

INSPECTION REPORT

CROMWELL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Chatteris

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110869

Headteacher: Mrs Mary Darby

Reporting inspector: Mr Martin Beale
19385

Dates of inspection: 27th - 30th November 2000

Inspection number: 223726

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Adrian Garraway
Date of previous inspection:	29 th April 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Cromwell Community College is an average-sized mixed comprehensive school for pupils from 11 to 16 years of age. There are 728 pupils, an increase of almost 10% since the last inspection. Very few pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds, and none has English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is close to the national average, but the proportion with statements is above average. There is an average number of pupils eligible for free school meals. The pupils' attainment on entry to the school is rising. Test results at the end of Key Stage 2 for the current Year 7 were close to the national average in mathematics and science, but below average in English.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Cromwell Community College has had problems in recent years, reflected in the current poor GCSE results, but is now improving rapidly as a result of firm and effective leadership by a new headteacher, supported by her staff and governors. There is a clear focus on raising standards and the quality of teaching. It is now giving satisfactory value for money. The low expectations and unsatisfactory attendance of some pupils are being challenged. The recognition and celebration of achievement are having a beneficial effect on the pupils' attitudes to learning, although some pupils, particularly boys at Key Stage 4, do not take their work seriously enough. Teaching is good overall. Satisfactory standards are being achieved at Key Stage 3, but progress at Key Stage 4 has been unsatisfactory and results at GCSE are below average and very low in comparison with similar schools.

What the school does well

- The headteacher provides the school with strong leadership, clearly focused on improving standards.
- Most pupils make good progress in English at Key Stage 3.
- A high proportion of the teaching at Key Stage 4 is good or better.
- There is much good teaching of German and standards are above average.
- The programmes for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and careers are making a significant contribution to the pupils' improving attitudes and therefore to progress in their studies.

What could be improved

- Results at GCSE, and particularly boys' results, are not as high as they should be.
- Attendance is unsatisfactory.
- The attitudes and behaviour of some pupils, mainly boys, are unsatisfactory and they do not work hard enough.
- Standards and provision for the resistant materials aspect of design and technology are unsatisfactory.
- Recent changes in provision for pupils with special educational needs are not being adequately implemented.
- The pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills do not develop systematically beyond the Year 7 core lessons.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was slow to respond to the previous inspection report of 1996 until the present headteacher was appointed. Since then the response has been good, the work of the school has been monitored and progress has been made in dealing with the key issues from the last inspection. Vigorous action has been taken to improve teaching by focusing on unsatisfactory performance in particular subjects. Despite an extension and reallocation of teaching time and improvements to accommodation and resources, differences in GCSE results between core and non-core subjects remain. Standard Assessment Test (SAT) results have improved, but GCSE results are worse than at the last inspection. The provision for pupils with special educational needs has been reorganised but weaknesses remain.

The assessment of pupils' work has been a low priority, and practice remains inconsistent. Planning for school development is more thorough; however, departmental responses to the school's priorities vary, with some lacking sufficient rigour to be effective.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16-year-olds based on GCSE examination results.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	E	D	D	E*	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

Key Stage 3 SAT results in English in 2000 were above the national average and close to the average of similar schools. This was a considerable improvement over results in recent years, which had regularly been below average. Results in mathematics were also above the national average but below results in similar schools. The overall results and those in science were close to the national average but well below results in similar schools.

GCSE results were higher in 1999 and 2000 than in 1998, indicating the impact of recent changes, although they are still lower than at the time of the previous inspection and, when compared with similar schools, are among the lowest 5% in the country. Girls have consistently achieved better results than boys at Key Stage 3 and GCSE, and to a greater extent than nationally. The overall progress made by pupils from their SAT results to GCSE was well below average in both 1999 and 2000, although progress was good in English and satisfactory in mathematics. Results in both were close to the national average but those in science were below average. The school failed to achieve its GCSE targets by a considerable margin in 2000. The targets for 2001 present the school with a significant challenge, which evidence indicates it is unlikely to achieve. Results in electronic products and food technology have been above average for the last three years and those in German were particularly good in 2000. Results in art have been low for the last three years and those in French and were well below average in 2000.

The beneficial impact of new leadership on the school's standards is already being seen in the better results in Key Stage 3 SATs and GCSE in the last two years. It is also evident in the work seen during the inspection. Standards seen in lessons at Key Stage 3 are similar to those in the recent SATs and attainment is higher at Key Stage 4 than the most recent GCSE results would indicate. For GCSE results to improve in some subjects, for example science, the teachers have yet to train pupils to convey the good knowledge that they have in writing for the examination. The abandonment of unsuitable GCSE short courses in geography and history is resulting in higher standards in both subjects. Whilst most pupils with special educational needs are mostly achieving their targets, these are sometimes too low and the pupils are not making satisfactory progress when learning some subjects.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The majority of pupils have positive attitudes to school and are interested and involved in the activities offered. A minority of pupils, mainly boys, lack motivation, do not work hard enough and have low aspirations.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	A high proportion of pupils behave well in and around the school. A small number of pupils occasionally behave badly in lessons and tutor periods.

Personal development and relationships	There are many examples of pupils, especially girls, responding positively to the opportunities to take responsibility and show initiative. Some boys are immature when asked to reflect on serious topics.
Attendance	Attendance is unsatisfactory, having been consistently below the national average for the last three years, and unauthorised absence is high.

Pupils often work well together, although there is a tradition amongst some of accepting a level of taunting and rough play which some younger pupils rightly find unacceptable. Some parents do not place sufficient priority on ensuring their children's regular attendance or helping them to raise their aspirations.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection. It has improved quite significantly in some subjects and has been a contributory factor to rising standards. Teaching is good overall. It is satisfactory or better in 95% of lessons, good or better in over 60% and very good or excellent in 15%. English and mathematics teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4, while the reverse is the case in science. Several teachers are very good and have high expectations of the pupils. They adopt a lively approach to their teaching, using questioning well to elicit a very good response from their pupils, who are keen and co-operative and concentrate on their work. They have established good working routines in their classes and, through encouragement, instil confidence in their pupils. All but one of the unsatisfactory lessons were in Years 7 and 8. The insecure knowledge of some teachers in subjects where the school is having difficulty recruiting staff had a bearing on the quality of teaching. Other shortcomings included limited challenge for higher-attaining pupils, unclear explanations and a lack of control by teachers of some pupils who consequently disrupted the flow of lessons. While literacy is promoted satisfactorily in English and numeracy in mathematics there is little support for the development of these key skills in other subjects. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory because some are taken out of lessons too frequently when they should more often be taught within the classroom with tasks and resources designed to meet their needs.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is generally broad and balanced but there is a need to extend opportunities at Key Stage 4 by the addition of a wider range of accreditation, including offering more vocational courses.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision for pupils with special educational needs is poor. Insufficient account is taken of the targets on their individual education plans, and pupils are inappropriately withdrawn from some lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural	Provision is satisfactory for the pupils' moral, social and cultural development but unsatisfactory for their spiritual development. The school does not do enough to provide the pupils with an understanding of

development	a multi-cultural society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	There are good arrangements for supporting and guiding pupils as they move through the school.

All National Curriculum requirements are being met, with the exception of computer-aided manufacturing at Key Stage 3 in design and technology. The information provided for parents is good. Staff are striving to keep parents informed, respond to their concerns and involve them in their child's learning. Health and safety procedures are satisfactory and arrangements for child protection are good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The strong, determined and effective leadership of the headteacher has brought considerable improvements to the school and increased expectations of what the pupils should be achieving.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The Governing Body has developed considerably in recent years. It now has a good understanding of its role, has broadened its expertise and is fulfilling its responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The monitoring of areas causing most concern has enabled the headteacher and governors to identify, and take action to eliminate weaknesses.
The strategic use of resources	The use of specific funding is satisfactory but not the deployment of learning support assistants. The length of time that staff spend teaching each week has been increased in recent years but is still marginally low.

The senior management team is at an embryonic stage and is still establishing its role. There are some shortcomings in middle management, for example in science and design and technology. Most departments are suitably staffed, resources are at least appropriate and sometimes good and the school buildings and site provide a pleasant learning environment. The learning resource centre has become a very good facility to support pupils' learning. The Governing Body uses the principles of best value when allocating funding.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They judge that the teaching is good and their children are making good progress in school. • They recognise that staff expect their children to work hard and to give of their best. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents are unhappy with behaviour in the school. • A significant number are unhappy with the amount of homework set. • Some do not feel that the school works closely with them or that they are kept well informed about how their children are getting on.

Almost 60% of parents returned the questionnaire sent to them before the inspection. Most parents are generally satisfied with the school but a minority have concerns. The inspection team shares the parents' positive views of the school and their concerns about the behaviour of a small number of pupils. The school is making every effort to establish a close partnership with parents and provides suitable information on pupil progress. Evidence indicates that sufficient homework is usually set.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The overall results in the Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 were close to the national average but well below the average of results in similar schools. SAT results in English were above the national average and close to the average of similar schools. This was a considerable improvement over results in recent years, which had regularly been below average. Mathematics results improved slightly and were above the national average but below the average of similar schools; however, results in science declined (continuing a steady decline since 1997). Results in science were close to the national average but well below results in similar schools. The upward trend in the school's overall results from 1996 to 1999 was close to national improvements, although only the English results are higher than at the last inspection. Over this period girls have achieved better results than boys and by a greater extent than nationally.
2. A key issue for the school at the last inspection was to tackle the causes of the marked difference in GCSE performance between the core subjects, modern languages and other subjects. Standards needed to be improved in particular in design and technology, art, music, business studies and religious education at Key Stage 4. While much effort has been put into dealing with these matters, the school has had only limited success in improving GCSE results. Standards and the progress being made overall by the pupils at Key Stage 4 remain a weakness, with results at GCSE being lower than they should be and lower than those at Key Stage 3. Throughout the school, boys are achieving lower standards than girls with the difference being more marked than nationally. The school has identified as a major priority the need to raise boys' achievement, but steps taken have yet to yield significant improvements.
3. GCSE results were higher in 1999 and 2000 than in the previous year, showing the impact of recent changes, although they are still lower than at the time of the previous inspection. Overall GCSE results in 2000 and the proportion of pupils achieving five or more A*-C grades were below the national average and were very low in comparison with similar schools. The gender gap is also significant at GCSE, where girls have achieved better results than boys, and as at Key Stage 3, to a greater extent than nationally apart from in 1999. The school failed to achieve its agreed targets for the proportion of pupils achieving five or more A*-C by a considerable margin in 2000. The targets for 2001 present the school with a significant challenge, which evidence indicates it is unlikely to achieve. The overall progress made by pupils from their SAT results to GCSE was well below average for those sitting GCSE in both 1999 and 2000, although progress was good in English and satisfactory in mathematics.
4. The proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades in English and mathematics was close to the national average but below average in science. Results in electronic products and food technology have been above average for the last three years and those in German were particularly good in 2000. Results in art have been low for the last three years and those in French, geography and physical education were well below average in 2000.
5. The beneficial effect of new leadership on the school's standards is evident in the work seen during the inspection. Standards seen in lessons at Key Stage 3 are similar to those in the most recent SATs and attainment is higher at Key Stage 4 than the most recent GCSE results would indicate. This is due in part to the action taken to remove unsatisfactory teaching in some subjects and the headteacher's drive to raise teachers' expectations and the aspirations of parents and pupils. The steps taken are now starting to bear fruit. Attainment in science lessons at Key Stage 4 for example, is better than in the recent GCSE examinations, where pupils had difficulty translating their knowledge into written answers. The abandonment of unsuitable short GCSE courses in geography and history is resulting in higher standards in both subjects. Attainment has risen in those subjects causing concern at the last inspection. Standards at Key Stage 4 in art, music, religious education and most aspects of design and technology are higher and there is no longer a

business studies course. Pupils are mostly achieving standards expected of them, although some low aspirations remain in Year 11 where the work rate and attendance of some pupils, boys in particular, decline.

6. Standards of literacy are satisfactory overall. Most pupils listen carefully but rarely speak at length, and when they do their speech can be indistinct. Teachers need to place greater emphasis on the development of speaking skills. Reading is satisfactory overall, although there are few opportunities for pupils to read aloud. The pupils' comprehension is generally satisfactory but the progress of weaker pupils is often restricted by their limited vocabulary. Research skills are developed well at Key Stage 3, this aspect being better than at Key Stage 4. Writing is fluent overall, with some good support for the development of pupils' writing in history. The best writing is fluent but the weakest pupils have poor spelling. Many, even at Key Stage 4, do not write in a cursive style, and handwriting is often poorly formed. There is an inconsistent approach to the development of language skills in subjects other than English. To tackle this weakness a working party is currently preparing a school literacy policy for implementation at the start of the next academic year.
7. Number skills, particularly those of mental recall are improving and are satisfactory overall. Standards are highest in Year 7 as a result of the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy in primary schools. Although there is no school policy for the development of number skills, training will take place soon for the planned extension of the strategy into the school in 2001. Number skills are well taught by mathematics teachers. The pupils' number skills and knowledge of measure are adequate to enable them to access the curriculum in other subjects such as science, geography and design and technology. There is some good use of graphs, charts and other statistical diagrams in these subjects and in ICT.
8. The taught course in information and communication technology (ICT) in Year 7 is providing a sound basis for the development of skills; however, the cross-curricular approach adopted in Years 8 to 11 is not developing the pupils' knowledge and skills sufficiently. There are many opportunities for the pupils to apply their ICT skills in other subjects, but the development of these skills and the learning of more advanced skills is unsatisfactory.
9. Most of the pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. While most pupils are generally achieving their targets, these are sometimes too low. The pupils' progress in their other subjects varies and is unsatisfactory when they are unnecessarily withdrawn from lessons to work with learning support assistants, thus missing the teaching of the subject specialist.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. The majority of pupils have positive attitudes to school and are interested and involved in the activities offered. Good, and sometimes very good, attitudes were seen in all subjects and in all year and ability groups but more often in the higher sets and among girls. A significant minority of pupils, mainly boys in all ability groups, lose motivation as they progress through the school. They do not produce enough work at school or at home during their GCSE courses at Key Stage 4 to enable them to fulfil their potential. They show unsatisfactory, and sometimes poor attitudes to teachers who are new to the school and to those teachers who fail to engage their interest.
11. Behaviour in the school is satisfactory. Most pupils behave well in lessons, at assemblies and around the school. They move around the site in an orderly way. They respect the library as a welcoming place to go to for practising their reading and ICT skills. Behaviour at times is unsatisfactory in lessons and form tutor periods, and takes the form of silliness and lack of concentration, which sometimes becomes disruptive. Behaviour at Key Stage 4 has improved since the last inspection. Even when attitudes are unsatisfactory, the pupils are not for the most part malicious. The level of fixed period and permanent exclusions is broadly average.
12. Pupils' personal development and relationships are satisfactory. The pupils work well together in many lessons, for example in mathematics and history, which helps them to make progress in their learning. The pupils value the friendly atmosphere in the school and the good relationships

they enjoy with most teachers and each other. Although the younger pupils feel safe overall, they and their parents report a distinct amount of harassment which takes place at lunch-times, for example in the locker areas and outside school, such as on the bus. There is a tradition amongst some pupils in the school community of accepting a level of name-calling and rough play that is unacceptable.

13. There are many examples of pupils, especially girls, responding positively to the range of opportunities to play an active part in school life. For example, in Year 7 a group of pupils are training to be librarians. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds become form captains, games captains and school council representatives. Year 9 pupils, including those with special educational needs, help at the open evening for Year 6 pupils and parents. Year 10 pupils have their own social committee and produce their own newsletter. The Year 11 prefects play a valued role in supporting younger pupils in their form groups and helping with their reading, for example in the before-school club. There are also good responses to the French family exchange scheme, which involved 30 pupils in Years 8 to 10, and the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme.
14. Many pupils take responsibility for their learning by making good use of their planners and taking advantage of the opportunities to review their progress with their form tutors. A significant proportion of boys lack the ability to reflect seriously on issues. They have no plans for their futures and are not preparing at school for further training or employment. This results in an immature response to taking responsibility for their personal development. An example of this was seen in a Year 11 careers lesson where many boys were reluctant to apply their skills and self-knowledge to the drafting of an application form for employment.
15. Attendance at the school is unsatisfactory. Attendance rates have been consistently below the national average for the last three years. They have improved so far this term, with attendance rates that are broadly average. Unauthorised absence is high. This is because parents do not always provide a valid written explanation of their child's absence. Also, there is a significant number of term-time holidays and other absences condoned by parents. These absences slow down the progress that the pupils make. Truancy is no longer a problem, as it was at the last inspection, because the school has improved its procedures, works well with outside agencies and arranges alternative provision for pupils at risk of disaffection. For example, attendance is good on the new Youth Award Scheme course in Year 10 for pupils disapplied from modern foreign languages. These pupils are motivated by the opportunities to undertake practical challenges independently, which build on their own interests and prepare them for life after school. Punctuality at the start of the day and to lessons is good. This results in a calm, purposeful atmosphere throughout the school, which encourages good working habits.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. Teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection. It has improved significantly in some subjects and has been a major contributory factor in rising standards. The vigorous action taken by the headteacher and the appointment of new staff have had a significant bearing on improved teaching in some subjects such as art and geography where there were previously some shortcomings. The action taken has yet to bear fruit in other subjects such as design and technology as new staff have yet to take up their posts. Standards are rising in art in particular as a direct result of the improved teaching, which is now good.
17. Teaching is good overall. It is satisfactory or better in 95% of lessons, good or better in over 60% and very good or excellent in 15%. Raising expectations of what the pupils can achieve has been a particular feature of the drive to raise standards. High expectations and the use of challenging activities were evident in many of the well-taught lessons observed during the inspection such in a Year 11 English lesson studying *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The teacher did not accept superficial answers to questions posed, and the lively interchanges that ensued resulted in a high level of participation from the pupils. The teacher's high expectations of the pupils' behaviour as well as their performance were features of a Year 8 gymnastics lesson. As the tasks became more difficult most of the pupils tried hard and succeeded in the challenging activities. The use of interesting resources supported the challenging activities in a Year 11 geography lesson and

extended the pupils' understanding of the impact of tourism in less developed countries. A good pace was generated and the teacher challenged some of the pupils' ideas and stereotypes.

18. Some teachers also stretch the more able through the provision of supplementary questions and more challenging activities as in a Year 7 ICT lesson where the brisk pace to the lesson encouraged the pupils to work hard. Extra material was also provided for the more able in a Year 8 mathematics top set. The teacher also had high expectations and had developed a relaxed atmosphere in which the pupils were given confidence to succeed. Several teachers have established very good working practices in their classrooms, in which the pupils can concentrate and extend their knowledge and skills rapidly. This is often coupled with the use of interesting activities and good questioning as in a Year 7 French lesson in the computer room. Many of these features were also to be seen in a Year 11 English lesson studying *An Inspector Calls*. The pupils answered well and showed good recall of previous work in response to the brisk and lively teaching, where the good use of humour helped to establish very good relationships and a good pace to learning. Good questioning, to determine and develop the pupils' understanding was used to positive effect in a Year 9 science lesson. The teacher placed a strong emphasis on the pupils developing responsibility and independence, which resulted in most concentrating and working very effectively. Very good classroom management, the use of a good variety of activities to develop the pupils' skills and well-targeted questioning contributed to the positive attitudes and good learning that took place in a Year 10 drama lesson. The teacher also assessed the pupils' progress while they were working. This feature was also seen in a Year 11 German lesson, where the pupils were being prepared for their oral examination. The comments made by the teacher encouraged high standards and the pupils were given the means to check their work to eliminate common errors.
19. All but one of the examples of unsatisfactory teaching occurred in Years 7 and 8. The school is experiencing some difficulty, as many schools are nationally, in recruiting staff to subjects such as mathematics and in finding suitable expertise to cover staff illness and those on maternity leave. This results in some weaknesses in subject knowledge that had a bearing on the quality of teaching in a small proportion of the lessons seen. Other shortcomings in lessons taught by staff who otherwise taught at least satisfactory lessons included a lack of challenge for higher-attaining pupils, a lack of control of some pupils who consequently disrupted the flow of lessons, and unclear explanations of the main learning points of the lesson.
20. The organisation of learning for pupils with special educational needs changed in September 2000 from these pupils being taught in separate classes, to their inclusion in other classes. Some teachers are experiencing difficulty in adjusting their teaching style and with accepting that it is the teacher's responsibility to meet special educational needs within the classroom. Consequently pupils are frequently taken out to work with learning support assistants on individual programmes, rather than being taught within the classroom with tasks and resources differentiated for them. Many assistants are well used within the classroom, giving general help to pupils and devising resources for individual pupils. At these times there is good liaison with the teacher; however, others are less involved and are not effectively used. Furthermore, some learning support assistants do not have the necessary level of subject knowledge to inform the pupils they are working with.

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

21. The school has responded well to the need, highlighted in the previous report, to extend and reorganise the time available for lessons. The time available now meets recommendations and can be used efficiently owing to the built-in movement time between lessons. Statutory requirements are now met, with the exception of computer-aided manufacturing at Key Stage 3 in design and technology. The provision for religious education has improved. The one-hour lessons are generally well used by departments. In an attempt to respond to the requirement to broaden the choice available to pupils at Key Stage 4 in the previous inspection report, mechanisms such as the adoption of short courses in the humanities subjects were also introduced. Unfortunately these were not successful and are being phased out. The school provides an alternative curriculum for a

small number of older pupils. Local further education colleges and employers make a good contribution to this by providing access to vocational courses and work experience. The school has recognised the need to develop its Key Stage 4 curriculum by broadening the vocational opportunities offered to pupils.

22. Most subjects have clear plans to show how the curriculum builds over a key stage and to map out the development of ideas and concepts. English, however, does not yet have such a plan and this is leading to an inconsistent experience for pupils. The teachers work too much in isolation in science, so that there are too few connections made between the separate subjects and topics studied in Year 9 and Key Stage 4. Learning therefore lacks coherence, and progress is limited as a result. Literacy is developed well in English, as is numeracy in mathematics. Other subjects often make a good contribution to the development of these skills, but the progress made is restricted by the lack of a coherent plan for their development across the school. The ICT course in Year 7 provides the pupils with the knowledge, understanding and skills required to access the range of programs that they use in school. There is some good further application of these skills to support learning in other subjects, with particularly good use made of the equipment available in the learning resource centre. While statutory requirements are met, this cross-curricular use needs to be more widespread and better planned to ensure a coherent and progressive development across all aspects of the subject. This is particularly important at Key Stage 4, where the pupils' option choices can result in differences in their ICT provision.
23. Effective links with primary schools help the pupils to settle in to the school quickly. This contact and liaison now needs to be extended to ensure that curriculum links are more effective and that the pupils' prior learning is identified and built upon more effectively, especially in English, mathematics and science. The programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) focuses upon important aspects at the right time. There is, for example, an early emphasis on study skills for Year 7 pupils. Pupils are required to think about their futures, so that by Year 8 careers and option choices begin to appear in the programme. Links with other colleges support the pupils' transition to further education.
24. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is poor overall. The majority of pupils with special educational needs receive the full National Curriculum. Some are disapplied from a combination of modern languages, design and technology and science in order to follow a work-related curriculum, or to enhance other curriculum areas. Some pupils with statements of special educational needs are withdrawn from class for a detailed programme of individual teaching devised by the teacher. Other pupils are withdrawn without good reason and so are denied interaction with the teacher and access to the work that the other pupils undertake. This leads to inequality of access and opportunity for these pupils, which is further weakened as some teachers lack the necessary skill to deal with the wide range of abilities and needs present in most classes.
25. A good range of extra-curricular activities continues to be provided. There are many sporting activities and these are increasingly supported by contributions from art, music, drama and dance. Many pupils take the opportunity offered to use computers around the school outside lesson time. Many pupils also respond well to the open door policy in other areas, such as art and music, to continue with project work or to develop their own ideas. Some good use is made of trips and visits to bring subjects to life and to provide the pupils with a concrete experience. Examples include annual French exchanges and day trips to Boulogne, as well as trips to places of historical interest. A major development has been the identification of high ability pupils and the provision of activities specifically designed to extend their experiences.
26. The school makes satisfactory provision for the pupils' personal development. Although the provision of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education was a key issue in the last inspection, little development has taken place, and it has not featured as an issue in the school development plans. Some new teachers or heads of department are considering these aspects in their aims and policies, and any examples seen tended to be individual initiatives, not planned for as a whole. There has been no staff training or awareness raising on these aspects of personal development, and there is no overall policy or co-ordination. The PSHE curriculum provides effective moral and social development, particularly in topics relating to self-awareness and relationships. Assemblies

contribute to moral development, with some element of the spiritual dimension in reflection on values and beliefs. Religious education contributes well to social and moral development, and visitors from other faiths and races also contribute to cultural education; however, there are too few opportunities for the spiritual dimension to be developed. Some good examples were seen in drama, geography and English. There is a cross-curricular project on the rainforest, and other cross-curricular projects with a cultural emphasis are emerging, but these all deal with the local community or 'far-away' cultural and ethnic groups. Insufficient emphasis is placed either on the multi-cultural element of life in Britain today, or on the spiritual dimension.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

27. The school's welfare procedures are sound and have improved since the last inspection when health and safety was a key issue. Arrangements for child protection are good. A member of the senior staff is the designated teacher and has undertaken the relevant training, as have all heads of year. There are clear systems for dealing with accidents and illness. The school nurse provides training for staff on medical conditions and also offers a confidential counselling service for pupils. The headteacher has worked hard, with support from the local education authority, to raise awareness of health and safety issues amongst staff and governors and to improve, for example, the procedures for evacuation in the event of fire. The matters raised in the last inspection report, and in subsequent local education authority audits, have been dealt with satisfactorily. No further issues were identified in the inspection.
28. The school has good procedures for monitoring absences, and a range of strategies are in place to improve attendance. These are not yet effective in bringing down absence rates significantly. Good attendance is rewarded and celebrated. The school has introduced some courses designed to motivate the small number of pupils at risk of disaffection. There is some evidence that the school's efforts are starting to raise attendance levels; however, absences condoned or not explained by parents remain high. The school recognises that it still has much work to do to overcome parents' and pupils' attitudes that it is acceptable to take days off during term-time for reasons other than genuine illness and unavoidable medical appointments.
29. Most teachers manage behaviour in the classroom well and set high expectations, but a small minority sometimes have difficulty in gaining the interest and attention of pupils, which can result in low-level disruption. Incidents of misbehaviour are carefully recorded and followed up by heads of year who work hard to encourage pupils to understand the impact that their actions have on others. There are good systems for rewarding good work and behaviour and very good monitoring of exclusions. Good work is done through drama and PSHE, especially in Key Stage 3, to promote respect and tolerance for others and to create an atmosphere where bullying and harassment are not tolerated. The school is appropriately reviewing and updating its anti-bullying policy, for example through a survey of Key Stage 3 pupils and discussion with parents at the annual general meeting of the Cromwell Association.
30. The school provides good care and support for particular groups of pupils who require special help, by making good use of outside agencies and services and by ensuring that effective liaison takes place between all parties involved in an individual case. A full-time in-school support teacher, jointly funded by the school and the local education authority, has been working since September to support pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. This provision is starting to have a positive effect on helping some of these pupils to raise their self-esteem and so cope better in lessons.
31. There are good arrangements for supporting and guiding pupils as they move through the school. Heads of year monitor their pupils' individual academic and personal progress well. They help the pupils in their care to recognise and celebrate their own achievements, to widen their opportunities for personal development, and to raise their aspirations, for example by encouraging them to look beyond the immediate area for further education opportunities. Pupils throughout the school are involved in monitoring their own progress once a term and in setting and reviewing targets, and they also evaluate their end-of-year reports. These tracking systems enable heads of year to identify

pupils who are underachieving. In Year 9, pupils start developing their own personal learning plans which continue throughout Key Stage 4, alongside careers education and preparation for the work experience placement in Year 10. In Year 11, identified pupils have in-school mentors to help them fulfil their potential and all pupils have access to departmental study clubs and revision sessions.

32. All of these efforts on the part of the school have had, up to now, a limited effect on raising pupils' achievement at GCSE. This is because a substantial minority of pupils in Year 11, mainly boys, have chosen not to take advantage of the support and guidance available. A few even failed to turn up for all of their GCSE examinations last summer. There is some evidence that this culture of non-achievement is slowly changing. Throughout the inspection week, pupils were seen to be pausing in front of the "honours" boards in the entrance hall to reflect on the achievements celebrated there. Year 10 pupils interviewed by inspectors said that the opportunities to discuss with form tutors their current and predicted grades and to set targets are useful in helping them to improve their achievement. Pupils in Year 10 responded more positively to a careers lesson than those in Year 11, partly because the teacher deliberately grouped the pupils in mixed-gender pairs so that the boys were encouraged to share the commitment to work of the girls.
33. Procedures for the monitoring of pupils' academic attainment and progress are at least satisfactory and sometimes good in several departments. The school system has been developed to identify individual underachievement, and is also used as a basis for target-setting by tutors. The system needs rationalisation and refining in order to accommodate the increased amount of information about assessment that is now being collected. The recording of attainment at Key Stage 3 is very broad and does not yet provide sufficiently rigorous links with National Curriculum levels. At departmental level, there is good practice in English, mathematics and science as far as tracking progress is concerned. There is now evidence that some other departments, such as geography, have improved their assessment practices since the last inspection, although some, such as the physical education department are still in the very early stages of developing a consistent system. There is no formal assessment in drama at Key Stage 3 nor in ICT at Key Stage 4.
34. The use made of assessment information by the school and by individual departments is unsatisfactory, although here again there are pockets of good practice. Some departments are beginning to use assessment data to set both departmental and individual targets, although even here practices are not consistent within departments. There is, however, still very little use of assessment to inform curriculum planning. Although there have been some improvements in assessment practices since the last inspection, these have not been sufficient to raise standards in all subjects, particularly at Key Stage 4. The main weakness is in the lack of consistency at school level. The collection of value-added data, for example, is still not accessible in a consistent format. The school needs to develop a clear picture of what it understands by assessment in the form of a coherent policy. This should provide the basis necessary for departments to develop greater consistency of practice and should help to relate assessment procedures to improving learning and raising standards.
35. Heads of departments hold the individual education plans (IEPs) for pupils with special educational needs. Teachers are expected to use these to write targets which are relevant to their subject. Some of these are clear, detail appropriate strategies to meet the pupils' needs and are used to plan lessons effectively. Other teachers do not use the IEPs to provide appropriate learning steps for pupils and rely heavily on learning support assistants. The assessment and identification of pupils with special educational needs in Year 7 is good. Some of these pupils will be put onto a paired reading or a literacy programme. Although these have only been in place since September 2000, they are showing early signs of success, with pupils reading with increased fluency and confidence. Pupils in other years have their needs recognised by class teachers who will inform the special needs co-ordinator by means of a newly introduced concerns sheet. It is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of this system; however, some pupils with apparent special educational needs are not on the special needs register. Statements are reviewed in accordance with statutory requirements.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

36. A substantial proportion of the parents (nearly 60%) responded to the inspection questionnaire, which represents a considerable increase in parental interest from that shown at the last inspection. The majority of parents are satisfied with what the school is doing in all of the areas surveyed. They are most pleased with the school's expectations of their children. A significant minority of parents are dissatisfied with particular aspects of the school's provision. These include the information about how their child is getting on, the way in which the school works with them, the amount of homework their children get and behaviour in the school. Parents at the meeting with inspectors also expressed mixed views about the school. They were pleased about the improvements in achievement at Key Stage 3, the feedback they receive on their children's progress and the good number and variety of extra-curricular activities. They had concerns about the ways in which the school deals with poor behaviour and attendance and about the approachability of individual members of staff.
37. The information provided for parents is good. Parents receive termly reports on their child's progress including an annual report that gives clear information, especially from Year 9 onwards, about the pupil's attainment in all subjects as well as areas for improvement. The exception is ICT where insufficient information is provided after Year 7. Parents also receive letters from heads of year when their child has been awarded a merit certificate or when their child's progress is causing concern. The school provides much useful information for new parents and for parents of pupils in Key Stage 4, for example a list of important dates such as coursework deadlines and a booklet giving advice on how to support their children as they prepare for GCSE examinations. A half-termly newsletter provides good information about pupils' achievements and school events, some of it written by the pupils themselves. Heads of year and other staff spend much of their time in contact with parents and respond well to their concerns.
38. The school has effective links with parents. The Cromwell Association provides a useful open forum where the headteacher can consult with parents on important developments such as the new homework and anti-bullying policies. The headteacher also holds meetings with parents of Year 11 pupils and of Year 9 higher-attaining pupils to share with them the ways in which the school and parents can work together to raise achievement. Some departments are building up their own links with parents, for example the mathematics department sets 'Challenges' for parents wishing to take part and some parents accompanied pupils on a weekend geography trip.
39. The impact of parents' involvement with their children's learning at school and at home is unsatisfactory. For most parents, especially those of higher-attaining pupils and the motivated, their involvement is satisfactory and improving. For some parents, there is a culture of leaving all the education to the school and of not expecting very much of their children. They do not support the school sufficiently in trying to raise aspirations and achievements. Many parents do not check their children's homework planners, some do not attend parent consultation evenings and a few respond unfavourably to requests to help their child at home. A significant minority of parents do not help the school to ensure that their child attends regularly and are reluctant to provide written absence notes. This negative influence contributes to the unsatisfactory attitudes, motivation and achievement of a minority of pupils.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

40. The school did little in the period following the last inspection to deal with the key issues raised in the report until the appointment of the present headteacher. Several important matters concerning the quality of teaching and standards in non-core subjects were given insufficient attention and an inadequate action plan was produced. The school was also heading towards a budget deficit while having to cope with increasing pupil numbers. Since taking up the post, the headteacher has sensibly prioritised what needed to be tackled within the restrictions of a deficit budget and a senior management team whose members carried other responsibilities within the school. Much had to be done and many difficult decisions taken, which included staff redundancies and other teachers leaving for competency reasons. Although this has clearly been a period of some turmoil for the school, the steps taken by the headteacher have been the right ones. They have brought much improvement to the school and helped to establish a climate for sustained improvement in the future.

41. The headteacher provides strong leadership and a clear direction for the school. Improving standards is central to the work of the school. It is through her determined leadership that progress has been made, weaknesses tackled and difficult decisions taken. Of necessity, some shortcomings for example in assessment and special educational needs have taken lower priority and less progress has been made, while other weaknesses have emerged for example in science and design and technology. The headteacher's actions are strongly supported by staff and the Governing Body. The senior management team is at an early stage of development now that its members have been released from other responsibilities for departments and year teams. Their line management responsibilities and the accountability of departments to senior management need clarification. Middle managers vary in their effectiveness. While there are strong and well-led departments, there are weaknesses in the management of science, special educational needs and design and technology - the latter to be remedied by the appointment of a new head of department in January.
42. In spite of the recent actions taken, results at GCSE remain stubbornly lower than they should be and many pupils fail to achieve their potential. There are clear indications, however, that the corner has been turned, that teaching is improving, that proportionately more pupils have higher aspirations and that standards in Year 10 are higher. The progress of each year group needs careful and regular monitoring to ensure that progress is maintained and under-achievement reduced.
43. By their own admission, governors were not fulfilling their responsibilities at the time of the last inspection. They had very limited involvement in either development planning, budget management or monitoring the work of the school. There has been a dramatic improvement and governors have been on a steep learning curve since the appointment of the current headteacher. Their considerable expertise and commitment has been very effectively harnessed and a close relationship established with school staff. Regular governor visits are a feature now and the committee structure functions with much greater purpose. The Governing Body is now at a point where it fulfils its responsibilities well, supporting the headteacher while critically examining management decisions and proposals for developments. It has a good understanding of the challenges facing the school, its strengths and its weaknesses.
44. A systematic programme to monitor the work of the school has been introduced and has benefited considerably from the support of local education authority advisers. Particular departments that were causing concern have been subject to careful reviews with plans for action established. Teaching has been observed and the information gained has been used effectively to bring about considerable improvements in the areas targeted such as art, geography and most aspects of design and technology. The school is now building a bank of useful data on the performance of its pupils and is reaching the point where this can be used to track the progress of individual pupils, to set targets for departments and the school and to monitor the progress being made.
45. Development planning has been a significant feature of the management of the school only for the last two years. The school plan is well constructed, based firmly on targets for higher standards with action to improve teaching. Departmental responses vary considerably with many lacking sufficient clarity to be of much value. Governors are now more actively involved in the planning process and in evaluating the progress made in achieving targets set. Financial planning is secure. Long-term projections show that the budget deficit should be eliminated in three years when the school reaches its capacity in each year group. The local authority has accepted this position thus enabling the school to continue important developments such as the extension of its ICT provision. Financial management is now good and governors are provided with regular and valuable budget data to inform their decisions.
46. In most subjects staff are appropriately qualified to meet the needs of the curriculum. The restructuring of the senior management team has resulted in the reallocation of some staff responsibilities. This has created a more efficient management structure. Professional development is effectively co-ordinated and linked to school and professional needs. Newly qualified teachers are well supported. There is, however, a serious shortage of specialists within

the mathematics department despite strenuous efforts to fill vacancies. The deployment of support staff for pupils with special educational needs is inefficient and needs to be reviewed.

47. There is adequate space to meet the current demands of the growing school population. New accommodation has been built providing very good facilities for drama, music and home economics. There is enough space for all pupils to have lockers, which are well used and in very good condition. The accommodation for the resistant materials aspect of design and technology is unsuitable and needs to be upgraded as a matter of urgency. Some of the toilet facilities for pupils in the older part of the building need to be refurbished, particularly as they are the nearest facilities to the dining area.
48. The school's concentration on raising the quality of its pupils' learning is complemented by the development of the very effective learning resource centre, which is enabling pupils to work better and achieve more. It contains a wide range of suitable and up-to-date books and other resources. In addition it is very well equipped with networked computers, which have access to the Internet. Pupils are able to access the library catalogue from any machine and are taught to do this effectively. The centre is well managed and very good support is provided for pupils during lessons and at other times of the day. Pupils are encouraged to take part in the efficient and effective operation of the centre and their contribution is recognised through a system of certificates.
49. ICT resources have recently been improved with the addition of a new computer room, and the ratio of pupils to computers is almost in line with the national average for secondary schools. The new music area is well equipped with electronic keyboards and has some computer facilities for music sampling. In science, textbooks at both key stages and ICT resources for measuring and remote sensing are inadequate. Resources for work with resistant materials, including for the use of computers in designing and manufacturing are very poor. With the exception of the two areas mentioned, overall resources in most curriculum areas are at least satisfactory and sometimes good.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

50. To continue the good progress made in the last two years, the school should:
 - raise the expectations and aspirations of pupils and their standards at GCSE by: (paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 5 and 10)
 - setting challenging but achievable GCSE targets at the beginning of Year 10 for individual pupils based on their Key Stage 3 SAT results, which add to the normally expected progress, and share these with the pupils and their parents
 - monitoring and reviewing the progress being made by pupils at Key Stage 4 on at least a termly basis so that early signs of underachievement can be identified, parents and pupils informed and steps taken
 - using the regular monitoring of pupils to identify subjects and classes where pupils are underachieving;
 - improve attendance and reduce the high proportion of unauthorised absence by: (paragraphs 15 and 28)
 - ensuring that the procedures introduced by the school for improving attendance are rigorously followed
 - making clear the requirements of the school and the law to those parents who persistently condone the absence of their children;
 - improve the attitudes to work of a minority of pupils, mainly boys at Key Stage 4, by: (paragraphs 10, 12 and 14)
 - raising their aspirations of what they can achieve
 - tackling their poor work ethic
 - providing guidance and counselling for those who are identified as being likely to underachieve

- providing a wider range of courses at Key Stage 4, including vocational courses, to meet the needs of all pupils and to provide them with pathways to post-16 education and training;
- improve standards in resistant materials by: (paragraphs 21, 73, 74, 78 and 79)
 - fulfilling National Curriculum requirements for computer-aided manufacturing at Key Stage 3
 - reorganising the resistant materials rooms to allow the teaching of all elements of design and technology
 - increasing the time allocation at Key Stage 3;
- improve the provision for pupils with special educational needs by: (paragraphs 9, 20, 24, 35 and 41)
 - providing training for teachers on the identification of pupils' learning difficulties in their subject and how they can meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs within their classroom
 - eliminating the arbitrary withdrawal of pupils with special educational needs from lessons
 - bringing to an end the practice of teachers of sending away support assistants who are specifically attached to pupils with statements
 - monitoring the use of the new system for writing IEPs and ensuring that teachers use IEPs to provide appropriate steps for pupils' learning
 - ensuring that the governors' annual report to parents follows requirements to report progress made in implementing the policy for pupils with special educational needs
 - providing subject-specific training for learning assistants to improve the quality of their support for pupils;
- raise standards in ICT by: (paragraphs 8, 22, 91, 93 and 95)
 - requiring all subjects to indicate clearly in their curriculum plans where they are to teach specific ICT skills from Years 8 to 11 and to what level and where ICT is to be used to support the pupils' learning
 - using this information to map how full access to the National Curriculum is being provided for all pupils
 - providing the specialist resources required in design and technology and science.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	148
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	50

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	14	47	32	5	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	728
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	54

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	29
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	141

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	35
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	29

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	6.6
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	2.7
National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	49	57	106

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	31	38	30
	Girls	48	41	30
	Total	79	79	60
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	75 (53)	75 (68)	57 (61)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (57)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	34 (22)	44 (39)	25 (19)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	21	38	30
	Girls	37	43	45
	Total	58	81	75
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	55 (71)	77 (70)	71 (62)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	21 (27)	41 (41)	22 (23)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15-year-olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	70	61	131

GCSE results		5 or more grades A*-C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	18	66	68
	Girls	28	53	55
	Total	41	119	123
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	31 (35)	91 (90)	94 (95)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results	GCSE points score
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Average points score per pupil	School	31
	National	38.4

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	2
Indian	
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	723
Any other minority ethnic group	2

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other	1	
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	24	3
Other minority ethnic groups		

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)	37.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	510

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.6
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	27.7
Key Stage 4	23.7

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1487981
Total expenditure	1551861
Expenditure per pupil	2269
Balance brought forward from previous year	19049
Balance carried forward to next year	-44831

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	728
Number of questionnaires returned	412

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	29	55	11	4	1
My child is making good progress in school.	30	60	7	2	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	18	51	17	3	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	14	57	20	7	2
The teaching is good.	16	65	8	3	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	17	50	23	7	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	35	50	10	3	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	39	53	5	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	13	48	25	6	7
The school is well led and managed.	22	51	12	4	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	21	53	15	4	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	47	13	6	12

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

ENGLISH

51. There is a generally improving picture of results in English, and attainment is broadly in line with national averages. There has been a steady improvement in results in the Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) at Key Stage 3 since 1998, including a significant rise in 2000, when results were above the national average. English results were similar to those in mathematics and better than in science. A significant feature of the SAT results in 2000 was that boys did particularly well compared with the previous year: the proportion achieving Level 5 and above rose by 30% to a figure well above the national average for boys. The results in 2000 were in line with those in similar schools, whereas they were well below in 1999.
52. At Key Stage 4, the GCSE English results have risen steadily since 1998 from well below to broadly in line with the national average. In 2000 the increase was due to a considerable improvement in girls' results. Boys did not do so well, their results being well below the national average for boys. In general, the pupils entered for this subject did better than in the average of all their other subjects, in contrast to those entered for English literature, who did worse. The GCSE English literature results have shown considerable fluctuations since 1998. They were in line with national averages in 1999 but fell significantly in 2000 to well below the national average. In 1999, the proportion of boys attaining grades A*-C was above the national average for boys; in 2000 it was well below.
53. There is some correlation between these results and the work seen during the inspection, but not in the case of English literature, where standards at Key Stage 4, and in Year 10 in particular, are higher than the most recent results suggest. Standards of speaking and listening at Key Stage 3 are satisfactory in Year 9, but need further development in the case of many younger pupils. The pupils generally respond well to their teachers' questions, although not always at length, and listen attentively, more to their teachers than to each other. At Key Stage 4, standards of speaking are good in those lessons where teachers ask probing questions and provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their ideas in discussion. An excellent example was seen in a middle ability Year 11 group studying *Of Mice and Men*, where most in the class were involved in animated interchanges based on convincing role-play of the main characters. There were few opportunities for reading aloud in the lessons in Key Stage 3 observed during the inspection, but comprehension is generally satisfactory and pupils are developing sound research skills. At Key Stage 4, pupils' comprehension is satisfactory in general, but that of weaker pupils is often hampered by a restricted vocabulary. A perceptive response to literature, with sensitive understanding of subtle aspects of the text, is frequently demonstrated in class discussions. There is a wide range in the standards of writing at Key Stage 3. Pupils in higher sets write lively narrative and produce analytical writing with a good standard of accuracy, whereas there is a small number of weaker pupils who do not always develop their ideas in detail and whose standards of spelling and punctuation are poor. At Key Stage 4, the writing of pupils in higher sets shows a range of increasingly challenging work, but not all pupils succeed in expressing the perceptive response to literature that they demonstrate in discussion in the form of well-organised essays written in appropriate style. Weaker pupils write fluently on a personal level, but their writing contains too many basic inaccuracies.
54. Standards of literacy across the curriculum are generally satisfactory, although there are several areas of weakness. Pupils listen carefully, but are not always provided with opportunities to speak at length. Many lack the confidence to speak out clearly in class; teachers need to help pupils to develop this skill. Most pupils' reading skills are generally sufficient to cope with the demands of the curriculum, although difficulties are experienced by some pupils in mathematics and science lessons. Many pupils have good research skills and many make effective use of the school library; this is particularly noticeable in art, design and technology and geography. Writing is satisfactory overall, but there are wide variations in standards. The best is fluent, accurate and well organised, while that of weaker pupils contains more inaccuracies than there should be. In many subjects,

pupils learn the vocabulary appropriate to that subject. In history, pupils are given good opportunities to develop a range of writing at Key Stage 3, with consequent improvement in standards. Although some departments have clear policies for the development of literacy, there is no consistency across the school. A working party has recently produced practical suggestions for developing all aspects of literacy. If these are implemented as part of a whole-school literacy policy, they should have a real impact on standards and should improve the quality of teaching and learning generally.

55. Pupils make good progress in English at Key Stage 3, partly as a result of their good attitudes to learning, and also as a result of good, structured teaching. There is now more emphasis on language work, which helps pupils to improve in accuracy as they move through the key stage and has been one of the factors leading to better results for boys. When progress is occasionally unsatisfactory, it is because the teacher's expectations are too low or because weaknesses in lesson planning result in learning not being effectively consolidated. Overall progress at Key Stage 4 is good, although the pupils in Year 11 last year did not make as much progress as they should have done in GCSE English literature. This is still true of a minority of pupils in the present Year 11. Where progress is poor, it is often due to the pupils' disaffected attitudes. Despite efforts by their teachers, these pupils show little interest or enthusiasm, and their poor motivation adversely affects the standard of their coursework. There is good progress being made, however, by most pupils in Year 10 and by many in Year 11. Year 10 pupils made very good progress in a lesson on *To Kill a Mockingbird* as a result of a skilfully handled discussion in which the teacher's challenging questions and careful listening to pupils' views enabled them to articulate and consolidate their knowledge and understanding of the text. Pupils in a Year 11 revision lesson on *An Inspector Calls* made very good progress as a result of their teacher's lively approach, good pace and well-chosen materials. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in those lessons where there is effective liaison with the learning support assistant. In some cases, poor progress is linked to poor handwriting: pupils who have not yet learned cursive script often write too slowly and this frequently affects their progress in Key Stage 3, sometimes carrying on into work in Key Stage 4.
56. The quality of teaching is slightly better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. Overall, the teaching in more than half the lessons seen was good or better, with only a small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. This was mainly due to weak management of behaviour, inadequate explanations and low expectations of what the pupils can achieve. In most lessons there is good classroom management: sound routines are established and teachers create a working atmosphere conducive to learning. Most teachers mark regularly, although there is not yet consistency in the way attainment is shown. Most marking is detailed and constructive, so that pupils are clear about how to improve. Only occasionally are there over-enthusiastic comments on mediocre work. Homework is set reasonably regularly, but does not always challenge higher-attaining pupils, particularly in the mixed ability groups in Year 7. There are good relations between pupils and with the teacher in most lessons. Pupils respond well: apart from the exceptions already noted, they generally have a serious attitude to learning, and behaviour in class is usually good. Some pupils in Key Stage 3 classes are over-dependent on the teacher. They need strategies for resolving their problems and queries independently, as well as opportunities when these strategies can be practised.
57. Some informal monitoring of work in the department has been introduced but no formal observations of teaching have yet taken place, although this is planned for later in the year. The department has rightly decided that pupils need a more consistent curricular experience and has identified as a priority the writing of coherent schemes of work, building in National Literacy Strategy measures, further development of ICT and common units for assessment. Since the last inspection there has been an improvement in attainment and progress, particularly at Key Stage 3. There is now a more effective analysis of assessment information and monitoring of individual pupils' progress, although there is still a need to ensure greater consistency of assessment practices throughout the department. Some of the points mentioned in the previous report have been tackled, but more regular extension activities are needed for higher-attaining pupils; teachers should plan to build this into their regular classroom practice.

Drama

58. Drama is still being developed in the curriculum. At present it is taught to Years 7 and 8 in Key Stage 3, and to both years in Key Stage 4. The first cohort to take GCSE drama will be the present Year 11. Drama is taught separately from English, but there is at present no head of department and the only drama specialist is part-time. Standards of drama vary at Key Stage 3. Some pupils' attainment is at least in line with national expectations and pupils show good progress in the development of drama skills. In other cases, the immature behaviour of pupils and the lack of specialist drama teaching mean that the standard of drama is low and progress is poor. Standards are above national expectations at Key Stage 4: pupils make good use of space, they perform with conviction and show very good progress in the development and use of drama skills in their improvisations. Good and sometimes very good teaching at Key Stage 4 results in the pupils making good progress generally. Pupils benefit from the teacher's sound subject knowledge and good classroom management. They improve as a result of thorough assessment practices, including high-quality verbal feedback during lessons. Pupils' attitudes are very good at Key Stage 4; they sustain concentration and effort during lessons, form a supportive critical audience for each other's performances, and bring enthusiasm and commitment to their lessons. Extra-curricular activities are being developed and cross-curricular links with other subjects including PSHE are good. The new well-equipped drama studio is an excellent resource for the development of the subject through the school. Drama now needs to be properly managed, with thorough curriculum planning and effective monitoring procedures. More subject specialists are needed if drama is to make the contribution it should to the pupils' personal development and to the life of the school.

MATHEMATICS

59. Overall SAT results at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 were above the national average but below the average of similar schools. Boys and girls achieved equally well. Mathematics results were similar to those in English but better than in science. The upward trend in these results over the last three years is more rapid than the national trend. At the end of Key Stage 4 in 2000 the proportion of pupils obtaining GCSE grades A*-C was close to the national average. Boys' attainment was significantly worse than girls' at the middle and lower grades, although better at the highest grades.
60. Standards are broadly in line with national expectations at both key stages and pupils make satisfactory progress overall, although this varies considerably with the quality of teaching, as well as the prior attainment of pupils in the class. Pupils are not achieving their best when the teacher does not know the pupils well, or does not have sufficient pupil management skills or specialist knowledge. Year 7 pupils are taught in mixed ability forms. Work is not always sufficiently matched to their ability, leading to inappropriate pace with lack of challenge for the higher-attaining pupils; however, a Year 7 class using the LOGO software in the computer room felt a great sense of achievement at the end of the lesson. A Year 8 top set responded well to challenge and the high expectations of their teacher, achieving a very high standard in calculating mixed operations with fractions. The bottom set Year 8 were making good progress with calculating angles through structured simple steps and clear explanation by their teacher, but the middle set seen was not achieving at an appropriate level. Discussion between pupils helps them to understand concepts and methods, an improvement since the last inspection. Group work was used well in a Year 9 lesson, and achievement in the Year 9 lessons observed was good throughout the ability ranges, with most pupils demonstrating an interest in mathematics, whatever the topic. Pupils with special educational needs achieve equally with others of similar prior attainment through the help of learning support assistants who liaise well with the teacher on work to be done, and keep records of their progress.
61. The Key Stage 4 lower-attaining pupils follow a graduated assessment scheme. Working at their own pace, and taking more responsibility for their own learning, leads to success for most pupils. The higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 achieve good standards in algebra. Top set pupils understand the function notation, expanding brackets and the factorising method of solving quadratic equations, while pupils in the second set successfully solve simultaneous equations by the elimination method. A lower intermediate set were revisiting methods of presenting data, and

were drawing and interpreting pie charts well, showing skills in measuring and using calculators. The top set in Year 10 were working at their own pace through the textbook, on various topics, supervised by a non-specialist while their normal teacher was absent. Year 10 middle set pupils were achieving high standards rearranging formulae, through the well-planned structure of the scheme of work and the sympathetic manner of their teacher. The enthusiastic attitude and good behaviour of Key Stage 4 pupils, along with good teaching and plentiful resources, led to standards in line with national expectations in the majority of lessons seen. Irregular attendance affects too many pupils' standards of work, and sometimes the pace and productivity of the whole class.

62. Almost all teaching observed was satisfactory or better, with nearly half being good or better: similar in both key stages. The best teaching seen was by the full-time specialist mathematicians who have high expectations and challenge their classes to achieve more. Characteristics of the best teaching are effective planning, with clear objectives and a variety of pupil and teacher activities, a fast pace and frequent recap to consolidate learning. The most effective teachers have good questioning techniques, which stimulate thought and elicit responses from pupils to demonstrate their gained knowledge and understanding or lead them into new learning. Ongoing assessment is good, monitoring pupils throughout the lesson and giving verbal or written feedback to help them know how to improve. Homework forms an integral part of the pupils' learning, although it does not always match their prior attainment and sometimes is not sufficiently challenging for individuals. Relationships between the regular teachers and their pupils are very good, with evident mutual respect. Pupils work very well together, quietly collaborating when necessary or required, and behaving well throughout lessons on the whole, with some minor exceptions in the younger years where they have weaker self-discipline, or the teacher lacks appropriate pupil management skills.
63. There have been many changes since the last inspection, including three new teachers. There are current staffing problems caused by the difficulty in covering long-term staff absence with mathematics specialists, which adversely affects pupils at Key Stage 3. There is now a well-constructed, appropriate department development plan. Assessment procedures are good, but the data is not yet effectively used to inform curriculum planning or raise standards. The use of ICT has improved since the last inspection, as has the use of mathematical language. Using and applying mathematics is seen as an important aspect, and each year group tackles investigational tasks each half-term, although this attainment target is not yet fully integrated into the teaching and learning of all mathematics. Monitoring and evaluation of the department has improved, but needs further development to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning and raise achievement. If sufficient extra specialists can be found, the planned developments should lead to improved teaching, learning and raised standards. Number skills are well taught, and the development of the National Numeracy Strategy in 2001 is welcomed, and planned for, needing training this year. The need for a whole-school numeracy policy and an audit of needs across the curriculum is recognised.

SCIENCE

64. SAT results in science in 2000 were in line with those achieved nationally, but well below those in similar schools. The results were below those in both English and mathematics. There has been a decline in Key Stage 3 SAT results since the previous inspection, when they were well above the national average. Girls have usually performed better than boys. The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades at GCSE was below the national average and well below similar schools in 2000. The results were lower than the previous year and the previous inspection when they were above the national average. The pupils' performance in science was, however, better than in the average of their other subjects, with boys performing comparatively better than girls. Nevertheless, the progress made from the Key Stage 3 SAT results to GCSE at Key Stage 4 was unsatisfactory. Staffing difficulties contributed to low results in 2000.
65. In lessons the pupils demonstrate levels of knowledge and understanding above those represented by recent examination results, particularly at Key Stage 4. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 11, for example, have a good knowledge of electron arrangements in atoms and can use this to explain ion

formation and bonding. Similarly, pupils in Year 9 understand that organisms are made up from cells, with higher-attaining pupils developing a good understanding of inheritance and the factors that can lead to variation. This higher overall attainment is most evident when the pupils respond verbally to the teacher's questions. Many pupils have weak literacy skills and have some difficulty in interpreting written questions. Their responses, without the support and guidance of the teacher, often lack the necessary accuracy and specificity of language. The teachers often place a good emphasis on developing the use and understanding of key words, as in a Year 11 lesson researching the nervous system. Sometimes there is also good support for developing the pupils' skills further. A good example was a Year 8 lesson investigating rusting where the pupils had to produce their own complete sentences from a table of results. There is, however, a need for the development and use of literacy to be more consistent across the department.

66. The teaching observed was good overall. There was no unsatisfactory teaching and a significant proportion that was very good. The good quality of the teaching observed is the main factor supporting higher standards and good progress in lessons. Some lively and energetic teaching, as in a Year 8 lesson on the reaction of metals and water, or a Year 10 lesson on the conservation of fish, motivates and encourages the pupils to work with interest and enthusiasm. Good links are provided with previous lessons, as in a Year 7 lesson on forces, and questions are used well to encourage the pupils to reflect upon their ideas and apply them to new contexts, as in a Year 7 lesson separating mixtures. This helps to clarify and consolidate the pupils' ideas. There is a good variety of activities, including demonstrations and the use of ICT, which enables the pupils to visualise the idea being studied, as in a Year 9 lesson on elements, mixtures and compounds. Greater use of visual stimuli and ICT would enhance learning further. These key features are present in varying degrees in most lessons. There is a need to identify examples of very good practice and to spread them more widely through the department if the overall quality of teaching is to improve further still. Pupils with special educational needs often make good progress as a result of effective teaching and support from learning assistants. Sometimes, however, learning support assistants are not used effectively for long periods of time, and class teachers need to develop a broader range of methods to ensure that work is matched well to the wide range of prior attainment present in many classes.
67. There are three main reasons why the good progress in individual lessons is not being maintained over time. Science is taught as three subjects in Year 9 and the pupils only have one lesson per subject per week. This makes it difficult to maintain momentum and develop an overview of science. The syllabus used at Key Stage 4 has a good emphasis on the use and application of science, but is not well suited to the needs of many pupils who require a more systematic development of ideas and concepts. Secondly, some pupils do not apply themselves with any great enthusiasm at Key Stage 4. Although their attitudes are satisfactory and they complete the tasks set, the teacher often has to work hard to get them thinking and applying their ideas. Some pupils do not take sufficient responsibility for their own learning and do not work independently. They will, for example, sit and chat when a section of work is completed rather than seeking out the next thing to do. Lastly the work of the department lacks co-ordination; the work of teachers is too isolated. Management of the department has failed to provide a clear direction and to ensure a consistent and coherent delivery of the science curriculum. There has been insufficient use of assessment data to identify strengths and weaknesses and a lack of focus in developments undertaken. Consequently the management of the department is unsatisfactory.
68. The task ahead is to improve the leadership and management of the department to ensure that the good work taking place in individual lessons develops the pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills more consistently and coherently, thereby raising standards in external tests and examinations.

ART

69. Standards in GCSE in 2000 were below the national average. The percentage of pupils achieving A*-C grades was a third of the national figure. Pupils achieved worse results in this subject compared with the average of their other subjects. Higher standards were seen during the

inspection. This is because of several factors resulting from a change in staffing, which has produced improved management and teaching, and greater interest shown by the pupils in the subject.

70. Pupils enter the school with standards that are lower than national expectations, as the majority have done little drawing or painting. They make good progress to reach standards that are in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3, and further good progress to reach standards that are close to the national average at Key Stage 4.
71. The quality of teaching is consistently good. The teachers give freely of their time and are passionate about their subject. This motivates and inspires pupils to become involved and to succeed. The teachers encourage experimentation, to which the pupils respond. This has contributed to the improvement in standards, particularly the development of the pupils' imagination and creativity. The emphasis on a written evaluation of every piece of artwork has helped bring about the improvement in standards. Through this, pupils have become visually aware and have developed the ability to be self-critical. Teachers question effectively, for example pupils were asked about the effect that different types of shading gave. This made the pupils think about the visual impact of their drawings. At Key Stage 4, the work in the pupils' sketchbooks is impressive, and this is mainly the result of the teachers' emphasis on using them to create a working resource. During the study of 'zoo life through their emotions', the pupils explored animals in their sketchbooks through drawing, painting and through visits. Their final pieces showed an ability to synthesise their emotions. For example, one pupil included barbed wire, which showed the influence of Dali. Teachers constantly introduce famous artists, which widens pupils' experiences, and the pupils explore their characteristics and frequently use them as a starting point for their own work. For example, the theme of dance was explored through the study of Kandinsky and Degas. This was achieved through drawings, the making of a wax model of a ballet dancer and the making of a large three-dimensional model. Pupils have the capacity to change their original idea, as was seen in the development of a distorted face in clay. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. Pupils enjoy art and are totally involved both in and out of lessons, as many return after school to continue their work. Their interest extends beyond the classroom, as seen in the extensive research that they undertake.
72. The school has a recently-appointed head of department, and a teacher new to the teaching of art, both of whom are committed to achieving high standards. The curriculum is considerably enhanced by a variety of visits in Key Stage 4, although none is undertaken in Key Stage 3. This limits one aspect of the National Curriculum, where pupils should study art and craft in their locality. In addition, pupils who do not continue with art will not have the experience of visiting art galleries. All issues raised in the last inspection have been dealt with; the department is now flourishing and has the potential to progress further. Resources are good. The art room provides a stimulating environment, and art makes a positive contribution to the pupils' cultural development; however, the high status given to the pupils' artwork is not apparent around the school, where there is a need for visual impact in the empty corridors.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

73. Results in the 2000 GCSE examinations were below the national average overall; however, there were variations between the individual subjects. Results have consistently been very good in electronics and good in food technology. In resistant materials results declined to below the national average, and results were very poor in graphics. Pupils did worse on average in design and technology than in their other subjects. Although standards are still below the national average overall, there have been changes within the subjects. This is as a result of considerable staff changes, which have affected the quality of teaching. This has had an impact in electronics and resistant materials where standards have declined, while standards have improved considerably in graphics.
74. The pupils' attainment is below average when they enter the school, largely because many have not experienced the full range of the design and making process. Pupils make satisfactory progress,

but at the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' level of attainment is below national expectations. This is due to considerable recent staff changes and also to the inadequate time allocation in Year 9. This has resulted in units of work being condensed, the full design and making elements not being covered, and the making process not being completed. Pupils use research appropriately, for example into the properties of veneers. They research types and shapes of bags, and produce paper patterns for their final individual designs. Pupils also conduct market research, from which they draw conclusions to be used in their final product. They work with a range of tools and equipment with some precision, for example when making small boxes, but the finishing is either of a low standard or not attempted at all. The pupils' evaluation of their work is mostly at a low level. For example, a pupil stated that her bag could be improved with more care over stitching, but this was not extended to explain how the improvements could be made.

75. At the end of Key Stage 4, there are some projects that are of a good standard in resistant materials and electronics. This was seen in the design of an alarmed biscuit tin, where the pupil had undergone extensive research into types of alarms and had produced good circuit designs. The overall standards in these subjects have been reduced by some disaffected boys who have little intention of producing work. Most pupils work hard in food technology, and this was seen when they evaluated the variety of cook-chill products that they had made. They explained that the products had not only to be attractive through the use of colour, but also to have flavour. Attainment in graphics has improved and there are many projects that are of a high standard. For example, projects aimed at specific packaging included disassembly, consideration of mass production, and types of packaging and printing. Pupils with special educational needs attain similar standards with the help of the learning support assistants and the class teachers.
76. The majority of pupils behave well. They listen carefully and work hard on tasks set. Their interest extends beyond the classroom. For example, a pupil took photographs of different types of boxes and their disassembly as part of research into packaging. Most pupils concentrate, and this was seen when they took notes during a demonstration. Many have a real interest in the subject, as was seen when a pupil wanted to know why processed foods were so much more expensive. The majority of pupils take great care with the presentation of their work, which is due to the emphasis on high standards in graphics. For example, much of the rendering done by Year 9 pupils was of a standard expected for GCSE.
77. Teaching in Key Stage 3 is good overall. One of the lessons observed was unsatisfactory because of poor discipline, which resulted in the pupils being delayed in completing their task. In Key Stage 4, the quality of teaching is good. All teachers have good subject knowledge, and through the use of demonstrations and exemplars, good teaching points are made. For example, the demonstration of pastry-making showed that a change of ingredients does not alter the quality of the product. Teachers have high expectations, and homework is seen as an integral part of pupils' learning. Good use is made of questioning. For example, pupils were asked why holes were made in a mould, which made pupils think and understand the process of vacuum-forming. Teachers are alert to pupils' level of understanding, and react appropriately. For example, a group of pupils who were struggling to produce an isometric drawing were brought together for a further demonstration.
78. At present, the department has an acting head and uses supply teachers. As a result of the timetable and the units of work, it was not possible to see any practical resistant materials lessons. The resistant materials rooms are out-dated and are inappropriate for the teaching of the design and making elements in design technology. In addition, the department does not have access to computer-aided manufacturing (CAM), which is part of the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum. With the inadequate time allocation in Key Stage 3, the very poor resistant materials rooms and the absence of CAM, the school is not delivering the full National Curriculum in Key Stage 3. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 does not include textiles, which consequently restricts choice.
79. The school has responded inadequately to the points raised in the previous report. Provision for resistant materials is still unsatisfactory and standards are low, and there is insufficient departmental co-ordination. To improve standards the school needs to reorganise the resistant materials rooms to allow the teaching of all elements of design and technology, increase the time

allocation at Key Stage 3 to allow the full National Curriculum to be taught, and extend the time allocation for technical assistance for food technology.

GEOGRAPHY

80. In 2000, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C in the GCSE examination was below the national average. Results in the short course were well below average. The pupils' performance in geography was lower than in their other subjects. At the time of the last inspection, GCSE results were poor. Results have fluctuated during the last three years, rising above the national average in 1999 for the full course, but falling in 2000. Results in the short course have been consistently well below average. There has been no significant difference in the performance between boys and girls.
81. Standards of work are average at Key Stage 3, maintaining the position described at the time of the last inspection. The recent introduction of more challenging work, together with the pupils' positive response to it, indicate that standards higher than the national average are achievable by the end of this key stage. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 7 are able to use map skills and research techniques as they investigate urban contrast in England and Wales. They then produce accurate written summaries of their findings and read them fluently to the class. In a very good lesson on earthquake activities in Year 9, the pupils responded with enthusiasm and worked very well in carefully managed groups, sharing appropriate tasks efficiently. The teacher's clearly defined aims and high expectations enabled all pupils to make rapid progress in their learning. Pupils are increasingly encouraged to extend their ICT skills, both in independent research and to enhance the presentation of their work. The teachers give pupils with special educational needs individual attention, sometimes with the help of learning support assistants, so that they make satisfactory progress in lessons. Occasionally, a lack of concentration and unsatisfactory behaviour reduces the standard of pupils' work and limits the progress that they make.
82. Standards at Key Stage 4 are below the national average, a position that is unchanged since the time of the last inspection; however, from the work seen during this inspection, there are clear signs of improvement. The short GCSE course has been inappropriate, particularly for many lower-attaining pupils who are unable to cope with the quantity and detail of work required. This course will no longer be taught after this year. Recent assistance from external advisers in the production of new, detailed schemes of work is introducing more challenging work and a wider range of skills that will enable pupils to build on their previous learning successfully. Some lessons now proceed at a very good pace and promote rapid learning. For example, the excellent preparation of resources, including activities to extend the understanding of higher-attaining pupils, enabled all pupils in a Year 11 lesson to see the moral and ethical implications of the tourist industry in the less developed world. Most pupils extend their knowledge of coastal processes by transforming statistics collected during fieldwork into graphs and diagrams. Their course-work lacks written detail, however, and they find it difficult to explain what they have seen. Examples of recent work completed in lessons and for homework include a very good range of tasks that are encouraging pupils to adapt their written work for different purposes and audiences.
83. The quality of teaching varies but overall it is satisfactory. In Key Stage 3, all of the lessons observed except one were at least satisfactory and half were good or very good. In the one unsatisfactory lesson seen, pupils lost interest and achieved very little when too much time was allocated to a task for which they were ill-prepared. In Key Stage 4, all of the lessons observed were at least good and one was very good. Particular attention is given to the needs of lower-attaining pupils in Key Stage 4, where difficult concepts are introduced by building carefully on their previous experience. A new marking policy now emphasises the use of detailed constructive comments that enable pupils to see how to improve the quality of their work. The teachers create stimulating learning environments within their rooms that include excellent displays of pupils' work. These encourage achievement and extend the pupils' knowledge of topical geographical issues. Good systems are now in place for assessing the quality of pupils' work. At Key Stage 3, details on National Curriculum levels are shared with pupils so that they know what is required in order to reach higher levels. A portfolio of work at each level is being assembled for reference and to ensure that teachers adopt a consistent approach. Although pupils do now have individual targets for improvement and are encouraged to add their own comments to these, the department does not

yet make full use of assessment data in order to track the pupils' progress rigorously. Some adaptation of the curriculum in the light of assessment findings has begun, although this needs developing further.

84. Good progress has been made since the last inspection on many of the issues that were raised at that time, particularly in the provision of work suitable for all pupils. Recent changes in staffing have resulted in the creation of a co-operative environment where new ideas and experience are shared freely; however, blurred lines of responsibility within the humanities faculty and a lack of consistent monitoring and evaluation of the department's performance inhibit sharply focused strategic planning. Development of the recent initiatives, together with further progress in the use of all of the assessment and performance data, will help the department in its drive to raise attainment at both key stages.

HISTORY

85. Until this year, all pupils in Key Stage 4 had to choose history or geography. The majority of pupils studied consecutive short courses in both subjects, sitting one examination at the end of Year 10 and the other at the end of Year 11. This system has produced poor results in history over the last three years and has now been abandoned. Those pupils entered for the short course in 2000 did much worse in history than in the average of all their other subjects. Over the same period, one class in each year followed the full GCSE course and their results have improved, so that in 2000 they were in line with the national average. These pupils did as well in history as in their other subjects.
86. At Key Stage 3 attainment is broadly in line with national expectations. New schemes of work have focused the teaching on historical questions and historical thinking, and teachers are successfully using a variety of approaches to extend the pupils' writing. The result is that pupils in Year 9 are achieving the expected level of understanding in their essays on the causes of the Industrial Revolution. The use of writing frames to help the pupils to plan their answers is improving the standard of written work produced by lower-attaining pupils. Learning materials are adapted to pupils' needs in some mixed ability classes but it is not yet standard practice. Withdrawal of a few pupils from certain lessons to work with a learning support assistant means that they miss the stimulus of the teacher's opening presentation. Pupils are acquiring the ability to analyse historical sources. In Year 9 lessons on the British Empire, they were able to identify the attitudes expressed by the rulers and those that they ruled, and classify them to illustrate a series of imperial themes. Similarly, Year 8 pupils were able to sort out causes of the English Civil War into the three broad areas of money, power and religion. In each year, pupils are developing their skills of independent enquiry through project work, but they need clearer guidance on how to make searches of CD-ROMs and the Internet. More attention needs to be given to different interpretations of people and events in order to develop the pupils' understanding of reliability and bias in history.
87. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is below national expectations overall, well below for the short course, better but still below for the full course. In a lesson on the effects of the Depression on Germany in the 1930s, pupils following the short course found difficulty analysing the appeal of the Nazis to different groups of people. Their files are poorly organised and some have work missing. Some higher-attaining pupils, mainly girls, have produced a high standard of coursework on developments in holiday-making in the twentieth century, but many are not putting in enough effort to achieve good results. More serious attitudes to the work on the full course in Years 10 and 11 are producing a higher standard of work overall. Already in Year 10, pupils have made good progress in writing historical essays, most recently explaining the rise of the Nazi party with relevant, well argued points, and reaching sound conclusions, supported by factual detail. Stimulating teaching that presents them with conflicting evidence, as in a lesson on who was responsible for the Reichstag fire in 1933, is making pupils think carefully about the usefulness and reliability of sources, though they struggle with the former. Pupils in Year 11 are making satisfactory progress on the full course, organising their notes efficiently and showing improvement in discursive essays. In their study of developments in crime and punishment, they were able to identify continuity and changes in the types of crime committed at different periods. In tests, a number of pupils have

difficulty evaluating the usefulness of source material and comparing conflicting sources. They are not drawing sufficiently on their own knowledge of the subject, to supplement information given in the sources. A few pupils are not doing their homework.

88. The standard of teaching was at least satisfactory in all lessons observed and was good in two-thirds at each key stage. In Key Stage 3, the teachers have embraced an enquiry-based approach to the subject that progressively builds the pupils' understanding of issues. Their style of teaching is very effective for developing the pupils' literacy, through studying a variety of historical texts and setting a range of written assignments. In their marking of pupils' work, the teachers set precise, achievable targets, which are proving successful in raising standards. Equally, at Key Stage 4, teachers are targeting the skills required at GCSE, particularly essay writing and source analysis. Lessons start off at a good pace but sometimes lose momentum, either through protracted question and answer sessions or lengthy periods of individual working. Tighter control of class discussion would also save time.
89. Since the last inspection, the department has benefited greatly from the assistance it has received under a support programme from external advisers. It has been particularly useful in assisting the teachers in developing their ideas for new schemes of work, assessment procedures and future planning. The result has been a more systematic approach to planning and the evaluation of the department's work than at the time of the last inspection. The new common assessments in Key Stage 3 provide a more objective basis for monitoring pupils' progress across a range of skills. More emphasis needs to be placed on National Curriculum levels, identifying in language that pupils can understand, what is expected of them to achieve the higher levels for each assignment. The planned portfolio of work to exemplify the different levels will help to standardise teachers' assessment of work. Pupils are now involved in self-assessment through the system of regular target setting. Further work needs to be done to organise the department's bank of learning materials to ensure provision and easy access to information/worksheets catering for the different levels of attainment within the mixed ability classes. The department has made good progress in sorting out the curriculum and assessment procedures. It is now in a strong position to make headway on improving standards at Key Stage 4.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

90. At Key Stage 3 standards in discrete ICT lessons in Year 7 are close to expectations. Pupils in Year 7 are developing a satisfactory level of skills in wordprocessing and information handling. They are able to interrogate a database, carrying out detailed searches in relation to travel arrangements, are able to use correct terms and draw appropriate conclusions. Attainment overall at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. There are many opportunities to use ICT in the subjects of the curriculum. Good use is made of ICT in mathematics lessons to explore concepts of shape using the computer language 'Logo'. The use of spreadsheets also enhances learning of the use of number. A good range of computer applications is used effectively in geography. The Internet is used in French lessons to access specialist sites providing teaching materials as well as information about France.
91. Teaching in the Year 7 course is good. Lessons are well planned, the pace is brisk and differentiated teaching materials are used well. The discrete ICT provision in Year 7 which has been running for the last two years has had a beneficial effect on the development of ICT capability. On the other hand, the current cross-curricular approach in Years 8 to 11 does not guarantee to teach all pupils the appropriate skills to move them to the higher levels of attainment required in Key Stage 4, where skills, knowledge and attainment overall are below expectations.
92. In all ICT lessons or where ICT is the main focus, in both key stages, the response of pupils is good, often very good. Levels of concentration and perseverance are high, as most pupils are keen to produce accurate, well-presented work.
93. In both key stages, where ICT is used across the curriculum, some teachers use computers profitably in their lessons. In the best lessons, classroom management is good or very good;

teachers work hard to involve all pupils. There are, however, occasions when opportunities for whole-class teaching of skills are missed and there is time-consuming repetition with individuals or pairs. In some cases the pupils' progress is impeded because teachers are not able to demonstrate how to use ICT to the best effect, for example how to select information from a CD-ROM or from the Internet and paste it into a wordprocessor. The New Opportunities Fund teacher training in the use of ICT is just beginning and should improve teacher skills and knowledge. The mapping and co-ordination of cross-curricular ICT needs to be developed further at Key Stage 4 to ensure equality of opportunity in terms of the time spent using ICT and the range of ICT applications utilised. The control and measuring aspects of the ICT curriculum are weak.

94. Progress has been made in response to the last inspection. Reporting and assessment procedures are in place in Key Stage 3 but not yet in Key Stage 4, where they are needed to inform planning and help provide appropriate targets for pupils for the development of higher level skills and knowledge. There has been an increase in cross-curricular use in both key stages but there is further scope in most subjects. Appropriate resources to exploit fully ICT in design and technology and science are still lacking but an ICT development plan is in place, which includes improved ICT in these subjects.
95. In order to raise standards further, attention should be given to appropriate progression in the development of ICT skills and knowledge from Year 8 to Year 11 in all aspects of ICT. This will need improved specialist resources in design and technology and science. Assessment at Key Stage 4 will be needed to ensure appropriate progress takes place.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

96. Standards at GCSE in modern foreign languages vary. In German, the percentage of A*-C grades achieved in GCSE examinations in 2000 was well above the national average, continuing a trend of very good performance in German since 1998. In French over the same period, performance has been below the national average, including poor performance in 2000. In 2000, the pupils' performance in German was better than in the average of all their other subjects whereas in French it was worse. Since the last inspection, the girls have generally out-performed the boys in modern languages, except in 1999 when the boys did better in French than the girls.
97. Standards overall at Key Stage 3 are in line with national expectations, with pupils achieving above average standards in German and average in French. In both languages, most pupils make good progress in listening, mainly because the teachers conduct listening exercises regularly and encourage good self-marking routines by pupils. For example, in a Year 9 German lesson, pupils organised themselves rapidly for a listening exercise, which they subsequently marked accurately under guidance. Most pupils attain a good standard in reading, because teachers generally use reading texts imaginatively to help pupils consolidate new language and develop good dictionary skills. In German, pupils achieve good standards in speaking, communicating confidently with a good German accent. In French, many pupils speak hesitantly and at a basic level, due to lack of opportunities to develop personal language. This was seen in a Year 8 French top set lesson in which the pupils listened attentively to the teacher and some responded briefly in French, but pupils did not practise their language with each other in pairs or groups. When teachers use French in lessons and organise productive speaking tasks, pupils make good progress. For example, in a Year 9 French lesson pupils spoke French confidently in pairs with a good accent and forming extended sentences. Writing skills in German are above average, but in French they are generally below average. In French, pupils require more opportunities for writing creatively and their written work generally should be supported with more regular and detailed marking. Pupils sometimes lack overall direction in their learning as there is little routine target setting in French or German. Some pupils in the wide ability middle and lower sets tend to make less progress generally in French. Pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress at Key Stage 3 due to good teacher support in the wide ability groups, but this attention is sometimes to the detriment of the abler pupils in the groups.
98. At Key Stage 4, standards are broadly in line with national expectations, with pupils attaining above average standards in German and average standards in French. Able pupils in top sets in French

and German make very good progress in listening, reading and writing and are keen to learn, responding well to structured activities which extend them. This was seen in a successful Year 11 French lesson in which the teacher's effective use of resources and tasks about holidays enabled the pupils to consolidate vocabulary and grammar, subsequently developing this in writing for homework. When pupils are in wide ability sets, some make poor progress, mainly due to the demanding range of pupil needs within a single class. For example, in a Year 11 French lesson and in a Year 10 French lesson, the teachers' choice of language level and tasks did not fully extend all pupils, including a few capable of above average attainment, and others with special educational needs. Target setting for improvement is good in both languages, but the marking of routine work in French is inadequate.

99. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with half the teaching seen being good or very good. Pupils have good attitudes to language learning overall. Most pupils, and especially boys, respond well when working with ICT. For example, in a Year 9 French lesson all pupils enthusiastically used their language knowledge to do virtual shopping at a French store on the Internet.
100. Since the last inspection, teaching and pupils' attitudes have improved, and standards in German have remained high; however, standards in French are lower (although pupils from the full ability range are now entered), and the speaking skill remains weak. The department should devise strategies for improving the standard of speaking in French. Setting should be arranged for the middle and lower ability bands in French. Teachers should support pupils with target setting at Key Stage 3. Schemes of work should be updated and linked to national standards, and the policy on marking should be implemented.

MUSIC

101. In 2000, the GCSE results were very poor with none of the seven pupils achieving an A*-C grade and only four achieving A*-G grades. The pupils scored one grade lower in music than in the average of their other subjects. Tapes of their compositions and performances heard during the inspection indicate that most pupils' results were appropriate to their abilities. The results of the previous two years were better. In 1998, there were over twice as many pupils taking music, of whom a third achieved an A grade. Over the last three years, girls achieved most of the highest grades whereas eight of the nine ungraded results belonged to boys.
102. There is a wide range in the standard of work at Key Stage 3. Standards are broadly in line with national expectations, with a few pupils working at an above average level. Advanced skills were demonstrated in a Year 9 lesson on the Blues, where three pupils performed an intricate improvisation. The use of ICT is an emerging strength: one pupil single-handedly recorded and sequenced four simultaneous tracks of a Blues composition. There are areas that need to improve at Key Stage 3. The quality of singing is poor. The pupils' written appraisal skills are under-developed; the resulting contribution of music to basic literacy is minimal. There are insufficient display boards to promote key words or pupils' achievements. An effective teacher who is a non-specialist takes one class in Year 7. The pupils make progress, but the lack of specialist subject knowledge results in their not making as much progress as they should. This situation is not satisfactory and requires monitoring of and guidance for the teacher by the head of department.
103. There is also a wide spread of standards at Key Stage 4. Most pupils are reaching national expectations in the three components of the course. In Year 10, some of the compositional work is more advanced than that in Year 11. Some pupils benefit from the use of ICT to create or enhance their compositions. For a significant number of pupils, their only instrument is the electronic keyboard. The department should consider arranging keyboard lessons in order to improve the practical skills of these pupils.
104. The teaching is satisfactory and occasionally good at both key stages. ICT skills are used well to teach lessons more effectively. This was evident in a Year 7 lesson, where a pre-recorded accompaniment to a whole-class performance enabled the teacher to work with various groups of pupils as they were playing. Across both key stages, most pupils are well behaved and positive about the subject. Since the last inspection the standard and frequency of practical activities at

Key Stage 3 has risen. The management of the department requires greater rigour regarding the target setting of pupils' work and the marking and monitoring of their written assignments. It is also necessary to devise effective strategies in order to raise standards at Key Stage 4.

105. Since the last inspection, several factors have had a beneficial effect on the teaching of music. The new, purpose-built accommodation, improved resources and ambitious extra-curricular activities have all contributed to raising the standard of pupils' performing skills. About five per cent of pupils receive school instrumental tuition. There are several ensembles, choirs and regular concerts including a liaison concert with local primary schools. An after-school training session for the most able pupils in Year 9 was initiated this term. This is an improving department. To progress further, the department has to address the issues of singing, writing and curriculum management at Key Stage 3, and ensure that at Key Stage 4, pupils' achievements are in line with their abilities.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

106. Pupils gained 31% A*-C grades in GCSE sports studies in 2000. Results were below the national average. This was the first group of pupils to take the examination.
107. Standards at Key Stage 3 are close to national expectations. In all Year 9 lessons pupils achieve satisfactory standards as a result of effective teaching by all teachers. For instance when the teacher shared with pupils clear criteria for a dance composition and encouraged them to teach each other, most of the pupils were able to select and combine energetic movements to good effect. Pupils' planning has improved greatly since the last inspection. In a Year 7 gymnastics lesson, as a result of the teacher's high expectations of quality work, the pupils were able to extend their movement vocabulary and increase control and accuracy. Ball handling skills in Year 8 basketball were insufficiently developed for pupils to participate successfully in a small game situation. The very secure subject knowledge of two teachers gave pupils in Years 7 and 9 trampoline lessons confidence to try new moves with some precision. Pupils with special educational needs make appropriate progress in lessons.
108. Standards are below expectations at Key Stage 4. Insufficient opportunity is given for pupils to take the initiative to evaluate their own work and that of others, or for pupils to take on roles other than that of performer. Attainment was appropriate in a Year 11 GCSE lesson on energy systems because the teacher mixed theory with practice, maintaining a good pace, ensuring that the pupils really understood the subject and made very good progress. Schemes of work for Key Stage 4 have been written since the last inspection.
109. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory. Teaching is good or better in over half the lessons. Perceptive teacher intervention in a Year 10 GCSE sports studies theory lesson provided support for those who needed it to answer the task and confidence for those pupils who were less sure of their own ability. It is essential that pupils are taught how to erect and dismantle physical education equipment as part of lessons. Good class management is a feature of all lessons.
110. Monitoring of the department is as yet informal as the two main teachers of physical education have been in post for only a short time. There is a clear vision for the subject, and a commitment to high standards is already visible. Several improvements have been implemented since the last report. Now, attainment levels should be raised, particularly in Key Stage 4. Schemes of work in both key stages are in the process of being updated and assessment of pupils' progress will be included. Currently assessment does not help teachers with their planning. Every effort should be made to ensure that the next Key Stage 3 timetable does not affect pupils' continuity and progression in physical education.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

111. The pupils' standard of work in lessons at both key stages conforms to average national standards apart from two instances at Key Stage 3 where it was judged below average. Results were well above the national average for the first cohort entered for the short course GCSE this year. Building

on this initial success, it has been decided to open up the short course to all of the present Year 10.

112. Pupils in Year 7 are able to demonstrate a basic knowledge of the structure of the Bible and to write a modern version of a well-known psalm. Pupils in Year 8 can answer factual questions about Islam but are, as yet, not able to empathise with the feelings of believers. In Year 9 pupils demonstrate knowledge of Hinduism and are able to relate to the 'rites of passage' to some extent. Attainment is always higher when pupils are able to learn from a faith as well as learn about a faith. In Year 10 pupils are able to apply what was learnt from the life of Martin Luther King to their own lives and attitudes. In Year 11, with the topic of 'Churches in Chatteris' this skill is not so advanced but their interest in the topic is sustained by an ICT initiative involving the creation of a web page for feeder primary schools to find out more about the Christian faith. This has also helped them to know and understand more about Christianity in Britain today. At Key Stage 3, the fuller implementation of non-statutory levels of attainment and assessment based on the locally agreed syllabus should ensure more rigour in the raising of standards.
113. The quality of teaching is variable, ranging from unsatisfactory to very good. At Key Stage 3, most lessons are satisfactory with occasional exceptions that are either unsatisfactory or good. At Key Stage 4 the quality of teaching is mostly satisfactory or better. Teaching is good when firm class management is combined with imaginative teaching methods and a range of activities which relate to the pupils' own experience, as with the lessons on Martin Luther King and Hindu rites of initiation. Teaching is less than satisfactory when the material is presented in such a way that pupils cannot relate it to anything they know. This results in disaffection and boredom. Pupils' attitudes tend to mirror the quality of teaching. Although attitudes to the subject itself are not very positive, there is a general willingness to learn. Pupils are, for the most part, positively disposed to learn and respond with enthusiasm when teacher expectations are high, good humour is used and when the lesson is structured in such a way that they feel involved and stimulated.
114. The curriculum is being developed by the extensive use of a variety of textbooks, artefacts, videos, specially prepared worksheets and ICT. At Key Stage 3 the visit of a Sikh to Year 9, and a trip to St Albans Abbey and 'The Bible Exploration Centre' by Year 7 are good examples of how to make the subject more relevant to their lives. The visit by Year 11 to the parish church in order to gain information for their web page is another example of good practice in making the subject more real and more relevant to the pupils. The assessment of work is thorough with constructive comments that enable pupils to progress in their learning. The department follows the good practice in the humanities faculty of target setting. On this basis a comprehensive departmental tracking and monitoring system can now be built.
115. Overall the department has improved. All pupils are now taught religious education at both key stages and the curriculum is also now in conformity with the locally agreed syllabus. The examination results and developments at GCSE are encouraging, as are the initiatives at Key Stage 4 to involve pupils in the study of religion by the use of ICT and to make a contribution to the local primary schools. The department has worked hard to produce learning materials. These should now be properly differentiated to suit all levels of ability including the more able. Further work needs to be done on a system of tracking and monitoring of progress from Years 7 to 11 so that effective targets can be set and standards of attainment raised. A more structured monitoring of the quality of teaching and the provision of training should encourage the wider use of more imaginative teaching and learning styles.