both staff and pupils are good. They are willing to take responsibility and they carry out their assigned or volunteered duties in a positive manner. Overall, their behaviour is good. Occasional misbehaviour is dealt with by teachers and other staff in a sensible manner. Pupils show satisfactory progress in their personal development.
29. Since the last inspection report, the school has largely maintained the good standards of behaviour reported then. However, problems of behaviour in Key Stage 3 were not noted then, and there were no reported cases of bullying at that time. There are now a number of cases reported by staff, pupils and parents. In these respects, there has been a decline in standards.

35. **Attendance**

30. Attendance is satisfactory. The overall level of attendance for pupils of compulsory school age is 92.1 per cent. This is slightly above the average for schools of this type nationally. The level of authorised absence is at present 7.3 per cent. Unauthorised absence is 0.6 per cent, which is below the national average. There is a separate policy for sixth form attendance, which includes a negotiated amount of home study. This agreement is signed by the school, parents and the student.
31. There is some lateness. At the start of the school day this is usually, but not always, due to the late arrival of buses. Some pupils are slow to arrive in time for lessons during the day.
32. The level of attendance at the school has improved considerably since the last inspection and is now higher than in the two previous years.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

### **Teaching**

33. Teaching is of good quality. Throughout the school, teaching is satisfactory in 26 per cent of lessons, good in 43 per cent, very good in 23 and excellent in 4 per cent. It is unsatisfactory in 4 per cent also. Most of the unsatisfactory teaching is in Key Stage 3, where it accounts for some 8 per cent of lessons at this stage. There is little such teaching in Key Stage 4 and none in the sixth form. Teaching improves at each stage. The amount of teaching which is good or better is 58 per cent in Key Stage 3, 78 per cent in Key Stage 4 and 83 per cent in the sixth form.
34. Some excellent teaching was seen, mostly in Key Stage 4. In these lessons, the teacher uses first-rate subject knowledge with great effect to motivate and involve the pupils; as, for example, in a Year 11 English poetry lesson when every pupil was engaged throughout and made very good progress. Much teaching is very good and has a very positive effect on pupils' learning. For example, the teaching of RE is of this calibre, and sometimes excellent. In a Year 10 lesson on the purpose of marriage, probing and encouraging questions led to good understanding and very good progress in knowledge. When teaching is good, the teacher is firmly in control of the class and subject matter, arranging a relevant sequence of activities and ensuring good progress. For example, a Year 7 girls' hockey lesson had all these features, while the teacher's enthusiasm ensured an enjoyable lesson with good progress in the skills of the game.
35. Satisfactory teaching often has many of the features seen above, but lacks the personal assurance and pace of a good lesson. Behaviour is then sometimes a problem. For example, a Year 9 German class made sound progress in vocabulary learning, despite some inattention caused by uncertain class control in a very large group. Most unsatisfactory teaching is in Key Stage 3, and is largely in music and modern foreign languages. Four such lessons were seen in music, three of them in Year 9. In some of these, the teacher talked too much, had too slow a pace, and was unable to interest the class. There were three unsatisfactory lessons in languages in Key Stage 3, two French and one German. In the French lessons, explanations were confusing and too much English was used. Pupils took the opportunity to misbehave. In German, vocabulary practice was not well handled and pace was slow, but pupils behaved well throughout the long lesson.
36. Generally, across all stages, teaching is very good in RE and drama. It is satisfactory in modern foreign languages, history and music, and is good in all other subjects. There are particular strengths in RE in Key Stage 3; in RE, English, science, drama and design and technology in Key Stage 4; and in RE, English and drama in the sixth form. Teaching is least effective in music and modern foreign languages in Key Stage 3, and in history in Key Stage 4. Teaching is effective in all subjects in the sixth form.



37. Generally, across all stages, teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. This leads to good pace, and pupils are secure in the knowledge that the lesson will be informative and worthwhile. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on *Lord of the Flies*, the teacher's clear, detailed knowledge of the text led to good planning and high expectations of what pupils would learn. Pupils were highly motivated and made very good progress. There were several English lessons in which good subject knowledge helped groups of pupils with special needs to make good progress.
38. Teachers have good expectations of what pupils can learn and the progress they can make. For example, the teacher of a Year 10 design and technology class in graphics products had an energetic, assertive style that conveyed high expectations of what pupils must do to make up for time lost in arriving late to class. The atmosphere was brisk and positive, and progress very good.
39. The planning of lessons is good on most occasions. Teachers are adept at planning a sequence of activities over the very long lessons, and usually succeed in keeping up momentum, at least in upper and middle sets. A good example of clear and effective planning was seen in a Year 13 mathematics lesson on dynamic programming, in which students made very good progress as they moved from one well-planned activity to the next.
40. Teachers' methods and organization are generally good, giving pupils the chance to make clear and well ordered notes. For example, lessons in careers and personal and social education are marked by well-organized schemes of work and clear exposition of the issues involved.
41. The management of pupils is often good, sometimes very good. For example, lessons in vocational GNVQ and business subjects in the sixth form are distinguished by very good management of the students, who take a full and positive part in the lessons, some of which they can run themselves; for example, in some business education sessions seen. The teacher is then the experienced manager who encourages the students to get the most from their own contributions. At the other extreme, management of pupils is sometimes insecure in Key Stage 3. At this stage, pupils are not all willing to learn without persuasion, and some teachers find it difficult to motivate a potentially indifferent class to behave and make adequate progress. The relatively modest of progress in Key Stage 3 is closely related to pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Teachers have not together found a way to train pupils newly arrived in Year 7 into secure, co-operative ways of behaving. Teachers generally have no such problem with older pupils in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.
42. The use of time and resources is generally good. Teachers usually manage to use the full 75 minutes well, but in lower sets there is often a slackening of pace as pupils decide they cannot devote themselves with similar energy to the last activity. Resources are often well used, for example, in science practical work. In a Year 10 practical lesson on making electricity, pupils made good progress because the teacher supplemented the good use of equipment with clear knowledge and teaching method. Resources in design and technology and PE are always well used, and when pupils have the chance to use computers, teachers make good use of this technology in their teaching.
43. Day-to-day assessment and the use of homework is generally good. Most work is carefully set and marked. Many teachers give pupils encouraging comments in writing, but there is less evidence of suggesting specific ways to improve work, for example, by setting individual targets for the next topic. This was the case in business studies work in Key Stage 4, when exercise books lacked this form of summary and forward-looking suggestion.
44. All pupils with special educational needs are taught in mainstream classes. The great majority of these pupils in Key Stage 3 receive additional small group teaching, on a withdrawal basis. Additional support in the classroom for all pupils with special educational needs is provided by the learning support assistants and by the class teachers. Small group teaching is consistently good and sometimes very good,

and on one occasion it was excellent. Overall, class teaching and support is also good but varies from class to class. Very good teaching occurs when teachers prepare differentiated materials, which are well-targeted to the abilities and interests of the pupils, and provide effective preparation before the lesson, followed by good support in the class after the lesson. Teachers in mainstream classes are often ineffective in supporting the needs of pupils with hearing impairment, as they have not generally had clear training for this role and do not often plan closely enough with the specialist support teachers of these pupils.

45. Since the last inspection report, the school has maintained its previous good quality of teaching.

## **The curriculum and assessment**

### **51. Curriculum**

46. The school provides a curriculum that meets statutory requirements in all key stages, except provision of enough time to teach the agreed syllabus in religious education adequately in Key Stage 4. Requirements for the teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) in Key Stage 4 are met, but for some pupils the different aspects are not covered in sufficient detail.
47. The curriculum is frequently discussed by governors and staff. Governors are closely involved and well-informed about relevant issues. All pupils have equal access to the subjects offered at all key stages. The total time provided on the timetable meets national recommendations of twenty-five hours a week. The school provides four lessons a day, each of 75 minutes, but weaknesses in this arrangement of time were observed during the inspection. Many subjects receive only one contact with their pupils in the week, so absentees suffer the more and continuity is threatened. Younger pupils have difficulty in concentrating for such a length of time, a weakness aggravated by the long afternoon. Furthermore, there is a loss of flexibility in timetabling, so that some subjects receive more time than is normal and some too little. In the last year, the school has designed a policy for literacy across the curriculum, and is in the process of doing so for numeracy.
48. In Key Stage 3, the school provides all National Curriculum subjects. There is a generous allocation of time for English and science, but less than average time is given for history and geography, and for mathematics in Year 8. A second modern foreign language is taken by three quarters of the pupils in Years 8 and 9. The requirements for ICT are satisfied: it is taught as a separate subject in Years 7 and 9, and in Year 8 within the core subjects, foreign languages and design and technology. Drama in Key Stage 3 is a part of the English curriculum and is taught to each year group for only one term in each year, making it difficult to recruit to the GCSE option in Key Stage 4.
49. In Key Stage 4, all students take a curriculum of English (Language and Literature), mathematics, double science, a modern foreign language, design and technology, PE, IT, RE and personal and social education (PSE). In addition, they choose within two options, which include history, geography, IT, drama, art, child development, RE, PE, economics and business studies. This curriculum is broad, providing nine subjects for GCSE, but permits pupils to engage in courses that may not be balanced, if they omit all history, RE and geography. Some French, German and music classes take place after school. This allows extra choice, but the length of day places a strain on the pupils involved. National Curriculum requirements for ICT are met partly by separate lessons in the subject, and partly by work done in other subjects. Despite an audit of topics that should be taught in this way, the coverage is not sufficiently detailed for some pupils. There is insufficient time for the teaching of RE in this stage, so that the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus are not met.
50. Pupils with special educational needs follow the same courses in most subjects. In foreign languages, English and food technology, some take a Certificate of Achievement rather than GCSE. These pupils are valued members of the school community. They are full participants in the whole curriculum and extra-curricular activities of the school. The organisation of the curriculum for pupils with special needs

is well co-ordinated. In most of the subjects short, medium and long-term planning makes reference to the special needs of the pupils.

51. The courses offered to the sixth form provide a good balance and a generous range of A levels and vocational GNVQ subjects. Most students studying A levels also take two lessons a week of general studies, games or community service.
52. The planning for pupils' progress from one stage of learning to the next and for the continuity of their education across the different stages is very good. In the summer term, pupils about to join from primary schools follow a three-day timetable at the school. English and modern foreign language teachers regularly visit many primary schools; the science, mathematics and technology teams hold meetings in school for primary pupils and teachers. Equal care is taken in guiding pupils into their courses in Key Stage 4, and again into the sixth form. The sixth form curriculum offers a good preparation for further education or employment. The range of A level and advanced GNVQ subjects allows students to consider a wide range of courses in higher education.
53. All pupils, except those in Year 8, have regular lessons in PSE. Health and sex education, together with the drugs awareness element, are effective and taught by a specialist team. This teaching is supported by form tutors in the morning tutor periods. Careers education is very good: the careers adviser helps to plan the course and gives specialist advice. The extensive careers library has plenty of space for research, using computers or reference books.
54. The school offers an excellent range of extra-curricular activities, which are highly successful in extending and enriching the curriculum. Many of these arise from house competitions and events. They include music, drama, art, technology, mathematics and writing. There are clubs for enthusiasts, for example, in computers, engineering and tapestry. Pupils can take part in Young Enterprise and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. From Year 7 onwards, all year groups have the opportunity to go abroad; for example, to France, Holland, Germany or Belgium. Sixth-formers visit the European cities of culture; recent visits have included Berlin and Barcelona. Year 10 pupils have a residential visit in Wales. The English and drama departments organise frequent visits to the theatre, as does the history department to museums and the geography department for field courses. The range of sports available in the lunch hour and after school is excellent, and well supported.
55. There have been many improvements since the last inspection. The curriculum is now more balanced in Key Stage 3, and provision for art and music is satisfactory. Pupils with special needs are no longer withdrawn for such long periods. However, the time given to RE in Key Stage 4 is still too little.
61. *Assessment*
56. The school has good systems for assessing pupils' attainment and uses them effectively. The school has a clear policy for assessment. Statutory requirements for the assessment and recording of pupils' work are met.
57. Day-to-day marking uses a clear and commonly used system for the assessment of effort and attainment. Attainment is regularly assessed and usefully linked to National Curriculum levels in Key Stage 3, and to examination assessment criteria in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. The GNVQ courses have a separate, very good assessment procedure, based on the tracking sheets, which are part of the required assessment programme. These identify the aspects that must be assessed for every student.
58. Formal assessments of pupils' work are conducted each year. These are well used to provide attainment levels for all pupils. The school uses a further bank of tests to assess the future potential attainment of all students. The results of these tests are used to produce overall school performance targets. Comparisons between actual and potential attainment levels are well used by subject leaders to identify pupils whose

performance does not match their potential.

59. Information produced from tests is used to help departments set targets, for their own performance and for pupils. At the moment, departments are using this data in different ways and the school has not yet coordinated its policy for the best use of this information. For example, the English and food technology departments set targets for individual pupils. Physical education sets targets for examination candidates. Some other departments discuss the data with pupils and establish individual action plans. Others are currently investigating ways in which they can use the data. Departments which set targets for individual pupils report a good effect on their learning. Pastoral teams also receive information derived from assessment, using it to negotiate individual action plans with pupils. The GNVQ system provides an excellent, continuing action plan for students.
60. There is also a lack of consistency in the way departments use the assessment data they receive and create, to help them plan developments in their schemes of work for pupils. There are some examples of good, positive planning. The modern foreign language department changed their Key Stage 3 and 4 schemes of work after analysing the information this data provided them. Art, religious education and geography make good use of the assessments they make to adjust the work they give to individual pupils. Some other departments have still to develop ways to use the data to identify ways to help pupils improve their performance.
61. For pupils with special educational needs, Individual Educational Plans provide appropriate targets, especially for basic literacy and numeracy work and for personal and social development. Individual Educational Plans are reviewed each term, or more often if required. Statements are reviewed on an annual basis and particular needs are met.
62. Since the last inspection, the school has made good progress in improving the quality of assessment data and the way in which it is used. The religious education team has developed procedures to use assessment data as an integral component of their planning cycle. Reports to parents have been changed, giving more significance to teachers' comments and pupils' attainment levels. The way assessment data is used to help plan the curriculum for individuals has improved, and the school has plans to ensure that this improvement continues.
68. **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**
63. Overall, the school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
64. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. This is largely in RE, but also in geography, where, for example, pupils were struck by the more than human scale of the flood disaster in Bangladesh. Some texts in English provide spiritual opportunities, and in PE pupils have the chance to express moods and feelings through dance. In RE, pupils study worship in a variety of religions. Older pupils consider the traditional arguments for the existence and nature of God. In art, pupils consider the idea of beauty, and reflect on the qualities of art, craft, and design. The school has produced a series of thoughts, 'Ridgeway Reflections', used by tutors on mornings when there is no assembly for a particular year group. These contain moral and spiritual material and were well used in most of the tutorial sessions seen during the inspection. Assemblies seen contained a spiritual element. The school therefore promotes pupils' spiritual development through acts of worship and its tutorial activities, so meeting the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.
65. Provision for moral development is good. There are codes of expectations for good behaviour on different occasions in the school day. Teachers provide good role models and pupils are taught to distinguish right from wrong. There are home/school contracts, which set out responsibilities for pupils, parents and the school. The school's reward system is very evident and pupils receive good or bad referrals, a number of which result in a letter home. Examples of moral development in the curriculum include physical

education, where pupils learn to play by rules. In RE, they have considered the Ten Commandments and applied them in modern settings. In English, Shakespeare and other texts often provoke moral debate, such as the character of Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*. In history, pupils study the Holocaust and the persecution of the Jews in the Second World War, as well as the slave trade of the eighteenth century.

66. The school provides very well for pupils' social development through its many extra-curricular activities. These give opportunities for pupils to join purposefully together and to increase their social understanding and co-operation. For example, in art, they share ideas and work collaboratively, when painting a large mural. In music, pupils sing in the choir, and play in the orchestra or bands. They give performances in music and in drama. For example, the school has produced performances of *The Tempest*, *Oliver* and the senior choir performed *Les Miserables*. Other activities include trampolining, expeditions to Dartmoor, and the school council. Some of the sixth form help younger pupils in their classes on a voluntary basis. In PE, pupils are encouraged to show fair play and teamwork, and there are many opportunities to join sporting activities. There are numerous visits in groups, such as geography field expeditions, visits to London to a mosque or temple for RE, and to museums for history. Overall, the school provides very good opportunities for social development.
67. The opportunities provided for pupils to develop an appreciation of Western culture are often very good. For example, there are many art expeditions, such as the residential week in Oxenwood for older pupils, and a large number of visits to the continent. There are visits to theatres in London, Swindon and Stratford, and a writing weekend for English students. Pupils attend drama and dance festivals, and performances of music and drama. In English, they have produced anthologies of poetry, such as that by Year 8 in the library. In PE, pupils have studied international aspects of sport, and the Olympic Games. They go to museums and galleries, and as part of their design and technology lessons they have visited an organic farm. However, there are few opportunities, provided by the school as a whole, for multicultural development and appreciation. There are examples of good practice in several departments. In religious education, pupils study aspects of several world religions, and in geography, they have looked at poverty in Latin American countries. In art, pupils have studied Islamic designs, and examples of western artists. Throughout the school, however, there is insufficient attention to festivals, celebrations, food and clothes, to prepare pupils for a multicultural society. Overall, considering both these elements, cultural development is good.
68. The last inspection report criticised the lack of planning for cultural development but said that the school prepared pupils well for living in a multicultural society. This multi-cultural aspect is not as apparent in this inspection, although the provision for pupils to appreciate their own culture has been well-maintained. The school has improved its daily acts of worship by monitoring the use of its published material for tutors, but the sense of good order in which pupils felt safe was not particularly seen in this inspection, and was not generally the case in Key Stage 3. Provision for social development has further improved. All in all, improvement in the provision of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has been just sufficient since the last inspection, but the school has maintained and increased its range of local cultural opportunities.

#### 74. **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

69. Academic support for pupils is good. An extensive range of academic information about pupils is available to subject departments and the key stage teams. Results of tests taken in Years 7, 8, and 9 are used to predict National Curriculum levels as well as to check progress and compare results. Pupils themselves prepare personal development plans in consultation with their tutors. All the information gathered in Key Stage 3 goes forward with pupils to Key Stage 4. Further tests are then taken to help predict GCSE grades. The school distinguishes between 'emerging' grades, i.e. what seems likely, and 'target' grades, i.e. ones that are achievable given hard work. As part of the process, pupils prepare action plans with their tutors, helped by key stage teams and senior members of staff. Some subject departments are better at setting realistic individual targets than others, but the overall procedures for academic support are good. Sixth form students receive very good academic support. Each has an

individual programme with a well-structured personal development plan and interviews. Subject targets in the sixth form are specific and constructive. The procedures developed by the school contribute to the standards that pupils attain.

70. There are good procedures to provide personal support and guidance for pupils at all levels of the school. The structure of the key stage and sixth form teams successfully overcome the problems caused by large year groups. Records, and other information to support pupils, are passed to successive teams as pupils progress through the school. All teams have frequent meetings to share information and discuss particular concerns. Tutors follow a carefully planned guidance programme, but there are variations in how well they use the time available. It is particularly effective in the sixth form. Teams review their procedures each year. The PSE programme also provides guidance for pupils. It is planned effectively so that likely topics of concern to pupils are discussed and repeated at appropriate stages during their time in the school. The guidance on careers is very good, especially that given to sixth form students.
71. Procedures to promote discipline and behaviour are good. There is a comprehensive structure to help teachers to promote discipline and behaviour consistently. This structure is reviewed and re-assessed each year. High standards are expected. There is an emphasis on rewards, but pupils are clearly informed of the rules and the sanctions for breaking them. Pupils' behaviour is monitored weekly by senior members of staff, who are aware of some irritating behaviour among the younger pupils. To this extent, the school's policies and procedures are not wholly effective, although they have a very positive effect in improving behaviour by the time pupils reach Key Stage 4. The school recognises that there are cases of bullying among pupils. It is very open about this and gives the anti-bullying policy a high profile, with the deliberate aim of reducing the number of incidents. However, members of staff are concerned that not all cases are notified to them.
72. The school has good procedures to record and monitor attendance. Day-to-day routines are efficient. The school encourages a first-day response from parents, for reasons of safety. The new attendance liaison officer has responsibility for contacting parents and co-ordinating reports of absence. Attendance is monitored efficiently by members of staff with the help of the Education Welfare Officer. There are regular spot checks for truancy. Attendance records are sent to parents as part of the annual report. Full attendance is rewarded. Procedures to record attendance in the sixth form have improved. However, not all tutors record negotiated study leave correctly. In addition, although individual sixth form students' attendance at lessons is noted and checked against registers, there are currently no procedures to compare overall student lesson attendance levels with levels recorded at registration sessions.
73. Procedures for child protection are good. There are three qualified co-ordinators in the school. The guidance provided for members of staff is good. Health and safety procedures are good. Routines to ensure pupils' health and safety, both within the school and on visits outside, are clear and comprehensive. Subject departments have good safety practices. Health education forms part of the PSE programme. There is an annual Health Week, with many events, and the school has won a Healthy School Award for this.
74. Since the last inspection report, when the provision of guidance for pupils was a key issue, there has been considerable improvement in the structure for academic monitoring of pupils and in the organisation of the pastoral systems. The support and guidance for pupils with Statements of SEN is now good and well co-ordinated, and support for the rest of the pupils with special educational needs is sound and well organised. The personal, social and medical needs of the pupils are well met.
80. **Partnership with parents and the community**
75. The quality of information that the school provides for parents is satisfactory. There is an informative prospectus. The governors' annual report to parents is laid out clearly. Newsletters keep parents up-to-date with events at the school. Other information about the school, for example about subject choices, is

provided at appropriate stages, although some parents report that information about arrangements for their own children does not reach them in time. The quality of information in reports about their children's work and progress is also satisfactory. A combination of reports and meetings ensures that parents have some information about progress each term. The full annual reports include National Curriculum levels and predicted grades for pupils, but other comments are more about the efforts pupils make and their attitude to work than about what they have learnt and can do. Reports rarely say what pupils should do to improve their work in each subject.

76. The level of parents' involvement with the school and with their children's work at home is satisfactory. There is a new home/school contract, as is now required. Most parents sign homework planners, but these are not otherwise used as a means of communication. The level of attendance at parents' evenings to discuss progress is high, but fewer parents come to special presentations. Parents generally support the work of the school, although there is no parents' association at present. They are pleased by the standards their children attain and appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities. Some parents have concerns about bullying and a higher than expected number wrote to the inspectors about this.
77. The school has very good links with the community. All pupils in Year 10 do a week's work experience. Pupils are well prepared for their experience and efficiently debriefed afterwards. The work they do contributes to several curriculum subjects, for example, English, and design and technology. Prizes are given for the best work-packs completed. The winning examples seen during the inspection were full of interest and beautifully presented. The school has links with a large number of local businesses and organisations. These are very supportive and help in many areas of school life, as, for example, the 'Dialogue 2000' exchanges in business education and modern foreign languages. There are further links with the community in the work of GNVQ students, as part of their courses. Health and social care students have helped at the Winged Fellowship Centre, while those studying leisure and tourism have set up and run events. Voluntary service is also undertaken, for example, as part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and the work of the Youth Action Group with local elderly residents. The school has been given a Sportsmark award by the Sports Council. Pupils are much involved in local charitable initiatives, such as the Thamesdown Rotary Club's Aquabox appeal. The community makes considerable use of the sporting and other facilities available at the school. The extent of these links, and the way in which they are used, make a considerable contribution to pupils' personal development and the standards they attain.
78. For pupils with special educational needs, specialists from outside agencies help in reviewing statements and contributing to the development and implementation of Individual Educational Plans. Parents are kept informed of developments and are participants in reviewing and setting targets in the individual plans of their children. Overall, liaison with the parents of these pupils is good. Links with the local community are good. Transition arrangements and practices with the feeder primary schools and with further education are good. This ensures smooth transition and continuity of specialist provision and support.
79. The good standards noted in the last inspection report have been maintained and the school's links with the community have grown further.

## **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

### **Leadership and management**

80. Leadership is very good. The leadership provided by the headteacher is very clear, direct and effective. He delegates responsibility very efficiently and requires a high level of performance from all staff. This has a very positive effect on the maintenance and improvement of standards. He keeps closely in touch with the daily life of the school, for example, through his brisk and useful morning meetings of senior

staff and his very frequent patrols of the school. Senior staff give very good leadership, working closely with the team leaders for departments and years. They have a detailed knowledge of how their areas are performing, both in curriculum and welfare provision. The management of departments and years is good. Team leaders give clear and experienced leadership, with a positive effect on the maintenance of good standards.

81. The leadership of the governing body is very good. Governors are led by a very experienced and well-informed chairman. Committees are very well led, discuss a wide range of relevant issues in good detail and produce clear minutes of their meetings. The induction of new governors is thorough and helpful. Governors are well-supported by the senior staff who attend their meetings. Each governor is linked to a number of areas, so gaining direct contact with the regular work of the school.
82. The monitoring of teaching is satisfactory. The headteacher observes lessons regularly and there is a full review of each department, including the observation of lessons, every two years. However, the role of the subject team leader in observing lessons is not well-developed and there is no regular meeting, for example, between the team leader and a senior member of staff about issues of teaching quality. The monitoring of the curriculum is good. The effectiveness of the curriculum is one of the criteria by which the school reviews its strategic plan. It is thus rigorously reviewed each year. For example, the width of the National Curriculum and sixth form programmes is reviewed, as are the systems of support for special needs and the provision of extra-curricular activities. Overall, the support and monitoring of teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory.
83. The school implements its aims and values very well. There is a leading statement, giving the vision of the school, which states that it educates for success. To achieve the sure expression of this statement, there are three objectives. These are to create learning conditions of high quality, inclusive of all statutory requirements; to encourage high achievement within pupils' capabilities; and to optimise income and be efficient and effective in expenditure. Though these objectives have a greater than usual administrative emphasis, they are implemented with considerable width of interpretation through eight themes, including those of pupil achievement, the curriculum and the community. For example, the first objective is assessed, among other means, by surveys of pupil attentiveness, politeness and the incidence of bullying. These assessments test whether the aims are being realised. As most school policies refer to the aims and are judged for their capacity to promote them, the school's aims, values and policies are reflected in its regular work to a very high degree.
84. Development planning and evaluation are correspondingly strong. The strategic plan is designed for a five-year period. It consists of the objectives and themes. The school intends that each objective shall be met through a series of specific ambitions, which are expressed through some or all of the eight themes. The plan contains a very detailed analysis of the themes, giving a great deal of information; for example, on staffing, the performance of pupils and the provision for ICT. The plan is costed in great detail and each item is ranked in order of priority. Senior staff are allocated responsibility for particular items. The plan is evaluated through an annual performance review, which applies criteria to assess whether the objectives are being met, and allocates a points score to each item in the plan. This process produces a very strong integration of objectives, development plan and evaluation, making a very effective model of quality assurance.
85. The ethos of the school is good in general. There is a strong commitment to high achievement and academic results, acknowledged by parents as one of the most successful aspects of the school. The school is committed to good relationships and these are well achieved in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. The ethos in Key Stage 3 is generally good, in terms of commitment to learning, but is not always secure in terms of the behaviour and attitudes of pupils. In this stage, there is some irritating behaviour and bullying. The staff has not managed to train all these younger pupils into secure habits of good behaviour. This limits their capacity to benefit from learning experiences without distracting others and therefore affects the ethos of the school at this level. Staff are rightly anxious to get high standards from these younger pupils, but the teacher's level of expectation is sometimes more than pupils can sustain



without some rowdy behaviour between one class and another. The development of key skills in speaking, number and ICT depends on an atmosphere in which pupils can be trusted to respond responsibly and sometimes work on their own, and it is this aspect which is not secure overall at this stage.

86. The school meets statutory requirements in almost all respects. The requirement for a daily act of collective worship is now met, as is the provision of a course in RE in the sixth form. However, the school does not provide sufficient time for the contents of the agreed syllabus to be taught adequately in religious education in Key Stage 4. Although the requirements of the National Curriculum for ICT are met in Key Stage 4, not all aspects are covered in sufficient detail. The school complies fully with relevant legislation on the equality of opportunity. All pupils have equal access to the full range of opportunities for learning that the school provides. The school meets almost all statutory obligation for the education of pupils with special educational needs. The governors' annual report to parents contains information about, but not evaluation of, the special education provision within the school.
87. The objectives of the school's policy on special educational needs are sound and are well known both to the school staff and to parents. There is unity of vision among the teaching staff regarding the education arrangements for pupils with special educational needs. The headteacher and governors are supportive, and there is good teamwork between the co-ordinator for special needs, the class teachers, learning support staff and most of the parents. Identification of social needs is well organised and managed. The management of the unit for hearing impairment is sound, but the overall leadership by the headteacher and governors has not secured enough training and resources to make the unit an effective one for the education of these pupils.
88. Since the last inspection, the good quality of leadership has continued and has improved in some respects. For example, the relationship of the governors to the school is now very good in the role and involvement of governors in school affairs, and management of the pastoral system has much improved.

94. **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

94. *Staffing*

89. The number, qualifications and experience of the teaching and support staff match the current curriculum satisfactorily in most areas and most teachers are deployed in their specialist areas only. Since the last inspection, over a third of the staff have joined the school, including several in their first post. This has resulted in a mix of ages, experience and expertise. Several staff have taught their whole career at the school. There is adequate provision of support staff for pupils with special educational needs, for both teachers and non-teaching assistants who work with pupils in class. However, provision of support assistants for pupils with hearing impairment is insufficient. The number of support staff is otherwise satisfactory, with good provision of technicians in science and technology.

90. Satisfactory systems exist for all aspects of staff support. Staff training and development are well managed, though there are aspects of training identified in this report which require attention. These relate to the need to provide all staff with training for the induction of new pupils in Year 7 in good patterns of behaviour and their education in key skills. Teachers new to the school, particularly those new to the profession, have a clearly planned programme of support. An induction programme of five days is provided for newly-qualified teachers in the July before they take up post, followed by a year's programme of observation, completion of career entry profile and a series of reviews. There is a clear management system for this, with professional mentors. Experienced staff joining the school have a planned induction programme related to their responsibility post and experience. The school has links with several universities and offers teaching experience for Initial Teacher Training students in several subjects. All students receive considerable support from staff, including a detailed in-service training programme led by teachers.

91. The appraisal scheme for staff is effective. It is based on a two-year cycle, with lesson observations. This is followed by staff development interviews and is now being linked with the new, detailed post descriptions to be introduced shortly.

92. The school meets the statutory requirement to have a co-ordinator for special educational needs. There is also a named governor with responsibility for special educational needs. The number of teaching and non-teaching staff is sufficient to meet the special needs of all pupils. However, specialist knowledge among some of the teaching and support staff is insufficient to respond adequately to the complex needs of some of the pupils. This is particularly the case for pupils in the unit for hearing impairment. Both teachers and support staff would welcome training to develop their expertise, especially in teaching strategies and planning, to meet the diverse needs of these pupils.

93. Since the last inspection, the level of provision for staff and arrangements for their professional development have been maintained. Though their time is fully used, staff are not under the unreasonable pressure previously reported for some.

99. *Accommodation*

94. The school's accommodation is satisfactory. It provides adequately for the large number of pupils. However, the site is comparatively small for the buildings needed and the increased numbers of pupils over recent years has required close supervision at lesson change-overs and at break and lunchtimes, because of the crowded conditions. In addition, the perceived need to constrain movement around the school has led, amongst other reasons, to the creation of a four-period day.

95. Since the last inspection, there has been some reorganisation of subject areas to provide for changes in the curriculum. Additional ICT rooms have been created and the GNVQ students are now housed in

appropriately refurbished classrooms. The school has taken over the management of the leisure centre from the Local Education Authority and the PE department now benefits greatly from the full use of its facilities, including the sports hall, swimming pool and gym. The layout of the science accommodation, criticised at the last inspection for its positioning on three floors, has not been changed, but some rooms have been refurbished. The same problems remain for technicians who carry equipment and materials from floor to floor. The number of classrooms housed in mobiles remains high, but since the last inspection much attention has been paid to their renovation and continuous upkeep. The planting of flowers and the construction of protective fencing have gone a long way to making this area more attractive, and the improvement is much appreciated by pupils and teachers.

96. The site manager and his staff have worked hard to improve the courtyard areas, which were commented on negatively in the last report for their bleakness. Pleasant seating, shrubs and flowers have been provided, and work in these areas is continuing. The general cleaning of the school is better than at the time of the last inspection, but there are still problems for the business manager in employing adequate numbers of suitable staff. After training, sixth formers provide valuable additional help. Two full-time cleaning staff have been employed to look after the toilets during the day. The security of the whole site has been improved with the installation of closed-circuit television.
  97. Accommodation for supporting pupils with special educational needs in classes and for individual and small group teaching is satisfactory. In the Hearing Impaired Unit, however, the quality of the room's sound-proofing is inadequate to block all extraneous noise. This hinders pupils' progress when they are using their specialist equipment.
  98. Overall, the provision of accommodation is satisfactory for the needs of the curriculum. Improvement since the last inspection has been considerable. The school has devoted much effort to improving its environment and appearance, with positive results.
104. *Learning resources*
99. Provision for resources for learning is good overall. It is good for ICT, where the ratio is nine pupils to each computer. The design and technology department makes very good use of the computer controlled machine tool in Key Stage 3. There is a shortage of ICT equipment for data logging and control technology, and of computers in some curriculum areas, for instance in art, particularly for Key Stage 4, and a lack of fitness-testing equipment in physical education. There is an inadequate number of some musical instruments. Overall, however, the allocation and management of resources to departments is very good. Good resources, well-managed, raise performance and extend the range of activities within and beyond the curriculum.
  100. Library provision is improving, and the number of books per pupil is around the national average. The new teacher-librarian recognises what needs to be done. This includes increasing the number of computers available, and improving resources for sixth formers. The careers library is well-established. The library is very well used by pupils, particularly during the lunch period.
  101. There are many visits to museums, theatres and galleries, and the school makes use of a wide range of local contacts to further the education of its pupils. This use of outside resources is very good and greatly helps pupils to learn in a practical way.
  102. The resources for pupils with special education needs are adequate, helped by additional funds made available over the last two years. Existing learning resources are sufficient to meet the special needs of the pupils. They are well used and are accessible for both pupils and staff. There is a budget for renewal and planning for enhancement of learning resources.

103. The issues raised during the last inspection have been well met, particularly the library conditions, which are now much improved.

109.     **The efficiency of the school**

104. The quality of financial planning is excellent. The headteacher, governors and bursar plan current and future developments with considerable care. They have established reserve funds so that the school can maintain buildings and replace costly items; for example, the necessary regular investment in computers. The school strategic plan is meticulously costed. One of its three main objectives is to optimise income and to be effective and efficient in expenditure. The school measures its performance in reaching this goal and achieves it successfully. The governors' finance committee provides a great deal of professional expertise. For example, two qualified accountants who serve on the committee make regular visits and work closely with the headteacher and bursar.
105. The school makes good use of its staff, accommodation and learning resources. The ratio of staff to pupils is around the national average and the percentage of time spent in contact with pupils is economical. Accommodation is sufficient and well arranged for most subjects. Very effective use is made of catering and leisure facilities, which the school now manages directly. The direct management of premises and cleaning is economical and efficient. Departments make good use of the learning resources at their disposal. For example, the library is well used as a resource for the various subjects, while the school makes effective use of its computer rooms. Grants for education and training are well used, and those for pupils with SEN are well applied to help individuals and groups requiring extra support. The use of funds for the work of the Hearing Impaired Unit is satisfactory, but money is insufficient to provide a properly comprehensive service. The education of pupils in the unit is hindered by lack of support and adequate training for mainstream staff.
106. Financial control is very efficient. The bursar makes regular, detailed reports to the headteacher and governors, who are well-informed about the state of the budget at any time of the financial year. The latest management letter confirmed that financial systems and school fund income were very good. School administration is very good. Secretarial and other support staff provide an efficient, welcoming service, and the school runs well on a daily basis. There are clear records of all meetings and staff are well-informed, for example, through regular briefing sessions, about administrative and pastoral matters.
107. The school's use of funding for special needs is effective. Existing teaching and non-teaching staff are deployed effectively to meet the special needs of the pupils. Since the last report the school has made sound improvements in this area. The organisation and co-ordination of the service has improved; specialist support, both in the classroom and in small group teaching, is better co-ordinated; Individual Educational Plans are well-targeted, and learning resources have improved considerably.
108. The school gives good value for money. It achieves good results at all levels, provides teaching and a curriculum of good quality, and maintains an excellent extra-curricular programme.
109. Since the last inspection report, the school has maintained and extended its good record for the efficiency with which it manages its financial and administrative affairs.

## PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

### ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

#### 115. English

110. In the national tests, at the end of Key Stage 3, in 1998, achievement was above the national average for level 5 and above, but below the national average for Level 6 and above. Overall, performance in 1998 was close to the national average. These results are below the average in comparison with similar schools. Results in 1999 showed a small fall in the number at Level 5, compared with 1998, but a significant increase in those achieving Level 6 and above. Over the three years 1996-1998, performance was well above average, for both boys and girls. However, results in English are somewhat lower than in mathematics and science, in these tests. Results have varied over this time. They were very high in 1996, fell to the national average in 1997, and remained around the average in 1998.
111. In GCSE English language, results in 1998 were well above national averages for both boys and girls at grades A\*-C. In literature, both boys and girls achieved results 20 per cent better than their respective national averages, but girls performed better than boys. In comparison with other subjects, the language results were slightly below the school average, and slightly above for literature. Results have maintained their high levels over recent years. Sixth form results have been consistently high for the last few years. In language and literature, the proportion achieving grades A-B has risen from below average in 1996 to well above average in 1998, with particularly high results in literature. Results in 1999 retained the high levels of previous years. Results are at least as high as they should be in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, and are satisfactory in Key Stage 3.
112. Standards observed towards the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with expected levels. Pupils are given opportunities for formal speaking, but standards by the end of the Key Stage are no higher than nationally expected. Pupils tend to read from a script rather than speak unaided with eye contact to an audience. Listening in all lessons is also in line with average levels and in some it is sensitive and sustained. Reading is at or slightly above expected levels. Pupils can interpret a text with confidence, but little expression. Pupils spend lessons in the library and keep a record of what they read. Books on loan to pupils in this Key Stage indicate regular and frequent reading. The standard of writing is above nationally expected levels. By the end of the key stage, pupils of all levels of attainment are writing in a good range of styles. Stories are imaginative, poems and writing about poems both show a sensitive use of language, and other writing is clear and controlled. Spelling and punctuation are both of generally high standard, but pupils only infrequently redraft their work to improve style and accuracy.
113. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards are well above nationally expected levels. Pupils are all capable of writing clear, accurate and extended prose. Much coursework is typed and very well presented. For example, one pupil wrote a deeply researched analysis of the Macpherson enquiry, comparing newspaper reporting with a play and a TV documentary on the theme of racism. Accounts of work experience are likewise vivid and well-constructed. Creative writing is of unusually high quality, well above the expected level. A story about a school teacher showed a sensitive understanding of an adult predicament, using a rich vocabulary, free of cliché. Analysis of *An Inspector Calls* showed insights into the characters and the way the play should be presented. Middle and lower attaining pupils are producing work of a standard much higher than their previous attainment would indicate.
114. Standards observed in sixth form lessons are also in line with the very good examination results, and often well above the levels expected for the courses. Students argue persuasively, with a good reference to the language of a text, though sometimes attention to the detail obscures a judgement about the overall quality of the passage being studied. Students can wittily parody a writer's style, and thereby prove how well they have grasped the devices that the writer is using. Speaking is often very good. For example, discussion of President Kennedy's inaugural speech produced valuable insights, coloured by a good

understanding of archaisms, biblical references, repetition and metaphor.

115. Pupils in all stages are attentive and eager to learn. They can work productively in groups, when the opportunity arises. Relationships are very good and the subject is popular. Progress in lessons is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good or very good in KS4. Success arises in those lessons where pupils articulate their responses, have time to reflect, and are required to summarise or evaluate what they have achieved in a lesson. Progress is good and often very good in KS4 and the sixth form. Over time, pupils make good progress in all key stages. There are visible signs of growing maturity, sensitivity, handling of language and ability to write at length. Pupils with SEN make satisfactory progress, appropriate to their prior attainment.
116. In all stages, teaching is never less than satisfactory and is mostly good or very good. In Key Stage 3, it is satisfactory in half of lessons and good or very good in the other half. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, it is mostly good or very good, and some excellent teaching was seen in Key Stage 4. Teachers prepare lessons conscientiously. They have very good knowledge of the subject, use the long periods ingeniously, and mark work thoroughly. Pupils know what is expected of them and how well they are doing. Low attaining pupils in particular are treated in adult fashion. Teachers expect them to digest and discuss the same sophisticated poetry as the higher attainers. One memorable example occurred when the teacher introduced a "first draft" of a poem and asked why one draft might be better than another. He did not tell the class that this draft was his creation. This ruse produced a high quality of debate. Only in one or two lessons was the task more mundane and the expectation more ordinary. Teachers are very skilled in explaining difficulties, then teasing ideas out of the pupils, letting them comment on one another's suggestions, and giving them a feeling of their own worth. Though teachers are adept at getting pupils to propose ideas to the class, it is rare for this to be done in small groups. When it did occur, the discussion lacked focus and was therefore less productive than it might have been.
117. The last inspection report commented favourably on standards of attainment and teaching, but listed a few points needing attention. These have all been successfully attended to, with the exception of the use of ICT, which is still less than it should be. The very high academic standards of four years ago have been well maintained. Results in GCSE language and literature are now slightly higher than in 1995, and similar at A level. The new team leader has introduced several procedures that have already had a good effect on teaching, record keeping and the sharing of good practice.
123. *Literacy across the curriculum*
118. The school has introduced a policy for literacy in all subjects during the last twelve months. This is beginning to take effect, particularly in science.
119. In general, speaking and listening skills are in line with expected levels in Key Stage 3, but are not well developed over this stage. Younger pupils do not often speak at length, partly because some problems of class control do not encourage teachers to make opportunities for this. These skills develop more strongly in Key Stage 4, when class control is no longer a problem and teachers are able to encourage pupils more effectively. Across all stages, the quality of listening is good in modern foreign languages, and speaking is good when pupils get the chance to develop this skill. In mathematics and geography, pupils are confident in using technical vocabulary and in articulating their thoughts, following closely the teacher's arguments. In science, they speak only to answer the teacher's questions and do not report or analyse their research. In religious education, the quality of discussion is high, as it is occasionally in music, but much less so in history, where in Key Stage 3 speaking is limited to giving short answers to the teacher's questions.
120. In all subjects, pupils can read sufficiently to interpret the text they are studying, but seldom read aloud. The exceptions are in English and modern foreign languages, though even here pupils in the lower sets have difficulty with vocabulary and lack confidence. Writing is above nationally expected levels in all subjects. In modern foreign languages, higher attaining pupils write with wit and flair as well as

accuracy; in mathematics and science they use appropriate vocabulary well; in geography and religious education, skills of note-taking and analysis are well-developed, with some imaginative writing also. In music lessons, pupils' writing in Key Stage 3 is restricted to filling in worksheets, but in Key Stage 4 there are successful examples of extended writing on projects; in art, pupils use language successfully to trace the way their ideas develop.

126. *Drama*

121. Drama is part of the English department, and taught in Key Stage 3 for one term to each of Years 7, 8 and 9. In Key Stage 4 it is an option, attracting about a dozen students. This year sees the revival of a Theatre Studies group in Year 12. Standards observed in Key Stage 4 are above nationally expected levels. Pupils have developed many appropriate skills, in concentration, movement and trust. Voice development is good. They can work well in groups, devising for themselves how to interpret a story and present it dramatically. In Year 12, the group has already attained standards at and above those expected of A level students. Their movement and expression are particularly forceful, though speaking is less well-developed. They can interpret a demanding text, such as Aristophanes' *Frogs*, so as to give its humour full rein. Motivation and progress are both good. Teaching is very good, with a most versatile approach, which takes account of pupils' varying aptitudes, gives them confidence, and allows scope for further development. Lessons have humour, pace, variety, and a touch of the unexpected.

127. **Mathematics**

122. The attainment of pupils in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, in 1998, is well above the national average, both at level 5 and above and level 6 and above. It is also well above the average attained by pupils in similar schools. Over the three years 1996-1998, attainment in these tests was also well above average. Results have remained well above average in recent years. They have been in line with results in science and above those in English. Both boys and girls were well above average over this period.
123. In the GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4, the percentage of pupils attaining grades A\*-C is well above national averages for the three years to 1998. GCSE attainment has remained constant during this period and girls have scored consistently higher results than boys. In 1999, the percentage attaining grades A\*-C was lower than in previous years, but still well above the national average, with the performance of girls showing a greater decline than that of the boys. Results have been a little below the average of other subjects in the school. Sixth form A level results are well above national averages, both for grades A-B and for all pass grades. GNVQ students in the sixth form achieve high levels of attainment. Overall, attainment is certainly high enough in this subject and is at least as high as expected.
124. In lessons in Key Stage 3, attainment was in line with nationally expected levels or higher in all but one lesson, and in some lessons it was well above expected levels. By the end of the key stage, attainment is overall above the expected level. All but the lowest attaining pupils are competent and confident when working with numbers. They are able to round numbers to a stated degree of accuracy and use this technique to form estimates. Low attainers experience difficulties when working with fractions. Most handle data well and standards of statistics are generally high. The highest attaining understand the concepts of cumulative frequency. Lower attaining pupils work well with tally charts and frequency tables. All but the lowest attaining can calculate various measures of average. Most are able to use computer spreadsheets to analyse and graph data. All undertake investigations competently and the higher attaining pupils use analytical skills to generalise their conclusions. All pupils calculate areas accurately, the middle and higher attaining applying this skill to complex shapes. The highest attaining use Pythagoras' Theorem accurately. The lower attaining make many careless mistakes in all areas, significantly lowering attainment levels.
125. In Key Stage 4, attainment is in line with, or above, national expectations in all lessons, except for those



in the lowest sets. In lessons with higher attaining pupils attainment is well above national expectations. By the end of the key stage, attainment is firmly above expected levels. The highest attaining work accurately with algebra, manipulating and solving complex equations with confidence. Lower attaining pupils have difficulty when deriving, manipulating and solving equations. All but the lowest attaining are able to represent equations graphically. All pupils calculate area and volume accurately. Middle and higher attaining pupils use formula to calculate areas of circles and volume of cylinders. High attaining pupils show very high levels of attainment by using trigonometry to calculate the sides of triangles. All pupils experience difficulties when working with negative numbers but handle data competently. The higher attaining understand and use concepts such as cumulative frequency, range and quartiles. In a lesson held at lunchtime, pupils standardised a set of exam marks by using standard deviation. Attainment levels in data handling are a significant strength of the department.

126. There are very high levels of attainment in sixth form A Level groups. Students are competent in all branches of mathematics and are confident in their ability. Standards of algebra are high. Students use their knowledge well to solve problems. For example, in one impressive piece of work, a student used network theory to support the efficient organisation of a conference. GNVQ students achieve levels of attainment in line with national expectations in their key skills lessons on the application of number. They are competent when working with number, and achieve higher standards because they are now considering practical issues from the real world.
127. Overall progress is good in both key stages and in the sixth form. Written work indicates that pupils make good progress over time, in small but significant steps, drawing on previously learned knowledge and skills. For example, graphical work progresses from bar charts in Key Stage 3, to cumulative frequency graphs in Key Stage 4. Work on algebra at Key Stage 3 is extended to solving complex equations in Key Stage 4. Lower attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, make sound progress when they know precisely what is expected of them and are supported by teachers and classroom assistants. Where progress is restricted, it is usually the result of low levels of confidence, difficulty in recalling previous learning and untidy work that makes revision impossible. Progress is particularly restricted in Year 8. This is due to a combination of large teaching groups, making it difficult for the teacher to provide help when needed, a smaller number of lessons than in other year groups and very long lessons in which pupils find it difficult to sustain their concentration.
128. Pupils show courtesy and consideration for teachers and one another, and generally behave well. In one lesson at Key Stage 3, where behaviour was unsatisfactory it was due to the disruptive behaviour of a small number of pupils. In both key stages, work is generally neat and tidy. Pupils approach their work with enthusiasm and are proud to share their learning with others. When given the opportunity, they work well in groups. A number of pupils, at all levels of attainment, show some confusion in the presentation of their work. This leads to errors and work that cannot be used for revision. Sixth form students work at a brisk pace and show an enthusiasm for their work. Their work is neat, tidy and well organised.
129. Teaching was at least satisfactory in every lesson observed. In over half the lessons at each key stage teaching was good. In some lessons in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form, teaching was very good. Teachers have secure knowledge of their subject and generally teach with enthusiasm. The most effective lessons are well planned and meet the learning needs of all pupils. Good lessons are based on learning objectives that are clearly explained to pupils, and include a balanced variety of activities designed to sustain pupils' motivation and extend learning. One such Key Stage 3 lesson required pupils to use earlier learning on estimation, rounding numbers and frequency tables, to gather data and calculate various measures of average. An effective Sixth Form lesson on networks was structured so that students moved through a series of short, increasingly difficult tasks. Conclusions established, following each task, were then applied to subsequent work. In less effective lessons, progress slows when teachers give lengthy explanations, and work planned to meet the learning needs of all pupils is not used. In these lessons, higher attaining pupils do not find the work sufficiently challenging and low attaining pupils become confused. Occasionally, opportunities for collaborative group work are missed, for example, in lessons on datahandling, where pupils are provided with data rather than being required to collect their own.

Homework is set regularly and makes a significant contribution to learning. Work is marked accurately and teachers use these assessments to help their lesson planning. Classes are generally well managed and standards of discipline are high.

130. The department is strongly led and benefits from a well-qualified team of teachers who are committed to their pupils. Schemes of work are clear, are linked to National Curriculum levels, and identify appropriate resources. Good assessment procedures are consistently applied across the department. Assessments are compared with results from a bank of tests, which predict future performance, to establish action plans for individual pupils and performance targets for the department. However, these very good assessment arrangements are not used sufficiently well to identify departmental strengths and weaknesses, or to identify ways to achieve improvement.
131. Since the last inspection report, the department has maintained its previously high standards. The progress of Year 8 pupils is still limited by the small number of lessons they receive.

132. Although there is no formal whole-school policy for numeracy in the curriculum, the mathematics department has started planning for the introduction of such a policy. Standards of numeracy are generally in line with expected levels in Key Stage 3, but are not consistently developed over this stage. With more specific syllabus requirements in Key Stage 4, standards improve and are above expected levels by the end of the key stage. Across all stages, there is some application of mathematical skills and knowledge in other curriculum subjects. Graphical work is increasingly well-developed in geography and science. Measurement skills and mental arithmetic are practised in a range of subjects. For example, these two aspects feature in Key Stage 3 physical education when scoring systems in different sports are used. Pupils apply their algebra skills when solving equations in science. Measurement of angles to evaluate compass bearings in geography supports mathematics work on shape, space and measurement. A level science makes use of a range of mathematical skills, and graphical and algebraic knowledge is well used in A level physical education.
138. **Science**
133. Over the last three years, the department's performance in National Curriculum assessments, at the end of Key Stage 3, has been high compared with the national average, with boys attaining higher grades than girls. This pattern of attainment has also reflected trends seen nationally. In 1998, pupils' performance was well above the national average and that of similar schools, but in 1999 there has been a drop in the proportion of pupils attaining higher levels, with a significant drop in the performance of boys.
134. Attainment in the GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 has also been consistently above the national average in recent years. Though boys and girls have achieved differing results in this time, these have not followed any particular pattern. In 1999, the proportion of pupils achieving higher grades in GCSE has fallen, compared with that of previous years, largely because girls' results were lower than expected. Results are generally in line with those achieved in other subjects in GCSE.
135. Sixth form A level results have also been well above average. In biology, the proportion of A-B grades rose to well above average in 1998, and results in 1999 were generally in line with those of previous years. All candidates gained a pass grade in the last two years. In chemistry, results at grades A-B have been well above average and have increased sharply in the last three years; in 1999 all candidates passed. In physics, results at grades A-B have risen from around average to well above this level.
136. Attainment in science is, therefore, well above that expected nationally at all stages. It is in line with that of mathematics and above English in the tests at the end of Key Stage 3. Attainment is high enough, and at least as high as expected in this subject.
137. Pupils attain at least the expected levels at the end of each key stage, and attainment is often higher. Generally, the higher attaining pupils exceed the level expected for their abilities by the greatest margin, but pupils of average attainment also reach levels higher than expected. Towards the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is above the expected level. For example, in Year 8 pupils of average attainment had developed thinking skills to manipulate two factors together when planning an investigation. A similar class in Year 8 could list the properties of metals, describe their reactivity and the place of metals in the periodic table. Both these demonstrated higher than average attainment. Year 9 pupils could calculate the speed of sound and light and relate this to the time-lag between thunder and lightning in a storm. The standard of written work at this stage ranges from excellent to untidy and unfinished. Sometimes, diagrams are not well done. There were several examples of incomplete homework seen in books.
138. Towards the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is often well above the expected level. For example, higher attaining pupils in Year 11 used the language and terminology involved in genetics with considerable

confidence, and related it to explaining problems in the inheritance of coat colour in cattle. Sixth form students also attain higher levels than expected for their courses. For example, they could list the physical and chemical properties of transition metals, using language such as energy levels and electron configuration. They could explain why certain forms of a copper ion behave as transition metals while others do not.

139. Pupils in all key stages make at least satisfactory progress over the key stage in relation to their previous levels of attainment. The department makes considerable use of the wealth of assessment data available at different stages to determine pupils' progress. There is little observable difference between the progress of boys and girls. Progress is at least satisfactory for pupils of all levels of attainment, with higher attaining pupils generally making the fastest progress. For example, higher attaining pupils in Year 11 made good progress in a lesson on evolution, building well on their own knowledge and benefitting from the teacher's good knowledge of the topic. A lower set in this year made satisfactory progress in understanding the link between crude oil, its commercial treatment, and the production of plastics. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress. Their progress is good when they had individual support and when resources and methods are matched to their needs.
140. Progress in lessons is at least satisfactory in all but a very small number of lessons, and is often good. The best progress occurs when pupils respond positively to good teaching, as, for example, in a Year 13 biology lesson when the teacher's clarity of knowledge and instruction in a practical session helped students to consolidate their theoretical learning well. They also progress well when tasks are challenging but they are told clearly how to achieve them; for example, in a Year 7 lesson when pupils were testing scientific hypotheses and they made rapid progress in acquiring the relevant vocabulary. Good progress was seen in Key Stage 4 in building on knowledge gained in Key Stage 3, for example, of rock types and the chemical reaction between limestone and hydrochloric acid to evaluate the suitability of building material samples. Unsatisfactory progress was seen when the tasks set presented pupils with little or no challenge, repetition of earlier work or mundane tasks; for example, in a Year 7 lesson on food chains, when the task given was not challenging enough.
141. Pupils' response in all stages together is at least satisfactory in four fifths of lessons. There is more unsatisfactory response at Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4, and all response is at least satisfactory in the sixth form. Much of the unsatisfactory response was by pupils of below average attainment. This was particularly true towards the end of a session, in the afternoon or if the accommodation was cramped or hot. The application of most pupils to work is generally good, but tends to fall off towards the end of tasks. There is a lack of concentration in both boys and girls, particularly during writing tasks. Behaviour is generally satisfactory, with better behaviour observed in the higher attaining groups and in the sixth form. Generally, pupils work well together, share ideas and work safely during practical tasks.
142. In the great majority of lessons seen, at all levels, teaching was at least satisfactory, and in over half of lessons teaching was good or very good. Good teaching was characterised by teachers' knowledge of their subject, with the lesson conducted at a brisk pace. Teachers skilfully question pupils to probe what they have remembered and plan a variety of activities to engage the pupils throughout the lesson. For example, Year 7 pupils were given a short time for group discussions before reporting back their ideas about relationships between identified variables. Teachers present pupils with challenging but achievable tasks, matching resources well to their needs, particularly for those pupils with special needs. Less effective teaching has relatively mundane tasks not suitable for some pupils, and a leisurely pace with no time-limits set. General questioning is not well enough directed to specific pupils to develop their understanding.
143. Teachers give pupils opportunities to use word-processing, spreadsheets and artwork in Key Stage 3, and encourage these skills in presentation of GCSE coursework. Within Key Stage 4, however, the lack of reliable equipment restricts the data-capture aspect of information technology provision.
144. The issues identified in the last inspection report have been met and the department has maintained its

high standards of attainment. Several laboratories have been upgraded, with a very positive improvement in the attractiveness and utility of these rooms. There is still scope for more development in target setting and the development of reviews of pupils' performance.

## **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

### **150. Information and communications technology**

145. Results in GCSE Information Systems at grades A\*-C in 1998 and in recent years have been well above the national average, and were similar in 1999. Boys' results have been somewhat higher than girls' in recent years, and have been well ahead in the last two. Results in 1998 were high in relation to most other subjects in the school.
146. Attainment is in line with the nationally expected level towards the end of Key Stage 3. At the end of Key Stage 4, whilst those pupils who follow the GCSE course demonstrate above average attainment, the overall attainment of pupils throughout the year is below the expected level. Without regular access to ICT, most Key Stage 4 pupils are not completing the volume of work or reaching the standards required. Several Year 11 pupils struggled to explain when they last used ICT in the school. Overall, sixth form students following a separate IT course, and those on vocational courses, attain above average levels.
147. In the taught ICT lessons, pupils are comfortable with the basic commands of word processing in Year 7. By Year 9, many pupils can create their own databases, for example, on cars, and are approaching levels where they feel comfortable with spreadsheet work. However, the IT co-ordinator recognises that the use of spreadsheets for calculations, modelling and graphs at Key Stage 3 requires further attention. The use of databases is underdeveloped in both key stages. For example, Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils, in the taught lessons, are covering the same content. Planning for the development of the taught curriculum through Key Stages 3 and 4 is incomplete at present.
148. Across the curriculum, pupils' levels of attainment are very varied. Generally, they receive enough experience in Key Stage 3 to reach expected levels. For example, Key Stage 3 pupils in design and technology lessons demonstrate competence when using a computer to design a product, and then to use a computerised machine tool to manufacture the item. However, Key Stage 4 pupils' experiences are insufficient for those not taking ICT as a separate subject to reach expected levels by the end of the key stage. Their attainment in control technology is low.
149. In both key stages, there are several positive aspects of attainment. Pupils exhibit competence in text handling, and some confirm skilful use in manipulation of text and graphics. Pupils are generally able to access software and some demonstrate capability in using techniques of data storage and retrieval. Many pupils are secure in the use of the Internet and all pupils and students have their own e-mail address. Some pupils report good use of CD-ROMs, although during the inspection, very little evidence was presented.
150. However, in both Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils' experiences of data logging and use of sensory devices are weak, mainly because of a lack of appropriate software and equipment. Knowledge and understanding of the social, ethical and moral issues raised by ICT are underdeveloped. Whilst some excellent, computer-generated work from both key stages and the sixth form was examined, the files of several pupils contain little or no use of ICT. The more able pupils are not being sufficiently stretched in order to improve their attainment. Overall, pupils' touch-typing skills are poorly developed.
151. Standards in separate ICT lessons and in GCSE are high enough. Standards across the curriculum are high enough in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form, but are not high enough in Key Stage 4. Statutory

requirements for the teaching of ICT are met in both key stages, but opportunities are not well enough co-ordinated in Key Stage 4, so that pupils do not all get the opportunities the school has planned to provide or make the progress they should.

152. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the taught information technology lessons in Key Stage 3. Progress is good in Key Stage 4 in those lessons where ICT is taught through a GCSE programme. Pupils attending sixth form courses including ICT also make good progress. However, in Key Stage 4 as a whole, pupils' learning is inconsistently developed and their progress is therefore unsatisfactory. Planned provision is limited for both years, particularly Year 11. Some pupils exhibit much competence and confidence in operating equipment, often supplemented through use of home computers, and these individuals make good progress in acquiring their own skills. Generally, however, progress is limited, and many pupils at all levels are unable to identify targets for improvement. Pupils with special educational needs often enjoy working at computers and make satisfactory progress.
153. In the taught ICT lessons, the quality of teaching is good and teachers' subject knowledge is a strength. Pupils are encouraged to become independent, and there is equal opportunity and access for all pupils to participate. Lesson objectives and instructions given are clear. However, the close questioning of pupils to improve their reasoning skills is not rigorous enough. Teachers are not identifying pupils' National Curriculum levels, and their marking of work to help pupils make progress is often unsatisfactory.
154. Where pupils use information technology they respond with enthusiasm, and levels of concentration are generally high from pupils of all abilities. There is often good collaboration amongst pupils, who are keen to help one another. They are glad to take responsibility for organising and presenting their work. Very many pupils make very good use of the IT facilities during the lunch hour.
155. The school's recently developed ICT action plan, and Key Stages 3 and 4 mapping analysis, highlight many issues in need of development. Whilst departments have agreed to teach certain aspects of the ICT curriculum, this is not happening in many subjects, particularly in Key Stage 4. A mapping exercise of the whole school has been carried out, but further planning of ICT within other subjects is urgently needed. Priorities include: planning to ensure continuity of learning; setting of tasks to stretch pupils further in both key stages; a structured monitoring programme; and a systematic way of recording attainment and progress in Key Stages 3 and 4. There is no target-setting programme for individual pupils.
156. The co-ordinator, who is the only full time ICT teacher in the school, receives little time to monitor the subject, though he has ensured that a Key Stage 3 planned programme exists. Resources are now good. The ratio of pupils to computers is good at 9.1, through a school networked system. However, many departments report that they cannot gain access to the three IT rooms, which are in different parts of the school. Nevertheless, not all areas are used to maximum efficiency and the booking sheets show that during some weeks the rooms are as much as 50 per cent under-booked. The change of computers over the last year has caused problems for staff. The school recognises the difficulty and is to arrange a structured training programme. The network manager and technician provide very good support.
157. There has been insufficient progress since the last inspection, when attainment was found to be broadly in line with expected levels at the end of both key stages. Although progress has been good in improving and networking the equipment, and a network manager and technician have been appointed, improvement in the overall attainment and progress of pupils has yet to match this development.
163. *IT across the curriculum*
158. Standards of ICT skills are generally satisfactory by the end of Key Stage 3, and by the end of the sixth form standards are good, particularly from those students who follow a designated course. By the end of Key Stage 4, overall standards are unsatisfactory because many pupils do not receive regular access to ICT.

159. Many pupils exhibit confidence in text handling, and some confirm skilful use in manipulation of text and graphics. Pupils are generally able, when required, to access software. Some demonstrate capability in using techniques of data storage and retrieval. Key Stage 3 pupils' experiences of control work are developing strongly, although they are unsatisfactory in Key Stage 4. Pupils' competence in data-logging and use of sensory devices in Key Stages 3 and 4 is unsatisfactory.
160. Use of spreadsheets for calculations, modelling and graphs in Key Stage 3 requires further attention. Overall, touch-typing skills are underdeveloped. Many pupils in both key stages and the sixth form can use the Internet well.
166. **Religious education**
161. Recent examination results have been very good. In the last three years, although there have been only about fifteen pupils entering the GCSE examinations each year, achievement at grades A\*-C has been over 90 per cent; 100 per cent of the pupils entered gained grades between A\*-G in each of the last four years. There are many more girls than boys in GCSE classes, so that comparison between their results is not possible. In comparison with other subjects in the school, results have been high in recent years. Results for the small number of students at A level have varied, but have been well above average in the last three years, and rose further above previous results in 1999. In examination and non-examination work, attainment is high enough, and higher than might be expected.
162. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. They have explored some sacred literature, such as the miracles of Jesus. They know the details of the stories, and also understand the types of miracle and the fact that in many instances, these miracles were done out of compassion. Pupils study the need for rules, examine the Ten Commandments, and learn to apply these teachings to their own everyday lives. For example, pupils in Year 8, when looking at the commandment about keeping the Sabbath day, wrote about their favourite ways of using time.
163. Key Stage 4 pupils have the chance, in their options, to choose a GCSE examination course. Those who do not take this have a general course lasting a few weeks. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils who do not take the examination course attain in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Those who take GCSE attain well above average. They develop the ability to make moral judgments well. For example, in Year 10, pupils were seen engaged in a good role-play lesson, deciding about the social and moral issues in an imaginary case, involving parents, foster parents and child. They establish a good basis of knowledge in new areas. For example, Year 11 examination groups were studying Islamic family life, including the laws governing food, forbidden and allowed.
164. In the sixth form, students display a high level of attainment. For example, an excellent lesson was seen where Year 12 students were discussing the traditional arguments for the existence of God. They have very clear knowledge and understanding of the various authors and their teachings.
165. In all key stages, pupils make very good progress. This is due to the high level of expectation and challenge from teachers. This, in turn, motivates pupils very well and they become actively involved in lessons. Using the methods that teachers have planned, pupils learn to research and unravel some of the problems posed. For example, in Year 9, pupils were involved in acting a version of a Hindu story. They made considerable progress in learning that, elaborate though the story may be, there is an underlying truth being taught. Pupils themselves suggested a variety of morals for the story, such as good versus evil. In the sixth form, students made rapid progress in researching topics and making their own presentations to the group, usually of a very high standard. Pupils with special needs make good progress, at all levels.

166. Pupils' response to religious education is good. They enjoy the lessons and concentrate fully. Most persevere well, and take a lively interest in the discussions. They both answer and ask questions in lessons. Their capacity for independent work is good and they work well in pairs or small groups. Behaviour during the inspection was consistently good. This is in large part due to the expectations and pace of the lessons set by teachers. Pupils have very good relationships with teachers and with one another.
167. The quality of teaching is very good and represents improvement since the last inspection. Teachers are very knowledgeable about the subject, and are able to provide many extra details about the work. They have very high expectations of pupils, and they provide a very good challenge and pace to the lessons. Planning is good and securely based upon the locally agreed syllabus. The match between the methods used by teachers and the expected outcomes is very good. Teachers involve pupils actively with discussion, questions, drama, and role-play. Teachers control their classes very well, largely because they have established very good relationships, and pupils respect them. Management of time and resources is good, and, in particular, there are some excellent study guides, produced for pupils taking examinations. For example, a comprehensive booklet on how to write essays is a very great help to pupils when they have to produce coursework for examinations. Teachers assess pupils' work very well, and there are regular tests and longer assessment tasks. These are well used to plan future teaching. Homework is often imaginative and furthers the work started in the lessons. For example, homework set after a lesson about the purpose of marriage extended the discussion well with a relevant essay.
168. The curriculum offered in Key Stage 3 is very good, but insufficient time is allowed in Key Stage 4 for those pupils not engaged in examinations. Provision in Key Stage 3, therefore, meets statutory requirements, but these are not met in Key Stage 4. All students are offered the chance to study for A level religious education in the sixth form, though the majority are withdrawn from the subject at the request of their parents.
169. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is study of worship and belief, and modern applications of the Ten Commandments. Pupils also have the opportunity to study family values and practices, such as their work on birth ceremonies, and they study several of the world's major religions in many aspects.
170. The subject is very well led, with clear vision for future planning and development. The head of the department has produced an excellent policy document, which includes all necessary aspects, such as schemes of work and assessment arrangements.
171. There has been considerable improvement since the last inspection report, especially in the department's quality of teaching and overall planning. Religious education is making a significant contribution to the school's curriculum, with very high examination results to its credit.
177. **Art**
172. In 1998, results in the GCSE art examination were above the national average for A\*-C grades. A significantly greater proportion of girls attained the higher grades. Results in 1999 were well above the level of the previous year. Although the number and prior attainment of pupils fluctuates from year to year, results over the last three years indicate a rising trend, and standards have improved since the last inspection. Results were generally in line with those in other subjects in 1998. In sixth form A level examinations, results show a similar profile to Key Stage 4, and are consistently high. Most students have gained distinctions in GNVQ vocational examinations in recent years. Standards in art throughout the school are high and are at least high enough for the attainment levels of these pupils.
173. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards are in line with or just above nationally expected levels. A small but significant number of pupils, mainly girls, achieved an exceptional standard. Attainment in lessons is



nearly always at a satisfactory level and is sometimes high. Pupils can use pencil, pen and ink, charcoal and chalk drawing techniques to select and record the shape, surface qualities and forms of natural and man-made objects. They use a variety of media and techniques with competence to design and express visual ideas. Collage techniques are applied to design and embellish monograms, to decorate pupils' sketch-book covers. Printmaking and painting work show interesting experiments with shapes, colours and patterns. Ceramic modelling is used to depict the human head and torso and to extend drawing and painting activity. However, pupils are more successful in two-dimensional than three-dimensional work. Pupils are acquiring the skill to use their study of other artists as a starting point for their practical work. They analyse how artists associated with the Surrealist movement use images and apply a similar approach to their own compositions. Pupils' ability to examine and discuss the purposes and meaning of the art they study is below the expected level. They are developing the ability to express opinions about the relative success of their own work, but are reluctant to make decisions about how to improve it. Pupils' understanding and use of technical terms and phrases are satisfactory.

174. Standards of attainment, towards the end of Key Stage 4, are well above nationally expected levels. Pupils make thorough preparatory studies in response to a theme that is set for them. They investigate how the visual qualities of natural objects can be expressed using mixed-media techniques. The majority of pupils are able to select and make effective use of graphic media to explore and extend their ideas. Pupils make three-dimensional ceramic tiles and cut card prints based on careful observational drawings that have been transposed into imaginative designs. Pupils continue to be more successful in two-dimensional work than in three-dimensional work and there has been little improvement since the last inspection. They produce analytical studies based on Cubism and other styles associated with art from different times and places. They make good use of the library resources to inform and develop their own work and ideas. Work of a higher standard shows the use of novel ideas and imagery. This is combined with the careful control and use of media and techniques.
175. In lessons, towards the end of the sixth form, students' current work demonstrates individual flair and creativity. Printmaking is of a very high standard. Students use their guided visits to museums and galleries to gain deeper insights into artistic styles and conventions, and can show how this study affects their views and practice. They create bold, abstract designs and painted card constructions, based on careful research. They are developing and applying a useful range of ICT as a part of their coursework.
176. Attainment in art on entry to the school is generally in line with national average levels. During Key Stage 3, pupils generally make satisfactory progress. When they are given extended tasks to develop their ideas and technical skills, progress can be good. They make satisfactory progress in consolidating their drawing and graphic skills, but slower progress in acquiring a repertoire of craft skills to help them realise their ideas. Average and lower attaining pupils are making slower progress than expected because they are not given sufficient opportunity to practise and apply the art and design skills they have learnt. Slow progress is also made in analysing their own and other artists' techniques and expressing informed views about them. The vast majority of pupils in Key Stage 4, including those on the special educational needs register, make rapid progress. They are taught how to organise and present a range of visual and other information to communicate their ideas and feelings. Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 are making unsatisfactory progress in ICT because of the lack of facilities in art. The progress of most students in the sixth form is at least good and sometimes very good. They are consolidating and refining the skills they acquired in Key Stage 4 and are developing a mature approach to their work.
177. Pupils' response to art in Key Stage 3 is no better than satisfactory. Response in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth is often good and sometimes very good. A small but disruptive group of girls and boys in most Year 7, 8 and 9 classes become restless as their lesson progresses, and this has not improved since the last inspection. When pupils have positive attitudes to art, they work with a sense of commitment and are keen to succeed. The behaviour of these pupils is good. Art has a motivating effect on pupils when they understand the purpose of their artwork and when they are given closely guided and sequenced practical work. This has happened by the time pupils are in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, when respect is shown for people and property.

178. Teaching is at least satisfactory, often good and sometimes very good. It is better at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than at Key Stage 3. Subject teachers are committed to promoting the importance of the subject and to raising attainment. Lessons are planned to provide well-organised and managed practical sessions. Clear tasks and targets are set at the start of lessons. However, in Key Stage 3 there are missed opportunities to structure the work to take account of pupils' varying rates of progress and their levels of attainment. Teachers' management of class discussion is effective when pupils are engaged in planning how they will approach the work and what they might expect to achieve by the end of a session. There are few opportunities for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 to talk in depth about their own or other artists' work. Teachers in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form use demonstrations and examples of their own and other artists' work to motivate and inspire pupils. Although these approaches are present in Key Stage 3, they are not as well-developed. Well-judged intervention is used sensitively in all years to provide support and challenge. At the end of a lesson, or at an important stage in a unit of work, teachers are effective when they draw together and summarise what has been learnt and consider with their class the next steps that need to be taken. They involve pupils in the evaluation of their work, but this practice is most evident in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Systematic records are kept of all pupils' attainment and progress. Homework is set for all classes and is used to support and extend coursework done in school.
179. The department is well managed and benefits from good leadership. Subject documentation is comprehensive and art staff work together effectively as a team to develop policies and practices. The curriculum in Key Stage 3 is carefully designed to provide core activities that build year on year to enable pupils to make progress. However, the provision of additional activities restricts the opportunities for pupils to consolidate their use of their core skills. The analysis of Key Stage 4 and sixth form examination data for art is a relatively new initiative. This is being used effectively to raise questions about development priorities and to set targets for improvement. Currently, no analysis is made of the end of Key Stage 3 results.
180. Since the last inspection report, there has been an improvement in standards in Key Stage 4 and a high standard has been maintained in the sixth form. The department continues to make good progress.
186. **Design and technology**
181. In the GCSE examinations at grades A\*-C, results have risen in recent years from around the respective national averages in design and technology subjects to well above these levels in 1998. Results in the 1999 examinations are an improvement on those achieved in 1998, and above the average for the school. Results in textiles, food, child development and resistant materials have been well above the national average. In graphic products and systems and control results have been above average. It is not possible to identify different levels of attainment in boys and girls, as the populations in the various subjects vary considerably between the sexes. The A level design and technology examination was first taken in 1999. All candidates passed, half with grades A and B. All candidates have passed the vocational GNVQ Health and Social Care examination in recent years, several with distinctions and merits. At all levels, standards are high, and at least high enough, in these subjects.
182. Attainment, towards the end of all stages, is above nationally expected levels and is at times very high, particularly in Year 11. The best work of boys and girls in both Key Stages 3 and 4 is of excellent quality in all material areas, including food, graphics, resistant material (wood, metal, plastics), textiles, and systems and control.
183. Design portfolio work is often of a very high standard and demonstrates deep research, realistic designing with good application of knowledge and skills, appropriate use of information technology, such as word processing, and presentation of high quality. Some pupils' work folios, made with the help of ICT, are excellent. For example, in Key Stage 3, pupils are challenged to design their products with the aid of computers and to use a computerised machine tool for manufacturing.

184. Some craftwork is of a very high standard, in accuracy, finish, and in meeting design requirements. Both boys and girls, in both key stages, demonstrate capability in researching, developing ideas, modelling, manufacturing and evaluating their work. Overall, their recognition and understanding of the designing and making procedures is very good. Very effective project management is evident at all stages. Pupils have only limited experience with pneumatics. Generally, higher attaining pupils in Year 9 are not being provided with sufficient, open-ended, projects to increase the level of challenge. Some sixth form students show much creativity, and their design and craft work is of a high standard. Skills for others in technical graphics are not sufficiently extended.
185. At all levels, progress in each of the material areas is never less than satisfactory. Pupils with special needs make good progress at all levels. In Key Stage 3, progress is satisfactory in half the lessons seen and good or very good in the other half. Where progress is satisfactory, most pupils understand the task and can work competently to given instructions. For example, a Year 8 class in resistant materials made steady progress in their task of designing and making in wood and plastic. Where progress is good, pupils rapidly identify practical ways to achieve the task, seen, for example, in a Year 8 food technology lesson, when pupils made assured progress in the stages of assembling a savoury dish.
186. In Key Stage 4, progress was very good in half the lessons seen and good in almost all the rest. Pupils in Year 11 often make particularly good progress. Pupils demonstrate increasing self-confidence in their ability to select materials, tools and equipment, and in communicating their intentions clearly. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on child development, pupils made very rapid progress in understanding issues of health in pregnancy. In a Year 11 graphics product lesson, pupils made rapid, assured progress in perspective drawing. In both examples, progress was very good because pupils had confidence in the teacher's good subject knowledge and were given work well suited for their needs.
187. Sixth form students made good progress. For example, in a Year 12 lesson on how multimeters work, students identified mathematical elements quickly and accurately, and the ablest made very good progress in understanding the variables involved.
188. In all years, the majority of pupils have positive attitudes towards the subject. They often demonstrate enjoyment and a sense of commitment, both when they work independently and as a team. Pupils form friendly relationships and are ready to help one another. Most show respect for their teacher but a few, mostly in Years 8 and 9, behave in a silly way and chat persistently through the lesson.
189. The quality of teaching is often good or very good, with particular strengths in Key Stage 4. Lessons are well planned and organised. For example, in a Year 8 food technology lesson, the teacher had planned a relevant, varied lesson based on nutrition, which she taught at a fast and demanding pace; all pupils followed each process very well and made rapid, assured progress. Teacher's organization and their provision of resources are often very good. For example, a Year 8 textiles lesson was greatly helped by good co-operation between the teacher and technician, so that pupils were able to use a computerised sewing machine with confidence. Teachers often set good time targets for the completion of work. Design and practical skills are safely and carefully taught in all areas. All teachers display a thorough understanding of the subject. In Key Stage 3, teachers do not all challenge pupils' reasoning skills during practical activities or regularly identify their National Curriculum levels.
190. The department has a very strong team of teachers and technicians, very well led. Curriculum planning is good. Setting of the recently introduced individual pupil target setting system within the food and textiles areas is a positive improvement. There are excellent displays of pupils' work in each of the material areas and in the school corridors.
191. Since the last inspection, the department has maintained and improved its previous high standards. Attainment and examination results have improved, and design folios of high quality are now being

produced.

197. **Geography**

192. The numbers of pupils gaining GCSE A\*-C grades has remained well above the national average since the last inspection. Girls' grades have been steady at about 20 per cent above the national average, but boys' results have improved each year since 1996, and in 1998 were similar to those of the girls. The number of A\* grades has varied in the last five years, but has never been below the national average, and has often been well above. Results are generally higher in geography than in other subjects. A level grades since the last inspection have been well above the national average, but were lower in 1999 than in previous years. Results are, therefore, high in this subject, and are at least high enough.
193. Towards the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is at least in line with expected national levels, and generally above. In Year 7, basic mapping and number skills are rapidly put in place. There are strengths in written work, for example, in Year 8, where middle attainers produce good extended passages on such diverse topics as climate, life in Kenya and river transportation. In Year 9, higher attainers use a variety of sources. For example, they combined maps, illustrations and imaginative writing in their work on Disneyland, Paris.
194. Towards the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is high. Pupils have a useful technical vocabulary and express themselves well. Good general knowledge and spatial awareness enables them to grasp the themes being studied and to convey ideas with confidence. Use of ICT is sometimes strong, particularly in Year 10 work on Hurricane Andrew and on atmospheric circulation. However, ICT is not a general strength and is not used enough in the classroom. Attainment in the sixth form is high or very high, and marked by an increase in written and number skills, leading to enquiry work of a high standard. For example, Year 12 students investigating tourism information services demonstrated high levels of skill in their enquiries, and good use of ICT.
195. Across all key stages, the majority of pupils make good progress, and progress is seldom less than satisfactory. All have equal access to the curriculum, and the growing use of materials designed to meet individual needs allows most pupils to achieve their full potential. Pupils make good progress because teaching is well organised and gives them good challenge; for example, in a Year 9 lesson on plate tectonics, when lower attaining pupils made rapid progress in understanding the causes and effects of earth movement. Challenges from teachers are met with determination, as seen in Year 13 investigations into alternative theories for depositional features at Chesil Beach, and in the making of map projections in Year 9. Pupils tackle work drawing on an ever-increasing understanding of geographical skills. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress at all stages. The department identifies their needs and sets appropriate work, but support in the classroom is not sufficient to ensure that all make sufficient progress.
196. Geography is a popular subject and take-up at Key Stage 4 by boys and girls is high. Across the key stages, high and middle attainers show considerable interest and commitment, but in some lower attaining groups the long lessons sometimes lead to lapses in attention and some very poor behaviour. Sixth form students show an aptitude for personal enquiry work and the great majority handle new work with confidence. Behaviour is good in most lessons, at all stages. Pupils work co-operatively, and relationships between staff and pupils are generally productive.
197. Across the different stages, teaching is at least satisfactory in most lessons, and is good or very good in the majority. Most teachers have a good knowledge of the subject. For example, good knowledge of the effects of cyclones made a potentially difficult class in Year 10 attend with interest and make satisfactory progress. Teachers plan and deliver their lessons efficiently, using a variety of techniques and resources. Such good teaching was seen in a Year 7 lesson on mapping, when very good planning led to high expectations and good progress. Teachers maintain a high pace and good expectation through

questioning and the constant reinforcement of knowledge. In a few lessons in Key Stage 3, poor behaviour hinders progress, as, for example, when good planning and subject knowledge failed to motivate pupils in a Year 8 lesson which was compromised by some irritating and spiteful behaviour from most pupils in the class.

198. The department is well managed. Attainment in lessons at Key Stages 3 and 4 is similar to that observed at the last inspection, while it has improved in the sixth form. GCSE grades have been maintained at a high level and many problems of poor motivation have been lessened.

## **History**

199. GCSE results in 1998 reached the national average, but pupils performed less well than in all other subjects. In recent years, GCSE results have been around the national average, although the number of entries has been small. Girls achieved a higher proportion of grades A\*-C in 1997 and 1998. In 1996, boys achieved far more than girls, and in 1999 the proportions were equal. At Advanced Level in 1997, four of the five students were successful. There were no entries in 1998 and 1999. Generally, standards are low in relation to the potential levels of attainment for these students.
200. Towards the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is in line with nationally expected levels. Pupils gain an average knowledge and understanding of history from a study of the key elements and Programmes of Study. In Year 7, pupils study the Roman Empire and begin to distinguish primary and secondary sources accurately. About a third of the higher ability pupils use appropriate vocabulary, for example, to compare and contrast a monarchy and a republic. Lower attaining pupils and those with special needs struggle to establish some basic skills, for example, to estimate the space for recording a time-scale. In Year 9, conditions in the eighteenth century cotton mills challenge pupils of higher ability to empathise well with the social changes of the time. They note key points clearly. However, only about a third of the upper set pupils attain these above-average standards; for example, to recognise that a reduction in factory hours required legislation. In the lower sets studying the cotton mills in Year 9, some two thirds of the pupils work below the expected national level. They can write basic descriptions of the working conditions accurately, but their analysis of cause and effect is limited. Pupils with special needs make limited but appropriate written comments from the drawings they study.
201. Towards the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is below average, although about half the pupils are competent in the use of source materials and understand the concept of reliability. For example, pupils in Year 11 assess the reliability of source materials and the value of Roosevelt's New Deal from video appropriately. The sample of assignments from the work scrutiny reflected extensive reading and the use of the Internet to understand the basis of discrimination in the 1920s and 1930s. However, pupils' recording of work is inconsistent and written work is weak. Pupils in the lower sets lack confidence, especially girls, though boys manage to answer the more factual questions.
202. There is a small minority of very able students in the A level groups who work well above the expected standard. Other students attain appropriate standards. Students research the legitimacy of Cromwell's army and more able students compare the divided loyalties within his government with present day politics effectively. However, the depth of their interpretation is less consistent. Many students read widely. Discussion is often well-informed, for example, in students' thoughtful discussion of the implications of Mary's marriage to Philip II of Spain. Many students acquire a good sense of time, and there are frequent checks on the accuracy of dates.
203. Progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 is satisfactory. Pupils generally learn effectively, and there are some examples of good progress at both stages. Some of the higher attaining pupils make good progress in understanding a sequence of historical events, while some improve their expression of opinions in writing. For example, Year 9 pupils increase their ability to describe how children were forced to work in the textile mills. However, not enough of the higher and middle attaining pupils make the progress they

should and only about half the pupils within the higher attaining GCSE group can build effectively on their previous studies of migration within America. Few pupils in the second set can sequence the events leading to the rise of Hitler. Lower attaining pupils and those with special needs make satisfactory progress when they seek the help of the teacher to improve their understanding. Overall, the proportion of pupils working at the higher levels is too small. Note-making skills are not well-developed. There are limited opportunities for some groups to use ICT.

204. In A level groups students' progress is satisfactory, and for a small minority it is very good. There is good progress in Year 12 from informed discussion, a good work rate and challenging questioning. For example, students made good progress in a lesson on the rise of Fascism, helped by the teacher's good subject knowledge and the help they gave one another in improving their grasp of the issues.
205. Generally, pupils respond satisfactorily in lessons and are attentive. On occasions, their behaviour is immature in both Key Stages 3 and 4. Not all pupils are enthusiastic. However, more often there is a positive working atmosphere. Pupils work independently and silently for sustained periods. This silence promotes controlled rather than involved learning. Relationships are often good, although boys and girls tend to sit separately. With increased confidence older students enjoy discussion.
206. Teaching is never less than satisfactory. Although there is good teaching at each key stage, teaching is most effective in Key Stage 3, where the great majority is good. Teaching is largely satisfactory in Key Stage 4, and mostly good in the sixth form. There is good teaching when lessons are purposeful in approach and good lesson planning unites the activities of a long teaching period effectively. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on the Tudor period, good planning and pace enabled pupils to make useful gains in knowledge. Most lessons are conducted at a good pace, although at times they are too slow to stimulate interest. There are frequent checks on pupils' understanding; for example, in a Year 9 lesson on industrial Britain, to question why people look happy working in an eighteenth century factory. However, where teachers make the whole group follow the same task, more able pupils spend too long completing less demanding work, leaving too few opportunities to extend their learning. Some teaching lacks sparkle and excitement, and discipline is then difficult to maintain.
207. The history team is led competently by an experienced historian. Staffing has improved since the last report and senior colleagues with experience of pupils' attainment in other subjects now contribute successfully to the Key Stage 3 programme. However, targets for the improvement of individual pupils' work are not clear enough.
208. Since the last inspection report, statistical information has improved results at GCSE, and A level groups have been reintroduced. However, standards in the current Year 11 GCSE groups are expected to be lower than in 1999, and progress in raising attainment is insufficient.

#### 214. **Modern foreign languages**

209. GCSE results in French have risen since the last inspection, when they were already above the national averages for all maintained schools. In 1998, results in French were well above national averages. The results in German have also improved to a level above the national average. In comparison with their performance in other subjects, pupils in French obtained higher grades and pupils in German slightly lower grades. The gap between the performance of boys and girls was wider than is the case nationally, with girls attaining a higher proportion of grades A\*-C. A level results have maintained the high standard reported at the previous inspection. In 1998, results in French were well above national averages at grades A and B. The number of students entered for German was too low for valid comparisons with national averages, but five of the nine students who entered gained an A, B or C grade.
210. During Key Stage 3, observation of pupils in lessons and scrutiny of their exercise books show that pupils' attainment is above the standards expected nationally. The teachers' assessments of pupils'

performance at the end of the key stage in 1998 and 1999 confirm these findings. Most pupils listen attentively and understand most of the teachers' instructions in the foreign language. A minority of pupils is not always prepared to listen carefully, and they understand only a very narrow range of vocabulary after much repetition. A good number of higher and middle attainers show good levels of confidence and can take part readily in conversations about themselves. Other middle and lower attainers are much less confident and a significant number, including even higher attainers, do not have enough opportunities to practise this skill consistently. Pupils learn to use dictionaries sensibly to support their own reading. Higher attainers' extended writing in Year 9 exercise books in 1998 was of good quality, with good use of the past and future tenses. In the current year there is a similar picture for higher attainers in German, but not yet in French. Middle attainers make good attempts at using tenses, but with less accuracy. The quality and standard of presentation of pupils' work vary between classes. In Year 8, approximately three-quarters of the year group begin to learn a second foreign language. Much of their written work is of good quality and well presented, but pupils in two lessons seen had not made enough progress in speaking the new language.

211. Towards the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is above national expectations. However, their speaking skills are not as highly developed as their writing skills. In one Year 10 class of lower attainers, nevertheless, pupils succeeded very well in talking in German about their leisure-time activities, after much encouragement from their teacher. Pupils do best in writing and build up their skills well over the key stage. The higher attainers are used to writing at length and often show flair and imagination in their GCSE coursework. They respond very well to suggestions about how to improve in their use of structures and tenses. In an excellent top French set in Year 11, the teacher combined the maximum amount of oral and written work, so that the pupils could rehearse quite fluently the phrases, vocabulary and tenses they were going to use later in writing plans for a holiday. Middle attainers' understanding of work on tenses requires a higher level of support, but in general they reach higher levels of accuracy than expected. Many pupils in the lowest sets take great pride in a limited range of writing activities.
212. In the sixth form, overall attainment is in line with expectations for the course. The higher attainers express their opinions in written and spoken form very well and have a wide vocabulary over a range of topics. They are confident enough to guess at meaning, and in Year 12 have a good and fast-growing knowledge of grammar. Less gifted students are much more hesitant in speaking and less sure of grammar and structure.
213. During Key Stage 3, pupils make satisfactory progress overall. They are mostly attentive, but the 75 minute lessons are very long for young language-learners, particularly the lower attainers. A small number of middle and lower attainers find it hard to concentrate, even with the most skilful teaching. During Key Stage 4, overall progress is good, because pupils have a clear idea of what they are trying to achieve and are given good support materials. Pupils make unsatisfactory progress in the few classes in both key stages where the teaching is not purposeful and teachers' expectations are not high enough. Pupils with special educational needs generally make satisfactory progress, but in Year 7 they sometimes find it difficult to keep up, given the large mixed-ability classes and the relatively infrequent lessons. Students in the sixth form make good progress.
214. Most pupils, except for a small minority, are interested in the languages they learn and behave well in class. The number of pupils going on visits to France and Germany is high, but they are not so forthcoming in taking up opportunities for exchanges. The Dialogue 2000 exchange organised in the sixth form, however, provides an excellent chance for A level and GNVQ students to spend a month in France on a business project.
215. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Half the lessons seen were good or very good, and a small number were outstanding. The other lessons were mainly satisfactory; a few were unsatisfactory. In the unsatisfactory lessons the foreign language was not used consistently enough and there was a lack of pace and challenge for pupils. All teachers have a secure knowledge of the languages they teach, but not all use the foreign language enough with their pupils. More chorus work, rapid language drills and

pronunciation practice would raise the standard of all pupils' listening and speaking skills to the best standards evident in other classes. Teachers' very good understanding of how pupils make progress in writing skills has raised pupils' standards in this area. However, there is a tendency for some teachers to concentrate too much on writing at the expense of speaking. All teachers set clear objectives at the beginning of each lesson and ample time is given for pupils to write down their homework. Teachers introduce a wide variety of activities, including some innovative multi-skill listening and reading tasks. Overhead projectors are used well, but the best practice is not common to all teachers. Most teachers manage their pupils well in the long lessons and change activities often to maintain concentration and interest. The department has organised a good referral system for those who misbehave.

216. The head of department has a very clear understanding of recent developments and leads the department very well by example. Documentation is meticulous and is constantly updated with the co-operation of the whole team of teachers. In recent years, the high turnover and absence of staff has been successfully managed to maintain standards, but support for the monitoring and observation of teaching is currently inadequate. During the inspection week, one teacher was absent for three days. Assessment procedures are good overall, and they enable pupils to understand the value of continuous revision. The development of target-setting and ICT provision is under way. Some display in classrooms needs improvement. Lack of flexibility in the timetable means that all Key Stage 4 second foreign language lessons are taught twice a week after school.

217. Since the last inspection report, GCSE results have risen and the high standard of A level results has been maintained. The long length of the lessons mentioned in the last report has not been changed.

## 223. **Music**

218. In recent years, Key Stage 3 teacher assessments have been in line with the national average. In KS4, very small groups have achieved average GCSE pass rates in recent years, but the number of higher grades has been low. The numbers opting for GCSE music are still very low in relation to the size of the school, but their results are generally higher than in other subjects in the school. Numbers taking A level are low, but in the three years to 1998 all candidates passed, and the proportion achieving grades A and B has been around the national average. There were no candidates in 1999. Standards in examinations are high enough, but those in Key Stage 3 are too low.

219. When pupils enter the school, there are wide differences in attainment, related to whether they have received specialist and/or instrumental teaching in their previous schools, and their level of parental support. Most pupils arrive with average musical experience but a sizable minority of pupils show above average attainment for their age.

220. Towards the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is below nationally expected levels. Singing is underdeveloped. Pupils sing insufficiently and irregularly; their singing lacks gusto and there is not enough attention to being in tune, expression, posture, breathing or diction. Most pupils play keyboards in instrumental work, but performing and music reading skills are insufficiently developed, as, for example, when playing their own compositions. Pupils who play instruments can name given notes or recognise common signs, but the majority show little understanding of notation. In composing 12 bar blues pieces with given ideas, most pupils do not understand structure and lack techniques to develop pieces, or the performing skills to realise them. Pupils listen carefully to one another and recordings. They appraise sensibly, but show limited general musical knowledge, for example of composers, instruments, forms, styles and artists.

221. Attainment, towards the end of Key Stage 4, is above the nationally expected level for those taking music. Standards in the current Year 11 group and the after-school Year 10 groups are above average. Pupils show very good instrumental skills; the average pupil performs at about Grade 4/5 level in Year 10 and at Grade 5/6 in Year 11. Piano, guitar and violin are the most played instruments. Pupils do not



sing in class and do not therefore develop vocal skills or experience a range of vocal repertoire, such as madrigals, extracts from opera, folk music from around the world or rock music. Pupils compose coherent pieces showing a secure understanding of musical language, including harmony, but are disadvantaged by only having one computer to develop and notate their work. They listen attentively and appraise well. They show good general music knowledge of artists and instruments, but only satisfactory knowledge of composers and well-known pieces of music.

222. In the sixth form, the numbers taking music are low, but standards are in line with expected levels for the course. All students taking A level are Grade 8 performers and all play a second instrument well. Compositions show good understanding of a wide range of styles and techniques. Aural work is less secure. Students in Year 13 show satisfactory general knowledge and knowledge of musical history.
223. At Key Stage 3, progress is unsatisfactory. The department has been through a period of instability, with staff absences and changes affecting progress. High attaining pupils who are instrumentalists, and read music, make the best progress, building on their previous learning, experience and their personal interests. However, work does not yet build adequately on that done in the primary schools or develop instrumental, vocal and music reading skills to enable pupils to achieve their potential in performing, composing and listening. Pupils with special needs make similar progress and are well integrated. Progress in this stage is affected by the academic, worksheet-based approach, which does nothing to motivate most pupils. Progress in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form is satisfactory because of the enthusiasm of the pupils who opt for the subject and the clear targets set by the examinations.
224. In Years 7 and 8, most pupils show positive attitudes. They show initiative and are willing to take responsibility, for example, when composing in groups. They enjoy music making, but vehemently dislike the theoretical approach and written work. About 95 per cent of the pupils have their own instruments, but they do not use them in lessons. Attitudes harden, and by Year 9 most pupils dislike classroom music, many waste their time and some are disruptive. Mainly, only the pupils who have developed instrumental and music reading skills opt for music in Key Stage 4 and their attitudes are very positive. Almost all GCSE pupils take advantage of opportunities in tuition, but about a quarter disadvantage themselves by not joining extra-curricular activities; these would support their work. Many support choirs and instrumental groups in the community, such as church choirs or the Swindon Youth Band. Attitudes in Year 11 and the sixth form are mature, as seen in an evening concert of examination performances. The involvement of other pupils in school music, including sixth form students, strengthens achievement. Pupils recognise that music contributes significantly to their social, cultural and personal development.
225. In classroom work, at Key Stage 3, teaching seen during the inspection was poor or unsatisfactory in four out of ten lessons (mainly in Year 9) but good in five of the lessons. All teaching in Key Stage 4 and sixth form work was good and some was very good. Teaching shows sound subject knowledge and good musicianship, for example, in accompanying. Expectations of pupils' work and behaviour are appropriate at examination levels but sometimes not enough is demanded of pupils in Years 8 and 9, where an over-emphasis on theory does not develop skills sufficiently or challenge pupils. The most talented pupils are not fully stretched. In poor lessons, discipline is insecure and relationships are unsatisfactory. In others they are good. Lessons use a range of resources, but more use should be made of visual aids. Lesson planning does not relate to pupils' needs and the lack of singing means that the National Curriculum is not being fully implemented in Key Stage 3. The better lessons proceed at a suitable pace, but the weaker ones are slow and lack rigour. Assessment is encouraging and supportive, but goals specifying targets related to standards are lacking and pupils' attitudes are insufficiently monitored and responded to. Homework is set and marked regularly.
226. Music is organised appropriately by the hardworking head of department, but much remains to be done, especially to raise standards in classroom work in the lower school and increase numbers in examination work, instrumental tuition and activities. The current schemes are unbalanced and the approach is too academic; pupils are not motivated, engaged or stimulated by them. Curricular links with primary

schools are insufficiently developed to ensure continuity. Resources are adequate, except for the shortage of classroom instruments, especially bass-tuned percussion, computers, recording and audio equipment. There is no technical support.

227. Eleven visiting teachers provide a wide range of instrumental and voice lessons involving 28 boys and 48 girls. This is less than 5 percent of the school's population and half of the national average, but an above-average number of pupils receive private tuition locally. Standards, pupils' attitudes, progress and the quality of teaching are good. Some excellent teaching was observed in violin tuition. These staff and their lessons support a limited range of extra-curricular activities, with involvement by about 5 per cent of the pupils. Standards, attitudes and progress are good. School concerts and productions involving larger numbers, such as last year's *Oliver*, are held regularly. Current activities include the choir, orchestra and band. Performances, including those in assembly, enhance the cultural life of the school. Visits to London to see *Cats!* and *Miss Saigon* further this. These activities reflect the dedication of staff, the support of parents and the enthusiasm of the musicians whose performances and successes do much to enhance the life of the school.
228. Improvement has been insufficient since the last inspection report. Results have generally remained at their previous levels, but the quality of teaching is now unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3, with a large element of poor behaviour now present in Year 9. The number of pupils receiving instrumental tuition has declined. However, the department has continued to present a very good range of events, in difficult circumstances.
234. **Physical education**
229. Results at grades A\*-C in GCSE sports studies are consistently above the national average, though below average when compared with other subjects in the school. Approximately 50 pupils are entered each year. Girls quite significantly outperform boys in the achievement of higher grades. Passes for grades A\*-G remain constant at 100 per cent. Since the introduction of A level physical education in 1997, small entries of students have achieved passes at grades A and B, well below the national average, but all candidates have achieved a pass grade in these years. Standards are high overall, and at least high enough in relation to the attainment of pupils when they join the school.
230. Attainment, towards the end of Key Stage 3, is above nationally expected levels. Pupils plan work and judge performance effectively. Teachers provide opportunities in most lessons for independent learning. Emphasis is placed on safety and this is reflected in pupils' good safety awareness. In a Year 7 swimming lesson, pupils showed concern for themselves and others when moving around the pool-side. In games, most understand the basic principles of attack and defence and are effective in their use of skills. They take pride in their own gymnastics performance and show good body line and extension. Well-structured and knowledgeable teaching contribute significantly to attainment. High attainers in Year 9 badminton lessons use good technique to out-manoeuvre opponents by varying length, width and disguise of service. Lower attainers often achieve beyond expected levels because teaching is well-adapted to meet their needs. They show satisfactory individual skills, but are less effective under the pressure of the game.
231. Towards the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is above average in relation to nationally expected levels. Pupils' knowledge of what constitutes a healthy life-style is well-developed. Most pupils plan effectively and perform tactics to beat opponents. Pupils' willingness to make critical comments on performance and their ability to judge and adjust accordingly ensures their improvement. In the lessons taken by all pupils, boys' and girls' attainment is similar. GCSE groups are on target to achieve higher than average levels at end of key stage.
232. A level students are on target to achieve results around the national average at end of Year 13. They are highly motivated and benefit from specialist teaching. Written assignments are well researched from a

variety of sources, data is analysed and accurate summaries made. Students' understanding of biomechanics is enhanced by the expertise of a physics teacher. Students not taking the A level examination are performing above-average in their selected activities.

233. Pupils' progress across the attainment range in all key stages is good. As pupils move through the school they refine technique and develop a better understanding of tactics, rules and safety. They improve their skills of movement and develop their ability to plan their own fitness work. Most pupils listen and want to improve. Their progress is aided by well planned and challenging teaching. Lower attainers in a Year 8 hockey lesson improved beyond expectations due to the teacher's use of shorter sticks and simplified instructions, rules and tasks. Pupils with special needs are fully integrated into lessons and make progress in line with most other pupils. GCSE and A level students make good progress in developing research, discussion and analytical skills. The use of ICT is underdeveloped, due to lack of opportunity. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They listen to instructions, communicate well in group-work and try new skills confidently.
234. The quality of teaching in all key stages is good and in almost half of lessons is very good. Teachers are committed, supportive and manage pupils very well. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. High but realistic expectations are set and pupils are challenged to deepen their knowledge and understanding. Teachers have clear aims and plan lessons well. In a Year 8 dance lesson, the teacher created a stimulating atmosphere through use of appropriate music and enthusiastic specialist teaching; opportunities were provided for pupils to plan, perform and evaluate performance, and they responded with performance of real quality. Teachers in a high proportion of lessons adapt work to suit the needs of all pupils. Examination groups' homework is set and marked appropriately. The use of ICT is rare.
235. The department covers the nationally required programme, providing a broad and balanced series of activities. The Year 9 Programme of Study cannot be followed in sufficient detail due to insufficient allocation of time. The subject is very effectively led and managed. A dedicated team of well-qualified specialists provide excellent support. Short-term planning is good but medium and longer-term plans lack enough detail for accurate forward planning. All appropriate policies are in force, including health and safety. The school's ownership of the leisure complex greatly enhances pupils' opportunities. Games changing rooms need refurbishing. Fouling of school pitches by dogs is a continuing problem that needs urgent attention.
236. The department staff and 20 per cent of other teachers provide a highly successful extra-curricular sports and outdoor activities programme. An extremely high percentage (77.5) of pupils participate, and this has been recognised by a Sportsmark Award. Individuals and teams perform successfully, up to national level. Cross-country and athletics teams regularly appear in regional and national finals. International honours have been gained by runners. The subject makes a considerable contribution to the moral and social development of pupils.
237. There are no issues arising from the last report. Since the last inspection good standards have been maintained.

243. **Unit for hearing-impaired pupils**

238. The Unit caters for 12 hearing-impaired pupils, most of them with severe to profound bilateral sensorineural hearing loss. It is staffed by one qualified teacher of the deaf and five learning support assistants (2.4 full time equivalent).
239. All the hearing-impaired pupils have access to a broad and varied curriculum. They receive most of their education in mainstream classes, with additional support on a small group basis in the unit. The integration policy is sound, but the number of specialist staff available is not sufficient to respond adequately to the special and complex needs of the pupils. As a result of this, specialist support in the

classroom lacks continuity and depth, and this has a detrimental effect on the attainment and progress of the pupils.

240. The pupils' attainment in most subjects is well below the national average. Their progress over time is satisfactory and in line with targets set in Individual Educational Plans, when they receive the professional support they need. The progress of all hearing-impaired pupils in the school is regularly monitored and adequate records are kept. These records and assessments are well used to help advance specialist teaching and planning in the unit. There, most of the hearing-impaired pupils work with interest and consistency, but their potential is not fully appreciated or developed throughout the school because most teachers' expectations for these pupils are often too low.
241. The teaching of small groups within the unit is consistently good. The teacher of the deaf and most learning support assistants show commitment and provide good, but limited, support both in mainstream classes and in the unit. The teaching of hearing-impaired pupils in their classrooms by most mainstream teachers is poor. Most of the time, hearing-impaired pupils in mainstream classes are ignored, and in their isolation derive little benefit from the rich linguistic environment which surrounds them. Their active participation in lessons is limited, and mostly non-existent. Mainstream class teachers support the integration policy, but most of them have insufficient knowledge and training to appreciate the effects of deafness on educational development. In particular, their knowledge and practical skills relating to teaching strategies, proper use of amplification and communication enhancement with hearing-impaired pupils, are poor.
242. There are adequate links between the unit's staff and mainstream teachers but not enough time is given to co-ordinating planning and teaching. Relationships between pupils, staff and hearing-impaired pupils are good, but there is a strong tendency among hearing-impaired pupils to interact with one another and group together during break and lunch periods. Both teaching and non-teaching staff are approachable and friendly. Links between the teacher of the deaf and parents are adequate. Parents are kept informed and are encouraged to visit the school, but most of them are highly dissatisfied with the limited and patchy support provided for their sons and daughters.
243. The identification of learning difficulties is sound and well-documented. Statements are in operation and are annually reviewed with the participation of parents. Individual Educational Plans are in place also. They are well targeted, especially on the linguistic and personal needs of the pupils, and are usually reviewed each term. Most of the parents are involved, but hearing-impaired pupils do not participate in setting and approving targets in their Individual Educational Plans. The school is planning to improve this.
244. The Unit is housed in a small room, which is used effectively. It is partially sound-treated, but ambient noise is sometimes too loud and interferes with the proper use of amplification. Furthermore, the acoustic environment in some of the mainstream classrooms, the halls and the corridors is not conducive to good hearing-aid use. The Unit is adequately resourced, but specialist auditory equipment, such as the individual and FM-wireless hearing aids of the pupils, are not properly maintained and are poorly used in school. As a result of this, the hearing-impaired pupils are denied the full benefit of amplification and this has a serious detrimental effect on their learning and progress.
245. The Unit has developed good working relationships with a range of services, which provide a substantial input. In particular, links with health and local education advisory services are well-established, and most of them have a positive impact on the educational management and progress of the pupils. Links with the feeder primary school unit for hearing-impaired pupils, further education and career services, are good and this ensures continuity of specialist provision and support.
246. The school's policy statement on special educational needs contains some information on hearing impairment. The main aims and philosophy of this policy provide a sound base for further development

of the educational provision and practices for hearing-impaired pupils in the school.

## **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

### **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

247. The team of 14 inspectors spent the equivalent of 57 days in the school. The team observed 254 lessons, in whole or in part. They spent a total of 189 hours observing lessons, tutor time and registration periods, assemblies, and talking with pupils about their work in classrooms and informal situations. Of that time, about 38 hours was spent reviewing pupils' written work.
248. Daily assemblies were attended, as well as registration periods, break times, lunchtimes and a range of extra-curricular activities, including the work of the hearing impaired unit. Observations were made of pupils' behaviour outside lesson times. The provision for students with special educational needs was also inspected. Discussions were held with members of the governing body, the headteacher, teaching and support staff, parents and helpers in the school. A special meeting was held with parents by the specialist inspector for hearing impaired pupils, who also met the Local Education Authority officer responsible for this aspect of the authority's provision.
249. The team scrutinized an extensive range of papers, including minutes of governors' and staff meetings, financial statements, policy documents, teachers' records, reports and attendance registers. Before the inspection, the registered inspector held a meeting attended by 40 parents. An analysis was made of 392 parents' questionnaires (27 per cent of those sent out), the results of which were shared with the school. The proportion returned was sufficient to make a representative sample of parents' views.

## 250. DATA AND INDICATORS

### Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 - Y13	1480	4	161	113

### Teachers and classes

#### Qualified teachers (Y7 - Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	84.75
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	17.46

#### Education support staff (Y7 - Y13)

Total number of education support staff:	19
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	448

#### [Secondary schools]

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	79.6
Average teaching group size:	KS3 KS4
	27 22

### Financial data

Financial year:	1998-99
	£
Total Income	4,007,598
Total Expenditure	4,183,452
Expenditure per pupil	2,875.22
Balance brought forward from previous year	468,016
Balance carried forward to next year	292,162

## 1. PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out: 1453  
 Number of questionnaires returned: 392

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	10	61	18	9	2
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	21	58	11	8	2
The school handles complaints from parents well	10	43	35	10	2
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	18	53	19	8	2
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	26	51	14	8	1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	28	59	11	1	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	24	56	15	5	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	19	58	13	8	2
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	17	55	21	5	2
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	14	52	23	9	2
My child(ren) like(s) school	23	57	14	4	2



### **Other issues raised by parents**

At the parents' meeting, there were many anxieties about bullying. These were confirmed by the pupils to whom inspectors talked during the inspection. There were also a large number of references to this in the notes made by parents on the questionnaire form. There were also some references to poor behaviour in lessons.

Inspectors agree. There is some poor behaviour in Key Stage 3, and pupils do not always treat each other with consideration at this stage. Improving this is a key issue for action. However, behaviour is not unsatisfactory in general, and bullying is not an everyday feature of life. From what inspectors were told, it is limited to Key Stage 3. Inspectors were impressed by the good behaviour and mature relationships in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.

The registered inspector received letters from most of the parents with children in the unit for hearing impairment. Parents were most anxious about the quality of support which their children were receiving. A special meeting was held during the inspection, in which parents met the specialist inspector, who also met the representative of the local education authority. Inspectors concur with parents' views. Improvement in the support given is a key issue for action in this report.