

INSPECTION REPORT

WEY VALLEY SCHOOL

WEYMOUTH

LEA area: DORSET

Unique reference number: 113879

Headteacher: Mrs M L Headon

Reporting inspector: Dr Kenneth C Thomas
3390

Dates of inspection: 10 – 14 December 2001

Inspection number: 216882

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Dorchester Road
Weymouth
Dorset

Postcode: DT3 5AN

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr E Coughlan

Date of previous inspection: September 1999

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3390	K Thomas	<i>Registered inspector</i>	Business studies.	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? The school's results and achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
19677	M Cumbers	<i>Lay inspector</i>		How high are standards? Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
15948	D Evans	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
13122	S Mathews	<i>Team inspector</i>	History; Equal opportunities.	
27983	M Sewell	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; English as an additional language; Drama.	
12276	T Payne	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music.	
15407	M Harrison	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography.	
15051	L Kauffman	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology.	
20192	T McDermott	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education.	
10905	A Brewerton	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.	
27058	K Cannon	<i>Team inspector</i>	Special educational needs.	
8052	K McKenzie	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and communications technology.	
12198	L Weatherley	<i>Team inspector</i>	Religious education.	
18638	C Shaw	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art.	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Wey Valley School is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11-16, situated in the town of Weymouth in Dorset. There are 1344 pupils on roll and this makes the school bigger than most other comprehensive schools. The majority of pupils are drawn from five primary schools and come from a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is rising and is now just below the national average. There are very few pupils, 11 only, of minority ethnic origin. Six pupils speak English as an additional language. The overall attainment of pupils on entry in Year 7 although below average, covers the full attainment range. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, at 23 per cent, is about the same as the national average. The majority of pupils transfer at the end of Year 11 to sixth form education. The school has experienced difficulty in recruiting appropriately qualified teachers in business studies, design and technology, mathematics, music and religious education.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an improving school, which provides a good education for its pupils. The excellent leadership of the headteacher, effectively supported by other senior managers and governors, has brought much improvement. The school provides good value for money. Because teaching is good overall, most pupils make satisfactory progress and for many it is good. This is reflected in the results in the National Curriculum tests and in the GCSE examination, which are above average in comparison with similar schools. Staff work hard to ensure that all pupils are able to participate in the wide range of activities the school offers.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- The exemplary leadership of the headteacher, with very good support from other senior managers, is ensuring that procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are being used effectively to improve the quality of education the school provides.
- Good teaching promotes good learning in most lessons. This is well supported by the effective use of assessment to monitor pupils' progress and set targets for improvement.
- The school has an effective inclusion programme and makes very good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Pupils' learning is enhanced by very good links with the community and a very good range of extra-curricular opportunities.
- Very good provision for physical education and sport promotes above average standards and high levels of enthusiasm for the subject.
- Very good support from the governing body allied to very good financial planning, are ensuring that the school makes the best use of its resources.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- The senior management team is under-strength and the headteacher and her deputy are over-burdened.
- Pupils' behaviour is adversely affected by a lack of external hard play and social areas, and inconsistent implementation of the school behaviour policy.
- The attitudes and behaviour of a small but significant number of pupils, mostly boys, mean pupils do not learn as much as they could in some lessons.
- Standards in music and business studies are being adversely affected by staffing difficulties.
- Procedures for making early contact with parents about pupils who are absent from school without explanation.
- Accommodation for science and music.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

When the school was last inspected in 1999 it was judged to have serious weaknesses. The school has improved considerably and now provides a good quality of education. Several of the issues for action identified in the last report related to management and the work of governors. These have improved to the extent that they are now strengths of the school. Similarly, provision for pupils with special educational needs although previously identified as a weakness is now very good and also a strength of the school. Vigorous action taken by senior managers and the governors has successfully brought about improvements in teaching and learning. Standards are rising. National Curriculum tests results have improved at the same rate as the national trend while GCSE results have improved at a faster rate than the national trend. This is supported by the effective use of school self-evaluation procedures and assessment information to monitor progress and set improvement targets. Although substantial improvements have been made to the accommodation, the school still lacks outdoor hard play and social areas. With the exception of the collective act of worship the curriculum now complies with statutory requirements and provides a broader range of courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The school is now in a strong position to raise standards further.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	B	C	C	B

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds in English, mathematics and science have been rising at the same rate as the national trend over the past four years. In the 2001 tests, these results were average in comparison with all schools but when compared with similar schools, based on pupils entitlement to free school meals, they were above average. Girls'

results in the English tests are consistently better than those of boys. There was little difference between the results of boys and girls in mathematics in 2001, although in previous years boys have tended to achieve slightly better results than girls. Boys achieved slightly better results than girls in science in 2001; however, the difference between boys' and girls' performance was much narrower than in previous years. Comparisons of standards of attainment on entry with the results obtained in end of Year 9 tests show that achievement is satisfactory. Results in the GCSE examination have been rising at a faster rate than the national trend over the past four years. In 2001 the proportion of pupils gaining at least five A*-C grades, although just below the school's target, was average in comparison with all schools, but above average in comparison with similar schools. These results represent satisfactory progress and achievement from the end of Year 9. Results in English, mathematics and science were also average in comparison with all schools, but above in comparison with similar schools. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. In 2001 virtually all gained GCSE grades in the A*-G range with about a third gaining grades in the higher A*-C range. The few pupils with English as an additional language are also achieving well. Appropriate targets have been set for 2002.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils appreciate the support and encouragement they receive from their teachers and show that they want to learn. Pupils say that they like school and enjoy most of their experiences.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in most lessons is good, but unsatisfactory behaviour in some lessons and in corridors at break and lesson changeover times makes behaviour unsatisfactory overall. The exclusion rate has fallen since the last inspection but is above average for the size of school.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships amongst all groups are generally good. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to develop independence, initiative and responsibility for others.
Attendance	Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now close to the national average. Much of the absence is due to family holidays being taken in term time.

The school puts much effort into team building through residential activities and this has a positive effect on pupils' attitudes and relationships. Much of the unsatisfactory behaviour stems from the lack of an outdoor hard play area. Because of this pupils spend an unusual amount of the break and lunch periods inside the school, where some pupils engage in the type of behaviour that although appropriate in an outdoor play area is inappropriate inside the school. Many teachers tolerate this behaviour, even though it is unsatisfactory. The consequence is that the behaviour often spills over into lessons and is typified by low-level nuisance behaviour that teachers have to spend too much time controlling. This interferes with teaching and learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	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 was good or better in most of the 190 lessons observed and very good or excellent in about a third. Teaching was unsatisfactory in 14 lessons. Teaching is very good in physical education and good in mathematics, art, geography, history, ICT and special educational needs. Teaching in science, design and technology, modern foreign languages and religious education is good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is satisfactory in other subjects apart from business studies where it is unsatisfactory. There are examples of excellence in teaching in history, art, science, modern foreign languages and English. Teaching of this quality had a significant effect on pupils' achievement in these lessons.

Teachers have good subject expertise and use their knowledge well to plan their lessons, provide clear explanations and give good guidance to pupils. They use a wide range of teaching methods to involve pupils in their learning. In the best lessons, expert questioning is used to identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge and to extend their understanding of the work. Teachers use a good range of strategies to enable pupils to learn and develop skills. In most lessons, pupils' interest is maintained through a variety of activities that are closely matched to their learning needs. However, low expectations, a poor match of lesson activities to pupils' learning needs, and in some instances weaknesses in subject knowledge, were features of much of the unsatisfactory teaching. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory overall. However, the school has yet to develop a systematic approach to the teaching of literacy and numeracy in all subjects.

Teachers work hard to ensure that there is a suitable climate for learning in lessons and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning and the progress they make. However, many pupils, particularly boys, take a long time to settle down in lessons and this wastes teaching time. In some of the unsatisfactory lessons, a lack of control slowed progress. Nevertheless, most pupils show a good commitment to their learning and concentrate well in lessons. This along with good teaching explains why the majority of pupils make satisfactory and sometimes good progress. Gifted and talented pupils, together with those with special educational needs and English an additional language, make good progress as a result of good teaching. Information and communications technology is well taught by specialist teachers, but insufficient use is made of computers to support teaching and learning in many subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a good socially inclusive curriculum with very good opportunities for pupils to enrich their experiences beyond lessons.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is much improved. It is now well organised and carefully monitored. Good support for pupils' learning through well-constructed individual education plans.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. These pupils make good progress as a result of the good support they receive.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall. Provision for social and cultural development is good and for spiritual and moral development it is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good arrangements for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic and personal development. There are weaknesses in procedures for monitoring attendance and for promoting good behaviour.

With the exception of the daily act of collective worship, all statutory requirements are being met. The curriculum is much improved since the last inspection. Good curriculum planning is resulting in a broader curriculum with better provision of alternative courses in Years 10 and 11. The school has effective links with parents and makes very good use of the community to support pupils' learning. Effective links with Post 16 providers ensure continuity when pupils leave school. All teachers do not implement the agreed school behaviour management strategy consistently. The procedures for making early contact with parents in the event of unexplained absence from school are not followed consistently by all teachers

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides excellent leadership and is well supported by her deputy and other senior staff. There is now a clear sense of purpose and well-conceived plans for improvement. However, senior management is under-strength and the head and deputy carry too many responsibilities.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very effective. They have a real commitment to the school and provide the school with an unusually high level of specialist help and advice.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are helping to raise expectations and standards.
The strategic use of resources	The principles of best value for money are applied in the purchase and use of resources. All additional funding is used for the intended purposes. Very good financial management has almost eliminated the budget deficit. The school provides good value for money.

At the time of the last inspection the school was judged to have serious weaknesses. Most of the weaknesses related to the management and governance of the school. The excellent leadership of the headteacher, with very good support from governors, has remedied this situation. Virtually all of the issues for action identified in the previous inspection report have been tackled successfully and some, such as leadership and management, are now strengths of the school. Staff morale has been raised and there is a strong commitment to improvement. This has underpinned the progress made over the last two years. Standards in business studies and music are being adversely affected by staffing difficulties. The lack of an outdoor hard play area is having an adverse effect on pupils' behaviour.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The progress their children are making. • The range of extra-curricular activities. • The expectations that their children will work hard. • The approachability of the school. • Their children like school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework. • Behaviour. • The information the school provides. • The closeness with which the school works with parents.

The school has effective links with parents and most parents have positive views about the school. Many parents were keen to let the inspection know about the ways in which the

school has improved over the past two years. Inspectors agree with the positive views of parents. Inspectors also agree with parents' concerns about behaviour. However, they judge that the amount of homework set is appropriate for the needs of pupils, that there are sufficient opportunities for parents to work closely with the school and that their parents are kept well informed about their children's progress.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The results of National Curriculum tests taken in Year 6, in the last year of primary education, show that, although standards of attainment have risen slightly since the last inspection they are below average overall. Although the attainment of pupils entering the school in 2001 was average in mathematics, it was below in English and science. Girls entered the school with higher standards than boys in English, while there was little difference between boys and girls in mathematics and science. This has been a consistent pattern over the past three years. The percentage of pupils entering the school with special educational needs is increasing. Although the percentage of pupils with special educational needs in the school, at 23 per cent, is about the same as the national average, thirty-nine per cent of the pupils who entered Year 7 in 2001 were identified as having special educational needs.

2. Pupils' make satisfactory progress through Years 7 to 9 and standards in the National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds, taken at the end of Year 9, have risen at the same rate as results nationally over the past four years. In the 2001 tests, results in English, mathematics and science were average in comparison with all schools and above average when compared with similar schools, based on pupils entitlement to free school meals. The results of both boys and girls in English were above their respective national averages in 2000 but dropped to average in 2001. This was due to 17 pupils starting but not completing the 2001 tests. In tests nationally, girls achieve higher standards than boys in English while boys achieve higher standards than girls in mathematics. Similar differences are observed in the school's test results. Girls' results in the English tests are consistently better than those of boys. There was little difference between the results of boys and girls in mathematics in 2001, although in previous years boys have tended to achieve slightly better results than girls. Boys achieved slightly better results than girls in science in 2001; however, the difference between boys' and girls' performance was much narrower than in previous years. Comparisons of standards of attainment on entry with the results obtained in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 show that achievement is satisfactory. The 2001 teacher assessments in other subjects show attainment at the end of Year 9 to be above average in physical education, average in music, art, modern foreign languages and history, and below average in design and technology, geography and art. The assessments show that girls achieve higher standards than boys in all subjects other than information and communication technology (ICT), where standards are about the same, and physical education, where boys achieve higher standards than girls. These differences largely reflect differences observed nationally.

3. Inspection evidence is consistent with teacher assessments for all subjects other than music and art. The evidence suggests that the standard of work of pupils presently in Year 9 is above average in art, while standards in music are below. In about three-quarters of all lessons pupils are achieving standards that are at least consistent with those expected for their age and in about one in five lessons standards are above expectations. Standards are highest in lessons where learning activities are stimulating and provide pupils with an appropriate degree of challenge. Standards are most often below expectations in lessons where teachers lack the classroom management skills necessary to ensure that pupils put effort into their work.

4. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11 and achievement in the GCSE examination is satisfactory relative to previous levels of attainment at the end of Year 9. Results in the GCSE examination rose at a faster rate than the national trend over the period from 1997 to 2000 and the rise continued in 2001. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, 49 per cent of pupils obtained five or more A* to C grades and 93 per cent of pupils obtained five or more A*-G grades. Due to the absence of a few pupils from the examinations, these percentages were just below the school's targets. Nevertheless, they were average in comparison with all schools and above average in comparison with similar schools. The average total points score, which reflects achievement across the whole GCSE grade range, also shows performance in the 2001 examination to have been average in comparison with all schools and above in comparison with similar schools. The targets set for 2002 are achievable and should continue the rising trend. There was a marked difference in the performance of boys and girls with 55 per cent of girls obtaining five or more A*-C grades compared with 43 per cent of boys. In most subjects differences in performance are explained by differences in attainment at the end of Year 9 and, taken overall, the achievement of both boys and girls is satisfactory. However, there are substantial differences in performance between boys and girls in design and technology, history and French over and above those explained by differences in performance at the start of the GCSE courses.

5. The percentages of pupils gaining A*-C grades in the 2001 GCSE English and English literature examinations were close to the national average. Although girls achieved better results than boys in both subjects, the difference between boys' and girls' results in English was less than the national difference, while the difference in these results in English literature was about the same as the national difference. The percentage of pupils gaining A* to C grades in mathematics was close to the national average with little difference in the performance of boys and girls. Results in science show continued improvement since the last inspection. This trend continued in 2001 when the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades was above average. There was little difference in the results of boys and girls, although more boys obtained the highest grades.

6. The percentages of pupils achieving A* - C grades were above average in art and physical education. Reflecting results nationally, more girls achieved A*-C grades than boys. In German the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C was above the national average but in French it was just below. Girls performed better than boys in both languages but the difference between girls' and boys' performance was greater in French than in German. The percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades was below average in business studies, geography, history, music, drama and design and technology, with more girls obtaining A*-C grades than boys. In most of these subjects the results represent satisfactory achievement. However, pupils' achievement in history was adversely affected by long-term absences of teachers due to illness. In geography pupils' achievement was affected by the pupil grouping arrangements and by changes in the teaching staff in September 2000. As a consequence the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades in both subjects in 2001 was below that obtained in 2000. There was substantial difference in the percentages of boys and girls in gaining A*-C grades in design and technology, where 48 per cent more girls than boys obtained the higher grades. The school has taken advice from the local education authority (LEA) and is implementing strategies to tackle this problem.

7. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress through Years 7 to 9 and achievement is good by the end of Year 9. These pupils make good gains in basic literacy and English and satisfactory gains in numeracy. Their reading and spelling skills improve, and they progress from poorly written single words to coherent sentences and paragraphs on a range of topics, such as creating hand-written booklets on their local area. They use computers and the Internet with confidence sending and receiving e-mails from American

pen pals as part of their English work, or conducting independent research for specific projects, such as earthquakes and volcanoes. Pupils make very good progress through Years 10 and 11 and this is reflected in the GCSE examination results. In 2001, 39 per cent of the Year 11 pupils on the special educational needs register obtained one or more GCSE A*-C grade, 66 per cent gained five or more A*-G grades and virtually all gained at least one A*-G grade.

8. Pupils following the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) course are achieving well and many are on the way to completing elements of the Bronze and Silver Awards. The work-related college link is ensuring success for most of the 17 pupils who participate and most are doing well, although irregular attendance affects the progress of a few. The nine pupils in Year 11 are making satisfactory progress and are learning new skills through experience in the work place.

9. The school makes good provision for gifted and talented pupils. All such pupils are identified and extension activities are provided in most subjects. Latin is offered as an out of hours additional subject from Year 8. Gifted and talented pupils in mathematics take the GCSE examination at the end of Year 10 and are able to take the AS level course in Year 11. Pupils achieve well on all of these courses.

10. Satisfactory standards of literacy enable the majority of pupils to make the most of their education. Standards of reading are satisfactory. Regular practice across a range of subjects leads to pupils becoming competent readers, able to understand texts and to identify different layers of meaning. In history and geography, for example, pupils are required to read a wide range of source material and to make accurate notes and use summarising techniques. Writing skills are generally satisfactory and most pupils are able to write in a range of styles. Although standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar are generally sound, there is a lack of consistency between subjects in the attention paid to the correction of grammatical errors.

11. Speaking and listening skills are generally satisfactory and improve as pupils move through the school. Pupils become increasingly able to express their viewpoints with confidence and to listen to the views of others. This was seen, for example, in a Year 11 French lesson where pupils' rapid and accurate responses to skilful questioning by the teacher made a significant contribution to the excellent learning taking place in the lesson. Pupils are able to understand and use specialist vocabulary in, for example, mathematics, science and design and technology. However, literacy skills are not being developed in a systematic way in all subjects and work in Years 7 to 9 does not build sufficiently on the National Literacy Strategy being implemented in the primary schools.

12. There are six pupils on the school roll with English as an additional language. All but one of these pupils are fluent English language speakers and are achieving standards that are generally above expectations for their age. One pupil is provided with effective in-class support by a language specialist and is learning English at a good rate. These pupils are carefully monitored and all are making good progress.

13. Pupils' numeracy skills are variable but satisfactory overall. Higher-attaining pupils are able to use calculators correctly and mental arithmetic accurately to answer questions. However lower-attaining pupils, in all years, have difficulty with some basic number work, although knowledge of multiplication tables and the ability to use calculators is often good. Numeracy skills are applied effectively to help pupils make progress in other subjects. For example, to interpret company accounts in business studies and to draw line graphs and

manipulate equations in science. In geography, pupils are able to represent temperature and rainfall figures graphically. They are also able to create and interpret population pyramids to make comparisons between different countries. However, the school has yet to implement a numeracy strategy, so these skills are not being developed in a systematic way in all subjects.

14. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 have discrete information and communication technology lessons and standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 and through Years 10 and 11 are consistent with national expectations. Most pupils use computers with confidence and apply their computing skills well to support their learning in some subjects across the curriculum.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. The attitudes of pupils are satisfactory overall. The school has a welcoming and friendly atmosphere and pupils are generally courteous to visitors and keen to talk about their school and to show them around. Many pupils appreciate the support and encouragement they receive from their teachers and show that they want to learn. During the many discussions inspectors held with pupils, pupils said that they like the school and enjoy most of their experiences. This is consistent with the views of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire.

16. When given appropriate challenges, pupils respond well and try hard to achieve their learning goals. This was evident, for example in a Year 11 mathematics lesson where pupils sustained concentration for long periods as they revised the manipulation and simplification of algebraic fractions. A similar high level of concentration was evident in a Year 8 geography lesson on the effects of tourism on Kenya. There are, however, some occasions when pupils become talkative and noisy. Most pupils take pride in their achievements and gain considerable satisfaction from their efforts. For example, pupils in a Year 11 English lesson confidently put forward their ideas when discussing the poem 'Valentine' by Carol Ann Duffy. The pupils whose special educational needs are related to learning difficulties have good attitudes and are keen to make progress. They respond well to the very good support the school provides.

17. The quality of the relationships amongst all groups are generally good. The school puts much effort into team building through residential activities. These start immediately pupils join the school in Year 7 with a weekend residential trip to Portland and later in the year with a residential visit to Runnage Farm. Weekend trips to the outdoor activity centres on Dartmoor are organised and offered to all pupils at different times during the year. Parents, pupils and staff all speak positively about the benefits of these activities in promoting good relationships and pupils' personal development. Pupils are encouraged to develop their own interests. Many take advantage of the opportunities offered by the variety of clubs and out of school activities and respond well to the chance to get involved in activities beyond their normal lessons. However, because of the short lunch period all activities are run after school and this disadvantages those pupils who rely on school transport. Pupils of varying attainment levels undertake challenging activities with enthusiasm, such as designing and building a robot to compete in Robot Wars, or a prize-winning car, which competed at Goodwood. Almost 90 per cent of parents who responded to the questionnaire thought that the school was helping their children to become mature and responsible.

18. Because teachers work hard to maintain positive atmospheres for teaching and learning, behaviour in most lessons is good. In discussion, many pupils are pleasant, mature individuals with clear ideas about what they enjoy and what they want to do in the future. However, behaviour is a matter of concern to parents and inspection evidence indicates that these concerns are justified. In 13 per cent of lessons behaviour was unsatisfactory as was much of the behaviour on the school corridors at break and lunch times. As a result overall standards of behaviour are unsatisfactory.

19. Much of the unsatisfactory behaviour stems from the lack of an outdoor hard play area. Because of this pupils spend an unusual amount of the daily break and lunch periods inside the school either on the corridors or in the few social areas. These areas become very crowded and some pupils engage in the type of behaviour that, although appropriate in an outdoor play area, is inappropriate inside the school. Because of the circumstances many teachers tolerate this behaviour, even though it is unsatisfactory. The consequence is that the behaviour often spills over into lessons and is typified by low-level nuisance behaviour that teachers have to spend too much time controlling. This interferes with pupils' learning and is most often seen in lessons that follow the lunch break. Temporary teachers in particular have difficulty in controlling this behaviour. Unsatisfactory behaviour in lessons is sometimes linked to a lack of challenge and lesson tasks that fail to engage the interest of pupils. When this occurs, lessons lack pace and behaviour deteriorates. However, there are also a small but significant number of pupils, mostly boys, who exhibit the most challenging behaviour that disrupts teaching and learning in lessons. When interviewed, Year 9 pupils in particular commented on having difficulty concentrating in lessons that were disturbed by others, and there are also significant pockets of disruptive behaviour in Year 7.

20. The school code of conduct is based on rewards and an escalating series of sanctions that are made clear to pupils. The school works hard to support pupils with challenging behaviour and avoid the need for exclusions and the number of exclusions has dropped since the last inspection. Teachers in the inclusion unit and the school nurse work to improve the behaviour of pupils at risk of exclusion, so that they can be reintegrated into normal lessons. However, the behaviour of a small number of pupils, and the disruption that these pupils cause to lessons, is such that it inevitably leads to exclusion from school. As a result, during the last school year there were 87 fixed period and 10 permanent exclusions. The number of exclusions is above average for a school of this size but about average for schools in Dorset.

21. A lack of social skills is the source of much of the inappropriate behaviour. Some pupils have little understanding of the impact of their actions on others and engage in thoughtless and sometimes over-loud behaviour. The school attempts to develop pupils' social skills through the personal, social and health education programme (PSHE), and the numerous residential activities. There are many different opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, for example, through the year and school councils. The school has a member of Dorset Mediation on the staff, and now has 14 Year 10 pupil mediators who have completed their training and are ready to help however they can in cases of bullying or other conflict. Their existence is being widely publicised, but so far they have had few calls on their services. Pupils and parents agree that though there are cases of bullying, the school is very quick to sort them out, and it is made clear that bullying is unacceptable. No incidents of sexism, racism or harassment were observed or reported. The heads of year monitor the few members of minority groups in a careful but discrete manner.

22. The need to improve attendance was identified as a key issue for action in the previous inspection report. The school has successfully tackled this issue. The attendance rate is now satisfactory with the rates of both authorised and unauthorised absence close to the national average. Absence due to family holidays is greater than that usually found in secondary schools, due to the fact that many parents are employed in the tourist industry and

unable to take holidays during the summer months. Nevertheless, the school works hard to communicate to parents the importance of pupils being in regular attendance and the continuing rise in the attendance rate is an indication of a positive response from parents. A relatively small number of pupils are persistent non-attenders and they account for a substantial proportion of the absences. Pupils are generally punctual at the start of the sessions and most lessons start on time. However, lateness at the start of the day is sometimes unavoidable due to problems with public transport.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

23. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Teaching is slightly better in Years 10 and 11 where three-quarters of lessons are good or better, compared with just under two-thirds of lessons in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is very good or excellent in a quarter of lessons in Years 7 to 9 and in a third of lessons in Years 10 and 11. Unsatisfactory teaching was observed in 14 lessons. Teaching is very good in physical education and good in mathematics, art, geography, history, ICT and special educational needs. Teaching in science, design and technology, modern foreign languages and religious education is good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory in other years. Teaching is satisfactory in English and music. Teaching in business studies is unsatisfactory. There are examples of excellence in teaching in history, art and science in Years 7 to 9 and in history, science, modern foreign languages and English in Years 10 and 11. Teaching of this quality had a significant effect on pupils' progress and achievement in these lessons. Small amounts of unsatisfactory teaching were observed in mathematics, science, music, religious education, PSHE and ICT in Years 7 to 9 and in business studies, mathematics and modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11.

24. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach and draw on this effectively to plan their lessons, provide clear explanations and give appropriate guidance to pupils. In mathematics, for example, teachers use their good subject knowledge to provide explanations that are clearly understood by pupils because they are well matched to pupils' levels of attainment. These explanations capture pupils' interests and they find it easier to remember what they are learning. In science, teachers make good use of their subject knowledge to ask questions that challenge pupils to explain their observations, or to enable them to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding of the topic. Clear explanations and demonstrations, together with skilful questioning to check and extend understanding, is also a feature of good teaching in art. The good subject knowledge of physical education teachers is used effectively to highlight the features of high quality performance. However, because of weaknesses in subject knowledge in business studies teachers do not use the spontaneous opportunities that arise from pupils' responses to questions to extend their knowledge and understanding. Because of a lack of subject knowledge, the tasks set in one Year 7 music lesson were too easy and pupils made insufficient progress in the lesson. In modern foreign languages, teachers make extensive use of the foreign language in most lessons. This has a positive impact on learning, especially listening and speaking, as pupils are given a good model to imitate. However, in the few lessons where teachers use too much English, progress in learning is slower. Specialist information and communications technology (ICT) teachers use their subject knowledge well to give clear explanations and provide good individual support. However, not all teachers are confident and competent in the use of computers and this restricts the use of ICT to support teaching and learning in several subjects.

25. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory overall. However, the school has yet to develop a systematic approach to the teaching of basic skills in all subjects. Although work in English lays a foundation for the development of literacy skills, the department has been slow to recognise the importance of developing these skills in an organised way and to build on the work being done in the primary schools. In-service training time has been devoted to literacy and several subjects have begun to develop a literacy strategy. In history, for example, the identification of subject-specific vocabulary, a good variety of tasks and writing frames to help those of lower potential attainment are all key features of lessons. In art, teachers support pupils' development of literacy skills by providing opportunities to learn technical vocabulary and to write extended pieces expressing what they have learned or researched. Subject-specific key words are displayed in most classrooms. In business studies, drama, science and ICT, for example, there are good displays of subject specific words to support pupils' use of the appropriate technical language. However, little reference was made to any of these words in the lessons observed. Reading is also developed in many subjects, and pupils are provided with opportunities to read in pairs and small groups, and to read aloud to the class as a whole. However, the literacy strategy is in an early stage of development and there is as yet no systematic way of identifying and sharing the good teaching methods that can be seen in several subjects. Pupils develop their numerical skills in many subjects. In mathematics, teachers include activities to improve recall and pupils' mental agility in lessons to develop numeracy skills. Numeracy is also developed through measuring and judging proportion in art and design and technology, and in interpreting data in geography and science. However, there is at present no school numeracy strategy, with the consequence that pupils' numerical skills are not being developed in a systematic way in all subjects.

26. Lesson planning is good. Teachers plan their lessons effectively and in many cases share their objectives with pupils. As a result most pupils are clear about what they are doing and are fully involved in their learning. In science, for example, a feature of good lessons is the clear explanation of learning objectives at the start of lessons that are revisited at the end to consolidate the learning that has taken place. In a Year 7 science lesson on neutralisation, for example, pupils carried out their experiments with acids and alkalis very confidently as the result of being given such clear explanations. Lesson planning in design and technology is now good and takes account of the need to raise boys' attainment. The close matching of activities to the attainment levels of pupils is a good feature in the planning of lessons in physical education. Activities are carefully prepared to extend the higher attaining pupils and adjusted so that average and lower attaining pupils are also fully engaged in the lesson. This has a positive effect on pupils' levels of achievement. However, there is inconsistency in planning in English. Planning in some lessons is detailed and pupils' learning is extended by the use of stimulating and challenging materials. However, in other lessons planning lacks rigour and this is reflected in a lack of progression in pupils' work.

27. The headteacher has made clear the need to raise expectations and this is evident in most lessons. Where teachers have high expectations and these are communicated clearly to pupils then this leads to good progress and achievement in lessons. For example, in an excellent Year 11 French oral lesson, pupils made rapid progress because of the enthusiasm and sense of enjoyment engendered by the challenging pace of the lesson. The high level of challenge was also seen in a Year 11 history lesson on the civil rights movement in the USA, where pupils made very good progress in response to excellent opportunities for independent decision-making. The best teaching in physical education is characterised by high expectations and lessons that proceed at a good pace. In a Year 7 netball lesson, for example, pupils made clear gains in space-creating skills because of the

challenging nature of the teaching. High expectations are a feature of the best teaching in design and technology and are particularly important in supporting girls who are taking traditionally boys' subjects. Low expectations were among the shortcomings in most of the unsatisfactory teaching.

28. Teachers use a good range of strategies to enable pupils to learn and develop skills. Paired and small group work is used well in many subjects. In personal, social and health education, for example, pupils are provided with numerous opportunities to engage in small group discussions. These activities help to develop pupils' self-confidence as they express ideas and challenge each other's thinking. Effective small group work is a feature of most drama lessons. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, group work was used effectively for pupils to develop a characterisation. Small-group work is used effectively to undertake investigations in science and to discuss ideas and solve problems in business studies. Group work is also used effectively in physical education to develop pupils' skill levels.

29. Classroom management and organisation are satisfactory. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are generally good and teachers work hard to ensure that there is a suitable climate for learning in lessons. However, many pupils, particularly boys, take a long time to settle down in lessons and this wastes teaching time. In some of the unsatisfactory lessons, a lack of control, with pupils allowed to shout out answers or move around the room without permission slowed progress. Even in some of the otherwise well taught lessons, teachers have to deal with an undue amount of low-level nuisance behaviour that makes demands on the teachers' time and interferes with pupils' learning. Shortcomings in teaching also include too much time spent on direct teaching in some lessons, so that some pupils become bored, or in other lessons, too little time spent on explanations so that pupils do not fully understand what they are expected to do.

30. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils are generally taught in normal classes and often in smaller teaching groups to which additional support is targeted. A well-organised team of teaching assistants provides this support. Because teachers are aware of the general targets in pupils' individual education plans and take account of these in lesson planning, pupils with special educational needs make good progress in lessons. The effective use of teaching assistants helps to ensure that all pupils work at an appropriate pace and achieve well during lessons. A small number of laptop computers are provided for pupils with poor hand and eye co-ordination, and well-structured resources, such as simplified worksheets and extra vocabulary lists in history and geography, are used to ensure that all pupils are able to participate fully in lessons. The quality of teaching and learning when pupils are withdrawn for individual and small-group teaching in the learning support room is very good. All staff have a very good knowledge of their pupils and individual education plans are used effectively to guide lesson planning. Effective team teaching allows for variety and flexibility, which keeps the pupils motivated and on task. For example, in one Year 8 lessons, the literacy skills of pupils were developed as they wrote e-mails by hand and had them checked before they could move to the computer suite to send them. Specialist group tuition for pupils with speech and language problems or Downs Syndrome is excellent with the consequence that pupils make rapid progress in learning. In English for example, they are able to name and describe their favourite characters and compare the personalities of Mr Fezziwig and Scrooge. The teacher's high but realistic challenges encourage pupils to volunteer to read aloud and they are able to decode words with occasional prompts and cues from the teacher. Pupils respond with enthusiasm to the excellent relationships and pleasant working atmosphere in the learning support room.

31. An extension to the school's educational inclusion provision is the arrangement made for eight pupils with severe and multiple learning difficulties, who attend a nearby special school, to attend lessons on a weekly timetabled basis. These pupils are fully included in lessons when they attend the school and also participate in shared residential visits. This provision enriches the education of the pupils involved and promotes the personal and social development of Wey Valley pupils by encouraging thinking of and caring for others.

32. Most subjects support the learning of gifted and talented pupils through the provision of planned extension work. Examination results in the GCSE and GCE AS level examinations for mathematics over the last two years indicate that the quality of teaching and learning is good. In all years, gifted and talented pupils follow the recently introduced Somerset Thinking Skills course for higher-attaining pupils, but it is too early to make a judgement on the impact of this course.

33. The quality of teaching and learning in the inclusion unit is good. The teachers' good knowledge of the pupils and the sensitive handling of difficult issues promote confidence and trust. The teachers' negotiate individual pastoral care plans, which helps the pupils to develop strategies for resolving their areas of conflict and the majority return to their main classes within a few days. Where some pupils require a longer stay within the unit, the teachers' liaise closely with subject leaders to maintain continuity in the pupils learning.

34. The school has made good progress in improving the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection report. Although the amount of satisfactory or better teaching is about the same the amount of good or better teaching has increased. The strengths identified in the previous report have been largely sustained, while improvements have been made in the areas of weakness.

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

35. Since the last inspection the curriculum has been much improved. It has better breadth and balance and allows greater equality of opportunity for all pupils.

36. The weekly teaching time of 25 hours in all years is consistent with government recommendations. The teaching day is divided into five one-hour periods with four of the five lessons taught before and one after the lunch period. Although this makes for a long morning session, the arrangement is effective as most of the teaching is done when pupils are most alert. A few minutes are also allowed at lesson changeover times to allow movement between classrooms. The one-hour lunch period is divided so that in the first half of the lunch period Years 8 and 10 have assembly and tutorials while Years 7, 9 and 11 have lunch and then reversed in the second half. This arrangement is made to minimise the amount of time pupils spend on the school corridors and other indoor areas during the lunch period, because they are unable to spend time outdoors due to the lack of a hard surface play area. However, the effect of this arrangement is that lunch break for both pupils and teachers, is too short. This restricts lunchtime activities and has an adverse effect on teaching and learning in the after-lunch period.

37. The school meets all of its statutory requirements and offers a broad and balanced curriculum. There is a question of insufficient time allocated to religious education in Year 11 but, as the changes to the curriculum made after the last inspection work their way through, this issue will be resolved. The governing body are now fully involved in the development and evaluation of the curriculum with individual governors linked to each curriculum area. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

38. There have been improvements in the quality and range of the curriculum offered to pupils. Pupils are provided with a wider choice of courses in Years 10 and 11. In addition to the core curriculum of English, mathematics and double science, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are provided with courses in ICT, PSHE, a foreign modern language and design and technology. In the Lower School, dance has been introduced into the teaching of physical education and pupils now have the chance of studying Spanish, German or French in Year 7. Higher-attaining pupils now have the opportunity of studying a second foreign language in Year 8. The school is in the process of developing its literacy and numeracy strategies.

39. Vocational education is seen as an essential part of the curriculum and provision is good. All pupils can choose to take a vocationally orientated ASDAN programme in Years 10 and 11, and they work toward their Bronze or Silver awards supported by five members of staff. This is a popular option and there are two groups in Year 10. Sixty pupils in Years 10 and 11 have chosen the ASDAN course as an alternative to a further GCSE. Some pupils, who find the full range of subjects at GCSE unsuitable for them, choose the work-related option, which is based on a college link course in Year 10 and on work experience in Year 11. Individual pupils complete work based NVQ qualifications in a range of areas such as hair and beauty, vehicle mechanics or building. These courses, which are linked closely to careers education, work placements and attendance at Weymouth College, have proved to be highly motivating for the pupils involved. Whilst these developments have widened the opportunities for work-related courses the school recognises that more could be done. In addition to the Intermediate level GNVQ in ICT studied by some pupils in Year 10, the school has plans to extend the opportunities next year to include GNVQs in art and design, manufacturing and possibly science.

40. The school provides good opportunities for all pupils to be included in the curriculum it offers. All pupils are able to follow any course leading to GCSE and the school actively encourages boys and girls to specialise in subjects that are traditionally gender biased. The school does not prohibit lower-attaining pupils from taking any of the GCSE subjects and appropriate support is provided to help those pupils succeed. For example, the school's commitment to providing equal opportunities for all is demonstrated by the full inclusion of a Year 10 girl who has Downs Syndrome in every curriculum area. Although there is no wheelchair access to the upper floors, if the need arises classes are moved to the ground floor so that all pupils can follow the full curriculum. Subject schemes of work pay attention to the needs of all pupils including those who are identified as being gifted and talented. The school removes barriers to learning for those who do not find it easy to work at home by running homework clubs and increasing access to computers after school.

41. The PSHE programme is very good. It is well taught through timetabled PSHE lessons, with contributions from science, religious education and the tutorial programme. It enriches pupils' experiences and contributes well to their personal development. The curriculum is well organised and effectively taught by specialist teachers and form tutors, with good contributions from outside agencies such as the police and the Health Authority. Careful planning and good support from specialist teachers help to ensure consistency when form tutors teach PSHE lessons. Schemes of work are organised in a spiral fashion, with core topics being revisited as pupils get older and need more information. Topics covered include drugs and sex education, as well as inter-personal relations and study skills. Parents are notified that their children can opt out of the sex education component of the programme. Planning for the inclusion of the citizenship curriculum is well advanced. An audit has been undertaken of the topics that are already being covered and this is guiding the planning of schemes of work.

42. Provision for careers education and guidance is good. Careers education is provided within the PSHE programme. It is taught by form tutors with the support of materials and advice provided by the careers co-ordinator. There is a good careers library which is located within the learning resource centre and which has its own computer facilities. Pupils have the opportunity to find out about running a company through Young Enterprise and some pupils have mentors who come from local industry and commerce. The school is also supported well by the careers service, which provides guidance for all senior pupils. The Dorset Education Business Partnership provides valuable support for all aspects of careers and vocational education. A careers convention is held annually and pupils are provided with advice on the opportunities available at local schools and colleges or through training in the work place. All pupils in Year 10 have two-weeks work experience. This is well managed through the Trident scheme. Pupils have advice on letters of application and produce curriculum vitae with the help of their tutors. All placements are vetted to ensure they provide a safe environment for pupils.

43. Links with the local community are very good and a strength of the school. The work of the education-business link organiser help to broadens pupils' learning experiences by tapping into the expertise, funding, time and skills available in the community. A variety of initiatives are being pushed forward, to the benefit and enrichment of the pupils. 'Barclays New Futures' have sponsored a new sensory garden at the school, which has been planned by the pupils. Pupils take part in the 'Young Enterprise Project', and have gone forward to 'European Young Enterprise'. Challenging engineering projects, such as 'The Construction Curriculum' in Dorset Initiative has involved engineers from local 'Neighbourhood Engineers Support' firms working with pupils of all abilities encouraging pupil contact with adults in a more mature out-of-school setting which has been of great benefit to them. The army engineers have also visited the school to set challenges for pupils of all attainment levels. Each year, 'Science Week' hosts many representatives from local and national firms, as does the Careers Fair. The 'School Nurse Project' funded by the Health Authority has provided a worker based at the school focussing on emotional support and the prevention of teenage pregnancy.

44. Curriculum links with partner institutions are good. The school has very good links with Weymouth College, where the majority of pupils continue their studies after leaving Wey Valley. The college provides alternative courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11 in bricklaying, carpentry, motor mechanics, beauty, hairdressing and catering. These courses are successful in motivating disaffected pupils who speak well of the time they spend at the college. One pupil has already started a part-time NVQ course at the college. The school also has close links with Wyvern Special School. Pupils from the school join mainstream classes in a number of subjects and are 'buddied' by Wey Valley pupils. They are also included in residential visits and Wyvern School provides work experience placements for Year 10 pupils. There are good links with the primary schools for pupils with special educational needs and the school is able to make good provision for these pupils when they enter the school. However, curriculum links are weak and work in English, mathematics and science does not build sufficiently on the work done in the primary schools. The strengthening of links with the primary schools has been identified by the school as an area for improvement.

45. Curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is now good. The main emphasis is on providing support for pupils in normal lessons, and support staff are appropriately deployed to provide this support and to meet statement requirements. Pupils are withdrawn, as necessary, for individual and small group work to boost literacy and numeracy skills. The use of the computer-based learning programmes provides valuable additional provision both during the school day and as an after-school activity. The recently opened inclusion unit enhances provision for pupils with behaviour difficulties and others who

find difficulty in following school systems and procedures. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is organised to maximise opportunities for pupils with special educational needs with a range of alternative courses. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good in most subjects and supported by pupils' well-constructed individual education plans.

46. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities in which a large number of pupils participate. The range of activities offered by the school not only enriches the curriculum, but also extends the range of opportunities for pupils to achieve. Extra classes outside normal hours are provided in all subject areas. There are special interest clubs and visits to theatres, museums, and other centres of interest. These all aim to raise standards by extending the development of skills and understanding beyond the standard curriculum entitlement for all pupils. Features of particular note in the enhanced provision are those run by the mathematics department, which gives pupils the opportunity to study successfully to GCE AS Level, and in languages, where pupils can take a GCSE course in Latin. The school also offers summer schools specifically to improve standards of numeracy. There is a comprehensive range of sporting activities for both elite and open access groups outside school hours. Teams and individuals play in all major games for both boys and girls, and are entered in local, regional and national competitions. A wide range of internal competitions is held together with non-competitive activities such as trampolining, which are well attended.

47. The extensive outdoor education programme also enriches the curriculum. The residential visits to Portland at the start of Year 7 and to Runnage at the end of the year are central to the building of the tutor group into a team. Expeditions to Dartmoor took place on 17 weekends in the last school year, including an expedition for parents and one for staff. Pupils in all years are offered two expeditions a year. The expeditions are particularly useful in building relationships with disaffected pupils and those with emotional and behavioural problems. The school makes funds available to ensure that no pupil is unable to take part on the grounds of cost. Pupils and parents speak highly of this aspect of the school's provision. Pupils are also provided with opportunities to travel abroad. There are visits to the Alps for skiing and to the France for extended sailing courses. There are cultural visits to Venice and language exchanges with schools in France and Germany.

48. The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. While some departments have planned opportunities built in to schemes of work to promote this aspect of pupils' development it is inconsistent across departments. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Acts of collective worship are held on a regular basis for all year groups and these make a positive contribution to this area. The themes for collective worship are planned and followed. The school has worked hard to improve the quality of the worship offered to the pupils but statutory requirements are still not fully met as not all pupils receive a daily act of worship.

49. The acts of worship observed in school assemblies were good and clearly valued as an essential contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Pupils enter assemblies in an orderly manner, sometimes to music and opportunities are given for prayer and reflection. All year group staff are present and several staff refer to the themes of the worship in subsequent lessons. The worship theme for the week of the inspection was 'Rights and Responsibilities'. Pupils clearly enjoyed these sessions especially the excellent Year 10 assembly and the singing of the 'Colours of the Wind' by two pupils in the Year 8 assembly. During both assemblies pupils clapped spontaneously in appreciation. However, opportunities for the development of pupils' spirituality are not taken in most subjects. Where this aspect is identified and included in schemes of work then provision is good. This is exemplified in art, PSHE and religious education. In these subjects pupils are given opportunities to explore their own and others' feelings and beliefs, to develop a sense of self-

esteem and to consider the some of the fundamental questions in life. The GCSE religious education short course on philosophy and ethics is a good example where pupils in Year 10 were given the opportunity to empathise with the situation at 'Ahmici' and consider how they would have responded finding their own family tortured. The PSHE programme where pupils are able to talk openly and honestly in a 'safe' environment, together with the English work on poetry and drama also provide opportunities for pupils' spiritual development. The displays of pupils' art around the school are very good examples of how pupils are given the opportunity to explore their ideas and feelings through art. However, other subjects make too little contribution to this important aspect of pupils' personal development.

50. Provision for pupils' moral development is satisfactory overall. However, as with spiritual development, there is inconsistency in provision across the school. The school clearly aims to foster values such as honesty, fairness, truth, justice and respect for all. In subjects where opportunities to contribute to this aspect of pupils' development have been identified and included in schemes of work, then this is having a clear impact on the pupils' development of a sense of right and wrong. The strict application of the safety code in science is an example of this. Other subjects also make a significant contribution to the moral development of the pupils. For example the pilot self-assessment work in design and technology is beginning to have a key impact on pupils' behaviour and sense of worth. In religious education, pupils are given the opportunity to acquire knowledge and understanding of traditional moral values and rules for life. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, pupils engaged in a thoughtful discussion of the qualities that are necessary to sustain lasting relationships, and in a Year 10 lesson, pupils engaged in a powerful debate on the liberation of Dachau and the moral issues surrounding the event. Through drama and PSHE pupils are provided with opportunities to consider the implications of their actions on themselves and others. They are encouraged to cope with setbacks and learn from their mistakes. The geography curriculum offers pupils the opportunity to discuss the moral implications of wealth, trade, population and global threats to the environment. The outcome is that most pupils in the school develop a clear a sense of right and wrong. They are able to act responsibly and show consideration for others. This is especially true of those pupils who work with and support the pupils who visit from Wyvern Special School. However, self-discipline, good behaviour and respect for all is not continually reinforced, particularly when pupils are moving around the school. A significant minority of pupils do not show respect for themselves, their peers or adults. These pupils show an unwillingness to accept and adhere to the school's code of conduct.

51. Provision for pupils' social development is good. Relationships are generally good and staff set good examples to pupils and most subjects make effective contributions to pupils' social development. In physical education, for example, pupils learn the benefits of co-operation and the need to have respect for opponents. In art, history and PSHE, pupils explore social issues related to public health, drugs management and advertising. In science, mathematics, drama and religious education pupils are provided with numerous opportunities to develop their interpersonal skills through paired and small group work. Pupils' social skills are also developed through the wide range of extra-curricular activities, which are well supported by the staff and pupils. The school has a strong belief in the benefits of outdoor education and pupils are provided with regular opportunities to engage in expeditions and residential activities. Pupils are able to take part in activities such as caving, orienteering, walking and cycling. These activities are popular with staff, parents and pupils and often include pupils from the Wyvern Special School. In addition, the school also offers field trips in geography and visits to religious buildings as part of their religious education, as well as trips to other European countries. All of these activities support the development of pupils' social skills. In preparation for citizenship the school has recently set up elected Year and School Councils. Representatives are elected following a campaign run on parliamentary election lines and meet on a half termly basis with pupil set agenda. The

school has carried out a curriculum audit in order to be able to fully implement the statutory citizenship curriculum in 2002. Pupils are also made aware of social responsibility through fund raising for charity. Each year group has representatives responsible for fund raising. For example, pupils recently raised £1,483 for 'Children in Need'. Year 10 pupils take part in the Trident Scheme which covers community service, personal challenge and work experience. The PSHE programme, together with the successful anger management sessions are beginning to have an impact on the ways in which pupils relate to each other and to adults. However, the lack of social skills of some pupils is a major contributory factor to inappropriate behaviour in classrooms and the public areas of the school. This problem is exacerbated by the lack of an outdoor hard play area.

52. Provision for pupils' cultural development is now good and much improved since the last inspection. The school strives to develop in pupils an appreciation of their own cultural traditions in many subjects of the curriculum and most obviously through English literature, drama, music, art, history and geography. This work is well supported by educational visits to places of diverse cultural and historical interest. Pupils take part in school drama productions and musical performances and these are of a high standard. The religious education curriculum and the collective acts of worship are contributing to the pupils' knowledge and understanding of other people, their beliefs and cultures. Pupils are, for example, able to explore Hindu belief and practice, the Muslim world, the Sikh world and Christianity as a worldwide faith. The cultural experiences of pupils with special educational need are widened through contact with pen pals in schools in the United States and South America though e-mail. In modern foreign languages and physical education pupils are provided with opportunities to visit other European countries such as Austria, Italy, Germany and France, and to experience European cultures that are different from their own. Art and geography also make good contributions to pupils' cultural development. In geography, for example, pupils study the effects of tourism on Kenya and art displays reflect the world in which we live and give appropriate emphasis to other countries and cultures.

53. The school has successfully tackled the weaknesses in the curriculum identified in the previous inspection report. Curriculum provision is now good and with the exception of the provision of a daily act of collective worship fulfils statutory requirements.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

54. The school provides a good level of care and support for the wide variety of personal and educational needs of its pupils. A great deal of thought has been given to the establishment of systems and procedures that will support pupils' learning and raise their aspirations. Procedures for child protection and ensuring children's welfare and safety are satisfactory. The school policy on child protection is satisfactory and follows local authority guidelines. Links with the relevant child protection agencies are very good and there are effective procedures to ensure that all matters relating to the protection and welfare of pupils are dealt with thoroughly. However the special educational needs co-ordinator, who is the named person in charge of child protection, has no access to the SIMS pupil data and has no computer with which to do this work. This reduces the efficiency of the system.

55. The school takes seriously its responsibilities for the health and safety of its pupils. The buildings are generally secure and kept under surveillance by security cameras. Fire exits are marked with regulation signs, although directions to the exits are not visible in all corridors. Fire drills are held regularly and evacuations are carried out in an orderly manner. A sufficient number of staff hold first aid certificates. Arrangements for the care and supervision of pupils who are taken ill on site work well and all accidents and medicine administration are properly recorded. The school nurse is provided by the Health Authority

under the auspices of the School Nurse Project. Her main target is the reduction of teenage pregnancy, and she gives advice and access to all the help that pupils might need either on the premises or at an outside clinic. To emphasise the amount of responsibility and hard work involved in looking after a baby, pupils are able to care for 'cyber baby' for a weekend. Parental permission is always sought for out of school activities and risk assessments are meticulously carried out. Trained and certificated staff are always in charge of outdoor pursuits and only trained staff are allowed to transport pupils in minibuses. However, in some technology lessons pupils were observed working with long hair not tied back, and not wearing protective goggles and a few other minor matters were brought to the attention of the school. Parents at their meeting were concerned about the safety of pupils cycling to school on the busy main road.

56. The school has very good procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development. Continuity in care is provided by the form tutors, who stay with their tutor groups as they move through Years 7 to 11, and by heads of year. Pupils are in contact with their form tutors every morning and afternoon for registration, and for their PSHE lessons. This enables tutors to develop a good knowledge of individual pupils and their particular social and educational needs. Pupils know that their form tutor is the first person to go to for help with any problem, followed by their head of year. In response to an issue raised in the previous inspection report, the role of form tutors has been extended to include the monitoring of pupils' academic progress as well as the provision of pastoral support. The school has good pastoral links with the primary schools and this helps to ensure continuity in care when pupils enter the school in Year 7. Both parents and pupils believe that the transfer arrangements are effective and that the school's induction procedures are good. Pupils are provided with good support and guidance as option choices are made at the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11. The school's good links with other schools and post-16 providers, the careers service and local employers ensure continuity at the time pupils leave school.

57. The school attaches high priority to regular attendance and has worked hard and successfully to improve attendance since the last inspection. Attendance has risen in each of the past three years and is now at the national average. Nevertheless, the school recognises the need to continue to improve attendance, and heads of year work closely with the education welfare officer to target poor attenders. However, there are significant weaknesses in the procedures for improving attendance. The use of the SIMS system for registering pupils ensures that the school can maintain accurate records of attendance in an efficient way by computer scanning the class registers. However, there is a lack of urgency in the procedures. Registers are only scanned in twice a week and this causes a delay in producing accurate figures, which can impede the work of the education welfare officer. There is also a lack of clarity in the procedures for making early contact with parents about pupils who are absent from school without explanation. In the event of unexplained absence, form tutors are expected to telephone parents and if it is not possible for form tutors to do this they are expected to pass the task to the register clerk. Some tutors do this diligently, but others do not appear to realise the importance of this task as the first link in the chain of improving attendance and ensuring their pupils' safety. There is also a need to tighten procedures for ensuring that pupils do not miss lessons after registering at school. Senior staff patrol the school regularly and spot checks are carried out to check attendance at lessons with attendance at registration at the start of the session. Registers are taken at the start of all lessons. In the event of absence from a lesson teachers are required to send a slip to the register clerk who checks to see if the pupil is marked absent from school and then informs the teacher if truancy is suspected. However, all teachers do not follow this procedure and instead rely on asking the group if a pupil was present at registration. This means that it is not possible to state with certainty that all pupils are attending all lessons.

58. The school has a behaviour policy and a clear code of conduct is displayed in all classrooms. The code of conduct is supported by an escalating series of sanctions to manage inappropriate behaviour. The sanctions include detentions and removal by a senior teacher for the remainder of a lesson, if a pupils' behaviour is disrupting teaching and learning. However, there is a lack of consistency in the management of pupils. Although class management is generally good in lessons, teachers do not apply a consistent behaviour management strategy. This is most evident when pupils move along the corridors at lesson changeovers or when pupils congregate indoors at break and lunchtimes. At these times some teachers intervene and attempt to control inappropriate behaviour, while others ignore it. The consequence is that pupils are not provided with clear and unambiguous messages about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. The school takes a serious view of bullying and encourages pupils to report any instances to a member of staff or specially trained pupil mediator. Pupils know to whom they should turn if any bullying occurs. Both pupils and parents state that although instances of bullying have occurred they have been taken seriously by the school and are confident they would be treated equally seriously in the future. The pupil inclusion unit is providing good support for pupils who exhibit the most challenging behaviour and are at risk of exclusion. However, it is too early to fully judge its effectiveness.

59. At the time of the last report, the procedures for assessing attainment and progress were unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4, with variation between departments. Since then, the school has introduced effective assessment procedures so that the quality and use of assessment are now very good and strengths of the school.

60. A particular strength of the school is the attention paid to the analysis of examination and test results. The system is based on the transfer of information from the primary schools and in particular the results of the National Curriculum tests taken in the last year of primary education. This information is used to predict National Curriculum levels at the end of Year 9 and to monitor each pupil's progress towards their targets. The same method is applied to Years 10 and 11, with Year 9 National Curriculum test information used to predict GCSE grades. There are careful procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress and pupils are left in no doubt about their levels of attainment and targets. This is particularly strong in the two years leading up to the GCSE examination. Form tutors and subject teachers are able to check with pupils how well they are doing and whether they are doing well enough. The value of this is that pastoral and curriculum teams are now working more closely together to support pupils' progress.

61. All assessment information is collected, analysed and shared with subject departments. Departments are expected to use these analyses to evaluate individual pupil performance, compare the outcomes of different teaching groups and set the school's performance against national figures. Good use of is made of assessment information to guide lesson and curriculum planning in some subjects. In history and design and technology, for example, modifications have been made to teaching and learning strategies and schemes of work in order to raise the attainment levels of boys. The GCSE course in business studies has also been changed in order to provide a course more suited to the needs of boys. Assessment information has been used to change the grouping arrangements for pupils and to extend the range of courses offered in Years 10 and 11. Assessment information is also used effectively in mathematics to provide fast track GCSE courses for higher-attaining pupils in Year 10 and GCE AS Level courses in Year 11.

62. Marking is effective and regular in most subjects and linked to National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 and GCSE grades in Years 10 and 11. Pupils and most parents understand this system. However, there are inconsistencies in business studies, music, design and technology, geography and religious education. Marking also provides pupils with

guidance on what they need to do to improve the presentation of their work but not enough guidance is given on what pupils need to do in order to improve their subject-specific skills. The school meets statutory requirements for reporting pupils' assessments at the end of Year 9. Assessment information is used effectively to inform parents of the progress their children are making through interim reports in the autumn and spring terms, and the full report, which is sent to parents in the summer term. This information also forms the basis for discussion at parents' evenings.

63. Assessment practice is good in most departments. In mathematics, assessment information is used effectively to set targets and guide curriculum planning. In science, assessment is thorough, regular and accessible, in a form that pupils and teachers understand and can use. In art, procedures are well understood and focused on improving pupils' knowledge and understanding. In design and technology, the schools procedures are also used well and understood. Additional monitoring introduced in September 2001 is having a very good impact because the assessment procedures are being applied consistently. In geography, there are good quality recording sheets for pupils to use. In history, ICT and music, assessment is used well to guide planning and to help pupils move forwards. In modern languages and physical education, the robust assessment procedures are strengths, assisting in raising standards and the planning of teaching and learning. In physical education, assessments are moderated and pupils are fully involved in their own assessments and in target setting. However, in English, although the school's system is used and targets are set, there is inconsistency in using the data in raising attainment due to staffing difficulties and management changes.

64. Support and guidance for pupils with special educational needs were judged to be unsatisfactory at the last inspection because of unsatisfactory procedures for their identification and assessment, and for monitoring their progress. The school now has systematic procedures for the identification and assessment of these pupils. Individual education plans are carefully prepared and pupils' progress, in relation to the targets specified in them is closely monitored. Detailed records of pupils' progress are maintained by the special educational needs co-ordinator and all annual reviews of statements of special educational needs are well documented.

65. The management of pupils with English as an additional language is excellent. The school has an inclusion policy and early identification of language needs is addressed by the SENCO. The special educational needs co-ordinator ensures the early identification of their needs. If these needs are seen to be acute they are placed on the register of pupils with special educational needs. At present no pupil is on the special needs register. One pupil who is in the process of English language acquisition is being provided with effective support and is making good progress. Pupils with English as an additional language are closely monitored and assisted wherever possible by learning support assistants, as a result they are all making very good progress.

66. The school has made good progress in the care and support of its pupils since the last inspection. The strengths in provision have been maintained and good improvements made in the areas where provision was judged to be unsatisfactory.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

67. Parents have positive views of the school. Although only 11 per cent of parents responded to the questionnaire and 44 attended the pre-inspection meeting, the views expressed through these channels showed that parents are generally happy with the school. They consider the leadership and management of the school to be good and feel comfortable

about approaching the school if they have any problems or concerns. They also feel that the school expects their children to do their best and that their children are making good progress. They appreciate the wide range of activities the school provides outside lessons. Inspection evidence supports these positive views. A small number of parents, however, expressed concerns about aspects of the school's work. Some parents feel that behaviour is not good enough and that pupils are not given enough work to do at home. The inspection supports parents' views with regard to behaviour but not their views on homework, which is set regularly in most subjects. Parents also expressed concern about the information the school provides and the closeness with which the school works with parents. Inspection evidence does not support parents concerns about the information the school provides. The school makes considerable efforts to provide clear information for parents about the school and their children's progress. The school prospectus is of good quality and meets statutory requirements. It contains a good deal of information on the school aims, the curriculum and other opportunities provided by the school. Regular newsletters are sent to parents giving additional information about school events and parent activities being organised by the school. Annual reports contain sufficient information for parents to understand what their child can do and where they need to improve in most subjects. Each year group holds at least one consultation evening for parents to discuss their children's progress. The school makes strenuous efforts to encourage parents to attend parents' meetings and staff are always willing to arrange alternative times for parents who cannot attend. Links with parents of pupils with special educational needs are good. The special educational needs co-ordinator is in frequent contact with parents. They are invited to participate in annual reviews of their children's progress and to discuss the options available to them in pupils' individual education plans, although not all attend.

68. Parents contributed to the writing of the home-school agreement, which all parents sign when their child enters the school. Parents are encouraged to become involved in the work that their children do at home, particularly as external examinations approach when additional support and encouragement are needed. All pupils have homework planners which parents are asked to check regularly. Parental comments are welcomed and usually acted upon promptly. There is a small but active parent and teacher association that arranges social events and raises funds for the school. Parents help with the many outdoor education weekends and act as escorts on school trips. A few parents act as helpers during the day and some help with projects such as building sets for school drama productions, and with engineering projects such as the construction of robots and cars. The school is keen for parents to be involved and requests are made for parents to make themselves known if they have time or skills to offer.

69. Comparisons of the views of parents expressed at this inspection compared with the last inspection indicate that there has been a significant positive shift in parental opinion. Parents are very complimentary and appreciative of the efforts that the school is making, and in particular of the improvement that has taken place since the arrival of the head teacher. They speak of a new optimism and rising image of the school in the community.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

70. The school was in a difficult position when the current headteacher was seconded from the headship of another local school to be the acting headteacher of Wey Valley immediately before the last inspection in 1999. At that time the management and governance of the school were unsatisfactory and this was reflected in the organisation and ethos of the school. The staffing structure did not meet the needs of the school and leadership by heads of department lacked consistency. There was little monitoring and support for teaching and curriculum development and procedures for the appraisal of teachers, including lesson

observation, had fallen into abeyance. There was no special educational needs co-ordinator and provision in this area lacked effective management and co-ordination. The school had made unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection. Overall standards in GCSE examinations were declining, as were attendance and behaviour. There was disharmony and a lack of communication between senior management and the governing body and staff morale was low. The inspection report acknowledged that the acting headteacher was providing strong leadership to the school but concluded that the problems caused by previous unsatisfactory management and governance of the school would take some time to eradicate and were major contributors to the judgement that the school had serious weaknesses. Shortly after the inspection the acting headteacher was appointed to the permanent position and the downward trend has now been reversed. This is principally due to the excellent leadership the headteacher has provided to the school.

71. The headteacher has brought to the school a clear sense of purpose, higher expectations and well-conceived strategies for its improvement. These have been successfully communicated to all who are associated with the school with the result that staff morale has been raised. This has underpinned the progress made over the last two years. The headteacher has high expectations of the staff and continually challenges them to evaluate their performance in order to improve teaching and learning and raise standards. Virtually all of the issues for action identified in the previous inspection report have been tackled successfully and some, such as leadership and management, are now strengths of the school.

72. When the school was last inspected there were no deputy headteachers and the workload was considered to be inequitable and unsustainable. To tackle this issue the LEA seconded an experienced deputy to the school until a permanent deputy head could be appointed. This appointment was made in January 2001 and has considerably strengthened senior management. The senior management team has also been extended by the inclusion of two additional senior teachers. Senior managers now work effectively as a team and share the headteacher's drive to improve the school. Each has clear line management responsibilities through which middle managers, such as heads of department and heads of year, are held accountable to senior management. However, because the assistant heads carry substantial departmental or other responsibilities, in addition to their roles as senior managers, the workloads of the headteacher and her deputy are still too heavy. The range of their responsibilities is too wide and this is impeding the rate at which improvement is being made. The need to further strengthen senior management by the appointment of another deputy head has been recognised by the governing body and strategic planning has taken this into account. There are firm plans to appoint another deputy head in the near future.

73. The overall quality of management provided by heads of department is good. Leadership and management in mathematics and physical education are very good and having a positive impact on standards. Good leadership is also seen in science, art, design and technology, geography, history, ICT, modern foreign languages, and religious education. Leadership and management in English have now been stabilised after a period of uncertainty during which standards of attainment in Years 7 to 9 were adversely affected. One of the assistant heads, who is a very experienced former head of the English department, now heads the department and is providing good leadership to a department in need of a sense of unity and common purpose. Leadership and management in business

studies and in music are adversely affected by the long-term illness of the heads of department. The acting heads in both subjects are enthusiastic and hardworking but both lack the experience necessary to manage the departments and put into place changes to move the department forward further. Leadership and management in these subjects are, therefore, unsatisfactory.

74. Provision for pupils with special educational needs was identified as a significant weakness and key issue for action in the last report. This issue has been tackled so successfully that provision for special educational needs is now a strength of the school. Immediately after the inspection the LEA seconded an experienced special educational needs co-ordinator to the school to begin to tackle the problems and a permanent co-ordinator took up post in September 2000. Rapid progress has been made since that time and the management and leadership of the special educational needs department are excellent. The co-ordinator together with the governor with responsibility for special needs and the team leader of the teaching assistants make an outstanding team. Effective procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress have been established. High quality education plans ensure that all staff are kept up to date and well informed of individual pupils' needs and the monitoring of teaching and learning ensures that subject teachers are using these effectively. Annual Review procedures are efficiently managed and there are good links with parents.

75. Management of the inclusion unit is good. The well structured policy and practice ensures that pupils attend on a formal referral basis. Teachers in the unit assess pupils' classroom needs through lesson observation before liaising with the pupils and their parents to formulate a pastoral care plan. Monitoring and assessment procedures are good and there are good links with subject teachers to ensure that there is minimal disruption to the pupils' learning across the curriculum.

76. A major factor in enabling senior management to identify and tackle weaknesses and to help communicate the commitment to raising standards has been the establishment of systematic procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. Effective use is made of management information systems to analyse test and examination performance in great detail and to compare the performance of individual subjects. This has helped to identify where a subject's performance falls below that of others so that steps can be taken to bring about improvements. This information is also used to set targets for departments and to make clear the headteacher's commitment to raising expectations, standards and the quality of teaching and learning. The regular observation of teaching, scrutiny of pupils' books and external training for heads of department are all being used effectively to support the drive for improvement.

77. There has been significant improvement in the governance of the school since the last inspection. The governing body is now very effective. It has a very good committee structure with an exceptional level of expertise through which it is able to monitor the work of the school effectively. It has established very good working relationships with the headteacher and the senior management team, and this has enabled them to address effectively the issues raised at the last inspection. Governors take part in a comprehensive training programme. There are increasingly effective links between the governing body and subject departments. As a result governors have a very good understanding of the issues facing the school over the next few years and are in a position to set the strategic direction for its future development. With the exception of a daily act of collective worship, the governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities.

78. The quality of financial management and planning is very good and significantly improved since the last inspection. At the time of the last inspection there was a substantial budget deficit. This has now been largely removed through tight financial control on expenditure, the rationalization of responsibility points, staffing changes and considerably increased income from lettings. Governors are now actively involved with the headteacher and the senior management team in financial planning and monitoring and are given very good support by the school bursar. All school plans are carefully costed and directly linked to educational outcomes. The school has very good procedures to ensure that the principles of best value for money are applied in the use of its resources, and all additional funding received by the school is used for the intended purposes. All issues raised in the most recent auditor's report have now been corrected. The quality of financial planning is now a strength of the school.

79. The match of teachers and support staff to the needs of the curriculum is satisfactory and most teachers are suitably qualified in their main teaching areas. However, the school lacks suitably qualified teachers in business studies. Further, due to the shortage of music and business studies teachers in the area, the school has not been able to appoint secondary trained specialist music and business studies teachers to cover the teaching commitments of the staff who are on long-term sick leave. Arrangements for the professional development of staff are good. Close attention is paid to the identification of individual teacher development needs and how these can be matched to school development priorities. Arrangements for the support and professional development of both newly qualified teachers and students undertaking initial teacher training are good and valued by participants, as are the induction arrangements for all new members of staff. The number and quality of technical support staff is good and the team of teaching assistants provide very good support for pupils with special needs. The secretarial and clerical staff provide an efficient and welcoming school office. They contribute very effectively to the administration and organisation of the school.

80. The provision of learning resources is satisfactory overall. Resource provision is good in mathematics, English, art and physical education. Pupils also have good access to computers and ICT is well used in most subjects. However, a lack of equipment is inhibiting progress in design and technology. Resources for gifted and talented pupils are developing well and these pupils make good use of homework and computer clubs. The inclusion unit is well resourced to support behaviour management programmes and, although subject resources are limited, most teachers provide relevant textbooks and work in their subjects for individual pupils. The library has been improved significantly since the last inspection. It has been enlarged and is now well supplied with books and computers that are well used for research and homework. The library staff are efficient and have improved the status of the library. The library is being developed into a very good resource for teaching and learning.

81. The quality of the school accommodation has been improved considerably since the last inspection. The semi-circular toilet block has been demolished and new boys' and girls' toilets have been built. Narrow corridors through the school administrative area have been widened and new office accommodation for senior managers and administrative staff have been built. Additional teaching areas, office accommodation and storage rooms have also been created by the imaginative use of space within the school. The learning resources centre now provides very good quality accommodation and is a pleasant and welcoming study area. The bookshelves are moveable and this allows the space to be used for a variety of purposes. Provision for special educational needs has been improved by the creation of a new learning support base in which small group and individual teaching can take place. However, as at the time of the last inspection, the overall accommodation remains unsatisfactory. The lack of a hard surface outdoor play area was identified as an issue in each of the last two inspection reports and, despite intense pressure from the school,

remains outstanding. The lack of such an area is having an adverse effect on behaviour because pupils, of necessity, spend too much of their break and lunchtimes on the school corridors and other indoor areas, where many engage in playground type behaviour that is inappropriate indoors. The music accommodation is unsatisfactory because one of the music rooms is far too small, the new mobile has poor acoustics and there are insufficient practice areas for group work. Desks in the main room inhibit work and chairs are too low for keyboard work. Accommodation for science is also unsatisfactory. There are not enough laboratories and a significant number of lessons are taught in ordinary classrooms. This limits what can be taught and affects standards. Some of the old laboratories are in a poor state of repair and also affect how science is taught.

82. Pupils show respect for the school buildings and there is little evidence of any graffiti. The site manager and his team maintain the school premises to a good state of cleanliness and this makes a positive contribution to the ethos of the school. However, the work of the school cleaning staff is made more difficult by the inconsiderate behaviour of some pupils who leave a considerable amount of litter in the corridors after break times.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

83. All of the following issues feature in school improvement planning. In order to raise standards and the quality of education provided, the governors, senior management and staff of Wey Valley School, with the help of the Local Education Authority, should:

- Strengthen the senior management team by implementing the plan to appoint of another deputy headteacher as soon as finance allows.
(Paragraph: 72)
- Continue to press the case for the provision of an outdoor play area as a matter of priority.
(Paragraphs: 19, 36, 51, 58, 72, 81, 110)
- Improve standards of behaviour by ensuring that:
(Paragraphs: 3, 18-21, 29, 50, 58, 67, 91-92, 108, 110, 119, 126, 134, 137-139, 145-146, 153, 162, 169, 192, 195)
 - * teaching and learning activities are closely matched to the attainment levels of all pupils;
 - * all teachers take responsibility for managing behaviour in the corridors and public areas of the school;
 - * all staff are committed to the agreed school behaviour strategy;
 - * teachers are provided with appropriate training in order to ensure that they are able to implement the strategy effectively;
 - * middle managers are provided with appropriate training to enable them to monitor and support behaviour management strategies in the classroom;
 - * there are clearly designated responsibilities within the senior management team for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the strategy.
- Raise standards in music by:
(Paragraphs: 3, 6, 23-24, 73, 175-181)
 - * ensuring that the music department is provided with effective leadership and management;
 - * modifying schemes of work to develop pupils' basic skills in performing, composing and listening through music making;
 - * ensuring that there are clearly understood procedures for monitoring and evaluating the teaching of the schemes of work.
- Raise standards in business education by ensuring that:
(Paragraphs: 6, 23-24, 62, 73, 79, 131-133)
 - * the amount of specialist teaching in the subject is increased;
 - * the subject is provided with effective leadership and management;
 - * there is effective monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning so that strengths are identified and shared and weaknesses tackled;
 - * there is greater variety in teaching and learning to stimulate and enthuse pupils.
 - * expectations are raised and learning activities provide pupils with greater challenge;

- * the marking of pupils' work is regular and provides clear guidance on what pupils must do in order to improve.

- Ensure that there is a clearly understood procedure for making early contact with parents about pupils who are absent from school without explanation and that this procedure is followed diligently by all teachers.
(Paragraph: 57)

- Continue to press the case for improvements to the accommodation for science and music.
(Paragraphs: 81, 121, 180)

In addition, paragraphs 12, 25, 96, 117, 146 (literacy), 13, 25, 107 (numeracy), 26, 63, 88, 90, 92-95 (teaching and learning in English), 36 (structure of school day), 62, 90, 108, 139, 198 (marking), 24, 80, 107, 125, 136, 148, 155, 158, 198 (use of ICT) include weaknesses that have not formed the basis of 'Key Issues' identified above. The school should consider including these in the governors' post-inspection action plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	190
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	79

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	7	47	75	47	14	0	0
Percentage	4	25	39	25	7	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7– Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1344
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	182

Special educational needs	Y7– Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	32
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	290

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	60
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	51

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.8
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	144	124	268

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	74	97	90
	Girls	87	84	78
	Total	161	181	168
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	60 (73)	68 (68)	63 (69)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	24 (39)	40 (39)	33 (31)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	35 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	77	102	86
	Girls	90	86	71
	Total	167	188	157
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	63 (63)	70 (67)	59 (55)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	25 (20)	36 (38)	33 (26)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	29 (29)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	139	140	279

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	60(60)	130 (134)	135(137)
	Girls	77 (66)	127 (109)	132 (111)
	Total	137(126)	257 (243)	267(248)
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	49.3 (47)	92.1 (93)	96 (95)
	National	49.8 (47.4)	88.8 (90.6)	95.5 (95.6)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	39.4 (38)
	National	39.1 (38.4)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0	0
	National	0	0

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	2
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	4
White	1336
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	1
Black – other	2	1
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	85	8
Other minority ethnic groups	0	10

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7-Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	73.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.2

Education support staff: Y7-Y11

Total number of education support staff	33
Total aggregate hours worked per week	

Deployment of teachers: Y7-Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.7
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Average teaching group size: Y7-Y11

Key Stage 3	27.1
Key Stage 4	23.6

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	3190762.00
Total expenditure	3055612.00
Expenditure per pupil	2258.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	-137155.00
Balance carried forward to next year	-2005.00

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	32
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	29

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	6
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out
Number of questionnaires returned

1344
153

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	32	59	7	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	33	60	5	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	14	58	13	8	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	55	18	7	2
The teaching is good.	25	59	7	1	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	52	14	3	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	43	48	6	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	45	46	7	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	25	56	10	4	5
The school is well led and managed.	38	53	4	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	51	5	1	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	45	48	1	1	4

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

ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- A shared commitment to improve.
- Good leadership is providing a clear direction for development.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Use of ICT.

Areas for improvement:

- The marking of pupils' work and the use of assessment to guide planning.
- The monitoring and evaluating of the work of the department.
- The planning of schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 to provide a consistent framework for all teachers.
- The monitoring of pupils' progress, particularly in Years 7 to 9, to identify and provide support for pupils who are underachieving.

84. Standards of attainment in English on entry are below average. Standards in English at the end of Year in the 2001 National Curriculum assessments were average when compared to schools nationally, but above average when compared to similar schools. There was a difference in performance between girls and boys, with a greater proportion of girls achieving the higher levels than boys. However, this picture of girls out performing boys is reflected nationally. In general the trend between 1996 and 2000 has been upward, but in 2001 the results showed a significant decline. This disappointing performance was the result of temporary staffing difficulties and a lack of continuity in teaching and learning. Inspection evidence confirms that standards in English are broadly in line with national expectations at the end of Year 9. Achievement at the end of Year 9 is satisfactory.

85. Standards in English language at the end of Year 11 in 2001 were average compared all schools but above average when compared to similar schools. Girls significantly out-performed boys. The trend overall is steadily upwards. Standards in English literature at the end of Year 11 in 2001 were average when compared to schools nationally. Girls significantly out-performed boys. In 2001, the improvement in the English literature results is significant, the trend overall is steadily upwards. Achievement at the end of Year 11 in both English and English literature is satisfactory.

86. Pupils with special educational needs in all years are attaining well and reach standards that are good in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils with English as an additional language are achieving well and, by the end of Years 9 and 11, reach standards similar to those of their peers.

87. Inspection evidence shows attainment in speaking and listening at the end of Year 9 to be consistent with national expectations and frequently better. A good example was in a Year 9 lesson where pupils confidently made oral presentations on the analysis of character and theme in a range of short stories. Higher-attaining pupils demonstrated clear insight into the structure of the novel and delivered their presentations articulately. Attainment in speaking and listening at the end of Year 11 is above national expectations. In a Year 10 lesson on Shakespeare's 'Much Ado About Nothing', pupils demonstrated a high level of critical

appreciation and understanding of language devices as they analysed and discussed the scene.

88. Attainment in reading is close to national expectations at the end of Year 9. In a Year 7 lesson on the novel 'The Phantom Thief', pupils read with clear expression and obvious pleasure. They were able to select appropriate pieces of text to support their answers. At the end of Year 11, attainment in reading is close to national expectations. Pupils are reading with a satisfactory degree of sensitivity and understanding. In a lively Year 11 lesson, the poem 'Valentine' by Carol Ann Duffy was read with sensitivity and a degree of empathy. This enabled the pupils to develop a better understanding of the various levels of meaning. The structured support given by the teacher in this lesson helped them identify the extended metaphors for love. Higher-attaining pupils also identified the way in which carefully chosen vocabulary promotes vibrant visual images. However, there is generally not enough focus on reading. At present, there are no reading strategies beyond the timetabled use of the library in Year 7. This restricts opportunities for further reading beyond the prescribed class texts. There is little evidence of reading being used to support research work in other subjects. Pupils' reading is not monitored and there is neither a department nor school focus on regular reading. Regular reading habits form the basis of raising attainment in literacy.

89. Standards of writing at the end of Year 9 are close to national expectations for girls, but below for boys. The department has employed a number of strategies to raise standards for boys but the effectiveness of these strategies has been diminished because they have not been applied consistently across teaching groups. The use of a wide range of writing methods helps pupils improve, as in a Year 9 lesson where various lengths of string were used to represent story-lines and these were interwoven to produce a piece of media style scripting. These lower attaining pupils became TV scriptwriters in role for the lesson and all achieved very well. Their imaginative scripts demonstrated that high standards of writing are achievable if the task is well planned. Standards of writing at the end of Year 11 are close to and often above national expectations. Presentation is often excellent and shows a high level of commitment to the subject. There is evidence of pupils of all abilities drafting and redrafting their work and using ICT as a tool for improving presentation. Higher attaining pupils produce creative pieces of work of exceptionally high quality and are achieving the highest grades at GCSE. A good example of this was from a Year 10 pupil writing about 'loneliness' in a poem: 'It has a texture like, some craggy rock that stabs.....'

90. However, by the end of Year 11, some lower-attaining pupils are still experiencing difficulty with accuracy in spelling and grammar, which frequently affects the clarity of their writing and hinders understanding. This is made worse for pupils in some teaching groups, because marking does not provide clear guidance on how to improve. Despite these technical weaknesses pupils are producing imaginative pieces, which clearly demonstrate an understanding of audience and purpose in their writing. A good example of this was in a Year 10 lesson of lower-attaining pupils studying 'A Christmas Carol', where their vocabulary was considerably extended following a structured writing activity.

91. Most pupils behave well in lessons. In lessons that were stimulating and well planned the pupils responded in a very mature manner and concentrated well. Where behaviour was unsatisfactory, pupils sometimes arrived late and were unchallenged. The behaviour of a small minority of pupils in Year 7 was disruptive, particularly after lunch and these pupils took a little time to settle down to work. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in lessons by learning assistants.

92. Teaching is good overall. In about a third of the lessons observed teaching was very good and in a few it was excellent. This good standard of teaching is consistent with other inspection evidence. However, there are substantial inconsistencies between teaching

groups. Most teachers display good subject knowledge, but their expectations of their pupils are varied. Where expectations are high and pupils are challenged by stimulating activities, lessons are purposeful and pupils are well focused. A good example of this was seen in a Year 11 lesson, where lower attaining pupils were able to distinguish fact from opinion in a difficult newspaper extract. By working together on the text and discussing the issues, they made good progress and developed a real understanding of bias in language. But this good practice is not universal, and where expectations are low, progress is often unsatisfactory.

93. Overall planning is a weakness; some teachers have detailed lesson plans, others only brief notes. This inconsistency and lack of rigour is reflected in a lack of progression in some pupils' work. In order to raise standards, there is a need for more detailed lesson planning, particularly in Years 7 to 9, to include the National Literacy Strategy and to support temporary and part-time teachers. In the most successful lessons, teachers explain the lesson objectives at the beginning of the lesson and return at the end of the lesson to check that learning has taken place. In such lessons, pupils are drawn into taking an active part because tasks are well structured, as in a Year 11 lesson, for example, where pupils studied two love poems. The pupils' reading of the stanzas coincided with the unwrapping of a parcel. A very visual metaphor in which pupils discovered layers of meaning in the text as the parcel was unwrapped. All pupils understood the parody and a great deal of learning took place.

94. Good questioning techniques and oral feedback allow pupils to make very good gains in understanding. An excellent example was a Year 9 lesson where lower-attaining pupils were designing a drugs awareness leaflet. Skilful questioning enables pupils to extend their discussions and reflect on the 'shock-tactics' needed to gain the attention of teenagers at risk. Good pace, high expectations of pupils, stimulating and well-planned lessons and extended plenary sessions to consolidate learning are all features of lessons where achievement is good. There are examples of such teaching. Learning is less assured where time is not managed effectively and the learning outcomes are not kept in focus, as in a Year 10 lesson where pupils were intended to explore 'Iago's' character but the lesson drifted into exploring other issues and the pupils failed to complete the original task. The pupils in this lesson were left unchallenged and unsure as to what the outcomes of the lesson should have been; and because of this little learning took place.

95. There are some inconsistencies in assessment practice across the department. Although there is a clear marking policy not all members of the team are using it in the same way. Some work is very thoroughly marked, yet other work left unmarked for a whole term. Where assessment practice is good, the criteria are shared with the pupils and they are aware of their own learning and are able to identify what qualities are needed in order to improve. There is a need to ensure that this good practice is more consistent across the department if standards are to continue to rise. Not enough teachers use assessment information to identify underachieving pupils and provide more effective support. A more rigorous and consistent approach to monitoring all aspects of the work of the department is necessary to ensure that best practice is shared and weaknesses tackled. There is a need for greater teamwork and increased consistency in teaching and learning. Lesson planning does not always take enough account of the range of attainment levels in a class so that all pupils can be stretched.

96. Pupils' standards of literacy on entry to the school are below average. Almost one third of the pupils in Year 7 have weaknesses in literacy skills. Although some strategies for the development of pupils' literacy are in place in other subjects, these have not had time to be effective. Literacy skills are being developed systematically in some subjects, such as history and geography, but not in others. The need to raise standards of literacy has been

identified as a school development priority and strategies are now being put in place to ensure a more consistent approach to the development of these skills in other subjects.

97. After a period of instability the department is now being well led and managed. The head of department is working hard to overcome the many problems associated with staffing difficulties. The department is now adequately staffed and is well resourced. The English team share a commitment to improve the work of the department. This is an enthusiastic and energetic department, which requires firm direction and strong leadership in order to provide consistently high standards.

98. There has been some improvement since the last inspection. Strategies to raise the standards of boys have been implemented, although not consistently across the whole department. ICT provision has improved considerably and is used consistently both as a resource for learning and a tool for improving the presentation of pupils' work. This is now a strength of the department. However procedures for assessing pupils' progress and attainment at the end of Year 9 are still not being used enough to either guide planning or to motivate pupils. Assessment needs further refining and to be shared more fully with pupils. The department is now well placed to make the necessary changes and secure improvement.

DRAMA

Overall, the quality of provision in drama is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Subject is well managed and led.
- Enthusiastic drama team.

Areas for improvement:

- Resources including a soundboard and staging blocks.

99. Standards in drama are close to national standards at the end of Year 9. Results in the GCSE examination taken at the end of Year 11, improved in 2001 but were still below average. There is an upward trend in examination results over recent years. Achievement by the end of Years 9 and 11 is satisfactory.

100. Pupils are able to use a range of drama techniques effectively and understand the language of the subject well. Pupils in a Year 9 lesson, for example, were able to explore characterisation using a good variety of individual and small group activities. In this lesson, pupils explored enthusiastically different features of appearance and personality. Pupils are also able to use drama to engage in imaginative thinking such as speculating about life in the future. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, inspired by the play 'Waiting for Godot', pupils explored a difficult situation set in future time. The pupils sustained their roles well and demonstrated vivid imaginative thought processes. Pupils in Year 11 demonstrate a good understanding of dramatic process through participation and are able to analyse meanings and feelings using small scripted performances. Lower-attaining pupils use sustained role-play sensitively and empathetically.

101. The quality of teaching in drama is good. Teachers' high expectations produce positive responses from pupils and refreshingly lively pieces of work. Pupils manage and evaluate their own improvisations confidently and make subtle changes to them. Teachers use assessment effectively to provide pupils with good feedback on their performances. This helps them to gain confidence and develop further skills. These skills would be further extended by the use of staging blocks to enhance awareness of space and sound boards to develop theatrical skills. An enthusiastic drama team is well led, and manages to overcome difficulties in accommodation to provide a stimulating drama experience.

102. Much has been done to improve standards in drama since the last inspection. Planning has improved and a number of strategies are being used to raise standards. A good example is the pupil information pack, which includes guidance on self-evaluation. Pupils spoken to during the inspection found these extremely helpful.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **good**.

Strengths:

- Good teaching.
- Effective planning.
- Very good use of assessment.

Areas for improvement:

- Opportunities for individual learning.
- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning.

103. In 2001, the National Curriculum test results for pupils at the end of Year 9 were average for both boys and girls. When compared with similar schools, results were above the national average for Level 5 or above and about average for Level 6 or above. The results in mathematics were better than in English and science with boys' and girls' performances being about the same. Since the last inspection, results have improved at about the same rate as mathematics results nationally until 2001 when results showed little improvement on those for the previous year. Given the attainment of these pupils on entry to the school, progress has been good.

104. Pupils currently in the school, and in Year 9 in particular, are making significant gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding in mathematics. Higher-attaining pupils understand how to determine the surface areas of complex shapes, they use trigonometry to solve problems with triangles and can determine the equation for a straight line given the gradient and intercept. Lower-attaining pupils are much less secure in their understanding of mathematical concepts, however. Whilst being unable to determine the equation for a line, they can plot coordinates in all quadrants and can draw two-dimensional shapes with a fair degree of accuracy. In the majority of lessons, pupils' progress and achievement, including that of pupils with special educational needs, is good.

105. Pupils make satisfactory progress through Years 10 and 11. In 2001, the results of examinations for GCSE were in line with the national average for the numbers of pupils gaining grade C or better, but above average for those gaining a grade G or better. Compared with similar schools, results were above average. The results in 2001 were similar to those in 2000 but significantly better than those in 1999. There is good evidence to suggest that, on the basis of current achievements, results will improve further in 2002.

106. The work of pupils currently in Years 10 and 11 is average overall, but there is evidence of work which is well above average, particularly by higher-attaining pupils. These show a good understanding of the graphical solution of quadratic equations and the use of the sine and cosine rules. Average and lower-attaining pupils are less secure in their understanding of mathematics. Some can solve linear and simultaneous equations, but cannot obtain solutions to equations using graphs.

107. The standard of literacy is, overall, in line with expectations. Higher-attaining pupils cope fairly well with extended writing, use mathematical terms with confidence, and spelling is good. Lower-attaining pupils are less confident and tend to be more restricted in the range and extent of their written work, often limiting their writing to short sentences in which spelling and the use of mathematical terms are less secure. Higher-attaining pupils speak with confidence and understanding and are able to describe and discuss their work with a good degree of accuracy. Lower-attaining pupils, however, often have difficulty in speaking and tend to give very brief answers to questions. They also have difficulty in converting spoken language into written form. The standards of numeracy, whilst being satisfactory overall, are variable. Higher-attaining pupils use mental arithmetic well and are familiar with the use of calculators. Lower-attaining pupils, in both key stages, have difficulty with some basic number work, although knowledge of multiplication tables and the ability to use calculators is often good. There is at present no school numeracy strategy, with the consequence that pupils' numerical skills are not being developed in a systematic way in all subjects. There were several good examples of pupils using ICT, in coursework, including the representation of the results of investigations, in tabular and graphical forms. However, even though the use of ICT to support teaching and learning is included within the normal schemes of work, in practice it requires further development. Reports issued to parents provide useful information on attainment, attitudes and progress and of a pupil's strengths. However, some do not provide focused, subject specific, targets for improvement in each component.

108. Throughout the school the quality of teaching is good. It is slightly better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is often very good, but this is counter-balanced by a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers make use of their good subject knowledge to provide very effective explanations and ask questions that challenge or assess pupils' knowledge and understanding. Lessons are, on the whole, well planned and teachers give clear learning objectives that pupils understand. Classroom management and organisation are effective and the pace of lessons usually matches the needs and tasks of pupils. In a very few lessons, however, the expectations of teachers are too low. In these lessons, pupils underachieve and, sometimes, misbehave as a result. Teachers generally manage pupils well. In most lessons, time is used effectively but in a few lessons unsatisfactory time management led to the lesson finishing early. In some lessons there is over direction by teachers. In these, there is insufficient opportunity for independent learning. Exercise books are always well marked. Whilst constructive comments are often made, these rarely indicate what pupils have to do to improve.

109. The identification of appropriate and challenging learning objectives coupled with good support for pupils' learning, enables pupils, throughout the school, to make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11 in improving their knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts. In the majority of lessons pupils work hard and at a good pace. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress particularly when supported by classroom assistants.

110. The behaviour of pupils and their attitude to mathematics are both good overall. However, unsatisfactory behaviour outside the classroom has a negative impact upon teaching and learning when pupils return to classes. Pupils listen well to their teachers,

respond positively to the various activities and show interest and enjoyment. When given the opportunity to do so, pupils work well independently and in groups, think out problems for themselves and concentrate hard. Most pupils answer, and ask, questions well and have the confidence to discuss mathematical concepts with their teachers and with other pupils. However, some pupils, particularly boys, are reluctant to answer questions unless directed to do so by a teacher and are less confident in discussing mathematical ideas. This has an adverse effect upon performance.

111. All components of the mathematics national curriculum are well covered, but mathematical investigations are less well integrated into the teaching programme. Work is well matched to the aptitude and abilities of pupils including those with learning difficulties and those who are gifted and talented. This has a positive effect upon progress and achievement. For example, the most talented pupils take GCSE examinations at the end of Year 10. These pupils continue on to AS-Level work where, in 2001, they achieved considerable success. Individual education plans for slower learners, however, whilst sometimes containing targets for numeracy, do not provide specific targets for improvement in mathematics as a whole. Nevertheless, teachers have a good understanding of these pupils' needs and adjust their work accordingly. The organisation of the scheme of work ensures continuity and progression in pupils' learning.

112. Leadership in the mathematics department is very good. It is led by a dedicated head of department who is well supported by the team of mathematics teachers. She provides clear educational direction, is hard working and committed. Development planning, which is well linked to school development planning, is effective and manageable. Procedures for assessment are very good. Individual teachers keep very good records of pupils' progress and these are used, effectively, to identify underachievement and to guide future teaching. Assessment is well used as a means of tracking the progression of pupils from Year 7 to Year 11 and in identifying overall strengths and weaknesses in pupils' performance. Monitoring of the quality of teaching by lesson observations takes place and this is used very well to develop and share good practice within the department. In the past, the school has experienced difficulties in recruiting new mathematics teachers of sufficient calibre. The resultant use of temporary, non-specialist teachers has had a negative impact upon the department. Fortunately, this problem has now been solved by the appointment of a specialist mathematics teacher soon to join the school. Resources, in terms of books and equipment, including access to computers are good.

113. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Even though test and examination results are still average, they have improved steadily. Teaching, described as being sound at the time of the previous inspection, is now good. With the continued use of the department's strategies for further development the capacity to improve is good.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is **good**.

Strengths:

- Predominantly good teaching.
- Assessment that helps pupils improve their work.
- The leadership and day-to-day management.

Areas for improvement

- The attainment of girls.
- Better links with primary schools.
- The use of ICT in lessons.
- Shortage of laboratories and run-down accommodation.

114. National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 6 in the primary school show pupils' standards in science to be similar to the national average. The 2001 standards are below average but the trend over the past few years is upwards. Girls perform better in these tests than boys.

115. By the end of Year 9 pupils attain standards that are about average when compared with schools nationally. When compared with similar schools attainment is above the national average. Standards are gradually improving at the same rate as the national trends. The overall achievements of girls and boys are about the same but more boys than girls gain the highest levels.

116. At end of Year 11 pupils attain standards in the GCSE examination that are above the national averages. Since the last inspection the proportion gaining GCSE A*-C grades has improved every year and in 2001, when compared with similar schools, standards were well above the national figures. Even though both girls and boys make very good progress over the GCSE course, boys gain higher grades than girls.

117. In work seen during the inspection attainment by the end of Year 9 is in line with national expectations. Pupils in Year 7 lessons are developing a deeper understanding of the knowledge they bring with them from their primary schools, for example, how a wide range of body organs work in humans. In Year 8 lessons, pupils use this understanding to build mental models of the human body and are, for example, able to explain how food molecules are broken down in the process of digestion. Pupils in Year 9 are able to apply their scientific knowledge and understanding to suggest ways in which investigations can be carried out and conclusions drawn from experiments. However, many pupils find it difficult to write in sentences and paragraphs when describing experiments; this limits their attainment in science. In a good Year 7 lesson, pupils' used computer spreadsheets effectively to show results as graphs and this improved the standard of their work. Inspection evidence shows that girls and boys attain similar standards. The achievement of lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs is satisfactory by the end of Year 9.

118. By the end of Year 11 many pupils achieve above average standards. In Year 10, many pupils are able to use chemical symbols to write formulae in equations and by Year 11 are able to balance and use these equations as a matter of routine. Pupils' written coursework shows that many pupils have above average standards of mathematical ability

and use this effectively to perform calculations, draw graphs and solve problems. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, higher attaining pupils were able to perform difficult calculations, such as predicting and finding out the percentage yield of products from the reacting masses in an equation, with ease.

119. Most pupils have good attitudes and show enjoyment in their science lessons. They are interested in the subject matter and usually their behaviour is good. This results from the very positive relationships that exist between most pupils and their teachers. In many lessons an atmosphere is created in which achievement can flourish and this motivates pupils to sustain concentration and make good progress. This is particularly supportive of pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, who do well in science. In most lessons pupils work well together and carry out their tasks sensibly and safely. They are good at taking responsibility for retrieving, handling and assembling very delicate and expensive equipment or hazardous chemicals. In a few lessons, where pupils have unsatisfactory attitudes or there is unsatisfactory class management, unruly behaviour prevents teaching and learning from taking place. The challenging behaviour of boys in some lessons diverts the attention away from girls who then do not perform as well as they should.

120. Predominantly good teaching is the hallmark of the science department with a high proportion of lessons either very good or excellent. Teachers are well qualified and as a result are able to give accurate explanations that pupils can understand. A Year 11 lesson on the nature and effects of radiation, for example, was so interesting that pupils were filled with a sense of awe about the implications for their own lives. Teachers are good at sharing what they intend to be learned in a lesson so that pupils understand exactly what they have to do. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on neutralisation pupils carried out their experiments with acids and alkalis very confidently as the result of being given such clear instructions. Teachers are good at organising interesting practical work that encourages pupils to participate fully. In a Year 10 lesson, for example, pupils exploring the transfer of energy by different thermal conductors became so engrossed in the task they did not want to stop at the end of the lesson. Most teachers are good at challenging pupils to think at suitably high levels and making them aware of how well they have performed. A group of Year 11 pupils, studying science as part of a work-related curriculum, gained confidence as they were helped to assess their own performance of practical skills when making carbon dioxide gas from acid and limestone. Most teachers make good use of questions to probe what pupils know and help them make progress. A Year 10 group studying the decomposition of limestone were desperate to answer questions to show what they knew and were eager to share their opinions about the construction of a limestone quarry in Weymouth. In some lessons teachers tend to ask boys to answer questions rather than girls, which does not help girls to make the progress they should. Teachers set homework regularly and the marking of this and other work, provides pupils with clear guidance as to what they need to do to improve their work.

121. The day-to-day management is very good and the department runs smoothly. The team of teachers is well led by a talented head of science whose energy has helped to raise standards in science over the past few years. The department recognises the need for closer links with primary schools as a means of raising standards even higher. Schemes of work are well structured and include the planned use of computers. However, there is not yet a culture where computers form an everyday part of science teaching. Not enough guidance is provided to help teachers plan lessons that will deliberately develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. The laboratory technicians provide excellent

support and this improves the quality of lessons. However, there are not enough laboratories and a significant number of lessons are taught in ordinary classrooms. This limits what can be taught and affects standards. Some of the old laboratories are in a poor state of repair and also affect how science is taught.

122. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The regular monitoring of teaching and learning has helped to raise standards and there are realistic ambitions to raise them even further. Whilst irregular attendance still dogs the progress of some pupils, the number of pupils absent from national tests no longer affects results adversely. Assessment data is now used effectively by teachers to monitor pupils' progress including those with special educational needs. Teachers have improved the way in which they set pupils targets for improvement and use them to help plan lessons. Parents are now better informed about the attainment and progress of their children. For example, very successful meetings have taken place to help them understand national curriculum levels. All pupils are more accurate when recording results of experiments although some still find it difficult to evaluate results. The one-hour lessons make it easier for pupils to sustain concentration. Homework is set regularly and teachers are good at helping pupils understanding its importance. The provision of basic science equipment is adequate. Computer hardware is available, teachers have received training and there is a resolve to improve the frequency with which the equipment is used in lessons.

ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the provision for art is **good**.

Strengths:

- Standards are above average at the end of Year 9 and in the GCSE examination;
- Teaching is good and sometimes very good or excellent;
- The leadership and management of the subject;
- The monitoring of pupils' attainment and progress

Areas for improvement:

- The management of behaviour in some lessons;
- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning.

123. Pupils enter the school with average or below attainment. Teachers' assessments of attainment at the end of Year 9 show that most pupils reach the nationally expected level but that fewer pupils reach the higher levels. This is good achievement. Standards achieved by both boys and girls at the end of Year 11 in the 2001 GCSE examination were above average. This is an improvement on the 2000 results when the boys were below average. Girls achieve more of the higher grades than boys. The 2001 results brought the boys attainment closer to the girls, in line with the national difference. Pupils do better in the art exam than they do in their other GCSE exams. In 2001, pupils taking the specialist art photography exam achieved results, which were below average compared with the general art results.

124. Inspection shows that by the end of Year 9, pupils' work is above average. Both boys and girls have a good visual vocabulary, which they use effectively to express a range of ideas and feelings. Response to a musical stimulus for instance brings together the pupils knowledge of colour and perspective as well as the understanding of the work of 20th Century abstract artists to produce lively and evocative paintings. They learn to control a good range of media; their work develops individuality and their sketchbooks become progressively more organised and useful. By the end of Year 11, pupils' work is above average. Their planning, research and organisation bring diversity and richness to their painting, drawing, printmaking

and sculpture. Work on the theme of 'war' combines images from modern photography and Expressionist woodcuts to produce particularly dramatic coloured block prints and powerful sculptures. The higher-attaining photography pupils make imaginative use of both traditional and digital photography to express abstract themes based on architecture or reflections. Pupils are particularly good at evaluating and developing their work. This represents good achievement. Observation of pupils' work shows that they work hard to broaden their skills and understanding. Overall, girls throughout the school achieve higher standards than boys. Their application and involvement is better than that of boys and they take greater pride in their work.

125. Pupils' attitudes to art are generally good. They enjoy learning how to express their ideas and are keen to develop their skills. Pupils do their homework regularly and respond well to the teachers' comments. They look after their sketchbooks and use them well for class work and homework, so that they provide a good record of achievement. Overall, pupils' behaviour and the development of personal relationships are satisfactory. In some lessons, the behaviour and approach of a few pupils are unsatisfactory. This has a disturbing affect on the others in the class and affects learning.

126. Teaching is good overall. The lessons observed during the inspection teaching ranged from satisfactory to excellent. Around three-quarters of the lessons seen were good or better. In the best lessons, pupils made good progress because the teacher inspired and excited pupils with work that was challenging and well suited to their ability. In a very good Year 11 lesson, for example, the teacher used her very good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of individual pupils to provide appropriate advice and support related to the demands of the forthcoming GCSE practise examination. Good explanations and clear practical advice were well supported with visual examples. She provided assessment sheets and marking criteria for pupils to record their own progress. This gave pupils a clear idea of how to evaluate and improve their work. Teachers support pupils with special needs well, so that they too make good progress. In addition to setting simpler tasks and giving explanations, teachers work effectively with the teaching assistants to give individual help where it is needed. Teachers support the development of literacy skills well by providing opportunities to learn technical vocabulary and to write extended pieces expressing what they have learned or researched. Good question and answer sessions enable pupils to practise speaking and listening skills. In less successful lessons the lesson, activities do not inspire pupils or give them a clear idea of the learning objectives. As a result, the work becomes mechanical and pupils are not extended. In other instances, particularly in Year 9 classes, teachers do not always manage the pupils well. This leads to unsatisfactory behaviour and makes it difficult for others to learn. Nevertheless, even in these lessons pupils make progress. This is due not only to the quality of the planning and the provision of resources but also the perseverance of those pupils who want to learn. Teachers mark work regularly and make good use of assessment to monitor pupils' progress and set clear targets for improvement.

127. One lesson worthy of particular note was an excellent Year 9 lesson in which pupils worked alongside pupils with severe learning difficulties from a local special school. This regular arrangement provides very good opportunities for the development of social skills as well as artistic skills. In addition, the work of the pupils with special needs added new dimensions to the topic, which helped raise the level of achievement. The quality of the paintings from both sets of pupils was outstanding. This is typical of the importance that the department places on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of art.

128. The very good leadership and management of the department ensure that the regular monitoring of teaching and learning, and of pupils' progress, play an important role in the raising of attainment. For example, boys' attainment in the GCSE examination has been raised by providing them with work, which is more stimulating and by providing clearer guidance on what they need to do to improve. The new scheme of work provides a good broad and balanced curriculum and good use is made of visiting artists and visits to galleries to enhance pupils' work. The art team reviews schemes of work continually to ensure that the best learning opportunities are provided. The department has begun to use ICT but needs to find more ways of using this to enhance learning for all pupils, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

129. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection. Attainment has risen at the end of Year 9 and in the GCSE examination, teaching is now good overall and there are very good assessment processes. Reporting meets statutory requirements and the school has appointed a full-time leader for art. Other improvements include three-dimensional work, drawing from observation and the work with lower-attaining pupils. Given the enthusiasm and commitment of the teachers, art is well placed to improve even further.

BUSINESS STUDIES

Overall, the provision for business studies is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Good relationships.
- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning.
- A commitment to improve.

Areas for improvement:

- Leadership and management.
- The amount of specialist teaching.
- The quality of teaching and learning.
- Teachers' expectations and learning activities that provide greater challenge.
- The marking of pupils' work.

130. The proportion of pupils gaining GCSE A*-C grades in the 2001 GCSE examination was below average. Although the 2000 results had been above average, these results were unusually high. In most years the proportion of pupils gaining the A*-C grades has been about the same as in 2001 with just under a half of the pupils entered for the examination gaining these grades. Most pupils obtain grades in the A*-G range. Girls' results in 2001 were close to the national average for girls, while boys' results were below the national average for boys. Girls tend to achieve better results than boys nationally, but the school difference in performance was greater than the difference observed nationally. Comparison of standards of attainment on entry to the course with the results obtained in the GCSE examination shows achievement to have been satisfactory.

131. Inspection evidence indicates that the standard of work of pupils presently in Years 10 and 11 is below that normally expected at this stage of their course. Pupils in Year 11 have a reasonable understanding of primary, secondary and tertiary types of industry and are able to link these with examples from the locality. They show a developing understanding of business terms such as manufacture and production flow. Pupils in Year 10 have a rudimentary understanding of business partnerships and, with prompting, are able to identify some of the advantages and disadvantages of franchising to the franchiser and the

franchisee. However, pupils' knowledge and understanding of the of business concepts is not secure. They tend to struggle with definitions and are unable to generalise them to different circumstances. This was evident in a Year 11 lesson on business reports, for example, where pupils required considerable prompting to be able to identify some of the purposes of business reports by thinking about the purposes of school reports. Girls generally produce higher standards of coursework than boys. The highest-attaining pupils are capable of producing in-depth evaluations but are rarely extended by the tasks set. Pupils are competent users of ICT, which they use effectively to produce word-processed reports complete with graphs and charts.

132. Although teaching has some strengths these are outweighed by weaknesses, which make teaching unsatisfactory overall. Teachers show a genuine concern for their pupils and relationships are generally good. There is also a commitment to improve teaching and learning and to raise standards. In order to raise the attainment levels of boys, for example, the GCSE course has been changed to one that is better suited to their learning patterns. However, one of the major weaknesses is a lack of subject expertise. This leads to highly prescriptive text book based teaching, with pupils often required to do little more than copy notes from the overhead projector. The good attitudes of pupils toward the subject are demonstrated by the way in which they concentrate on the task, even though the tasks may lack interest and challenge. However, the lack of stimulus provided by the lesson tasks eventually leads to passive disinterest or, a deterioration in behaviour, particularly that of boys, which becomes difficult to control. The planned use of ICT for Internet research, spreadsheets and word processing is included in most lessons. However, the tasks are often undemanding and lack time limits. Because of this pupils are able to engage in a considerable amount of unproductive social conversation while working on the computers and lesson time is not used effectively. In one Year 11 lesson, for example, although some pupils were keen to make progress and worked at a good pace, others were inattentive and, when working on the computers, interspersed data entry with casual social conversations with their neighbours that slowed progress. Homework is often set but marking is irregular and does not provide pupils with clear guidance on what they must do in order to improve.

133. Leadership and management of the department is adversely affected by the long-term absence through illness of the head of department. The acting head of department is enthusiastic and hardworking. However, she does not have the authority or expertise needed to lead the department and to provide the support needed for the temporary teacher. The school has been unable to recruit appropriately qualified teachers of business studies and until this is done, the department will not be in a position to improve.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall the quality of provision for design technology is **good**.

Strengths:

- The range of materials available from Years 7 to 11.
- The GCSE results in food technology.
- The new pupil assessment profile.

Areas for improvement:

- Curriculum links with primary schools to assist planning in Year 7.
- Pupils' understanding of National Curriculum levels.
- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning.

134. Teacher assessments show attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2001 to be below average. Similar to the national picture, boys' attainment at this stage is lower than that of girls. At the end of Year 11, when pupils take the GCSE examination, girls' results are above the national average while boys' results continue to be well below the national average. In comparison with the previous year's results overall attainment dropped slightly. This was largely because of staffing difficulties in graphics, which affected the examination results. Inspection evidence indicates that this overall fall is caused by the general problems which boys experience in completing coursework and homework. Achievement the end of Year 9 is consistent with expectations. Girls' achievement at the end of Year 11 is above expectations, but the achievement of boys is below. Boys achievement is adversely affected by the attitudes of a minority who are unable to work independently and complete homework activities that are intended to consolidate and extend learning.

135. In work seen during the inspection girls' attainment by the end of Year 9 is consistent with national expectations, but that of boys is well below. All pupils are better at making than designing. In work seen in practical lessons, in pupils' folders and in discussion with pupils, there is evidence that girls listen more carefully to their teachers and because of this are able to work more independently when researching and evaluating their work. Most pupils work hard and produce good practical work. For example in a Year 7 lesson, pupils making a hand held maze game were challenged by the use of new tools and techniques, but used them effectively. The teacher's clear expectations of health and safety and accuracy when cutting, joining and shaping their boxes set a standard that all pupils aimed to follow. They learned specialised new techniques of using G-cramps to compress their wood joints and a surform to shape the corners of their box. Pupils with special educational needs are successful in design and technology. Good advice provided by the special educational needs co-ordinator helps to ensure that work is well matched to pupils' needs. The practical experiences of making provide pupils a concrete way of applying and developing their literacy and numeracy skills. They understand how important it is to communicate well and to make accurate measurements if they wish to produce good products. There was no evidence of pupils with English as a second language experiencing any problems in designing or making. Standards of literacy and numeracy improve across Years 7 to 9. This progress is well supported by the use of the homework booklet in textiles, which includes activities to improve spelling and increase familiarity with technical terms.

136. Inspection evidence indicates that at the end of Year 11 attainment is consistent with national expectations in food and textiles but below in resistant materials and graphics. In food and textiles, the techniques for developing design are followed well within the structure of the syllabus. In resistant materials pupils in Year 11 are working hard to improve their research, annotation, working drawings and analytical evaluation, which were disrupted due to problems in staffing during the last school year. Projects such as a rocking horse and a go-kart are proving to be challenging but the momentum to improve is now established and pupils are attending catch-up classes to improve their final portfolios. Many have made little use of ICT to aid analysis, designing or presentation. Planning for teaching control and modelling through ICT is at an early stage of development. Graphics has suffered from loss of staff in the first few weeks of term and temporary teachers are working hard to increase the momentum of learning but in these classes pupils have completed little work that reaches the expected standard.

137. The introduction of electronics has provided a challenging additional element to design technology. The course attracts pupils who generally have good mathematical and scientific skills. Some exciting projects are being completed such as a surveillance bug as part of a spy kit for a child's toy, and a kayak alarm. The projects are very motivating because they are a result of pupils' personal interest. Good use is made of ICT in circuit designing programmes and many pupils have engaged in broad research to strengthen their own

design ideas. Food and textiles continue to be successful courses. Pupils are very clear about the structured expectation of the courses and individual close monitoring and discussion with the teacher about progress is the key to pupils taking personal responsibility for their learning, this is stronger in food than textiles. In Year 10 there is good improvement in most design and technology areas. Graphics is adversely affected by poor accommodation, which has an impact on teaching and learning. Many boys have immature attitudes and do not appear to realise the urgency and importance of being focused on good quality work. Higher and middle-attaining pupils achieve satisfactorily, lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs achieve very well in design and technology.

138. Although teaching is good overall, learning is only satisfactory. This is because pupils' concentration in many lessons is disrupted by the behaviour of a minority of pupils. These pupils talk over the teacher, fail to engage with the learning activities and often impede the learning of others. All permanent teachers have good subject knowledge and an obvious enthusiasm for the subject. This has a positive impact on learning through high quality demonstrations and expositions. Assessment and pupil profiling have been extended to the whole department, having been introduced previously in food. This strategy has been adopted as a pilot scheme by all teachers and is bringing about improvement overall. Pupils' personal development is generally good because new systems in the department are helping to identify where pupils are having difficulties so that teachers can intervene and provide additional support at an early stage. For example, the new homework collection system in Year 7 is ensuring that all pupils complete the work set. Support for pupils with special educational needs is good. Teaching assistants are well integrated into lessons.

139. Attention to the development of literacy through marking is inconsistent. The strongest literacy development work is seen in textiles where a homework book is used to build up pupils' skills through writing frames and key words. Good attention is paid to the development of pupils' numerical skills. Some pupils use their computers at home as it is not always possible to access the school's computers. Lesson planning is good and schemes of work are closely matched to pupils' needs. Teachers are flexible in their response and prepared to make changes to lesson plans if the need arises. Time and resources are used well although the resources are ageing and only just adequate. For example in textiles there are too few machines to enable work to be completed in a short time with a large class. Homework is set erratically and many pupils do not record their homework in their planners. This is confusing for parents.

140. Leadership of the department is good. There is increased monitoring of the work of the department and good delegation of responsibilities to all in the department. The Year 7 to 9 co-ordinator has developed a useful profiling system, which is now being piloted, and is helping in the raising of standards. Two effective and well-qualified technical support assistants contribute to the smooth running of the department. The food technician is shared with art and has limited time to fulfil her role. A recent department review by an external evaluator has provided a good framework for future development. The accommodation was upgraded in 1993 and the suited rooms provide a good focal point for the subject.

141. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Planning for pupils with special educational needs, the structuring of work and the use of assessment have all been improved. However there are still some accommodation issues that have a negative impact on learning, especially graphics and textiles. The department has very good capacity to improve.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **good**.

Strengths:

- Good or better teaching in most lessons.
- Good management of pupil behaviour.
- Assessment procedures are good, well monitored and pupils have their own records

Areas for improvement:

- The regular, planned use of ICT.
- A clearer focus on the development of literacy skills.
- The provision of learning materials for pupils of differing attainment levels.

142. The 2001 teacher assessments show standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 to be below average. Although boys' results improved from 2000, girls' results showed no improvement. By end of Year 11, standards of attainment are average. In 2001, the proportion of pupils gaining A*-G grades was about the same as the national average, with little difference between the results of boys and girls. The results are not as good at the highest level as those obtained in 2000, when the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades was above average. Taking standards of attainment on entry to the school and at the start of the GCSE course into account, the test and examination results represent satisfactory progress and achievement at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Eight pupils elected to take the Certificate of Achievement examination instead of GCSE, all achieved pass grades and five gained a merit grade.

143. In work seen during the inspection, attainment by end of Year 9 is below national expectations. All pupils can draw and interpret simple graphs, have satisfactory knowledge of places and show understanding of some key words and concepts. In lessons seen in Year 7 on deserts, all pupils showed good understanding of the terms 'arid' and 'desert' and used a simple map to label deserts, but had limited understanding of the basic causes. In Year 9 lessons on employment, all pupils could categorise types of employment but lower-attaining pupils found definitions difficult and showed an initial reluctance to use the correct terminology. Higher attaining pupils produce clear detailed writing and show a good understanding of their work, but the writing of lower-attaining pupils is sometimes incomplete and shows a lack of detail together with poor presentation and literacy skills. Numeracy skills are satisfactory and in a Year 9 lesson on tourism in Japan, pupils displayed their competence in the use of ICT. However, the progress of lower-attaining pupils is limited by weak literacy skills. Satisfactory provision is made for the range of pupils' attainment levels and pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

144. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 11 is consistent with national expectations. All pupils have satisfactory graph and mapping skills and use a variety of key terms with confidence. Oral and presentation skills are well developed. In one Year 10 lesson, for example, pupils presented their conclusions on the positive and negative effects of global warming. They read their prepared text with confidence and displayed their maps and used the overhead projector to write bullet points for the class effectively. Higher-attaining pupils make very good progress in detailed written work but lower-attaining pupils have weak evaluation skills and difficulties in linking evidence to written text. All pupils complete coursework, collect data and present it in graphical or map form. Higher-attaining pupils show a broad range of skills and produce very good evidence-based evaluations whilst

lower-attaining pupils limit their use of data to simpler formats and provide only basic written analyses. Pupils' numerical skills range from satisfactory to good, while their literacy skills range from satisfactory to very good. Good planning by the teacher and the provision of work to suit pupils' needs ensure that pupils with special education needs make good progress.

145. Pupils show good concentration in most lessons and there is evidence of good group work and the sharing of ideas in both lessons and in fieldwork. Most pupils listen well and have good relationships with their teachers. However, there are some instances of unsatisfactory behaviour. In one Year 7 lesson, for example, the unsatisfactory behaviour of a few pupils interrupted teaching and learning until dealt with through the school's referral system.

146. Teaching is good overall. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed during the inspection. Good and very good teaching is characterised by challenging questioning that helps to develop pupils' understanding. Lessons are well planned and there is good use of resources, which helps to motivate pupils and to maintain their concentration. In one very good lesson in Year 8, for example, pupils completed a study of tourism in Kenya by making advertising posters. The wide variety of resources, including wall posters, planning sheets and the playing of Kenyan music stimulated an enthusiastic response from pupils who shared resources and ideas in a productive and creative atmosphere. Teachers have generally good classroom management skills and these are well used in Years 7-9 to ensure that pupils make satisfactory progress. The unsatisfactory behaviour of a small number of boys, together with weak literacy skills, limits the progress of some pupils and affects learning overall. Teachers' planning takes good account of the needs higher attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, but provision for other lower attaining pupils is less consistent. In Years 10 and 11 pupils behave well and demonstrate good communication skills when engaged in small group and paired work, and when making presentations. Teachers provide pupils with good advice on tackling examination type questions. In one Year 11 lesson, for example, a model framework was used effectively to help pupils understand how to plan and structure answers. However, weaknesses in literacy skills continue to limit the progress of some pupils.

147. Leadership and management of the department is good and there is a shared commitment to the raising of pupils' standards. Teaching and marking are both carefully monitored and assessment is used effectively to monitor pupils' progress and set targets for improvement. Good schemes of work help to ensure that teaching and learning activities are well planned. Additional classes for the completion of coursework and revision provide good support for pupils in Year 11.

148. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. All lessons now provide a good variety of tasks, which challenge pupils and help to extend their knowledge and understanding. Provision for ICT has improved although the planned use of computers is not as yet included in schemes of work. Teachers have good classroom management skills and this helps to ensure that pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons. There is a need to focus on the development of pupils' literacy skills and to provide pupils with clearer guidance through the marking of their work. The department is well placed to continue its improvement.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **good**.

Strengths

- The good quality of teaching and learning.
- The department is well managed.
- Good support for pupils with special educational needs.
- Assessment procedures are good.

Areas for improvement

- The attitudes and behaviour of boys in some lessons.
- Learning tasks are not always well matched to the needs of pupils.
- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning.
- The development of closer links with primary schools.

149. Teacher assessments show the proportion of pupils achieving the expected National Curriculum Level 5 at the end of Year 9 in 2001 rose to be about the same as the national average. These assessments are consistent with inspection evidence and the standards attained represent good progress and achievement through Years 7 to 9.

150. Results in the GCSE examination were above the national average in 2000, with the results of both boys and girls above their respective national averages. However the results showed a marked decline in 2001 to below average. Much of the decline was due to the poor performance of boys. This decline was largely due to the impact of discontinuity in teaching due to the absence through illness of key staff on a weaker group of pupils. It is not possible to determine any clear trend in the examination results because of changes in the number of pupils who take the option and variations in the number of pupils with special educational needs who choose to take the subject. Evidence collected during the inspection indicates that standards are consistent with expectations and that most pupils are achieving well. This is because of the quality of teaching within the department, which has shown significant improvement since the last inspection, especially in the GCSE classes.

151. By Year 9, pupils are able to talk knowledgeably about the topics they are studying. For example, they demonstrate a good understanding of some of the major developments in the opening up of the American West to European settlement. Pupils' understanding of key issues, particularly the impact of migration on the native American peoples who lived on the plains, is often good. They are able to use a variety of resources to form conclusions about issues such as the fairness of treaties imposed on the native Americans. Written work is generally satisfactory and often good. Higher-attaining pupils are able to show how economic and other factors link together. They demonstrate a clear understanding of the importance of the building of railways and how this threatened the way of life of people living on the American plains. During role-play work on the Lakota Sioux, for example, Year 9 pupils showed a good grasp of the essential facts and an understanding of how these people might have responded to the dilemmas that faced them. Average attaining pupils understood that the main response might initially be to fight, higher attaining pupils were able to weigh up the evidence very well and concluded that the only real choice was to go to the reservations. Although some pupils show a lack of understanding of cause and effect and are vague about the meaning of Manifest Destiny, they are all able to understand and sympathize with displaced people whose way of life had been destroyed. The approach to this topic makes a valuable contribution to the moral and cultural understanding of pupils. Work in lessons also shows that pupils are able to use the analytical and research skills gained earlier in Years 7 and 8.

152. Pupils in Year 10 demonstrate a good understanding of the GCSE topics being studied. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, understand the development of medicine and the key contribution of earlier civilisations such as the Greeks and Romans. Studies of public health in the nineteenth century show that the highest attaining pupils are able to make effective use of documents and extracts to extend their understanding of complex issues related to the spread of diseases such as cholera. Average-attaining pupils are able to talk about various aspects of sanitation in Victorian times and to understand the role of people such as Henry Mayhew. Pupils in Year 11 are confident in the use of computers for presenting work for assessment. Pupils of all levels of attainment show the ability to evaluate evidence and use it effectively. The majority of pupils show the level of skills, knowledge and understanding to reach the higher grades at GCSE. However, although their knowledge of some recently studied parts of the course is good, some find work on the Cold War difficult and are vague about key events such as the Cuban Missile Crisis. Work on aspects of the civil rights movement in the USA shows a good level of ability to cope with the sequence of events and the importance of legal decisions such as Brown versus Topeka.

153. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good. Most pupils work hard and participate well in lessons. They enjoy activities in class and find the work interesting and challenging. More pupils are now choosing to take the subject at GCSE. The response of pupils is often very good and they are very eager to take part in discussion and to use the library or web sites for their own research. Boys and girls work equally hard and boys are very ready to contribute in lessons. Where the behaviour and response of boys is less positive, it is usually as a result of a change of teacher or a last-minute change of room.

154. Learning is well managed in history and teaching is good. Two excellent lessons were observed during the inspection. Teachers use a variety of approaches to teaching and learning. They are knowledgeable about the subject and their lessons are well planned, managed and resourced. Lessons have focused objectives that are shared with and understood by pupils. There is a consistent focus on providing opportunities for the improvement of pupils' literacy skills. The identification of subject specific vocabulary, a good variety of tasks and writing frames to help those of lower potential attainment are all key features of lessons. Although learning tasks and resources are not always well matched to the attainment levels of pupils, teachers provide good individual support and use a good range of activities in lessons. Some lessons are made really exciting because teachers make very effective use of resources such as video clips and pupils can almost experience what it was like to be in the arena in Rome or in a filthy street in Victorian London. Because of this the progress and achievement of the majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, is good. Teaching assistants provide effective support for pupils with special educational needs and this ensures that they learn well because they are able to participate fully in lessons.

155. The majority of pupils are able to develop an understanding of chronology and the impact of change over time. Progress is good because pupils have the opportunity to develop skills in history as they progress through the school. The work of pupils at the beginning of Year 7 shows that they are learning to use a range of skills based on the use of evidence from primary sources. Although this approach to learning provides a good link between primary and secondary school, there is a need to establish stronger links with the primary schools to ensure that there is no repetition of topics and that the skills gained in primary school are built on. At present pupils do not have enough opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning and that of others by working in groups or on individual research in class. Tasks set for homework link well with work in class and ICT is used well

to support learning. However the department has insufficient access to computers in the classroom to take full advantage of their potential in promoting effective learning. Targets are set and pupils are assessed effectively so that progress is carefully monitored. The highest-attaining pupils are identified and extension work is provided. However, this work does not always provide them with a high enough level of challenge.

156. The ethos of the department is one of inclusion and pupils of all attainment levels work together well. The history rooms and corridors are used for displays of pupils' work and this celebration of their success contributes to their enjoyment of the subject. Trips to museums in London and longer visits to battlefield sites in Belgium and France are popular and make a valuable contribution to learning. Because of its rich curriculum content and variety of opportunities for discussion, teaching in the subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. The department is now well resourced and these resources are used effectively in lessons.

157. The department has many strengths, particularly the quality of its staff. There has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection. It is well managed, particularly in the development of resources and in the development of assessment procedures and documentation. Good leadership and management is resulting in rising standards. Careful planning and monitoring ensures that resources and assessment procedures are being used effectively to promote progression and continuity. Pupils are being provided with a varied, relevant and interesting experience in studying history.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Overall, provision for information and communications technology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Good teaching in timetabled ICT lessons.
- The progress pupils make in the development of their ICT skills.
- The management and technical support for the computer network.

Areas for improvement:

- Attainment at end of Year 9 and in the short course GCSE examination.
- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning all subjects.

158. Attainment at the end of Year 9 has been below national expectations, and fell further last year. This was against the trend in other subjects. A significant factor was the reduction in the amount of curriculum time made available for ICT lessons in Years 7 to 9, without a corresponding increase in opportunities in other subjects of the curriculum. However the difference in attainment between boys and girls was greatly reduced.

159. The percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades in the GCSE short course examination in 2001 was below average and below the results obtained in the previous year. A significant contributory factor was the reduction in the time available for teaching. Girls continued to significantly outperform boys. A small number of pupils took the full course GCSE examination and all gained grades in the A*-C range.

160. Action is being taken to raise standards. Schemes of work have been rewritten for Years 7 to 9 and more time has been allocated for timetabled ICT lessons in all years. A GNVQ Intermediate course in ICT has now been introduced. Inspection evidence indicates that by the end of Year 9, attainment in the ICT course followed by all pupils is now consistent with national expectations. This rise in standards is a result of increased time allocation and

more effective teaching. This was seen in a good Year 7 lesson, for example, where pupils were able to plan their work effectively in pairs and then use the fast Internet connection to research a variety of interrelated topics. This was done in order to provide information and costs on holiday accommodation and travel. The outcomes were well presented and illustrated with appropriate maps and pictures.

161. Work observed in lessons and in coursework folders, indicates that attainment on the examination courses in Years 10 and 11 is close to national expectations. The additional time allocated to the short GCSE course this year means that teaching time is now satisfactory and the syllabus can be covered in more depth. The outcome is that standards are rising. For example, in a Year 10 class pupils were making good progress in the use of databases to make complex queries using a variety of criteria. However, the weaknesses are still apparent in Year 11 lesson where a significant minority of pupils were having difficulty working out how to use numeric data to construct appropriate formulae for a spreadsheet activity. The attainment of pupils following the recently introduced GNVQ course in ICT is consistent with course expectations. When given the opportunity, pupils are able to apply a satisfactory range of skills. In a Year 11 art lesson, for example, pupils made good use of a digital camera and software to capture and manipulate images for their GCSE coursework. A significant number of pupils also take an extra ICT lesson after school to prepare them for the full GCSE course.

162. The overall quality of teaching is good with some that is very good. In all years, and in most lessons, effective classroom management and thorough planning of ICT lessons, ensures that the attitudes and behaviour of most pupils are good and sometimes very good. In some lessons, where pupils have to share computers, they collaborate and work effectively in pairs. In other lessons, groups of pupils worked well on different aspects of a task at different computers. Pupils on the GNVQ course are particularly well motivated. The high level of commitment of a significant number of pupils makes the voluntary after school lessons in Year 11 very worthwhile. There was some evidence of unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour in a few Year 8 lessons, where classroom management strategies were ineffective and had an adverse effect upon learning and progress.

163. Leadership and management of the department is effective and ensure that the department functions effectively. New schemes of work have been constructed and courses are planned in detail. Particularly effective use is made of the broadband Internet connection. In some examination classes, freely available resources are used in imaginative ways, to develop pupils' understanding the use of computer models in business. Tasks in all years are designed to be appropriate for a wide attainment range. Work of high quality is produced by some pupils in Years 10 and 11, where a number of different software applications are linked with good effect. Support for individual pupils working at computers by teachers and teaching assistants, providing special educational needs support, is good. However, in all lessons, more emphasis upon the whole class teaching of skills is needed to ensure that time is used most effectively. The department has good access to projection facilities. Teachers provide pupils with helpful diagnostic comment when they are working at computers and pupils' work is marked in detail. All pupils at in Years 10 and 11 have their ICT capability assessed though an examined course. Coursework is assessed appropriately according to course requirements and revised procedures have been introduced for assessing pupils' ICT capabilities in Years 7 to 9. The school has experienced some difficulties in recruiting an additional ICT specialist teacher and existing teachers have to use their non-contact time to ensure that a specialist teaching is available.

164. There has been an improvement in ICT resources since the last inspection. The number of computers is close to the national average for a school of this size. Improved resources have prompted the increased use of ICT in some other subjects. This has been supported by staff training in ICT through the New Opportunities fund. Several departments have yet to undertake this training. There has been a particularly good improvement in the use of ICT to support pupils with special educational needs. There is still more scope for the increased use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning, in particular in applying the concepts and techniques of using ICT to measure, record and respond to events in science, and to control and automate events in design and technology. An up to date curriculum map of use of ICT in all subjects is needed to guide planning. Assessment procedures have improved since the last inspection and are now used effectively to monitor pupils' progress and to set targets. The repair and maintenance of computer hardware is now very effective, both the curriculum and administration networks are fast and reliable. The ICT department has the capacity to effect further improvement in this aspect of the curriculum.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **good**.

Strengths:

- Quality of Assessment.
- Good Teaching.
- A committed team of teachers.

Areas for Improvement:

- More opportunities for pupils to engage in independent learning.

165. Standards at the end of Year 9 are close to national expectations. In 2001 the proportion of pupils gaining Level 5 or better was at the national average though the proportion of pupils gaining Level 6 or better was below the national average. Girls achieved higher standards than boys.

166. At the end of Year 11 standards are above national expectations. In 2001 the GCSE examination results in French and German combined were average for pupils gaining A*-C grades but above average for pupils gaining A*-G grades. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades A*-A grades were at the national average, but the proportion of pupils entered for the examination was higher than is the case nationally. In German the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C was above the national average, but in French it was below. Girls performed better than boys in both languages but the difference between girls' and boys' performance was greater in French than in German. The trend over the last few years is for results in French to show a steady rise while results in German showed a marked improvement in 2001 after a period in which results declined. Pupils make good progress overall. Progress is satisfactory in Years 7 to and good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils enter the school with attainment that is below average. By the time they reach the end of Year 11, attainment is above average.

167. Inspection evidence suggests that the standard of pupils' work is close to national expectations at the end of Year 9. By the end of Year 9 pupils have a good understanding of grammar. Higher attaining pupils use the three main tenses with confidence and are beginning to use more complex constructions. Lower attaining pupils are able to use the perfect tense with support from the teacher. All pupils have a good range of vocabulary and write accurately. Higher attaining pupils in a Year 9 German class for example, were able to write sentences using prepositions with the definite article without making mistakes. These

high-attaining pupils also develop good listening and speaking skills particularly in those lessons in which teachers make full use of the foreign language. In one Year 9 group, for example, pupils listening skills improved because the teacher used the foreign language throughout the lesson. In the same lesson, speaking skills improved because pupils had to use the foreign language themselves for communication with the teacher. Middle and lower attaining pupils do not have enough opportunities either to listen to the foreign language or to practise speaking, so progress in these two skills is unsatisfactory for these pupils. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. They make good contributions to whole-class oral work and produce written work that is above expectations.

168. Standards of work are above national expectations at the end of Year 11. Higher attaining pupils develop good listening skills and speak with confidence to a very high standard. In one Year 11 group, for example, pupils were able to answer open-ended questions with extended responses using complex constructions and an impressive range of tenses. The standard of writing for these pupils is at the same level as their standard of spoken language. Pupils can go beyond personal responses to use descriptions effectively. Average pupils have a good grasp of key vocabulary and write with a good level of accuracy. The standard of speaking and listening for this group of pupils is, however, below expectations. Low attaining pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, achieve well on the Certificate of Achievement course.

169. Most pupils have a positive attitude to their work. Their capacity to concentrate is at an satisfactory level. They work well on individual and group tasks, though they sometimes do not listen well to teachers' instructions. Some pupils demonstrate a high level of enthusiasm. In some lessons a small but significant minority of pupils display negative attitudes and have an adverse effect on the progress made by the whole group.

170. Teaching is good overall with some very good and some excellent teaching. There was also a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching is better for pupils in examination classes than it is for younger pupils. Teachers make good use of assessment. All teachers set out the objectives of lessons in terms of what they expect pupils to achieve. They have a clear understanding of National Curriculum levels and GCSE criteria and take every opportunity to point out to pupils their current level of achievement and how they can improve the quality of their work. Pupils are closely involved in the assessment process. When marking work teachers always indicate what pupils need to do to improve the quality of their work. As a result, most pupils in all year groups are aware of the level or grade towards which they are working and know what they have to do to achieve their targets.

171. Teachers' planning of lessons is nearly always good. Teachers ensure that pupils have a firm base of vocabulary before they proceed to develop skills. They have a lively and imaginative approach to the presentation of new material which ensures that pupils concentrate in this key part of the lesson. They have developed a good range of strategies for raising the achievement of boys and all teachers apply them consistently. Teachers manage pupils well. In those lessons where pupils display negative attitudes, they deal firmly but effectively with potentially difficult situations. In approximately half the lessons seen the level of expectation by teachers of pupils is high. In these lessons pupils demonstrate a high level of enthusiasm and make good progress. In other lessons the pace is slow and the work does not effectively challenge pupils. In these lessons pupils' enthusiasm is not as great and progress is less clear. The foreign language is well used by teachers in some lessons. In one Year 7 class, for example, the teacher used the foreign language almost exclusively. As a result, pupils had to concentrate hard to follow the lesson but had already achieved a good level of listening skills. In other lessons, however, the target language is not used enough. Sometimes this is because teachers are not themselves confident in its use when teaching their second language. At times the presence of pupils exhibiting challenging behaviour

makes its use difficult, while at other times it is due to the teachers' low expectations. Some lessons, particularly for lower and middle attaining groups, are too dominated by the teacher. As a result, pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise the target language in pairs and groups, particularly orally and this affects their oral confidence. Sometimes, when group and pair work is used, it lacks structure and pupils are unclear about what is expected of them.

172. The department offers a good range of extra-curricular activities. There is an impressive programme of visits and exchanges. Teachers regularly offer extra lessons to pupils preparing for GCSE examinations. Provision for the second foreign language in Years 8 and 9 is inadequate. The present time allocation does not allow pupils a reasonable opportunity to acquire the basic grasp of the language. As a result pupils do not have the confidence to want to continue with the language in Year 10. In 2001 no pupil opted to continue with their second language. Because of this a third language, Spanish, was offered for pupils who wanted to learn two languages for GCSE. Limited time and the wide range of ability in this group make it difficult for the teacher to achieve good standards.

173. The department is well led and managed. The two heads of subject work well together and give a clear direction to the work of the department. They have created a cohesive team of teachers who support each other well. Documentation is clear and helpful. Schemes of work give effective guidance and help achieve consistency of teaching. The monitoring of the work of the department and the monitoring of teaching are very effective. The department makes good use of data to improve standards. Development planning is not yet effective. The action points necessary to achieve the department's aims are not prioritised. Plans are not costed and do not have measurable success criteria.

174. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Results have continued to improve. There is now less unsatisfactory teaching. The provision for pupils with special educational needs and the quality of marking have both improved. The department is well placed to move forward.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Pupils show positive attitudes towards their practical work and behaviour is mainly good.
- The range of opportunities in instrumental tuition is good.
- The range and quality of ICT is good.

Areas for improvement:

- The leadership and management of the subject.
- Performing, composing and listening skills are below expectations.
- Pupils do not do enough singing.
- Learning is too keyboard based and not enough use is made of pupils' own or other instruments.

175. Pupils' standards of attainment on entry to the school vary according to the quality of the musical education in their previous schools, their interests and the level of home support. Some pupils enter with above average attainment. However, the attainment levels of most pupils are below average and this is confirmed by teacher assessments. By the end of Year

9, standards remain below average and overall achievement is unsatisfactory. This mainly because of discontinuity in teaching caused by long-term staff absence through illness, and difficulties in recruiting appropriately qualified temporary teachers. Most pupils are working at about National Curriculum Level 4 but some more talented pupils attain higher levels. In recent years, GCSE examination results have been below average. The results were also below average in 2001, but comparison of standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 with the results obtained in the GCSE examination shows that pupils achieved well.

176. Pupils do not engage in enough singing after Year 7 and do not sing as a class in GCSE work. This is a major weakness as pupils do not experience or enjoy an appropriate repertoire and do not develop their music reading skills. Pupils keep good time when playing instruments but do not have enough experience of instruments other than keyboards and little opportunity to use their own instruments in class. Performing skills and music reading skills are below expectations. In composing, some pupils show some imaginative ideas, but only the most musically experienced know how to use devices and structures to develop pieces confidently. Most pupils listen respectfully to examples played in recordings and to each other when performing but the technical vocabulary they use in appraising is limited. Pupils' general musical knowledge of, for example, instruments, composers, forms, structures and well known pieces of music is poor.

177. In GCSE work, the standards of pupils in Year 10 are broadly consistent with course expectations, but the standards of pupils in Year 11 are below, although there is a wide attainment range. Pupils' performing skills average less than Grade 3. One pupil is working for Grade 7 but others are still at the beginner stage, and about three-quarters of the group disadvantage themselves, as they do not make use of the free instrumental tuition offered by the school. Similarly, most pupils disadvantage themselves by not taking part in the extra-curricular opportunities offered. The most musically experienced show good understanding of devices and structures in composing and create imaginative and original compositions, but many find the work difficult because of their lack of basic skills. The computers and other music technologies in the department provide considerable support for pupils and they show satisfactory skill levels in creating music when using them. Pupils listen well to recorded extracts and to each other but vocabulary which they use in appraising is too limited and general musical knowledge is poor. The attitude of pupils varies from very good to unsatisfactory. This variability affects overall achievement in GCSE work, which is unsatisfactory in Year 11.

178. Most teaching is satisfactory and there is good teaching in about a third of lessons. There is a small amount of unsatisfactory, non-specialist teaching in Years 7 to 9. When lessons are good, teachers show secure subject knowledge so that they teach confidently, successfully linking performing, composing, listening and appraising. This was seen, for example, in a Year 8 lesson on contrasts between Mars and Venus from 'The Planets' and in a Year 9 lesson on 'The Blues'. Teaching is energetic and instructions and learning objectives are made clear to pupils. Schemes of work and lesson content have recently been carefully revised, but a major weakness in them is the lack of singing opportunities in Years 7 to 9 and the over reliance on keyboard work. In the best lessons, expectations are appropriate and lesson activities are well matched to pupils' attainment levels. However, in weaker lessons expectations are too low and higher-attaining pupils are not given enough challenge. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated in lessons and make similar progress to other pupils.

179. Most lessons have clear structures and are well organised. Class management is generally good so that most lessons are orderly. Relationships are good and pupils are usually good humoured and work well. When class management is weak and learning does not engage pupils in music making, they often become bored and behaviour deteriorates.

Pupils enjoy practical work but are more reluctant to write. Lessons start briskly and maintain a good pace so that pupils remain focused, but, sometimes, explanations are too long and there is not enough use is made of visual aids such as the overhead projector, illustrations or classroom display. The marking of pupils' work is supportive and shows them how they can improve. Appropriate use is made of homework to extend pupils' learning. Most pupils are attentive and work productively when they are interested. They are supportive of each other, keen to answer questions and the most enthusiastic involve themselves in opportunities offered by the department and musical opportunities outside school.

180. The head of music has been absent through illness for over a year. The acting head of music is very committed, enthusiastic and hardworking and has made positive changes. However, she does not have the authority or experience needed to manage the department and put into place the changes needed to take the department forward. Leadership of music is therefore unsatisfactory. There is some monitoring and evaluation of the subject's performance by senior management, but not enough on a day-to-day basis. Documentation is being revised and the department development plan is appropriate. The department has a satisfactory assessment scheme and increasing use is being made of the new National Curriculum levels to assess work. Good use is made of assessment information to establish the needs of pupils preparing for examinations. Curriculum links with primary schools are being strengthened. There have been seven music teachers in the last year and the present staffing for music is unsatisfactory. There is no technical support for music. The accommodation for the department is unsatisfactory. One of the music rooms is far too small, the new mobile has poor acoustics and there are insufficient practice areas for group work. Desks in the main teaching room inhibit work and chairs are too low for keyboard work. Keyboards are of good quality but there is a need for additional keyboards, tuned percussion instruments such as xylophones and glockenspiels to enhance creative work and music for singing and playing.

181. Twenty-nine boys and seventy girls receive instrumental or voice lessons from ten visiting teachers. Standards are broadly average. Teaching is satisfactory and some very good teaching was observed in voice tuition. The progress and achievement of pupils is satisfactory in relation to their ages and the time they have received tuition. However, they do not have practice books to encourage them to practice more. The monitoring of pupils' progress and teaching needs strengthening. The range of extra-curricular activities in music is good but pupils' attendance at these is low. The activities include choir, string ensemble, a small wind band, guitar ensemble and many rock bands. The school promotes regular concerts and musicals such as 'Little Shop of Horrors' are of a good standard and involve large numbers of pupils. Music groups perform in assemblies and for special occasions but the regular use of music in assemblies and visits to concerts are constrained by the pressures on staff. Workshops given by visiting musicians ranging from an army band to pop groups and these broaden the experience of the pupils. The school's groups perform frequently at the Weymouth Festival, for other schools, at fetes, in supermarket and for local charity events. These activities reflect the dedication of staff, support of parents and the enthusiasm of the musicians whose performances and successes bring credit to the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision for physical education is **very good**.

Strengths:

- Teaching is very good.
- Leadership and management of the subject is very good.
- Results in the GCSE examination are above average.
- Good procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress.
- Pupils have positive attitudes and are well motivated.

Area for Improvement:

- The dance option is not available to all pupils.
- The exterior hard surface play areas are unsatisfactory.

182. By the end of Year 9, National Curriculum teacher assessments show that standards of attainment are above average in all areas of the physical education curriculum. Inspection evidence supports these assessments. Pupils are able to perform skilfully in a range of games and aesthetic activities. They have a good understanding of health related fitness and they know how and why to warm up before exercise. They understand the effects of physical exercise on the heart. The progress and achievement of pupils with special educational needs is similar to that of their peers. Pupils are able and willing to make pertinent evaluations of their own and others' learning. There are no discernable differences in standards between boys and girls. Pupils achieve well and make good progress. Results in the GCSE examination in 2001 were above average and above the school average for all subjects. This is a consistent trend and there is strong evidence to suggest that this trend will continue.

183. By the end of Year 11, standards are above national expectations. Pupils build on the strong foundations of earlier years and achieve well in lessons. Progress and learning in a wide range of activities is always at least good. The large majority of pupils are able to apply their specific knowledge effectively when performing. They show a good understanding of rules and tactics, in both conditioned and full game situations. As tactical awareness develops alongside technical skills, pupils are able to make effective decisions in offensive and defensive situations, and can accurately officiate the activity. Pupils are able to participate effectively in a programme of health related fitness. In GCSE lessons, pupils are highly motivated and work very hard to refine and develop their knowledge, skills and understanding.

184. Timetabled provision has breadth and relevance for all groups of pupils and meets statutory requirements. However, a better balance could be achieved by enhancing the aesthetic aspect of the curriculum. Dance is a restricted option and not yet a full entitlement to all pupils. The very extensive range of extra curricular activities offers many opportunities for both elite, and open access interest groups of pupils to refine and develop performances. Very many pupils compete successfully in teams and as individuals at district and regional level, some reaching county standard or higher.

185. Pupils respond well to the exciting environment created by purposeful and stimulating teaching. They are well turned out and are very positive about the subject. They pay close attention to the teacher's guidance and work co-operatively with energy and enthusiasm. They are able and willing to offer cogent responses to searching questions. They are trustworthy and work responsibly when not under direct supervision. Relationships and behaviour in lessons are very good, and this contributes strongly to good overall progress.

186. The quality of teaching at all ages is very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. All teachers have secure knowledge and are enthusiastic in their teaching. Detailed lesson plans are used to support comprehensive schemes of work. Teachers work hard to raise standards of literacy and numeracy, and good use is made of ICT as a tool for learning when opportunities arise. Class management is good and this ensures that all pupils are able to engage successfully in lessons. The use of shared learning objectives, allied to searching questions to probe pupils' understanding and knowledge, ensures consistency and progression. Teachers have consistently high expectations that pupils will successfully meet the challenges set. Teaching methods are varied to meet the individual needs of all pupils and are very well supported by good demonstrations and clear exposition. Effective use is made of homework to extend classroom learning, particularly at GCSE.

187. The department is very effectively led and managed. The department shares a clear vision of the standards it wishes to achieve and a clear sense of the steps required to reach these standards. Teachers support each other well and show a strong commitment to the pupils and the subject. They are consistent in their challenge and support, and contribute significantly to the ethos, work and life of the school. There is a clear imperative to improve on previous best. The detailed end of module assessment and reporting arrangements provide accurate information on pupils' performance. Pupils know how well they are progressing, and staff members are provided with objective data for measuring learning outcomes. This links closely with the ongoing programme of staff and curriculum development, and is helping to secure high standards. Careful staff deployment and systematic monitoring of teaching and learning ensure even coverage across all areas of the curriculum.

188. There are extensive outdoor grassed areas and direct links to a nearby sports facility. Indoor accommodation is good and well cared for. The department is well resourced and the quality and amount of equipment for use in lessons is good. The department also has access to outdoor and adventurous activity facilities. The school holds the Sportsmark award and will shortly be submitting a detailed application to become a specialist sports college. The physical education department will be combining with the science department in this bid. The issue raised in the previous two inspections concerning the lack of a hard surface outdoor play area has yet to be resolved.

189. The department responded positively to the last inspection report. The strengths previously identified have been maintained and areas for improvement have largely been successfully tackled. Because of this the subject has improved significantly since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved. A full open access GCSE course is now available and is underpinned by good monitoring and evaluation procedures. Physical education is a successful subject, which has the capacity to secure further improvement. It is a major strength of the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in this subject is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- All teaching is by well qualified subject specialists.
- The department is well led and managed.
- The introduction of the GCSE short course for all Year 10 pupils.
- Relationships are good and teachers know the pupils well.

Areas for improvement:

- Planning does not always have a clear enough focus on intended learning outcomes in lessons.
- Not enough use is made of assessment to guide teachers' planning.
- The tasks set in Years 7 to 9 do not always motivate and challenge the pupils, especially the higher-attaining pupils.
- Not enough use of ICT to support teaching and learning.

190. Overall standards in religious education at the end of Years 9 and 11 are consistent with expectations. In 2001, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C in the GCSE examination was below average. Almost all of the large number of pupils entered for the DARE were successful, more than half gained a merit and a significant number gained a distinction. Standards in the current Year 11 are above expectations for the GCSE full course pupils but below national expectations for the remainder of the year group. The recent introduction of the GCSE short course for all Year 10 pupils not taking the full course GCSE is having a significant impact on standards at this level. Standards in the current Year 10 are good and above expectations.

191. Overall standards in Years 7 to 9 are consistent with national expectations. There is, however, some evidence of under-achievement in these years. Inspection evidence indicates that this is because of the uneven quality of teaching. Some lessons in Years 7 to 9 are characterised by low expectations and learning tasks that do not offer enough challenge. Where lessons have clear learning objectives, pupils progress and attainment is satisfactory or better. The assessment of pupils is good and takes account of previous learning. Planning shows a satisfactory balance of the two religious education attainment targets and the tasks set challenge and motivate the pupils. For example, in Year 8 pupils are able to talk about Hindu and Christian worship. They are able to evaluate the practice of yoga and relate this to the need for calm in their own lives. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils were able to identify the key qualities required for a marriage partner and evaluate their own personal qualities and attitudes to marriage.

192. Where attainment is below expectations, there are no focused learning objectives, the assessment of pupils is weak and the lesson tasks do not motivate or challenge the pupils. In Year 7, some teachers have low expectations and lesson activities repeat work done in the primary school. For example, in some Year 7 lessons on Divali, pupils showed a good knowledge and understanding of the Hindu festival. However, most of this knowledge and understanding came from work done in their primary schools studies and lesson planning did not take account of this to offer pupil a higher level of challenge.

193. Attainment in Year 10 is generally consistent with expectations. The new GCSE short course syllabus on philosophy and ethics is both engaging and challenging. One Year 10 lesson on the liberation of Dachau, for example, enabled pupils to engage in an interesting and powerful discussion of the rights and wrongs of the American soldiers' reactions to the horrific findings in the concentration camp. Pupils following the GCSE full course in Year 10 are making good progress in the study of St Luke's gospel. They are able to identify the different types of miracles performed by Jesus and explain the faith commitment of those involved.

194. The attainment of pupils in Year 11 following the Dorset Certificate course are below expectations while the attainment of pupils following the GCSE course is consistent with expectations. The time allocation for the Dorset Certificate course is not enough to allow all aspects of the course to be covered in enough depth. Lessons only take place every two weeks and continuity is lost with the two-week gap. In the Year 11 GCSE full course pupils wrestle with the Christian belief in life after death and the resurrection accounts. Here pupils show a good knowledge and understanding of Christian beliefs and are able to produce a story for young Christian children to help them cope with bereavement.

195. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in Years 7-9 vary from very good to unsatisfactory. Although the majority of pupils enjoy the subject and want to learn there is a significant minority of pupils in each class who have negative attitudes to the subject and to learning. In lessons which are focused with clear learning objectives and outcomes, pupils are well motivated, well behaved and enjoy the subject. In these lessons, teachers are able to manage inappropriate behaviour. Where the lesson is not clearly focused, pupils are not challenged and the tasks set are at a low level, the overall behaviour rapidly deteriorates and this has an adverse effect on teaching and learning. This is especially true for the higher-attaining pupils and those who enjoy the subject and want to learn. Most books are neat and tidy and show evidence of hard work and a thoughtful response to the work set. A significant number, however, reveal very little focused work, are untidy and contain unfinished work with missed pages. There is very little extra support for pupils with special educational needs in religious education and this is also having an impact on the behaviour of some pupils.

196. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are, in the main, positive. Following the events of September 11th, pupils increasingly appreciate the importance of studying other people's beliefs and are beginning to see the relevance of religious education to an understanding of the world. This is having an impact on boys' attitudes and many boys are now showing considerable enjoyment in their GCSE short course studies.

197. The quality of teaching is good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory overall in Years 7-9. The subject is taught by well-qualified specialists and this is a strength of the school. Relationships are good and teachers know the pupils well. Where teaching is good or better, lesson planning is clearly focused and contains learning objectives that are well linked to pupils' attainment levels. These are then shared with the pupils. Expectations of pupils are high and the tasks set motivate and challenge pupils thinking. Skilful questioning is used to challenge the higher-attaining pupils and to enable all pupils to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do. For example, a good level of challenge was seen in a Year 10

lesson on 'Just War'. Pupils were asked to examine and discuss the quotations on a Just War theory from St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and Francisco de Vittoria and were then given the task of writing their own theory. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, teachers have low expectations and tasks are undemanding. These lessons also lack clearly focused objectives and outcomes. Teachers make good use of selective clips to engage pupils with the subject and to promote discussion and debate.

198. Opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are clearly identified in the medium term planning but not always fully realised in lessons. There is little evidence of adequate use of artefacts and the use of ICT. Pupils are given opportunities to work in groups or pairs and work in the subject offers a significant contribution to pupils speaking and listening skills. Although there are clear behaviour, marking and homework policies there is a need for increased monitoring to ensure that these are followed consistently.

199. During the period of the inspection head of department was on sick leave and the department was being led by a competent and conscientious acting head of department, with good support from a conscientious team of specialist teachers. Resources are adequate and the department makes regular visits to places of religious interest. For example, Year 8 pupils studying Christianity and Hinduism visit local Anglican and Roman Catholic churches and meet with the clergy. They also visit the Neasden Hindu Temple. In the past the school has taken trips to the Holy Land and regularly visits are made to the Bournemouth Islamic centre.

200. The department has worked hard to build assessment opportunities into their schemes of work and the medium term planning. This is now being reviewed in the light of more recent assessment information from the primary schools. Schemes of work are being revised to take account of the 'Dorset Step Levels' of attainment and the QCA national levels. This is beginning to have an impact on raising standards. The department has very good capacity for further improvement.