

INSPECTION REPORT

BLenheim HIGH SCHOOL

Epsom, Surrey

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number: 131386

Headteacher: M/s Teresa Leech

Reporting inspector: Michael Owen
22926

Dates of inspection: 12-15 March 2001

Inspection number: 215549

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of students:	11-18
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Longmead Road Epsom Surrey
Postcode:	KT19 9BD
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Alan Carlson
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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22926	Michael Owen	Registered inspector	Business Education	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are students taught? How well is the school led?
9646	Geraldine Osment	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values, personal development and attendance How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? Community links
23393	Brian Dower	Team inspector	English Drama	
23528	Andrew Bird	Team inspector	Mathematics Equal Opportunities	
2711	Alan Jarvis	Team inspector	Science	
18638	Christopher Shaw	Team inspector	Art and design Information and communication technology	How good are the curriculum opportunities?
23418	Roger Yates	Team inspector	Design and technology	
22590	Robert Castle	Team inspector	Geography Physical education	
4773	Peter Gilliat	Team inspector	History Religious studies	
31690	Bridget Smith	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages English as an additional language	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Blenheim High School is a new comprehensive school with 739 boys and girls, which is smaller than average. This is because it has been open only for four years and although it will provide eventually for students aged 11-18, at this stage it has only students aged 11-15. The attainment of students on entry was well below average in its first intake, but it is now average and the school is oversubscribed. The number of students with special educational needs is below the national average; the proportion with Statements of Special Education Need is average. Twenty-nine students have English as an additional language. Thirteen per cent of students are entitled to free school meals, which is below average. A small proportion of students comes from minority ethnic backgrounds.

The inspection of this school included a detailed inspection of its provision for students with special educational needs and of its community links.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Blenheim High School is a good and effective school. Achievement is good: students with below average attainment on entry make good progress and reach average standards after three years. The school sets challenging targets. Teaching is good. Teachers are enthusiastic and students have good attitudes leading to good learning. Leadership and management are good, resulting in a positive climate for improvement. Taking into account its results so far and the nature of its intake, the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching and learning are good. All students make good progress because staff have high expectations and make good provision to meet their needs
- The very good leadership of the headteacher and senior staff provides clear direction to the school as it grows and develops
- Because of the very good climate for learning, very positive relationships and very good care, students behave well and feel proud to belong to Blenheim High School
- Everybody takes good care of the school's attractive accommodation and good resources, creating a learning environment of high quality
- Links with the community are very good and enhance the curriculum

What could be improved

- The leadership skills of middle managers, so that as departments grow, they use rigorous strategies to monitor teaching and learning and to set clearly defined targets for further improvement
- The use of assessment data at classroom level, so that students and parents are clear about attainment and how students can make the most of their potential
- Teaching and learning in religious studies, to raise standards and achievement
- The spiritual dimension of school life, including the statutory requirement for collective worship

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED

The school has not been inspected previously. However, it has made good progress since its opening four years ago. Standards are rising, the school has established a good local reputation and it is now oversubscribed.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 year olds based on average point scores in national tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
KS3 Tests	N/A	N/A	C	B

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

In 2000, students' results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were close to the national average in comparison with all schools in English, mathematics and science. In English the proportion achieving level 4 was above average, but the proportion achieving level 6 was below. In mathematics and science the proportions at both levels were close to the national average. The average point scores for all three subjects were close to average. Overall boys did better than the national average and girls slightly worse. This reflects their different levels of attainment on entry. Teachers' Assessments in foundation subjects showed standards were broadly average in history, geography, design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT) and modern foreign languages. Boys tended to do better than girls, especially in ICT. Although Teachers' Assessments showed well above average attainment by students in art and design, music and physical education, this was not borne out by inspection evidence. This indicates that staff expectations of the standards required in these subjects were not high enough. Results overall represent very good achievement because the attainment on entry of this year group, the school's first intake of students, was well below average. The school has set itself challenging targets.

Work seen during the inspection confirmed a picture of average or better standards being achieved by students who entered the school with below or well below average attainment levels. At the end of Key Stage 3 standards are above average in mathematics, design and technology, modern foreign languages and geography. They are average in English, science, drama, history, ICT and physical education; they are close to average in music and below average in art and design and religious studies. In Year 10 of Key Stage 4, standards are above average in mathematics, geography, physical education and business studies; they are average in English, science, design and technology, drama, modern foreign languages, history and ICT. They are below average in art and design, music and religious studies. The achievement of students is good overall, though there is some evidence that the highest attaining students could be achieving more.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Students are proud of their school and are positive about learning
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Students are pleasant, friendly and courteous. They work well together and have a good sense of responsibility.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Students develop their confidence and show respect for others.
Attendance	Good. Attendance rates are above the national average.

Students say they enjoy school and would recommend it to their friends. They take care of each other and of school property. Students with special needs are included well in the life of the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good

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

Teaching is satisfactory or better in 95 per cent of lessons, very good or excellent in 28 per cent and unsatisfactory in 5 per cent. Teaching is good throughout in English, mathematics and science. Teachers know their subject well and plan interesting and imaginative lessons that capture students' interest. They make clear what the point of the lesson is and conduct lessons with good pace. In many lessons teachers engage in good question and answer sessions. They make good use of learning resources, including computers, and set appropriate homework. They provide good personal and social education in tutor time. However, marking and assessment tends to be inconsistent and students and parents are not given a clear enough idea about attainment levels and how to reach higher levels. There are weaknesses in the planning and classroom delivery of religious studies, and expectations are not high enough in art, music and physical education. Teaching is good in design and technology, history, geography, ICT and business education. It is very good in modern foreign languages.

Although standards of literacy are good, the teaching of literacy is not consistent across the school and not enough attention is given to numeracy. Good teaching is provided for students with special educational needs and of those for whom English is an additional language. Teaching meets the needs of the majority of students but the school has recognised the need for gifted and talented students to be offered additional challenge.

Learning is good and students make a good effort to increase their knowledge, understanding and skills. They show interest, concentrate well and work productively on their own. Although teachers are making increased use of assessment data, many students are not clear how well they are doing against national standards and what they should be aiming for. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language learn well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The quality and range of learning opportunities is increasing as the school grows in size.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good at Key Stage 3 but limited at Key Stage 4 because there are not enough courses to meet the needs of the lowest attaining students.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. All are well included in the normal curriculum and a few have additional support that ensures they cope well and make good progress.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Provision for spiritual development is only just satisfactory and is not thought through. Provision for moral and social development is very good and for the cultural dimension it is good.
How well the school cares for its students	Very good. The school's pastoral care is a strength and students are given good support and guidance.

The school works well with parents, keeping them well informed and gaining their support. The school has recognised the need to provide better information about attainment and progress. Provision of modern foreign languages is a strength of the school, though at Key Stage 4 the statutory requirements that allow some students not to study a modern foreign language have not been completed. The school

takes great care of its students, helping them to overcome barriers to learning. Effective target-setting based on assessment data is developing.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The new headteacher has been well supported by the deputy heads and has won the confidence of students, staff, parents and governors. She is very clear about the way forward.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors have worked hard to establish a new school and recognize that as the school grows their role must change.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Procedures are being put in place to ensure that monitoring is rigorous and provides good feedback.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school is making wise use of its resources and planning ahead well for the Sixth Form.

The headteacher, senior staff and other key staff promote high standards and are working hard to build on the good quality of teaching and learning. As the school grows, middle managers are making adjustments to maintain high performing teams. The school is well staffed, has very good accommodation and good resources, including ICT resources. The principles of best value are applied in a satisfactory manner.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children make good progress in school • Teaching is good • They feel comfortable to approach the school with questions or a problem • The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provision of the right amount of homework • The amount of information about how their children are getting on • The extent to which the school works closely with parents

The inspection team agrees with what pleases parents. They did not find evidence of inappropriate amounts of homework being set. There was far more evidence of the school working well with parents than otherwise, but the inspection team – and the school – agrees that there has not been enough information about the attainment levels and progress of students. Many parents helpfully wrote in detail to the registered inspector and their views were taken into account during the inspection.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. In 2000, students' results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were close to the national comparison with all schools in English, mathematics and science. In English the proportion achieving level 4 was above average, but the proportion achieving level 6 was below. In mathematics and science the proportions at both levels were close to the national average. The average point scores for all three subjects were close to average. Overall boys did better than the national average and girls slightly worse – a reflection of different levels of attainment on entry. Teacher assessments in foundation subjects showed standards were broadly average in history, geography, design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT) and modern foreign languages. As in English, mathematics and science, boys tended to do better than girls, especially in ICT. Although teacher assessments showed well above average attainment by students in art and design, music and physical education, this was not born out by inspection evidence. This indicates that staff expectations of the standards required in these subjects were too low. The results overall represent very good achievement, since the attainment on entry of this year group, the school's first intake of students, was well below average.
2. Work seen during the inspection confirms a picture of average standards towards the end of Key Stage 3. Standards in English are average. Students communicate clearly in writing and read fluently and with understanding. They speak confidently and their ability to listen for sustained periods promotes learning. In mathematics standards are above average in all four National Curriculum attainment targets. Higher attaining students are competent at solving simultaneous equations and lower attaining students are good at presenting information in tables. Standards in science are average. Students know how to conduct experiments and draw conclusions to confirm their scientific knowledge and understanding of materials and their properties. Standards are above average in design and technology, French and German and geography; they are average in drama, history, ICT and physical education. They are close to average in music and below average in art and design and religious studies.
3. In Key Stage 4 judgements about standards of work seen can only relate to Year 10, because this is at present the oldest year group in the school. In English standards are average, although students show a wider range of writing skills in their work and cope with more complex reading demands. They write perceptively about literature, showing their enjoyment of reading. Standards in mathematics are good and students' knowledge and application of number are both very good. They know how to use algebraic formulae and their handling of data is good. Standards in science are average. They have extended their knowledge and understanding of a range of physical and biological phenomena and show, through their answers to questions, that they can argue a scientific point using abstract theories. They show a confidence in carrying out a range of experiments and investigations. Standards are above average in geography, physical education and business studies; they are average in design and technology, drama, French and German, history and ICT. They are below average in art and design, music and religious studies.
4. Standards of literacy in the school are good. There is evidence of good independent reading for enjoyment in modern foreign languages, with students reviewing well what they have read. Their literacy skills are reinforced through dictionary work and an emphasis on correct spelling and attentive listening. Students develop good speaking and listening skills through investigating topics together and discussion in many areas of the curriculum. They plan and develop their writing well, making good use of ICT for desktop publishing. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress in basic skills and are able to benefit fully from the school's curriculum.
5. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory. At Key Stage 3 students studying history construct and interpret block graphs of admission numbers to the Epsom workhouse during the last

century. In geography students can interpret graphical data, using percentages and mathematical keywords correctly. In ICT students make good use of 'logo' for control technology, spreadsheets and statistics. Analysis of mathematics assessment data at Key Stage 3 shows students' numeracy skills matched those achieved nationally. At Key Stage 4, geography students can interrogate population pyramids in terms of life expectancy, population growth and decay.

6. Standards in ICT across the curriculum are average. Achievements in English, science, history and design and technology are particularly good although students use ICT appropriately in most subjects. In music, for instance, powerful new software is providing exciting challenges to both teachers and students and helping to raise even further the range of computer skills. In mathematics, students have had fewer opportunities to use ICT and their skills are under-developed.
7. By the age of 14, students with special educational needs reach standards above those in similar schools nationally and continue to do this in Year 10. There are students on the special educational needs register who are reaching standards higher than other students in their class, for example in textiles. Standards are lower where students have literacy difficulties, where written instructions are too complex and there is no support in class, for example in some Year 7 ICT lessons. A number of students in Year 10 are not reaching GCSE standard despite making good progress since they came to the school.
8. The achievement of students is good in both key stages. The attainment on entry of Year 10 students was well below average but they achieved average standards at the end of Key Stage 3 and above average by comparison with similar schools – representing very good achievement since they began at the school. The attainment on entry of the current Year 9 was below average and is now average in English and science and good in mathematics. Students make considerable gains in the development of speaking and listening skills and in reading and writing. In mathematics students develop their knowledge and understanding of number, of shape and space and data handling. Their problem-solving skills improve. In science achievement is good. Students develop their ability to engage in scientific enquiry and they increase their understanding of different materials and their properties. Achievement is good in drama, geography, history, ICT, modern foreign languages, personal, social and health education and in GNVQ business studies. It is satisfactory in art and design and physical education and good in music in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. It is unsatisfactory in religious studies because of unsatisfactory teaching. Boys and girls progress at broadly similar rates, as do students of all levels of attainment, though there is some evidence that the highest attaining students are not achieving as well as they could be. The achievement of students for whom English is an additional language is good
9. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good at both key stages, and very good in some subject areas. Results of tests on entry to the school show that the number of students joining the school with learning difficulties is decreasing each year. Despite this, some students' performance in written tests is about two years behind what would be expected. However, they make good progress from the time they start at the school. For example a Year 7 student with poor literacy started the year by having an adult write down his ideas in history lessons, but by mid-year he was writing a page on his own. He produces excellent work in science and a support assistant writes up notes for him when he is withdrawn from the lesson for extra help with literacy. In English the same student uses spider diagrams to show the plot of Romeo and Juliet and takes care with presentation, but his spelling is still based on how he hears words. In geography he is obviously enthused and has produced a lot of accurate work on map reading and settlements. Homework is missing in some subjects and work is careless or unfinished in French and in religious studies, but where he has set his own targets to improve presentation, it is improving. In English progress in speaking and listening is good but writing, in particular structuring work in paragraphs, is unsatisfactory.
10. Students with special educational needs improve their practical skills in science by Year 9, developing their understanding of topics such as electricity and reproduction. In mathematics,

students have learnt to understand timetables, convert percentages to fractions, and calculate using function machines. Most understand what is meant by “inverse”. For some, reading is still halting but they have a range of strategies to work out the meaning of text. In geography students have learnt terms such as “tertiary industry” but are still held back by poor spelling and in some cases the organisation and structuring of writing. There are some students who have difficulty copying words, for example in French. They can match words to pictures but have difficulty spelling French words for themselves. Presentation can vary widely for the same student, for example real care being taken in English but careless unfinished work being presented in religious studies.

Students’ attitudes, values and personal development

11. Students have good attitudes to school and this came out clearly in interviews with students. Although fourteen per cent of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire said that their children do not like school, inspection findings do not support this view. The students interviewed expressed real enthusiasm for their school; they said they would recommend it to friends and demonstrated a sense of pride in being members of Blenheim High School. They spoke warmly of the support they receive from teachers and fellow students. They think staff listen to them and their concerns and they believe that the school values their happiness. Their complaints were very few and included the short lunch break and the loss of a personal, social and health education lesson owing to the two-week timetable. Almost all those interviewed felt that they work hard. They spoke enthusiastically about physical education, English and mathematics, where they felt they were doing well. All welcome the wide and popular range of clubs, activities and visits. The small minority of students who are less enthusiastic about school has been stimulated and motivated by opportunities to work with local institutions, such as the Epsom and Ewell Education Partnership.
12. The majority of parents feel that behaviour is good. The inspection team agrees with this view, and judges behaviour to be very good. However, there is a minority of students who have difficulty controlling their behaviour. For example, in a PE lesson in Year 10 the learning was unsatisfactory due to the disinterest of a significant number of girls. Staff are very good role models in the way that they conduct themselves. The students are pleasant, friendly and courteous and they are helpful to visitors. There are very good and warm relationships between all staff and students both in lessons and around the school. Their attention in assemblies dealing with “points of view” was very good and demonstrated great respect for the staff and the participating students. The students move around the school in a controlled way; they hold doors open for others and queue sensibly outside classrooms and in the busy lunch area. All students show respect for the school buildings and there is very little litter around the site. There is a wide range of appropriate rewards and sanctions that students understand and feel to be fair. Even the older ones like receiving merit stickers and all students appreciate that awards are given for a range of strengths, not just academic ability.
13. The rates of fixed period and permanent exclusions have decreased since the school opened. This sanction is used as a last resort after the school has worked exhaustively to support the students. Given the care taken with students before exclusion, the present figures are reasonable.
14. In many lessons students work co-operatively in pairs and groups; this is especially effective when the groups are of both boys and girls. In a very good Year 7 French lesson boys and girls worked together successfully asking each other questions about families. When all-boys groups develop there is sometimes silliness and a lack of awareness of the effect their behaviour has on the rest of the class. This was evident in a Year 8 science lesson when boys were constantly calling out. Good teaching and management skills enable students to organise themselves quickly; concentrate well and enjoy their lessons. Good examples include a Year 8 mathematics lesson when students were studying probability and a Year 9 mathematics lesson where students were keen and enthusiastic when constructing triangles and bisecting angles. The very good behaviour and very good attitudes to work that students with special educational

needs and English as an additional language demonstrate contributes to the good progress that they are making.

15. Students are given opportunities to take responsibility for the life of the school. Form captains discuss issues with their tutor groups, they then meet in year groups and two representatives from each year take matters to the school council. Through the council students have asked for more time to be devoted to personal, social and health education lessons. A Year 10 student is a member of the national Youth Parliament. Year 9 and Year 10 students take on the majority of responsibilities in the school. They act very responsibly as paired readers with Year 7 students, as house captains, as organisers of charity collections and helpers in the library and reception. Younger students conduct themselves in a mature way and could also take on more responsibilities around the school. Many students extend their interests and skills in sport and other areas through the wide range of extracurricular activities offered. Students are encouraged to develop their independent learning skills through the use of the learning resource centre. It has extended opening hours to meet the needs of those for whom studying at home is problematic.
16. Attendance last year was above the national averages and it is good. During the week of the inspection the rate of attendance was at 94 per cent. Registers are taken very promptly at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions and at the start of every lesson. The high rate of attendance is having a positive impact on standards.
17. The attitudes and behaviour of students with special needs are very good. Students treat each other and their surroundings with respect. They concentrate and persist even when they find work challenging. Relationships between support staff and students are very good and adult support is accepted willingly. There is a small number of students who have medication to help control their behaviour, and this is administered and recorded properly by staff. In each year, a group has been identified who would benefit from social skills teaching, for example in assertiveness. A member of the teaching staff and staff from the enhanced learning centre, with advice from the local authority behaviour support team, have produced successful short courses.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

18. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages. This results in good learning throughout the school. During the inspection two thirds of lessons observed were good, very good or excellent. The proportion of unsatisfactory lessons was very small.
19. Teaching and learning in English is good throughout the school. Planning for lessons takes account of the needs of nearly all students. Effective teaching strategies are in place to engage them in imaginative learning, including those with special educational needs. However, strategies for higher attaining students need to be applied consistently across teaching sets. Teachers are particularly skilled in the use of question and answer techniques to promote an enquiring and reflective approach to learning. The pace of lessons is generally good; but marking and assessment procedures are not consistent enough and assessment data is not used fully to enable students to see how their learning can be directed to achieving higher standards.
20. Teaching and learning in mathematics is good throughout. The good expertise of specialist teachers is a strength of the subject. Teachers plan well and make clear to students the learning objectives of lessons, but more could be planned for the highest attaining students. Otherwise teachers' expectations are high and students are interested and absorbed as they learn. Learning is enjoyable. Very low attaining students make good progress because work is presented in manageable steps. As in English, marking is inconsistent and assessment data is not used to help students target their learning.
21. Teaching and learning in science is good throughout. Teachers know their subject well and plan together to create interesting and varied practical learning opportunities. Learning has a good pace and learning objectives are usually made clear to students, although lesson summaries are not provided to consolidate their learning. Students concentrate well, listen carefully to what

the teacher says and enjoy learning. Teachers' questions are not probing enough and higher attaining students are not challenged enough. Marking does not help students learn what is needed for improvement.

22. Teaching and learning is good in most other subjects, with the exception of religious studies. As in English, mathematics and science, teachers' expertise is good, except that basic skills are not given enough prominence. The school has recognised the need to give added attention to literacy across the curriculum and to develop a strategy for numeracy. There are some gaps in the teaching of ICT, for example in mathematics, and opportunities to motivate boys through ICT are missed in art and design. The planning of lessons is good and teachers recognise that students learn at a better pace when hour long lessons have a series of timed activities to keep things moving. Expectations are high in most subjects, but not high enough in art and design, music, physical education and religious studies. In consequence students are satisfied with standards that could be higher and higher attaining students in particular are not challenged to extend their learning. When teachers exploit their good relationships with students to create lively exchanges of ideas, learning is very good, as in a Year 9 geography lesson. The teacher posed questions about conflict in the countryside between recreational users and farmers. Good use was made of the topical concern over foot and mouth disease and students drew on their experience of fieldwork, when they had learnt the importance of shutting gates. They brainstormed solutions to the problem of joy-riders damaging a country park and the teacher deepened their understanding of concepts such as sustainability, conservation and recreation.
23. In other good lessons teachers use imaginative strategies and activities to ensure that learning is active and that boys' interest, in particular, is sustained. In a good Year 10 business studies lesson students researched customer services by using mobile phones and the Internet to contact companies and organisations to obtain information. The class was divided into mixed teams who competed with one another to complete the tasks and evaluate their findings within a given time frame. In a very good Year 8 history lesson students were finding out about the English Civil War. The teacher provided a well-constructed information sheet and through skilful questioning helped students to think through the strengths and weaknesses of the two sides, building up their ideas in a spidergram on the board. A challenging task sheet (modified for low attaining students) enabled students to apply what they had learnt to answering key questions. This was followed up with a good homework task. The teaching and learning was brisk and stimulating so that all students joined enthusiastically in the oral part of the lesson and worked hard on the written task. Because of lessons like these, students show interest in their work, concentrate well and show a good capacity for continuing their learning independently. In general teachers and students make good use of resources, including the very good ICT facilities. There are good displays in many rooms, which add to the very pleasant learning environment of the school. Parents expressed concerns about homework. However, inspection evidence from lesson observation, discussion with students and scrutiny of student planners showed that appropriate homework is normally set and students generally have a good attitude to completing it.
24. Lessons are less effective when some of the good features described above are missing. For example, in religious studies lessons an unsatisfactory scheme of work was compounded by lesson plans that showed a lack of understanding about how to make the subject interesting, lively and relevant. A common weakness is that marking is sometime inconsistent but more particularly that it does not show the way forward. Similarly, assessment data and processes are not being fully used at classroom level, so that students are clear about their level of attainment in each subject and what they need to do to get to the next level. The school is aware of this and is working to improve practice.
25. Good use is made of tutor time after lunch. Work is well planned, with practical activities, role play and discussion. Teachers are well-prepared and the short twenty-minute sessions concentrate on work in small groups and a plenary session. For example students compare the relative merits of different types of jobs, others discuss the effects of bullying on individuals involved. For some year groups these topics will match the weekly theme for the school. For

example, in the week of the inspection 'Having your own point of view' was woven into assembly and picked up in some lessons. Good, relevant learning takes place in these short lessons.

26. The teaching and learning of students for whom English is an additional language are good. Five students receive support in lessons from a teacher who comes into the school on one day a week. Additional support is provided at lunchtime and during the tutor period. There is good liaison between subject teachers and the support teacher. For example, in a Year 7 science lesson the teacher was able to bring in suitable visual aids and to provide key words to support a Portuguese student in a practical lesson. As a result he was able to participate and contribute with confidence. Other students who do not require additional support are monitored and the students are well known to subject teachers.
27. The teaching and learning of students with special educational needs are good. Teaching by the enhanced learning centre staff and some subject teachers with low attaining groups is often very good. The school genuinely treats special needs as a whole school responsibility. Not only is information shared among the staff but teaching styles have been adapted to suit students' needs. Low attaining sets have a good share of experienced teachers. In the best lessons in the school, individual needs are planned for, lessons have structure and clear aims and students know at the end what they have achieved. Good lessons have a variety of short activities around a central theme, as was seen in a Year 9 mathematics lesson. Students have things to do rather than just listening to the teacher. They can record their ideas in a number of ways, for example with diagrams, or someone scribing for their group. This takes the pressure off students with writing and spelling difficulties. Encouraging comments, with clear indications of how to improve work, lead to improvements in presentation, for example in Year 7 English books. Students are encouraged to evaluate their work and set themselves targets for improvement, as was seen in Year 7 geography. There are excellent lessons on revising effectively in science and how to tackle assessments in geography, which set the tone for high achievement.
28. Where there are learning support assistants in class, the quality of support is generally good. In the best lessons, support is planned very well with the subject teacher, supplementary resources are produced, and while the support staff are active in class, predicting needs, they are not obtrusive. The special educational needs coordinator deploys them cleverly and flexibly to give links with each teaching year group and subject area, and each assistant has overall responsibility for named students with Statements of Special Educational Need. While this means that each student is supported by a number of learning support assistants, they work as a strong team, notes are taken and passed on in each supported lesson, and students' independence is promoted. A small number of students with literacy difficulties are withdrawn from one or two varying classes for specialist help. This very good teaching provides them with strategies for dealing with difficult texts, and for recording their work. Students are offered extra help with homework at lunchtimes and after school, and extra reading and spelling before school and at lunchtime.

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

29. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good and improving as the school grows. In consequence the curriculum meets the needs of the majority of students. The school is working to improve provision for the highest attaining students and for students with special educational needs at Key Stage 4. The statutory requirements of the subjects of the National Curriculum are well met, except that a group of students in Year 10 do not study a modern foreign language and the school has not completed the required process to formally disapply them from the National Curriculum. The breadth and balance of the curriculum is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. The allocation of teaching time to each subject is broadly in line with national norms, except that modern foreign languages at Key Stage 3 is above average. In consequence, ICT, art and design and music have a lower than average allocation.
30. At Key Stage 3, students study all subjects of the National Curriculum together with religious studies and personal, social and health education. Drama is not offered until Year 9 and this

has an adverse impact on standards. All Key Stage 3 students are taught ICT as a separate subject. Students are given a choice of two modern foreign language to study in Year 7 and are expected to study two languages from then on. At present these are German and French but the school is planning to add Spanish. Parents and students are very appreciative of this enrichment to the curriculum. At Key Stage 4, the curriculum contains all statutory subjects including religious studies and personal, social and health education. Information and communication technology is not taught as a separate subject but across the curriculum, which works well because of the good grounding students receive in Key Stage 3. In addition to the GCSE courses, students can take a GNVQ course in business studies. The present Year 10, which had a high proportion of low attaining students on entry to the school, began studying two languages in Year 7. This was found to be too demanding and the school made appropriate adjustments to the curriculum so that they now do only one. Subsequent year groups have fared better and the current system is flourishing. Appropriate provision is being made for those students who are not studying a modern foreign language. Teachers have devised a more vocational route for them, including business studies and work placement. The music department has adapted its GCSE course to cater for low attaining students. Support is provided for students' first language in the modern foreign languages department through early accreditation, either in GCSE or from summer 2001, AS level. One student achieved a GCSE in Italian last summer.

31. The school plans the curriculum well and takes into account changing needs. The consultation process is wide, considering not only the needs of the students but also the views of the students, parents, teachers and local community. This flexibility has been the key to establishing a firm foundation and a good reputation. The school deliberated long and hard over decisions such as the two-week timetable and the way personal, social, moral and health education and cross-curricular ICT is delivered. Provision for students who have English as their second language is good. Support assistants help them in lessons and specialist tutors enable them to take an examination in their home language. Plans to introduce more GNVQ courses are under way and a director of sixth form has been appointed. All departments are now considering their sixth form options.
32. The curriculum for students with special educational needs is good in Key Stage 3. Some students with reading and spelling difficulties are given extra help before and after school and at lunchtimes. Some use an independent learning computer program for literacy and numeracy at lunchtime. All students, including wheelchair users, can take part in every aspect of school life. The physiotherapist has provided advice on adapting physical education lessons to make sure as many activities as possible are inclusive. However, the curriculum for special educational needs at KS4 there are currently courses leading only to GCSE and a GNVQ in business studies and this provides only limited opportunities. The school has recognised this and is developing school-college links and discussing other possible examination course. Appropriate arrangements are made for small number of students with medical conditions or learning difficulties to have a more manageable curriculum, with fewer subjects to cope with.
33. The school has good strategies for improving literacy. Many curriculum areas improve on what has been achieved in Key Stage 2. For example, in modern foreign languages students are encouraged to read independently. In history students are encouraged to plan and develop their writing and in geography good use is made of technical language and key words. Teachers emphasise the importance of correct spelling. They provide good opportunities for developing speaking and listening skills. Students for whom English is an additional language are given good support to enable them to be benefit from the school's curriculum. The good strategies for literacy are not applied consistently across the curriculum. The school has already put in place measures to secure improvements.
34. The school development plan includes creating a whole school approach to numeracy. A start has been made but no curriculum audit has been conducted. The mathematics department is revising its Year 7 scheme of work and structure of lessons to take account of basic skills and the national numeracy strategy. Learning support assistants have had training and they provide good support for students with special educational needs. The calculator is used constructively

in mathematics as an aid to learning. Subjects that make good use of numeracy are mathematics, geography and ICT, although there is currently no reference to numeracy in schemes of work or department numeracy policies. Library resources to support the numeracy needs of students are satisfactory. There is no supplementary teaching in numeracy by the enhanced learning centre to cater for students with special educational needs. However, satisfactory support is provided in lessons.

35. The provision for personal, social and health education is good and makes a significant contribution to students' personal development, as well as preparing them well for life beyond school. The curriculum is broad and balanced and includes citizenship and careers education. This is well delivered by form teachers and visiting speakers such as the police liaison officer, local business people and the school nurse. Such is the popularity of the lessons that the school is reconsidering its decision to provide only one hour per fortnight. Provision for careers education is particularly good. A number of good strategies are used to engage students such as role-play activities, computer programs and stimulating interaction with the local business community.
36. The school's provision for extracurricular activities is good. Most departments run an after-school or lunchtime club and the homework club and "master classes" are very popular. Sports activities are flourishing and there are football, rugby and netball teams for the different year groups. Computers are available at all times during the school day, and often after school, in departments and in the learning resource centre. Here students are encouraged to research their own interests as well as to do homework and complete assignments. The school organises visits and exchanges that further enrich the students' experiences.
37. The community makes a good contribution to students' learning. With the help of parents and governors the school has forged a range of valuable links with local businesses. The GNVQ course has facilitated links with local branches of national companies. Students took part in a seminar on customer care, run by the local business partnership. During the inspection some Year 9 students went off to a 'business breakfast' to make a presentation to business people on what they had learned. Students are also involved in visits to hospitals, work with ethnic minority organisations and charities. All help to promote learning, improving students' social skills and awareness of the part that the community plays in their lives.
38. The school's relationships with primary schools, other secondary schools and the further and higher education colleges are also good. The school benefits from helpful background information on students and the primary schools learning how to prepare their students for the next phase. They have been able to make good use of the ICT facilities. This results in greater efficiency, as less time needs to be spent re-testing new entrants. A good induction process eases the transition from primary to secondary school. Curriculum development projects, including a broadband ICT network, are being set up with local secondary schools. This will greatly increase the sharing of information and resources. The technical college is providing some appropriate courses for Year 10 vocational students and work experience placements are being set up through the Trident scheme.
39. The school has a clear policy on equal opportunity and uses a variety of strategies. A member of the governing body has responsibility for testing the policy's validity and reviewing it. The school ensures that all students are fully included. Strategies include analysis of national data by gender, a mixed seating policy, open access to all subjects and extracurricular activities for all students, including students with special educational needs. Data on ethnic minority groups suggests achievement is within national norms. The quality of teaching and learning is good across both key stages for all students. There is good provision for disabled students' physiotherapy in physical education and there is full wheelchair access to all parts of the school. Students who are bilingual are encouraged to obtain GCSE accreditation in their own language. Social inclusion strategies are in place such as planned provision with the local further education college for poorly motivated students. The school works very closely with local education authority travelers' support staff. Exclusions are monitored in terms of ethnicity,

gender and ability. Reporting procedures, student planners and one-to-one interviews enable close monitoring of students by tutors and heads of year.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education

40. There is good provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory but it is not sufficiently planned. All students do not attend an act of worship every day and therefore the school does not meet statutory requirements. Local churches provide an opportunity in school for those who wish to worship in a Christian tradition. In assemblies there are few opportunities for spiritual development but across the curriculum there are some good opportunities but they are not consistent enough. In history, for example, students have visited First World War cemeteries and writing in a corridor display shows how deeply affected by the experience some of them were. Similarly in English the poem "Death of a Young Soldier" prompted reflection on the impact on the young man's family. In a different way students' excitement at discoveries in their work shows an element of awe and wonder. The arts subjects, however, currently make at best a satisfactory contribution to this area of students' experience in school.
41. The school teaches well the difference between right and wrong and its contribution to students' moral development is very good. Assemblies focus on moral issues and explain and exemplify them well. During the inspection, for example, teachers and students led assemblies on the theme of the week, "Having your own point of view". Moral issues are raised in history when students study topics like the Holocaust. In business studies they look at the moral aspects of globalisation and the use of third world labour. In physical education and games teachers emphasise the importance of playing fairly.
42. Social education is similarly strong. Students have good opportunities to exercise responsibility. There is a school council and a student from the school represents the area on the national Youth Parliament. Students took a very full part in these elections. Year 10 students are piloting a new citizenship course. Extracurricular activities provide further opportunities for students to make decisions and to work with others in a co-operative way. Assemblies strengthen the school's teaching on social matters and across many subjects there are good examples of students developing their social skills and understanding. In modern foreign languages, for example, teachers encourage students to work together. In an English lesson during the inspection they co-operated in staging a courtroom scene based on "Macbeth" and handled well the social interactions.
43. Provision for cultural development is good. Multi-cultural matters are dealt with very well across a range of subjects. In music, for example, the teacher explained the background to the Blues as students listened to and used a Blues scale in their work. In geography, students look at the way of life of other people around the world. All classrooms are named after people famous in the subject taught in the room. Many nationalities are represented, reflecting international contributions to present knowledge.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

44. Procedures to ensure students' welfare, health and safety are very good and this reflects a school aim that "every student will be valued and cared for as an individual". There are very good relationships at all levels and all students interviewed expressed confidence that there are sympathetic adults to whom they can go with problems. There is a very good pastoral system based on year teams. Tutors and heads of year have a commendable knowledge about students' individual circumstances and the challenges they face which may affect their learning. Procedures for monitoring personal development are very good; these include a computer database, which is well used by staff to record relevant information. The very good procedures lead to changes or modifications of the curriculum for individuals to ensure that all students can achieve their full potential. The local community is being used to good effect to support these initiatives.

45. The procedures for monitoring and promoting positive behaviour are very good. An effective system of rewards and sanctions is in place, which is applied consistently throughout the school. The pastoral support for students with special educational needs is good. The homework club, which takes place regularly during the week, is well attended and also helps students with learning difficulties to catch up with their work.
46. Students were in agreement that bullying is not an issue in the school but any bullying is tackled sensitively and firmly by staff and discussed in personal, social and health education lessons. They also believe that racism and sexism are not issues in the school. Good guidance on health, sex and drugs education is included in the personal, social and health education programme. The school has very good links with members of the community to support this
47. The procedures for monitoring attendance are excellent. The system of registration gives the school accurate information about which students are in school first thing in the morning. The school can respond quickly to concerns about individual students. Parents welcome the phone calls on the first day of absence.
48. The school has an appropriate health and safety policy and the governors' premises committee regularly undertakes risk assessments. There are suitable arrangements in place for first aid and medical support and staff have the necessary first aid qualifications. Child protection procedures are good. The special educational needs co-ordinator is the named responsible person and has received training for this role. The school provides training for teachers new to the school and all staff receive training in child protection issues.
49. The school promotes an ethos of mutual respect and tolerance. It is committed to a policy of inclusion and this leads to some students with behavioural problems remaining in school. That the teachers and fellow students cope well with very little overt disruption is a testimony to their skills and fortitude. Parents are happy that the school is encouraging their children to become mature and responsible.
50. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are good and improving, but they are weak in religious studies. The school and departments are appropriately selective about the amount of information that is collected and used. Senior managers analyse the data very well and discuss its significance with middle managers. This has increased staff awareness of its value to assist teaching and learning. English, mathematics and science are developing useful moderated databases of assessments, which are starting to be used well. There are emerging systems in modern foreign languages and the humanities. However, although increasing amounts of data are being gathered there is, as yet, no consistent pattern across departments.
51. The use of assessment information to guide curricular planning is good. Attainment information influenced provision in Years 9 and 10 and is being used to plan Sixth Form provision. Data is used very well to guide setting in subjects and has, for example, led to many departments planning work particularly well for lower attaining students in all years. Work has begun on identifying able and talented students and a working party has been established to help plan how their needs can be best addressed.
52. Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress are satisfactory. Heads of year are becoming more proactive in coordinating data across departments. Staff training has raised awareness of the importance of monitoring students' progress. Students at Key Stage 3 generally have a good idea of their level of attainment and how it relates to national standards. Key Stage 4 targets are better thought through than those at Key Stage 3. But in general the targets are not challenging enough and teachers need give clearer information to each student so that they know what they need to do to get better. Marking is inconsistently used to give students a clear idea of points for development and how improvements might be achieved. Reports to parents and information in planners do not adequately let parents know what their children's' targets are and so they are unclear of how they need to be supported.
53. Assessment and monitoring of the progress of students with special needs is very good. Those students with individual education plans have targets reviewed and set twice a year. These very good plans suggest helpful strategies for teachers, support staff, parents and students. The

targets are clear and written so that progress is measurable. Students know their targets and how well they are progressing towards them. All staff are well informed and have copies of the special educational needs register and individual plans. Most departments use these effectively for planning lessons. Good examples of this were observed in English, mathematics and geography. Where they are not used, progress is less good, for example in religious studies. Monitoring of the progress of students with Statements of Special Educational Need is more detailed than for other students on the register. These students often have a range of support and therapy from outside school, as well as support in school from a number of learning support assistants. There are very good links with a range of other services, such as physiotherapists and speech therapists, who contribute to statutory reviews.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

54. There was a good response to the pre-inspection questionnaire and meeting and overall parents and carers expressed positive views of the school. These positive views reflect the school's mission: "to make Blenheim High School the first choice school for parents and students". Most agree that their child is working hard and making progress and many said that they feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems. A significant minority of parents does not feel they are well informed about how their children are getting on. The inspection team agrees with this view. The school sends two progress reviews and a full report to parents every year. The full reports are of a satisfactory quality; they contain good information about the students' behaviour and attitudes to work but not enough detail about levels of attainment and students' strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum. Parents have opportunities to discuss the progress of their children at parent-teacher consultations. Attendance at these meetings is good, although some parents are not happy because sometimes teachers are fully booked and it is not possible for parents to see all of the teachers they would like to. Parents of children with a Statement of Special Educational Need are fully involved in the review procedures. The number of parents attending the reviews of their child's individual education plan is good. Although the provision of information to parents in languages other than English is not usually required, the school has good access to translators and interpreters if required and these services have been used in the past.
55. Seventeen per cent of parents who returned questionnaires said that their children do not get the right amount of work to do at home. However, the inspection team did not find evidence to support this view, as most subject teachers set relevant homework regularly and most of the students interviewed confirmed this. Students use planners to record their homework and form tutors monitor these regularly. Credits are awarded to those who complete the entries fully. The school recognises that there may be an inconsistency in the setting of homework and the head of Year 9 has sent a questionnaire to parents and is currently analysing the responses.
56. There is good information provided for parents through high quality newsletters, the Blenheim Buzz and the prospectus. The prospectus does not contain all of the required information on special educational needs and the governor's annual report to parents does not contain a statement on how the governors monitor progress through the stages of the special educational needs code of practice. Meetings were held to inform parents of children transferring from primary schools and for parents of Year 10 students on work experience. A helpful home school agreement has been signed and returned by the majority of the parents. The student planners are used effectively by teachers and many parents as a means of two-way communication. The school successfully promotes "excellence in partnership" through inviting parents to assist in school in various ways. The parent's association, appropriately called "The Blenheim Partnership", is well supported. The school's links with parents are effective and have a positive impact on the standards that the students are achieving. Although a significant number of parents feel that the school does not work closely with them, the headteacher and governors are already working to develop further the partnership with parents through improved communication.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

57. The headteacher provides very good, clear leadership. After only six months in post she has a comprehensive grasp of the range of issues the school is dealing with. She has quickly identified areas for improvement. Her predecessor led the school from its opening four years ago and gained the confidence of the local community. The very good achievement of the first year group in the 2000 national tests was because all the staff were supporting her determination to provide the best for every student. The very good leadership of the deputy heads has helped to ensure a smooth transition after her departure and this has helped the present headteacher to retain the good support of governors, parents, staff and students. She has listened with sensitivity to staff concerns and has introduced improved systems of communication to help promote a common purpose. The school's mission and motto are reflected well in all aspects of its work.
58. The headteacher has produced a very good school development plan in consultation with staff and governors. It is a vigorously written and bracing rallying call, identifying the school's current situation and facing future opportunities and challenges with confidence and high expectations. The school recognises the intense competition it faces in the area but is clearly determined to be the first choice for local parents. Development priorities are appropriate and have been translated down to operational level in a clear fashion. The plan is part of a three-year strategic plan focusing on the evolving Key Stage 4 provision, the future Sixth Form and working at the quality of teaching and learning to achieve the best possible results. Department development plans reflect whole school priorities as well as identifying specific department ones. The school recognises the need to focus more strongly in all plans on measurable outcomes, in order to provide clear targets and to facilitate effective school self-evaluation.
59. While heads of faculties and departments are for the most part providing good leadership, as the school grows in size there is a need for further clarification of developing responsibilities. The fact that this has been recognized and the senior leadership team has been reviewing the middle management structure again reflects good leadership. The headteacher has set up a policy group because there is a realisation that the very good work of heads of year in leading the school's very effective pastoral care needs to be married more closely to the work of academic departments. Together they can sharpen up and develop the use of data about students' performance. At the moment this is not being translated consistently into subject targets, including specific subject targets for every student. In consequence many students and their parents do not have a clear enough idea of exactly how they are doing in each subject and what they need to do in order to maximise potential. This information is needed if the school is to meet the appropriately challenging targets it has set itself for the 2002 GCSE examinations.
60. The very good performance and development review policy sets out clear expectations about what constitutes good teaching. There is much good and very good teaching and learning going on in the school. A start has been made on monitoring this through classroom observation. The next step is to ensure that both strengths and areas for improvement are clearly and rigorously identified, so that staff have good feedback to work on improvements and so that any weaknesses can be tackled effectively. This vital aspect of the work of subject leaders and heads of year is a recognised area for development as the school grows. As might be expected of a school that has Investors in People status, good attention is also given to the development needs of all support staff.
61. Another changing area of responsibility concerns the governors. To their considerable credit, the governors have overseen from scratch the building of a brand new grant-maintained school that was a building site for much of its first years. Their contribution to the school's good reputation has been considerable. With a very small number of staff and students, they needed to have a more "hands-on" approach. Now the school is becoming well established and is growing in size. It has become a local authority foundation school, which in itself has involved adjustments in responsibilities and systems. The governing body recognises the time is ripe for it to stand back and adopt a more strategic role and to give its attention to monitoring how effectively the school is working. For example, the governors do not have at present an agreed curriculum statement; they are not yet monitoring the progress of students with special educational needs and providing statutory information in the prospectus. Link governors have now been nominated to

provide critical support for each area of the school's work and governors are exploring how best to ensure they fulfil their monitoring function.

62. The enhanced learning centre is well led and efficiently run by the special needs co-ordinator. Until very recently however the school governors were not involved. The department's occasional difficulties in recruiting support staff, for example, should have a higher profile at governors' meetings. The support teacher for students with English as an additional language liaises closely with special needs staff and central records are kept in the learning resource centre. The support teacher has provided in-service training for staff in the past and contributes to the induction of newly qualified teachers. The teacher also provides profiles of students when they enter the school and keeps staff updated. Although some departments, like modern foreign languages, have policy and strategy documents for students with English as an additional language, there is no whole school policy document on this issue.

Efficiency

63. The school manages the delegated budget very efficiently and has successfully linked spending to educational priorities. Funding is above average because of additional provision for a new school. Capital grants are used appropriately for their designated purposes. The school has husbanded its resources well and consciously accumulated a budget surplus that will be used to fund the Sixth Form. Expenditure on teachers is about average but that on support staff is much higher than the national pattern; however, they are well used to support teaching and learning. Learning resources are also generously funded. The bursar works very closely with the headteacher to ensure that the money at the school's disposal is used wisely. The governors' finance committee receives regular monitoring reports but governors are not sufficiently involved in school development planning. From next year the school is to produce a three-year spending plan to take account of future needs, because there will be less capital grant funding available. The school satisfactorily applies the principles of best value – comparison, challenge, consultation and competition – both in purchasing and also ensuring value for money in academic outcomes. However, the governors do not have enough involvement in applying this principle. The very capable bursar has addressed the points for action from the last audit reports. The school very effectively uses new technology to support and monitor many aspects of its work. The funding received by the school for identified students with special educational needs is very well spent. The majority is used to fund staff and this is having a positive effect on the good progress students are making. The school facilities are let regularly to a number of local organisations and the funds received from these are carefully accounted for.

Staffing

64. The school is well staffed. There are sufficient appropriately qualified teachers to teach the national curriculum and religious studies. Teachers' specialist skills in most subjects are well matched to the work they do, especially, for example, in science and modern foreign languages. Many teachers are young and bring to their work an enthusiasm and energy which more than balance the lack of experience in some subject departments. Very efficient clerical, administrative and building supervisory staff provide very good support. Appropriately, staff training is accorded high priority. Imaginative and effective plans are made for staff professional development and these are well linked to the school development plan. Staff numbers have grown rapidly as the school has expanded. Very good induction procedures are in place for all new staff, including those who are newly qualified teachers.

Accommodation

65. The accommodation is very good. Both the brand new and the extensively refurbished accommodation is light, bright and in very good decorative order. Some areas are purpose built such the art and music departments. Many have some character and offer exciting possibilities for development. The school has further enhanced the building through artwork in the corridors and public areas. Students can reach all classrooms under cover but the central quadrangle is an attractive outdoor space for recreation. The site as a whole is spacious and attractive. The building is carpeted throughout which makes it quieter and helps the smooth changeover between lessons. There is wheelchair access to all parts of the building.

66. There are no major weaknesses. Some south facing rooms need blinds and drama is currently being taught in a dance studio where the acoustics are not suitable. For physical education and games there is limited and not entirely well-sited changing room space. Overall, however, students have a high quality environment in which to work and learn. The buildings make a substantial contribution to the ethos of the school, which is well described on the notice on the inside of the students' entrance: "You are now entering a learning environment". While there is currently ample space, it is clear that as the school grows, it will need additional accommodation and in particular appropriate facilities for the Sixth Form.

Resources

67. Across the subject areas, resources are adequate or good. For example in English there is a good range of texts available to students and in ICT, a good number of computers and powerful software. There is also a good range of resources for students with special educational needs. The school benefits from a well-equipped learning resource centre, run effectively by two professional staff. The good range of resources supports good learning: there are books, computers with Internet access, audio and video materials and newspapers and magazines. However, the range of texts, particularly for Key Stage 4 students is not yet adequate. Regular liaison with departments ensures that research projects are well-resourced. For example students were able to research for a history presentation on the First World War, using ICT and reference books. The centre is well used by Key Stage 3 students, who take good advantage of an after-school homework club and lunchtime access. Independent use by older students is not so good.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

68. In order to raise further the standards of attainment and achievement, the governors, headteacher and staff should continue to work together to:
- (1) Build on the good leadership skills of middle managers so that as departments grow, they use rigorous strategies to monitor teaching and learning and to set clearly defined targets for further improvement* (*paragraphs 58-60*).
 - (2) Develop further the use of assessment data at classroom level so that students and parents are clear about attainment levels and how students can make the most of their potential* (*paragraphs 50-53*)

- (3) Improve teaching and learning in religious studies so that standards of and achievement are raised (*paragraphs 149-153*)
- (4) Include more opportunities for reflection on the spiritual dimension of life and consider how the statutory requirements for collective worship might be better met (*paragraph 40*)

In addition to these key issues, the governors should consider addressing the following matters in their action plan:

- Clarify and develop the role of governors in monitoring and evaluation (*paragraphs 61,62*)
- Review the time available for PSHE (*paragraph 35*)
- Develop drama in the KS3 curriculum* (*paragraph 88*)
- Develop the Key Stage 4 curriculum for low attaining students* (*paragraph 32*)
- Identify and match work to fully challenge gifted and talented students* (*paragraphs 8, 19-22*)
- Develop a strategy for teaching numeracy* (*paragraph 22*)

Items marked with an asterisk () are already included in the school development plan*

COMMUNITY LINKS

71. The community makes a very good contribution to students' learning. With the help of parents and governors, the school has forged a range of valuable links with local businesses. In business studies the teachers effectively use parents' professional skills to enhance the curriculum. Visits by performing theatre groups assist students to deepen their appreciation of drama texts. For example, the Black Cat Theatre Company performed 'Macbeth' in school and this was well used by teachers to enthuse students and extend their learning. Meteor Music and Rock School provided excitement during music lessons and a visiting author was a good focus for the teaching of literacy. An attractive display in the English department celebrates the good work that the students produced following this visit. Members of the local Rotary Club assist the reading of those who have problems with literacy. All these activities help to improve students' social skills and awareness of the part that the community plays in their lives.

72. Achievement and motivation is also greatly enhanced by links that enable students to spend time learning off the school site. The school has identified a small group of students who need extra stimulus to maintain their motivation, particularly in Years 9 and 10. Through the Epsom and Ewell Education Partnership selected students have worked on a customer care programme, which included a business breakfast and presentations to business people. Year 9 students are involved in a project with Surrey SATRO to improve the environment in the children's day ward at the local hospital. Year 10 students took part in a linked project with St. Mary's College in Twickenham and one of the Year 10 students has been elected to the UK Youth Parliament. Visits to enterprises on the Longmead Business Park and links with NESCOL College facilitate interesting learning in work related studies. Trips to Europe and exchanges raise awareness of the wider European community and contribute to learning in almost every area of the curriculum. All of these experiences are very valuable in widening students' horizons.
73. Students take part in competitions organised by the Ewell Horticultural Society and these activities link well with work in biology. The Odeon Cinema sponsored a healthy eating campaign, linking with work in food technology and in personal, social and health education. Year 7 students visited a local church to learn more of the role of the church in the community. The school has very good links with members of the community to support personal, social and health education. These include the police, hearing awareness, Redhill health authority and the prison service.
74. Effective primary school links are promoted through visits by the head of Year 7, deputy headteacher and special educational needs coordinator. The staff visit primary schools to meet the transferring Year 6 students, to lead assemblies and to talk to primary school teachers. Primary schools are invited to open evenings. Primary and secondary school staff have worked together to standardise marking and to share information for setting in Year 7. There are also sporting fixtures between local schools. The school has forged links with local secondary schools and combined secondary school training was provided by Nonsuch High School. The school has also provided work placements for students from other educational establishments
75. The school successfully promotes 'excellence in partnership' through inviting parents to listen to reading, help in the careers library, on trips and by using the skills of parents to support the teaching of business education. From the wider community a grandfather has helped to set up the kiln and ceramic area, a local minister has been appointed as a school governor and this has resulted in strong links with a local church. The Blenheim Partnership (the parent-teacher association) holds fund-raising and social events, which are well supported by parents and the local community.
76. The range of links with the community enhances the school's own learning resources. These include trips to Horton Country Park for geography fieldwork, links with Paris College to support modern foreign languages and with Bourne Hall Library to examine artefacts for history work. British Airports Authority provided computer equipment and the retail chain Next donated fabrics to the design and technology department.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

134

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students

39

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	23	38	29	5	0	0

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

Information about the school's students

students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y10
Number of students on the school's roll	739
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	96

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y10
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	20
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	125

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	29

Student mobility in the last school year	No of students
students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	17
students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	30

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	6.7
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	76	49	125

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	56	48	52
	Girls	35	29	28
	Total	91	77	80
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	74 (n/a)	62 (n/a)	64 (n/a)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	17 (n/a)	37 (n/a)	22 (n/a)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	56	48	52
	Girls	35	29	28
	Total	91	77	80
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	75 (n/a)	62 (n/a)	65 (n/a)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	17 (n/a)	37 (n/a)	23 (n/a)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		

Indian	10
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	702
Any other minority ethnic group	22

Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	26	2
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y10

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	41.8
Number of students per qualified teacher	17.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y10

Total number of education support staff	20
Total aggregate hours worked per week	464

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y10

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y10

Key Stage 3	23.9
Key Stage 4	20.1

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
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	£
Total income	1853135
Total expenditure	1861200
Expenditure per student	2519
Balance brought forward from previous year	147811
Balance carried forward to next year	139746

Number of questionnaires sent out	739
Number of questionnaires returned	611

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35	51	9	5	1
My child is making good progress in school.	36	55	6	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	30	55	8	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	57	13	4	2
The teaching is good.	38	54	3	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	48	11	3	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	42	5	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	37	1		1
The school works closely with parents.	27	52	13	4	5
The school is well led and managed.	38	48	5	1	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	52	6	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	48	8	3	9

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

ENGLISH

77. Standards are in line with national averages, but students' achievements in relation to their prior attainment on entry into the school are good. This is because the quality of teaching overall is good and in some lessons very good.

78. Standards in the 2000 Key Stage 3 tests were in line with national expectations in terms of the proportion of students obtaining level 5 or above. In comparison with similar schools standards at this level were above average. Boys did particularly well in comparison with boys nationally. Fewer students obtained level 6 or above than students nationally although standards were close to national averages when compared with similar schools. Within the school the performance of boys at this National Curriculum level was better than that of girls. At Key Stage 4 there are no previous results and so national comparisons are not possible. However, from the evidence of the work seen in Year 10 during the course of the inspection standards are in line with expectations.
79. In work seen during the inspection standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are average, as was the work seen in Year 10. Students are able to communicate clearly in writing and read fluently and with understanding. They speak confidently and their ability to listen for sustained periods promotes learning. In Key Stage 4 students expand the range of their writing and the complexity of their reading. Students studying the works of Thomas Hardy wrote perceptively of the power of his heroines and how they confront tragedy. Their writing was illustrated with telling references to the text and all were eager to explain to their peers their understanding of the forces driving the principal characters. Their enjoyment of analysing such texts was evident.
80. Standards of literacy in other subjects are good. In history students plan and develop their writing and in geography good use is made of technical language and key words. Students read for enjoyment in modern foreign languages and review what they have read. Their literacy skills are reinforced through dictionary work and an emphasis on correct spelling and attentive listening. Investigative approaches involving students in developing speaking and listening skills through discussion are evident in many areas. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress in basic skills and are able to benefit fully from the school's curriculum.
81. Standards of speaking are good. Students use standard English and speak clearly and fluently as the situation demands. Their positive attitude to learning creates an ethos where all feel secure in volunteering answers and opinions; they know that their peers will listen with respect. This culture of speaking confidently and well and heeding what others say is a strength and contributes significantly to how well students achieve.
82. Students are confident and enthusiastic in their use of ICT to organise and present their writing in a variety of forms. This was seen to good effect in the striking front-page newspaper layouts that Year 7 students devised. They were able to combine arresting headlines and pictures with informative reporting. Students are given every encouragement to read widely and they have access to a range of appropriate literature. Most students read fluently and with understanding although lower attaining students are less confident when reading aloud. Good use is made of the library in the learning resource centre. The librarian has organised a library skills course in Year 7. Its success is evident in the large numbers of younger students who use the library on a regular basis and attend the after school book clubs.
83. Achievement in English is good at both key stages compared to standards on entry into the school. This is the case for all groups of students, including those with special educational needs, those of high prior attainment and those for whom English is an additional language. Considerable gains are made in the development of speaking and listening skills and improvements in reading and writing are good. Students develop their writing skills. They take care in the drafting of their work and because they then edit and check for accuracy, their final pieces of extended writing are effectively constructed and read well. They adapt their writing style to take account of the readership and use appropriate vocabulary. They are skilful at taking notes on literature texts and write perceptively on the set books.
84. The quality of teaching and learning across both key stages is good and sometimes very good. Planning for lessons takes account of the needs of all students and teaching materials are adapted for those with special educational needs and those of high prior attainment. Effective

teaching strategies are in place to enable the highest attaining students to achieve well but they need to be consistently applied across all top sets. A range of appropriate teaching strategies is deployed to take account of lesson content and students' levels of attainment. Teachers are particularly skilled in the use of question and answer techniques to promote an enquiring and reflective approach to learning. Year 10 students were studying the poetry of the First World War and the attitudes of the time to honour and cowardice. When asked to reflect upon the impact of a young soldier's suicide on his family they had to confront moral and spiritual matters from different perspectives. This challenging work brought them face to face with the complexities of such issues. Imaginative teaching inspires and motivates students. For example, a Year 8 classroom was re-arranged for students to embark upon an imaginary railway journey. Seated in pairs, they had to talk to each other in the role of a chosen character and tell a story. They were allowed to repair to the buffet car for a change of scene and refreshments but the exchanges had to continue until the journey's end. They rose to the challenge, engaged their imaginations, developed their linguistic skills and enjoyed the journey. The pace of teaching is good but there are occasions when there is insufficient time at the end of lessons for an effective evaluation of what has been learnt. Rooms are cared for and students' work and informative material is attractively displayed to create a stimulating learning environment. The fact that teachers know students well and respond sensitively to their problems is a key reason why the young people's attitudes are so positive to their learning and their behaviour in lessons so good.

85. Appropriate procedures are in place for the monitoring and assessment of students' work. Marking is often shows students how to improve their work but this approach needs to be applied consistently. Teachers observe each other's lessons and are looking at ways to share and improve further existing good practice. They are also examining ways in which comparative data about students' performance can be used to inform planning and improve teaching. The quality and range of extracurricular provision makes a significant impact, enriching students' experiences. Extension classes for those of high attainment help to raise standards and there are additional classes for those with language difficulties. The investment of such time contributes to the achievement of the students and their enjoyment of the subject and their positive attitudes.
86. The subject is well managed and effectively led. The head of faculty provides clear direction to the work of her colleagues by focussing on raising standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning. Aims and values are clearly set out and embodied in policies and the departmental development plan identifies appropriate priorities for taking its work forward. Teachers work well together and are committed to improvement. The department has the capacity to build on its present success because teachers are receptive to change and new initiatives and review their work critically.

Drama

87. Results in the form of teacher assessments and GCSE grades are not yet available because the development of the subject as part of the school's curriculum is embryonic. However, standards of work seen during the inspection across both key stages are in line with national expectations.
88. Year 9 students achieve well given that their levels of prior attainment are adversely affected because they do not have the opportunity to study drama in Years 7 and 8. In addition the fortnightly carousel arrangement makes it more difficult to build on what they have learnt in the previous lesson. In the lesson seen they made good progress in using posture and facial expression to convey emotion in devising and presenting a scene where parents react to a disturbed child. They worked well collaboratively in small groups to develop the scene and injected conviction and feeling into the presentations.
89. In Year 10 the first students to embark upon a GCSE course are achieving well given that they had no opportunity to study drama at Key Stage 3. In the work seen students were organised

into two groups to put together and then present fifteen minute plays suitable for children of five or six years of age. The resulting presentations were of average standard but the students' evaluation of each other's work was very good. They were rigorous in judging the impact of the work on a primary school audience and suggested improvements. Such criticisms were accepted positively and actors and audience engaged in a creative dialogue. There is the potential for significant improvements in standards where students reflect upon and discuss their work in such a way.

90. The teaching of the subject is good and much has been learnt by the students in the few months the teacher has been working with them. Her experience, her realistic appraisal of the students' potential and her knowledge of them as individuals has brought good progress. Her work is hampered, however, by the inadequate accommodation and limited resources and by the carousel arrangement in Year 9 prior to the GCSE course. If the subject is to develop as a powerful learning aid then the school must address these issues.

MATHEMATICS

91. Standards in mathematics at Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with the national average. In 2000, Year 7 students' attainment on entry to the school was below the national average, with more lower grades than one would expect. Prior attainment of Year 10 students on entry to the school was well below the national average. At Key Stage 3, the proportion of those students achieving level 5 or above and level 6 or above was close to the national average, with boys performing better than girls. Levels of attainment are similar to those achieved in science and better than English at level 6 or above but not as good as English at level 5 or above. In comparison with similar schools the proportion of students achieving level 5 or above in 2000 was broadly in line with the average and above average for the proportion of students achieving level 6 or above. Average point scores are broadly in line with the national average, but above the average for schools in similar contexts. They are below those for English and science. The department added very good value over Key Stage 3 for the current Year 10 cohort of students.
92. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are above average. Students use and apply mathematics, extending a concept and articulating their thinking through set tasks. Their numerical skills are satisfactory, without the need to rely on the use of the calculator. They work confidently in small groups producing posters on percentages and sharing their findings with the rest of the class. Year 7 students can apply Eratosthenes' sieve, to identify the set of the first twenty-five prime numbers. They use this knowledge and understanding to determine the lowest common multiple for pairs of numbers. Year 8 average attaining students can determine the sum of the interior angles of polygons, defining some challenging aspects of shape and space successfully. Year 9 high attaining students are competent at solving simultaneous equations both graphically and algebraically, applying well all the rules of algebra. Neat and accurate working supports students' learning of transformation geometry and pie charts. Students handle data well. Lower attaining students can present real information in the form of a frequency table. They calculate a mean reinforcing their knowledge of number, illustrating the information in a variety of ways and interpreting the outcomes against an initial hypothesis, such as "teachers drive old cars". However, closer scrutiny of students' work indicates writing skills are not well developed. ICT skills are limited because ICT is only just being introduced into the revised scheme of work, apart from some discrete lessons and support provided for students with special educational needs. These students have good skills and good knowledge and understanding of number.
93. In work seen at Key Stage 4 the standards achieved by Year 10 students are above average. Knowledge and the application of number is very good. High attaining students use standard form, fractional indices, directed number and estimating skills well. Higher attaining students identify and solve quadratic functions using a variety of strategies. Average attaining students make good use of number and algebra to find term-to-term rules and formulae for sequences of numbers. Lower attaining students can solve simple linear equations showing the stages involved. The level of attainment when handling data is good with examples of discrete and

continuously grouped data. Cumulative frequency curves including the inter-quartile range and scatter diagrams are presented both clearly and accurately, supporting learning.

94. Achievement is good at both key stages. Good teaching results in very good attitudes and response to mathematics, leading to good progress. In Key Stage 3 students develop suitable strategies for solving problems and conducting investigations through planned exercises. For example, Year 7 students completed an investigation into the sequence generated from arranging chairs around increasing numbers of tables arranged in a common pattern at an Award Ceremony. Higher attaining students in Year 8 develop a good theoretical appreciation of bearings and their inverse, based on a practical exercise conducted outside the classroom. Year 9 students learn to apply the rules of algebra when justifying a hypothesis. Students with special educational needs make good progress, achieving as well as their peers with the help of learning support assistants attached to specific students. In Key Stage 4 all students continue to make good progress. They develop a good understanding of shape, space and measurement. Average attaining students learn to apply their knowledge of number to a variety of contexts, for example, standard form, surds and negative indices. The highest attaining students develop their skills in solving quadratic equations using a variety of strategies, such as completing the square, using a formula or by graphical method.
95. Standards of numeracy in other subjects are satisfactory. For example, at Key Stage 3 students studying history make good use of numeracy, constructing and interpreting block graphs of admission numbers to the Epsom workhouse during the last century. In geography students interpret graphical data using percentages and mathematical keywords correctly. In information and communication technology students make good use of 'logo' for control technology, spreadsheets and statistics. At Key Stage 4, geography students interrogate population pyramids in terms of life expectancy, population growth and decay. The calculator is used constructively in mathematics to aid learning without the need to rely on it for basic calculations. However, there is no consistent policy for improving numeracy across all subjects.
96. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall at both key stages. Specialist teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject is very good. The less secure expertise of non-specialist teachers impacts upon students' understanding and progress. Teaching of basic skills is unsatisfactory because of the lack of literacy, numeracy and ICT policies and strategies. Teachers' planning is very effective. Objectives are clearly communicated to students, providing a clear purpose at the start of lessons. However, planned opportunities for extending gifted and talented students are not evident across both key stages. Teachers' expectations are high with good use of open and closed questions that challenge the thinking of the majority of students, engaging and deepening their understanding. Teachers encourage intellectual effort and an atmosphere of imaginative curiosity by arranging for students to work out of doors, in groups and at the whiteboard, enhancing their personal development. There are clear expectations of high standards and good behaviour and the focus is on work throughout the lesson. Relationships between the students and the teachers are very good. Teachers use time effectively; for example, work for the lowest attaining students is broken down into 'bite' size activities to take account of their capacity to concentrate. Teaching methods are effective with good use of resources and imaginative teaching styles, making learning easy, memorable and enjoyable. Assistants are employed well to support the learning of students with special educational needs. Homework is issued regularly to all students and is appropriate, except that it does not always provide enough challenge highest attaining students. Procedures for the assessment of students at the end of completed topics are good; the quality and use of ongoing assessment is less effective, so that students are not always clear about how they can progress to the next level. Work marked in lessons is not monitored and the marking of homework is inconsistent. Although required by the department marking policy, grades are sometimes omitted, undermining students' knowledge of their own learning. Valid written diagnostic and evaluative annotations to support students' learning are infrequent, although poorly presented work is challenged by the teacher and students are expected to complete corrections.

97. Leadership and management in the subject are good, with clear educational direction evident in the departmental development plan. The department has made good progress since the school opened four years ago. Teachers work well together and there is a clear commitment to raising standards further. However, there is no comprehensive department handbook to support this ambition. Policies for procedures and practices such as marking and assessment are not clear enough. Additional policies need to be established, such as literacy, numeracy, ICT, special educational needs, gifted and talented students, homework, equal opportunities. Evaluation of the subject's performance through lesson observation, analysis of collected assessment data and monitoring the delivery of the scheme of work is satisfactory. But as the school grows in size, there is need for greater clarity, rigour and consistency. The department does not have a second-in-charge to support the management of the department as it grows and prepares for the Sixth Form. The quality of teaching and learning would improve further if accommodation were on one floor, facilitating teamwork and closer monitoring and support. Additional textbooks, sufficient for one per student, and a full set of graphic calculators would improve further students' conceptual development in the subject.

SCIENCE

98. Standards at entry are below average. Standards attained by students at the end of Key Stage 3 in the 2000 national tests were average. This was a marked improvement on their well below average attainment on entry. Compared with similar schools, performance last year was above average but the proportion of students achieving the higher grades was not as high as the proportion that reached the nationally expected standard. Boys' standards were approximately two terms ahead of the girls. However, close scrutiny indicates that more boys, in particular, should be getting the higher grades. Standards are on a par with English and mathematics. These results show that these students made a very good start in the school but that there is potential to do even better.
99. Overall standards of work seen at both Key Stage 3 and in Year 10 are average. The work seen reflects the variety, rigour and challenge that teachers plan into their teaching. In a Year 9 class students know that magnetic fields are regions of space where magnetic materials encounter forces; they can carry out an experiment to confirm that that a current in a coil of wire generates a magnetic field just like that in a bar magnet. They have good predicting skills when suggesting that increasing the voltage applied to the coil or number of turns in it could increase the strength of the magnetic field. They can work out their own method of testing this. Students in Year 7 are building on their knowledge of how to separate mixtures and can separate them into their constituents, using distillation, filtration and chromatography. Students in Year 8 know that displacement reactions take place between metals and solutions of salts of other metals. They can use the particle theory of matter to explain the properties of solids, liquids and gases. Year 7 students understand that a mixture of soluble dyes in inks could be separated using chromatography but could not describe this well. They could not yet confidently explain that the coloured dye in the ink that dissolves best moves furthest up the paper because it is more soluble than the other colours. This is because teachers encourage students to develop their own class notes but too little attention is given to ensuring that students write good descriptions and explanations that are scientifically accurate. In Year 7 many students can predict that a black and a silver surface will radiate heat differently but few can write a prediction as an "I think... because" statement. Students' written work is generally well presented and they use the right scientific words well in their written explanations. They have learnt about the ways in which a range of scientists work and their discoveries. Numeracy skills are a little weaker than literacy skills but still satisfactory. There is particularly good graphical work and appropriate calculations undertaken in investigative work but the development of numeracy needs to be carefully mapped through all topics. The use of ICT is improving. The write up of investigations benefits from the widespread use of word-processing and spreadsheets and there are occasional examples of these being used in other work. Students are starting to use data-loggers to collect and store experimental data. In work seen at Key Stage 4 overall standards achieved by Year 10 students are average. Higher attaining students can set up and use an electrical circuit to study the behaviour of copper electrodes in an electrolytic solution of copper sulphate. They know that ions are formed from atoms by the loss or gain of electrons and

whilst they still have to master using these ideas confidently to describe electrolytic reactions they undertake their practical work very confidently. Lower attaining students in Year 10 showed patchy but an improving understanding of the periodic table of the elements, the chemical formulae of different alkanes, atomic structure and the properties of the alkali metals and the halogens. Students know about the similarities and differences between plant and animal cells and are learning about the structure and function of different organs in the body. In investigative work many are becoming much more aware of the reliability of scientific evidence and anomalous results.

100. Achievement is good overall, especially for the average and lower attaining students. By the end of Year 9 students have covered the full programme of work and have made good progress in acquiring new knowledge and understanding because of the rich and varied curriculum and the high proportion of good, brisk teaching. Boys and girls make similar strides in their achievement; differences in standards achieved in national tests are related to differences in prior attainment. Students with special educational needs also achieve well because of the careful support and well-matched work they are given. For example, during a Year 8 lesson two students with Statements of Special Educational Need made good gains in understanding that some metals are more reactive than others. This was because they were assisted by a very effective learning support assistant and were given well-structured work. Students in two classes in Year 10 were given an exciting circus of experiments, with problems to solve and key questions to answer to help them revise for an assessed module of work. They are generally making good progress because of good and enthusiastic teaching. Year 10 students have settled well into their GCSE work; they are generally making good progress. Assessment results indicate that they are continuing to raise their standards when writing answers to questions. They undertake practical work very confidently. Higher attaining students can set up and use an electrical circuit to study the behaviour of copper electrodes in an electrolytic solution of copper sulphate. The achievement of higher attaining students is satisfactory but not as high as it could be.
101. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall in all years. Practical work is managed well and team planning has ensured that there is a good variety of well-chosen tasks in lessons; this helps the students enjoy the lesson and provides good levels of challenge, particularly to the average and lower attaining students. For example, in a Year 8 class the teacher promoted class discussion and students made good interesting class presentations on plants they had researched. Work was consolidated by a well-chosen written exercise. Teachers generally have strong subject knowledge and many use this well to ensure that students are taught the key facts and correct scientific conventions. Nearly all lessons have good pace. Where teaching is particularly effective, such as in the teaching of electromagnetism in Year 9 and revision with the lower sets in Year 10, it was because of the exceptionally well-presented lesson objectives, well-timed and appropriately chosen activities and excellent classroom management. In most lessons teachers relate very well to the students and as result students enjoy their work, concentrate hard and are very productive. Homework is regularly set, and exemplar examination questions are being increasingly used to show students the standards they need to reach. There are some weaknesses that, if addressed, would make good teaching even stronger. Teachers do not always make the students aware of the standards they are expected to achieve; for example, the difference between mass and weight was not pointed out to Year 10 students. More challenging work could be set for the highest attaining students; often they are given exactly the same work as other students. Learning outcomes could be more consistently communicated; students are clear about what needs to be done but summaries at the end are often rushed and do not give them a clear understanding of the big idea taught in the lesson. Marking could be improved; work is regularly marked but there are too few evaluative and supportive comments to help students understand what to do to get better. Too little use is made of probing questions to help students explore their understanding and to help teachers understand the strengths and weaknesses in what has been learnt. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching stems from weak classroom and behaviour management.
102. The newly appointed head of department leads an enthusiastic and committed team. Appropriate development priorities have been clearly identified. A manageable number of

improvements is being tackled at any one time. The good curriculum planning needs to be improved so that more specific learning outcomes are included for each lesson, along with opportunities to challenge higher attaining as well as lower attaining students. More information is now being collected on students' achievements but greater use needs to be made of this at classroom level and in setting targets for all students. The excellent accommodation is enhanced by good display, providing a stimulating learning environment for science. Technical support is also excellent and does much to allow the large amount of practical work to operate smoothly. The popular science club supports learning well and wider links with industry and other educational visits are being planned. A start has been made to monitoring the quality of teaching but this needs to be more rigorous. The department is making good progress and is on track to raise standards further.

ART AND DESIGN

103. Standards of 14 year olds, as assessed by the teachers in 2000, were well above average. However, this is not borne out by the inspection, which finds that standards in art and design are below average for the end of Key Stage 3. Most of the students can explore ideas and express them in their work; few can develop or refine their work because their research lacks depth and understanding. Standards in Year 10 are also below average at this stage of a GCSE course. Whilst the work is often imaginative and expressive, the research and development of ideas is limited.
104. At Key Stage 3 the range of media that the students use is limited. It is mostly confined to painting and drawing on paper. Sketchbooks are too small to inspire or challenge the students. Some are prepared to use these as a store of creative ideas but lower attaining students use them superficially. In general, at Key Stage 3, girls are doing better than boys: their work shows a better understanding of art from other times or cultures and they are prepared to go into more detail. In Key Stage 4, the boys' work tends to be better than the girls'. In work such as paintings developed from Pop art or abstract painters, the results can be a mechanical interpretation without a real analysis of the context of such ideas.
105. Achievement is satisfactory and improving at both key stages. The general level of attainment on entry is below average and students develop new knowledge and skills as they progress through the school. At Key Stage 3 the higher attaining students learn to extract design elements from, say the Arts and Crafts movement or early 20th Century art, but they are not developing the skills or the understanding of colour sufficiently well to use this effectively in their own work. At Key Stage 4 vacuum-formed masks show that students are able to develop new skills and make good use of decoration inspired by carnivals to express alternative approaches.
106. At both key stages the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The co-ordinator for art and design has recently begun maternity leave, and the school has had difficulty in recruiting an experienced replacement. Judgements about teaching are, therefore, based on the students' achievements and lessons taken by a supply teacher and a newly qualified teacher who has recently joined the school. Planning is generally good and is firmly based on the National Curriculum. Lessons are well managed, so that students are relaxed and enjoy working on the tasks they are given. However, teachers often fail to challenge them, as in Year 9 lessons during the inspection, where the pace was slow and the teacher had not set clear targets or time limits. In this case students had researched the packaging topic only superficially, so that their designs lacked insight or refinement and they did not have a clear idea how to improve them. Lower attaining students became bored and made slow progress. In the best lessons, the teacher assesses the students' progress effectively and sets some clear targets. Students then learn better and gain a sense of achievement. In a very good Year 10 lesson, the students' behaviour at the start of the lesson was poor, but improved considerably as the teacher challenged and inspired them to try harder. Even the most recalcitrant students, girls in particular, were pleased with the progress they had made. Individual attention given by the teacher and a good rapport with the students also raises expectations and improves progress. In most lessons students behave well, organising materials and workspace without fuss and

listening well to instructions. However, only a few express their research well in words, so that this aspect of key skills learning is underdeveloped.

107. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The department has largely achieved the objectives agreed with the school but these have not been sufficiently geared towards raising attainment. The assessment of students' achievement is carried out regularly and consistently and students have a good idea of how well they are doing, because they are fully involved in the process. But expectations are too low, particularly for the higher attaining students. Art and design benefits from very good accommodation in bright and stimulating surroundings. Teachers make satisfactory use of a small computer suite for experiments in digital design, although they miss opportunities, for instance in pattern making and image manipulation. This is a developing department and the co-ordinator has established good routines. The new teacher is enthusiastic and learning fast. There are good signs that students are ready to respond to greater demands and new challenges. There is good potential for improvement: the department needs to challenge students more and be more adventurous in its use of media.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

108. Teachers' Assessments in 2000 showed standards are above average for 14 year olds. Most students are meeting national expectations as a result of good teaching, students' very good attitudes to learning and good progress. At Key Stage 4 the standards achieved by the majority of students are in line with national expectations, but with a significant minority falling below. Students with special educational needs and make good progress and work to a good standard across both key stages. No significant differences were observed in the performance of boys and girls.
109. In work seen during the inspection, students towards the end of Key Stage 3 show above average levels of attainment, at least similar to those reached last year. For example, in the production stages of making a printed circuit board, students make notes and produce circuit diagrams and layout masks. Throughout this process good teaching helps students to acquire new skills and to deepen their understanding of the technology they are using. When any student needs to learn a new skill or experiences a problem, which provides a learning opportunity for all, then good teaching capitalises on this with the result that learning is improved for all. A good example was in electronics, using a computer based learning program. This, coupled with the students' willingness to learn, make and finish products to a good standard, resulted in above average attainment. Similar standards are seen in textiles lessons. For example, in a Year 8 lesson students used overlockers with confidence and skill and in a Year 7 food technology lesson students objectively analysed and evaluated their cakes. At Key Stage 4, Year 10 designing is weak. Folder work across all abilities is below average. Basic skills in presentation, layout and rendering need to be improved in order to ensure that students will not be disadvantaged at GCSE.
110. Achievement in Key Stage 3 is good; in Key Stage 4 it is satisfactory. The majority of students make good progress including higher achieving students and those with special educational needs. Students with English and an additional language are integrated well and make progress in line other students of similar ages. In Key Stage 4 progress is restricted due to the poor quality of design work and low expectations of presentation skills. Making suffers from a lack of consistency and missed learning opportunities. For example, when evaluating pasta products, students' testing lacked validity.
111. Teaching and learning are good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. The teaching of making is better than the teaching of designing across both key stages. Because of the good teaching in Key Stage 3 the attitudes of 11-14 year old students to learning are often excellent and never less than satisfactory. For example, in a Year 8 lesson using thermoplastics and heat treatment, students were inspired to create their best work by the insistence on high standards and very clear guidelines on production methods. The brisk pace and clarity of lessons coupled with very good use of speculative questioning ensures that students are challenged and

managed well. For example, in a Year 9 lesson students using light dependant resistors were hypothesizing and testing sensors for the deaf. In a Year 10 lesson, teaching and learning was satisfactory. The behaviour and attitude of the students was good, although opportunities were missed to develop language skills in pasta product descriptions. At both key stages work is marked and appropriate homework is given out but students do not always know clearly how well they are doing. Marking schemes and level descriptors need to be shared with the students. The department needs to use the data collected about students' attainment over time to assist in the planning and development of new modules. The work of collating data should be aimed at making a difference to the quality of teaching, learning, and assessment. Displays are excellent throughout the department and are used effectively as teaching and learning aids.

112. The management of the department is good. Regular focused meetings ensure that planning for teaching and learning remains a priority. The curriculum provides satisfactory coverage of the National Curriculum. Food technology contributes to the understanding of different cultures by making and tasting food from other countries. Access to computers is good but where students have to share, higher attaining students make limited progress with extension work. The department should consider the use of laptops and smartboards to enhance provision for gifted and talented students.
113. The department is in a very strong position to improve further. In order to do this the role of the subject coordinator needs clarification. To further improve the quality of teaching the staff need to ensure that sharply focused classroom observations are carried out. This will help all staff to consolidate the good practice observed, whilst identifying areas for improvement such as explaining aims and objectives to students and focusing on literacy and numeracy. The department should also increase the range of courses on offer at Key Stage 4, for example electronics and graphics, as the school continues to grow and evolve.

GEOGRAPHY

114. Teachers' Assessments for the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 indicate average standards. However, students in Year 10 who have chosen to study geography at Key Stage 4 are achieving above average standards. There is no significant difference between boys' and girls' attainment at either key stage.
115. In work seen during the inspection, standards in both key stages are above average. Year 7 students have a secure understanding of the rainfall cycle. Most students know technical words associated with the cycle, for example, precipitation, evaporation and condensation. Year 9 students show a good understanding of deforestation and start to understand different ways in which these areas under threat could be conserved; the moral issues of conservation are developed. Students understand some of the environmental issues after visiting a country park - the problems relating to litter, graffiti, noise pollution and footpath erosion. Low attaining students use spider diagrams successfully to brainstorm the consequences of these issues; higher attaining students write a connected outline for their notes. Students consider the possible solutions and assess their merits. Their numeracy skills successfully support their work. For example, Year 9 students successfully draw graphs and bar charts representing fieldwork data. Students successfully use ICT in order to present their project work. In Key Stage 4 students show a secure knowledge of Brazil; they know areas that are densely and sparsely populated. Students use simple population data about Brazil to plot population graphs; many students label their graphs giving evaluations of the data they plot
116. Achievement is good in both key stages. By the end of Key Stage 3 students successfully develop basic geographical skills of map work, scale and direction; they learn to present work successfully using shading, titles and keys. They begin to understand the concept of sustainability in relation to conservation of the environment. Overall, students including those with special educational needs make good progress in map work, use of keys and scales and observational skills. Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and make good progress from the level of their prior attainment. In Key Stage 4 boys and girls make good progress as they build on the basic geographical skills already learned. They start to evaluate data over a period of

time, linking the effects of birth and death rates with recent trends in society. This demonstrates they are starting to link aspects of human and economic geography. Concepts are beginning to develop as they look at a model of population transition. Low attaining students, however, struggle with this concept.

117. Teaching and learning are good in both key stages. Teachers show a good knowledge of geography and apply their knowledge well. For instance, in Year 10, their knowledge about Brazil's population enables students' own knowledge and understanding to be challenged and their horizons and concepts to be extended. Students are encouraged to ask and answer geographical questions in detail. Confident teaching produces challenging questions, which further enhance students' understanding of, for example, work on conservation in the Horton Country Park. Teachers expect students to work hard and achieve well. This was observed when Year 7 students studied the rainfall cycle. At times, however, there are insufficient strategies of a practical nature to involve students in their learning in order to enhance their understanding. The range of tasks is sometimes insufficient to meet the needs of the range of abilities in a class, particularly higher attaining students in Key Stage 4. Teachers are generally flexible in their teaching to meet the needs of students with special educational needs and the support they give is good. Teachers and learning support assistants ensure that students with special educational needs integrate well into lessons, where they are also well supported by their peers.
118. The geography co-ordinator provides good leadership and management of the department; he has a clear view of what constitutes good provision and in consequence the curriculum is good. The department makes satisfactory use of selective data and statistics in order to track students' progress. However, this is insufficiently developed and the department does not make good use of national statistical comparisons. Monitoring of teaching and learning takes place but this too is insufficiently developed to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
119. The department has made good progress since the opening of the school. There are good foundations for the development of the subject. The geography department works closely as a team; they are all very enthusiastic and committed to the raising of standards.

HISTORY

120. Teachers' Assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 were in line with the nationally expected level in 2000. In the work seen during the inspection standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are also broadly in line with the expected level for 14 year olds; standards in Year 10 of Key Stage 4 are at the national average for students following a GCSE course in history.
121. At Key Stage 3 most students show a sound grasp of the topics they are studying; they are able to describe and explain historical events and changes, although they find analysis more difficult, for example, when writing about the causes of the English Civil War in Year 8. On the whole students work well with historical sources. Year 9 students successfully researched information from a very wide variety of sources about life in the trenches during the First World War. Some higher attaining students in Year 9 produce good historical writing, as in work on Robert Owen and the factory system. In Year 10 students are mastering the content of the course well, such as the background to Hitler's rise to power in 1933. They continue to use historical sources effectively; for example, they worked thoughtfully and carefully with some challenging sources when investigating the Reichstag fire. Many students write thorough, well-argued essays although lower attaining students find it difficult to produce work with sufficient historical explanation and analysis.
122. The achievement of students, including those with special educational needs, is good in both key stages. They extend their knowledge of different periods and develop relevant skills. They build successfully on earlier work, which helps them make effective progress. At Key Stage 3 students make particularly good progress in developing their structured writing; good teaching enables them to improve their skills in selecting and organising information in answer to historical questions.

123. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, and is often very good. Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject and their knowledge of the topics they teach are very well used to extend students' interests and understanding. Very effective strategies are in place to develop students' literacy skills; writing frames, for example, are well used at Key Stage 3 to help students develop essay-writing skills. Lesson planning is thorough, and is usually well matched to the learning needs of students, including those with special educational needs, so that they all make good progress. Teachers use a wide range of teaching methods, which are effective in tackling new topics and consolidating students' understanding. Skilful and probing questioning is particularly well used to drive students' learning forward, as in a Year 7 lesson when students were recalling previous work they had done on life in a medieval village. Well-organised group work to research conditions in the trenches led to very effective PowerPoint presentations by some students in one Year 9 class. The day-to-day assessment of students' work is good and most students know what they have to do to improve their work. Students are very well managed and this ensures good behaviour and positive attitudes.
124. The department is very well led and managed. A good scheme of work, and well-prepared resources meant that two new teachers, one newly qualified, who joined the staff at the beginning of the school year, could become effective very quickly. Students' learning is greatly enhanced by the subject's effective use of educational visits, the school's learning resource centre and ICT. Good progress has been made in developing the subject in the school over the last four years, owing to the high level of staff commitment and considerable hard work. The department now needs to build on its good assessment procedures to ensure that the data obtained is fully used for monitoring students' progress and for setting them appropriate targets, especially as Key Stage 4. The department is well placed to continue the process of developing and refining its scheme of work as the school grows in size.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

125. Teachers' Assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 show standards are below average for girls and above average for boys. The inspection confirms that boys do better than girls and that the overall standard is in line with the national average. Students' knowledge and understanding of the value and use of ICT in society is good and they have a sound grasp of a range of software tools. In Year 10, standards are in line with expectations for this stage in the GCSE course.
126. In work seen during the inspection standards are average at both key stages. Higher attaining students can combine information from the Internet with their own writing to make a presentation, which they adapt and refine for a particular audience. In science students use a computer program linked to sensors to measure rates of cooling in liquids and higher attaining students interpret the data effectively by means of the resulting graph. In design and technology they can develop and refine a series of commands to control switches and lights. Few students are yet able to devise their own spreadsheets to test an idea or model a system but most are working towards this by exploring the effects of changing variables. At Key Stage 4 students have developed some good work in modeling various businesses, combining text, pictures and tables with information from the Internet to produce convincing scenarios. Overall, students have an above average grasp of the way that ICT can help them in their work and the effects it has in society
127. Achievement is good at both key stages and for some higher attaining students in very challenging lessons, very good. At Key Stage 3, students learn to use a wide range of software tools and equipment to solve problems in data handling, searching for and sorting information, financial modeling and controlling various devices. At Key Stage 4, higher attaining students develop a good understanding, for instance, of how changing wage levels or profit margins can affect a business. Lower attaining students learn to present their ideas convincingly through the design of letter headings and business cards. They are keen to use computers because they can see the advantage that they can provide and they are given good opportunities across the curriculum to increase their skills.

128. Teaching and learning are good throughout. Teachers have high expectations of what they want students to achieve. Students enjoy this challenge, and often use their initiative to solve a problem, as in a Year 9 lesson where a student e-mailed the results of a data-logging experiment to his fellow-student in another room, so that she could incorporate them in the write-up. Teachers prepare the lessons well and explain the tasks clearly, telling students what they should expect to learn. This complements the useful marking and assessment and enables the students to know how well they are doing. In one lesson, the teacher explained the National Curriculum grades he had given for a project. Teachers use the resources of the ICT rooms well so that student can see a large demonstration screen from their workstations and have access to all the software they need. They are able to retrieve work they did earlier, log on to the Internet or print work in progress, which speeds the learning process. The department also operates a 'buddy' system. Boys and girls are seated alternatively and, wherever possible, higher and lower attainers are together. This means they are able to ask their partners if they have a problem, reducing demands on the teachers and, again, aiding progress. In this challenging environment, teachers sometimes do not provide work that is appropriate for lower attaining students. Often, the written instructions are too difficult. In the best lessons, the teacher provides simpler instructions and work in smaller steps, so that students at all levels can achieve good progress.
129. Leadership and management are very good. The development of the syllabus has gone hand in hand with the development of the resources and both are good; they enable all the subjects to have access to good quality tools to enhance teaching and learning across the curriculum. ICT lessons provide a good boost to students' literacy and numeracy skills, as teachers provide vocabulary, encourage spell-checking and set numerical and statistical problems. The Key Stage 3 ICT lessons ensure that the National Curriculum programmes of study are covered, as well as providing the expertise of specialist teachers and skilled technicians. The open access and placement of computer workstations around the school and in the learning resource centre enables students to explore the Internet, complete assignments or do their homework. The English, science, history and design and technology departments all make particularly good use of ICT. In mathematics, students do not have enough opportunities to develop the use of computers as a mathematical tool in. Good provision is made for a visually impaired student to use a laptop in class. Students withdrawn from lessons for literacy help are encouraged to use spellcheckers, but these are not in evidence in the classrooms. Considering the large number of computers in school, there is little supportive software that makes writing easier for students with special needs. Students with computers at home are able to research and word process their homework. Computers are sometimes used in lesson time for word processing, but students need to leave the classroom to do this.
130. The school's good links with local businesses, the development of GNVQ business studies and the production of a very good school newspaper have provided the impetus for a "real world" understanding of ICT. This interaction also plays an important part in students' social, moral and cultural education. To improve achievement further, teachers should ensure in their planning that they provide appropriate learning opportunities for lower attaining students and those with special educational needs.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

131. Teachers' Assessments in 2000 in both French and German show standards for all students to be just in line with national expectations. Although boys performed better than girls in 2000, this was not evident in the standards of work seen, where there is no noticeable difference.
132. In work observed during the inspection in Key Stage 3, standards are above average. In Year 9, higher attaining students in both French and German can use a range of structures and produce more extended writing using different tenses, with middle and lower attaining students able to write independently and at varied lengths. In listening and reading, students can understand and respond to a range of texts that sometimes contain more complex language. All students

understand and respond to target language instructions and explanations in the classroom. More extended speaking was not observed, however, and students were only taking part in short exchanges. Nevertheless the range of structures used in speaking is good, with all students able to ask and answer questions with good pronunciation. In Key Stage 4 the standard of work seen overall is average, with standards in French and German in line with or occasionally above expectations at this stage of Year 10, across the four skills of speaking and listening, reading and writing. In Spanish, students are beginners, but are able to respond to and produce a range of language, although at this stage in limited contexts.

133. Achievement is good in both key stages. In Year 7, students are achieving well and most are able already to understand and apply grammatical concepts such as gender, plurals and agreement in a range of contexts. They soon write accurately and speak with good pronunciation. Students starting a second language in Year 8 make very good progress and use their previous first foreign language learning experience to make rapid progress in the second language. When introduced to new language, students assimilate it quickly and make good progress in using it independently. For example, in a Year 9 French lesson, students were able to recap orally, without the support of notes or a textbook, the vocabulary and language structures for leisure activities. When introduced to new structures about the weather, they were able to ask and answer questions incorporating the new language. Students with special educational needs are also progressing well and are able to contribute well to speaking activities in the classroom. In Year 10, French and German, students are achieving well, building on language learnt in Key Stage 3. They use and respond to language from a range of topics across all four skills and can express opinions and use different tenses, thus already addressing GCSE requirements. In a Year 10 German lesson, students were able to quickly use new language about the advantages and disadvantages of living in the town and country, using complex language with subordinate clauses and expressing opinions. Higher attaining students were able to produce short dialogues with little support. In a French lesson, students were able to consolidate new language and topics by producing a mini-project in writing and in speaking. Higher attaining students were able to conduct their own survey and to write it up. Middle to lower attaining students were able to express simple opinions with some support. In Spanish, students are already able to speak with good pronunciation after less than two terms. They have learnt to use tenses other than the present, to express simple opinions and understand and respond to longer written and spoken texts.
134. In both key stages teaching and learning are very good in French, German and Spanish. Teachers have high expectations in all three languages, using the target language as the main means of communication in the classroom. Students respond using French, German or Spanish themselves to communicate. In a Year 7 German lesson, students requested to take their jackets off, in German, with no prompting. Teachers make sure students are clear about what to do and what is expected of them. As a result students respond positively to all three languages, the standards of behaviour are high and presentation in exercise books and folders is good. Lessons are well planned with different activities given clear timings so that the pace is very good, with students taking part in a range of activities, including games, pair work and ICT assignments. In a Year 10 Spanish lesson, after the initial introduction of new language for occupations, students took part in repetition games, miming games, listening and reading exercises, all of which reinforced the new language structures, enabling them to produce extended conversations in pairs by the end of the lesson. Homework is set regularly in all languages. The activities set enable students to consolidate or extend their learning of new language. For example, in a Year 7 French lesson, all students were required to complete a family tree for homework, following a lesson introducing family members. Higher attaining students had to complete a more complex gap-fill exercise. Teachers provide good opportunities for more extended reading, listening and writing in French and German and plan different activities so that all students can achieve. However, fewer opportunities are provided in speaking and the range of activities for the very high attaining students, including more creative use of language, is more limited. In Spanish, the planning appropriately takes into account the students' age and maturity as well as the fact that the students are beginners, so that all learn new language quickly and with enthusiasm. In Key Stage 3 teachers regularly build the assessment of listening, reading and writing into their teaching, as well as assessing students

more formally in all four skills, three times in the year. However, although students have some idea of their levels in Year 9 and target-setting is a regular feature in Key Stage 3 in French and German, the targets are not sufficiently linked to National Curriculum levels for students to understand clearly what they need to do to improve their performance. In Key Stage 4, target setting and assessment, related to examination performance, is under-developed in all three languages.

135. The department is very well led and managed. It works as a team with a clear commitment to improve standards and to share good practice and resources. The curriculum provision is very good. Two languages are offered in Key Stage 3 and Spanish can be learnt in Key Stage 4. Extracurricular provision is good: there are well-established trips to France and Germany and an exchange to Germany, as well as a lunchtime language club. All department documentation is clear, with appropriate policies covering a range of issues, such as rewards and sanctions, special educational needs and marking. These are clearly acted on by the whole department and ensure consistency in teaching and learning. The very good deployment of the two foreign language assistants has a good impact on teaching and learning.
136. The department is making very good progress and has the capacity to improve further. In order to improve it needs to further develop the scheme of work in line with the revised National Curriculum, building in more creative and varied tasks, especially for higher attaining students and for speaking in both key stages. The assessment of speaking needs to be reviewed to ensure that there are more opportunities built into lessons. Target-setting needs to focus more closely at student level on the National Curriculum requirements and at Key Stage 4 on examination requirements, in order to monitor students' performance and to help them improve.

MUSIC

137. Although Teachers' Assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 showed levels well above the national average, inspection evidence showed standards are below the national average. At Key Stage 4 they are further below average than at Key Stage 3, where they are close to the national average. Most of the Year 10 students are working below the level expected at this stage in their course. However, this group contains students with special educational needs and several lower attaining students. They are working at levels appropriate to their present musical knowledge and skills. A substantial minority of students understands the work well and is working at appropriate GCSE levels.
138. There were no lessons in Year 9 during the inspection but discussion with students showed they are aware of what their current and past work involves and what they should be able to do. They can talk about their work in some detail and show a fair understanding about their compositions and the performances in which they have taken part. At Key Stage 3 standards are rising and the work of Year 7 and 8 seen during the inspection is approaching the national average. The tasks they undertake are sometimes below the level they ought to be tackling but they are often well done. For example, Year 7 students have a good grasp of the idea of three beats in a bar. They can clap easily and securely on the first beat and play simple tunes and bass parts on percussion instruments or keyboards. Very few students read staff notation but many are quick to recognise letters giving chords and have memorised how to play them. Students do not sing well but in both Year 7 and Year 8 they are prepared to sing in class. Many of them use their speaking voice to sing and the sound becomes rather hard when they try to sing loudly. The choir makes a better sound in a popular style and is beginning to use good vocal tone especially for higher notes. Year 8 students improvise simple tunes and rhythms over a walking bass, some of them showing a feeling for style as well as a facility to use the notes. This was an example of the majority working at a lower than average level and a minority able to take the relatively simple task and produce good work from it. Year 9 books show competent work.
139. Few Key Stage 4 students have good instrumental or music reading skills and so their performances and compositions are at a lower level than they should be at this stage in the course. Those who can play more competently use their skills well. For example, two have

prepared a version of the theme music "Titanic" which they can play competently and musically. Others, however, struggle to play a simple version of the Eine Kleine Nachtmusic theme. Most students' knowledge of the elements of music needs to be improved to bring them to a point where good GCSE work can be attempted.

140. Achievement is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. Because tasks are pitched at an appropriate level, most students can make progress. In a Year 7 lesson, for example, students grew in confidence at both reading notation and playing the bass part of a song. Vocal work does less to improve students' singing, although the choir made perceptible progress in their rehearsal. Where students do not make good progress it is due in large part to their own lack of concentration. Some students, for example, learned little in a Year 10 lesson because they failed to apply themselves. In the same group others settled to the task, worked hard and made significant advances in skills and understanding. Students taught by visiting instrumental teachers learn at a satisfactory rate. Students with special educational needs take a full part in Key Stage 3 lessons and are achieving well.
141. Teaching is satisfactory overall and a third of lessons seen were good. Learning is satisfactory. Teaching and learning tends to be better at Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4 a difficult group makes it hard to bring about rapid progress in students' musical knowledge and skills, despite some effective presentation of ideas. In Key Stage 3 students explore rhythm and melody and how composers use all the elements of music. A new sound world through African music opened for Year 7 students during the inspection, when they heard some atmospheric singing. Good questioning helps students explore this world but not as fully as it might. Teachers prepare lessons thoroughly and organise activities within them well. They make the objectives of the lessons clear to students and sum up well at the end so that students have a good grasp of what they have learned. Tasks are appropriate to students' attainment levels and are usually open-ended so that more musically able students can work in a more complex or musically advanced way. This is not always made clear, however, and examples were seen of students completing the work easily and not progressing quickly enough to the next level. In a Year 8 lesson several students could play the given riff and were almost immediately ready to improvise their own. Generally teachers pace lessons well and students are busy and learning. They help most students enjoy their music making, especially when the tasks bring about successful performances of pieces, however simple, they have created for themselves. However, in both class and choir singing teachers do not capitalise on students' readiness to sing, to improve the sound and widen the repertoire.
142. Teachers manage classes well and this enables students to concentrate and to learn. Some classes need firmer handling to make lessons more effective without losing the good atmosphere and relationships. Teachers create a good sense of urgency by setting time limits for tasks are always positive about their work in class and their written work. But in marking written assignments they sometimes do not give enough guidance as to how students might make their work better. Teachers plan appropriate tasks for students with special educational needs so that although their attainment levels and musical abilities vary a great deal, their learning is satisfactory. Teachers provide many extracurricular activities and give amply of their time and musical skills to help students learn through them. The band and vocal and instrumental group rehearsals have an air of purpose and enthusiasm.
143. There are now two teachers with good musical expertise in the department, one part time. Planning and the organisation of a busy and growing department is now more realistically undertaken. Accommodation for music is very good. The department has a large new purpose built area with ample practice facilities which make a positive contribution to students' learning. Students need better access to computers within the department, especially for GCSE work. The scheme of work for music is satisfactory but assessment procedures are not worked out sufficiently. In order to improve the department should raise standards at Key Stage 3 to provide a better platform for students to tackle GCSE work at Key Stage 4.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

144. Standards of students' work at the end of Key Stage 3 in physical education are average. However, Teachers' Assessments for 2000 judged standards to be at a significantly higher level, which indicates teachers' expectations are not high enough. In Key Stage 4 in Year 10 standards are above average when compared with students of the same age nationally. Boys out-perform girls.
145. Work seen during the inspection indicates that standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are at the level expected for students of the same age nationally; attainment in Year 7 is rising. Year 7 students demonstrate good footwork when catching a netball; high attaining students successfully signal and call for the ball when in a good receiving position. Low attaining students show very little spatial awareness. Year 9 students, including those with special educational needs, show competence in a range of games, such as football, netball, hockey and volleyball. For example, they effectively use the volley pass in netball to make simple rallies; high attaining students move well in order sustain longer rallies and use the dig shot effectively. Students participate well in games and demonstrate a spirit of fair play and good sportsmanship. They have a general understanding of the principles and procedures of a warm-up prior to starting physical activity; however, they are not always given sufficient responsibility for leading warm-up or naming muscle groups. This would help them prepare for future GCSE work. Work in Key Stage 4 shows that standards in Year 10 are marginally above the level expected of similar aged students. The majority of Year 10 students know the grip to use when playing badminton; they sustain a short rally over a net. Students adopt the correct stance when receiving service. High attaining students show good footwork during a rally whereas the footwork of low attaining students constrains the length of rallies. GCSE written work shows students have a basic knowledge of bones, muscles, joints and the circulatory system. In a lesson about the respiratory system they use anatomical words correctly, such as trachea and diaphragm. Levels of literacy depress the standard of written work. Students show a better understanding when discussing what they know. Standards are further enhanced by extracurricular activities.
146. Achievement is satisfactory at both key stages. Students in Key Stage 3 of all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, work well together and are make satisfactory progress. However, some Year 7 students make very good progress, as observed in a basketball lesson. In football, students learn to use different parts of both feet in order to make effective and accurate long passes over a distance of 20 metres. They begin to have an awareness of the width and depth of the pitch; some high attaining students playing in a game lift their heads in order to see the options available. In Key Stage 4, Year 10 students work hard to become successful. They develop their understanding and expertise in both theoretical and practical aspects. Skills developed earlier are applied successfully to a range of games. However, theory and practice are not always successfully combined and students do not become sufficiently involved in their learning. This adversely affects their theory examination results. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are all well included and make satisfactory progress.
147. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of physical education and apply it successfully in their teaching. For example, their very good knowledge of basketball has a positive impact upon students' learning in Year 7. As a result students are challenged to extend their skills and understanding of the game. Teachers usually have high expectations of students' effort and behaviour but expectations of standards and challenge are not high enough. Teachers ask good questions that reinforce students' knowledge and understanding. For instance, during a Year 10 theory lesson the teacher probed and challenged students' knowledge of the effect of exercise on the respiratory system. In the GCSE examination course the theory aspects of the course are not well linked to practical aspects to increase students' interest and improve learning and standards. Long term planning and organisation are good; teachers ensure that students build on their progress from year to year. At times, however, there are insufficient activities and tasks to meet the needs of the whole range of students in the class, as seen in Year 9 volleyball. Good relationships, good subject knowledge and good evaluation of students' work ensure all

students, including those with learning difficulties, make satisfactory progress and in the lower years good progress, in their learning. Teachers make good use of information from individual educational plans and adapt teaching strategies to meet individual students' needs.

148. The leadership of the department is satisfactory; the co-coordinator provides sound educational direction for the subject. Teachers are well deployed and good use is made of their strengths. The curriculum is currently dominated by games and the more aesthetic areas are under-developed. Not enough attention is given to literacy and numeracy and ICT. There is good provision of a varied range of extra-curricular activities, including playing for teams. Because the sports hall has been out of use for a long period of time, work in basketball, volleyball and badminton has been greatly constrained. At times, changing facilities are insufficient to accommodate students timetabled to participate in physical education.
149. Since the opening of the school four years ago physical education has made good progress. Curriculum and assessment are evolving the department recognises that assessment procedures are in need of improvement. Teachers work hard and effectively as a team and are very committed to raising of standards. Further development of regular, systematic and rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning is needed in order to share good practice and focus on improved learning.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

150. At the end of Key Stage 3 standards in work seen during the inspection are below the level expected by the Surrey Agreed Syllabus for 14 year olds. Standards in Year 10 of Key Stage 4 are below national averages for students following the GCSE short course in religious studies.
151. At the end of Key Stage 3 most students have some knowledge and understanding of the key features of Christianity, as well as an appreciation of aspects of the Jewish, Muslim and Hindu traditions. However, their understanding of general religious concepts, such as ways in which symbols are used in religion, is limited; they also have little appreciation of the difference that belonging to a faith community might make to individuals. Some higher attaining students write with clarity and insight, for example in some Year 9 work on Hindu weddings. But the overall quality of students' written work is below average; it is often brief and inaccurate. In Year 10 many students demonstrate a sound knowledge of a range of ethical and moral issues, but their understanding of relevant religious perspectives is weak.
152. At the moment most students, including those with special educational needs, are under-achieving at both key stages. The increase in students' knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other world religions during their time in the school is less than it should be. Students also make insufficient progress in developing their skills of discussing and explaining religious and ethical issues; there is some improvement in students' written work in Years 9 and 10, but students' oral skills remain under-developed.
153. The overall quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. Teaching is most successful where questioning is good and exposition well judged, as in part of a Year 7 lesson on the life of Jesus. However, lesson planning is a major weakness in the teaching of the subject. The continuity of work, both within individual lessons and from lesson to lesson, is not always clear, which means that many students do not understand the purpose of what they are asked to do. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on Christian attitudes to money and wealth, students' progress was restricted because the learning objectives were not specific enough and the students' tasks were insufficiently focused. The range of teaching methods used in the subject is narrow and this often leads to missed opportunities and unexciting work. For example, in a lesson on how Jews celebrate Pesach, little was done to help students understand and appreciate the importance of the seder meal. Expectations of what students can achieve are not high enough, so that progress in lessons is too slow; students' tasks are often undemanding and do not take account of the wide range of attainment within classes. Students are managed appropriately in

most lessons although where teaching is unsatisfactory an under-current of chatter and inattention slows down learning.

154. A business-like start has been made to the organisation of the GCSE short course in Year 10, and the subject co-ordinator is given good support by a non-specialist who teaches some religious studies lessons. However, the overall quality of leadership and management in the subject is unsatisfactory. Teachers' use of assessment information is at an early stage because appropriate assessment procedures have only recently been put in place. The subject scheme of work is inadequate because it lacks overall direction and coherence, and does not provide enough detail to support the planning of lessons. The amount of progress made during the last four years in developing the subject has been unsatisfactory. The key priority now is to improve the quality of teaching and learning so that standards of attainment and achievement can be raised.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

155. At Key Stage 4 the school provides an optional Part One GNVQ Business Studies course at Foundation and Intermediate level. Standards are above the national average at this stage of the course. The results of the first completed modules show a higher than average proportion achieving merit grades and passes. Because this is the first year group to take the course it is not possible to make judgements about previous results. Students also have the opportunity to gain accreditation in the key skills of communication, understanding number and ICT but it is too early to make judgements about standards.
156. In work seen during the inspection standards are above average. Students contribute their ideas and draw on each other's experiences. They work co-operatively in groups and can undertake a group assignment in an organised and enthusiastic way. For example, when researching customer services, teams competed with each other to phone national companies to obtain information and to assess the customer friendliness of company websites. Their communication skills are limited in range at this stage, but they have the confidence to get their ideas across. They know about the different ways products are marketed. They can produce questionnaires and write letters to companies as they investigate different kinds of businesses in the local area. They can analyse factors such as location and the role of the different stakeholders in a company. Higher attaining students get beyond descriptive writing, largely derived from company information, and show an understanding of issues such as the conflicting interests of stakeholders. Written work is well presented, often making good use of ICT skills, though the work of some students is marred by low levels of literacy. Students with special educational needs benefit from the course and with effective support from the learning assistant manage well to complete assignments.
157. Achievement is good, considering the range of students' prior attainment levels and that students have been learning the requirements of the GNVQ course only since last September. They are building their understanding of the expectations of the different levels of the course. Their confidence in expressing themselves in different situations is growing and they are learning how different ways of communicating are more appropriate to some situations than others. They are grasping the various ways in which companies market their products. They have a growing understanding of how different sorts of businesses work, and through the good links established via parents and the willing participation of local companies, they are increasing their knowledge of the real world of business and commerce.
158. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and of the course requirements. They are very aware of how to plan interesting and varied lessons to engage the interests of the range of students in each class. This includes higher and lower attaining boys and girls, students with special educational needs and students for whom English is an additional language. Lessons are conducted with enthusiasm and pace, using a good range of strategies to ensure that learning is active. For example in a good lesson on communication skills, two students acted out a job interview in role. The teacher had briefed

them effectively, so that the way they behaved in the interview provided good learning points for the rest of the class. Teachers use a good range of resources, including flipcharts, handouts and ICT to create variety and interest. They make very good use of business links, bringing company representatives in to talk about aspects of their business and arranging visits to company premises. In their enthusiasm to move things on, teachers sometimes take over too much of the lesson and do not give enough space for students to evaluate each other's contributions. While learning objectives are made clear at the start of each lesson, they are not always consolidated at the end. Good support is provided to ensure that assignments are completed on time, by creating interim deadlines. Marking and assessment of work is good and teachers provide good information to ensure that students know what level they are working at and what they need to do to improve.

159. The subject is well led and the teachers work together effectively to plan the course. They are clear about future developments, including the expansion of GNVQ courses in the future Sixth Form. Good use is made of data on prior attainment to inform decisions about the most appropriate levels at which students should be entered. As the course develops and other courses come on stream there is a need to include more detail and guidance in schemes of work to ensure consistency of teaching and equality of opportunity. There is some useful monitoring of teaching and learning through scrutiny of assignments and informal discussion. But regular classroom observation is not yet taking place to enable teachers to gain feedback and to have a clearer picture of where improvements can be made.
160. The GNVQ course is progressing well. To improve further, classroom observation should be undertaken to monitor the effectiveness of different teaching strategies and to focus on how well students are managing and evaluating their learning.