

INSPECTION REPORT

HANLEY CASTLE HIGH SCHOOL

Hanley Castle

LEA area: Worcestershire

Unique reference number: 116981

Headteacher: Mr A Johnston

Reporting inspector: Mr R Passant
OFSTED Inspector No. 2728

Dates of inspection: 11 - 14 September 2000

Inspection number: 223735

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	mixed
School address:	Hanley Castle High School Church End Hanley Castle Worcestershire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Thomas
Date of previous inspection:	1 May 1995

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		Special educational needs	How well are pupils or students taught?
		Equal opportunities	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils and students?
			How well is the school led and managed?
			What should the school do to improve further?
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			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is a rural voluntary controlled 11-18 mixed comprehensive school. The school has a very long historical tradition. There are 839 pupils and students on roll. The school is broadly average in size. Approximately 10 per cent of pupils are on the special educational needs register, which is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs, at just over one per cent, is well below the average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (4 per cent) is below the national average. All but five pupils are white, from the UK, and so the percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language is very low. Attainment on entry is across the full ability range but is, overall, above average. A high proportion travel to the school on school transport.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Hanley Castle is a good school with significant strengths. Standards are high and the quality of teaching and learning are good and often very good. The school is led very well. The ethos of the school, with its central concern for the care for the individual, is very strong. Members of staff display a very high degree of commitment to the pupils and the quality of relationships between staff, pupils and students is very good. The school provides at least good value for money and some aspects relating to the commitment of staff, pupils' attitudes and the overall ethos are very good.

What the school does well

- Standards across the school are good, particularly in the examination years.
- The quality of teaching across the school is good.
- Pupils and students are well motivated and well behaved, and there is a rigorous work ethic in classrooms which ensures good progress.
- There is a very positive ethos; pupils and students are known and valued and their self-esteem and confidence are fostered consistently. People like and respect one other.
- The school invests in and values the team of staff working in the school. Morale is high.

What could be improved

- More formalised monitoring procedures to underpin the school's leadership, inform school planning and develop the school's systems of self-evaluation.
- Use of assessment information to inform pupils more effectively about what they have to do to improve.
- Increase access to computers across the school.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made steady progress since the last inspection. The school has expanded in size and gained in its reputation. Standards in examinations have risen steadily. The quality of teaching has improved. The effectiveness of the provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	B
A-levels/AS levels	C	D	C	n/a

Key

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

The percentages of pupils achieving Level 5 or above in English, mathematics and science were above the national average in the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the age of 14. The percentages of pupils achieving Level 6 or above were above the national averages in science and mathematics and well above in English. When compared with schools which have a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals the results are below average in English and well below the average in science and mathematics. Standards are good in Years 7-9 and pupils make at least steady progress. Progress accelerates as pupils move through the school.

The 1999 GCSE subject results indicate that the percentage of pupils achieving grades A*-C was above the national average in almost every subject. The exception to this was in religious education. The overall point score per pupil in religious education was in line with the national average. Nearly all the cohort take double combined science, mathematics and English language as examinations subjects. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSE passes includes a very high proportion of pupils achieving success in these three core subjects.

The trend in the improvement of the school's average total GCSE point score per pupil was above the national trend. The school sets realistic internal targets based on scores taken in tests on entry to the school and pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests at 14. The school operates a relatively open sixth form. Entry to it is not governed by strict academic requirements based on GCSE results but is based on personal qualities. As a result the attainment on entry to the sixth form is broader than is often the case.

Attainment in speaking and listening is good throughout the school. Standards in reading are good across most of the curriculum and pupils are encouraged to read for information and research in most subject areas. Writing standards are varied: good in some subjects - for example in religious instruction, history and English - but lower in some others. In mathematics lessons the strong emphasis on basic skills ensures that pupils of all levels of attainment can use calculators, have measuring skills and can represent data with simple statistical diagrams. Pupils' competence in numeracy overall is adequate to support the curricular requirements of a wide range of subjects. Most students are moderately competent in their use of information and communication technology but the poor provision of suitable equipment is detrimental to their progress in school. This is recognised by the school, which has plans to rectify the situation.

Pupils with special educational needs generally make steady progress towards their targets. A team of learning support assistants supports pupils with statements effectively. Higher attaining pupils are generally set appropriately demanding work.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to school are very good. Pupils come to school prepared to work and participate fully in what the school has to offer.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good. Pupils are trusted to respect their surroundings. Concentration in lessons is usually very good. In very few lessons is there silly behaviour. The fixed term exclusion rate is normally low. It was inflated last year by an isolated incident in school. Pupils were confident that if bullying occurred it would be dealt with swiftly and effectively.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships in the school are very good. Staff and pupils like and respect one another. The school carries out pioneering work in counselling. Considerable efforts are made to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are fully included socially and academically.
Attendance	Attendance is broadly in line with the national average.

There is a strong sense of tranquillity and calmness around the school. Pupils are secure. This is balanced by a lack of complacency, and a commitment to improvement demonstrated by members of staff.

The strong roots in the school's past which are used effectively to inform the formation of the present school's values are balanced by a sensitive awareness of the pressures facing an adolescent in today's society.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	good	good	good

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

The quality of teaching across the school is good. It is often very good and occasionally outstanding. It is never less than satisfactory. In the lessons seen teaching was satisfactory in 17 per cent, good in 49 per cent, very good in 30 per cent and excellent in 5 per cent. English, mathematics and science are taught well. Good teaching is seen in all subjects. Teachers have very good subject knowledge which allows them to build effectively on pupils' experience. The consistently good teaching ensures that pupils are well motivated, make good progress and work with very high degrees of enthusiasm, interest and concentration.

Overall, planning is good and ensures that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and higher attaining pupils, are appropriately challenged. Better use could be made of assessment information to inform pupils how to improve.

Opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in reading, speaking and listening are supported well across the curriculum. Writing skills are developed well in some departments. Emphasis on basic numeracy skills in mathematics is reinforced satisfactorily across the school.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum.	The school works hard to ensure that what is taught is relevant and interesting to the pupils and provides appropriate challenge. The extra-curricular provision is very good. Pupils are offered a broad curriculum, which provides considerable opportunities to achieve success.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs.	The school has an inclusive ethos. There has been significant development in special educational needs provision since the last inspection and the provision is at least sound. All pupils with special educational needs have full access to the National Curriculum. The special educational needs co-ordinator manages the department well, and there is a strong sense of teamwork with learning support assistants.
Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.	Overall, the school makes good provision. The provision for moral and social development is very good. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory and for cultural development it is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils.	The school cares very well for the pupils. Teachers know the pupils well.

There is an active and good partnership with parents. Annual reports, however, do not always chart progress in subjects in a sufficiently detailed way.

There are many strengths in the curriculum provision. The arts are valued. Pupils have the opportunity to learn two languages from the time they start school. The personal, social and health education programme is very good. Pupils and students value the formal and informal opportunities for advice and support. The lack of access to computers means that subject departments are not able to offer a full range of experience. Electronics and control technology are not taught and there are time pressures on English and religious education in the upper school. Religious education is not taught formally in the sixth form.

The school consistently gives attention to ensuring pupils' and students' welfare and achievement. The school believes in fostering wide-ranging opportunities for success to build pupils' self-esteem and confidence.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headmaster and other key staff	The headmaster provides a clear direction for the development of the school and very good leadership. Pupils and students, their development and achievement, are central concerns. The day-to-day management of the school is very good. The clear aims and aspirations for the school need to be translated into a development planning cycle which draws on information gathered from whole-school evaluation. Departments need to make more use of comparative information. Overall, the management across the school is secure.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is effective. Governors bring to their role considerable personal and professional expertise. They are acutely aware of their responsibilities as a corporate body. The presentation of the school development plan needs to be in a format which enables relevant governors to fulfil their monitoring role more effectively.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is not large but it has reached a critical size whereby previously informal procedures associated with its leadership and management now require underpinning by more rigorous self-evaluation procedures at departmental and school level.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very good use of resources. It has invested in an effective team of support staff.

The school has pressure on its accommodation and the quality of learning and teaching is limited on the occasions where lessons take place in cramped conditions. There are efficiency issues which arise from the accommodation pressures, for example not being able to place subject specialist rooms adjacent to one another. Staff are well qualified and work hard. In addition to the need to provide access to computers there are some resource needs within departments. The school applies the principles of best value although some departments could usefully make greater use of comparative assessment data.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best. Children like school. Their children are making good progress. They feel comfortable about approaching the school. The school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information about how their children are getting on. Closer working with parents. Concerns about the right amount of homework.

The inspection supports parents' positive views of the school. Reports to parents are variable in the amount of information given about a pupil's progress and the targets for improvement. There are inconsistencies in the setting of homework. The school works hard to inform parents and involve them in the life of the school. There was a high rate of return of the parents' questionnaire. Many of the returns were from parents whose children had just started in the school. This accounts for the relatively high percentage of 'do not know' responses.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. In 1999, pupils' performances in the National Curriculum tests at the age of 14 indicated that the percentages of pupils achieving Level 5 or above in English, mathematics and science were above the national average. The percentages of pupils achieving Level 6 or above were above the national averages in science and mathematics and well above in English.
2. The best overview of pupils' results takes into account the achievements of all pupils rather than simply the proportions of pupils achieving a particular threshold. When the 1999 school National Curriculum tests results are compared using the average point score gained per pupil, then performances in English and mathematics were well above, and in science above, the national averages. When pupils' performances are considered over four years, performance in mathematics was above, in science well above and in English close to, the national averages. When the results are combined, the performance of pupils was above the national average. Both boys and girls performed above the national averages for their age group. The trend in the school's average National Curriculum points score for all core subjects was broadly in line with the national trend. The results are below average in English and well below the average in science and mathematics when compared with schools which have a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals. Standards are good in Years 7-9 and pupils make at least steady progress. Progress accelerates as pupils move through the school.
3. The GCSE results at 16 show that the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C was well above the national average in 1999, as was the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more passes at grades A*-G. Based on the averages over the last three years, passes at A*-C were well above and passes at A*-G were above the national average.
4. When the results are analysed using the average point score per pupil, they show that pupils' results were well above the national average. When the results are compared over the last three years, both boys and girls achieved well above the national averages. The trend in improvement of the school's average total GCSE point score per pupil was above the national trend.
5. When the results are compared with those of schools with a similar free school meals entitlement of four per cent, the results show that pupil performance at GCSE was above average. When the results are compared with schools having a similar average point score in the National Curriculum tests at 14, they indicate that pupils' progress at GCSE was well above average.
6. Overall, the school is achieving standards in GCSE examinations above what might be predicted on the basis of National Curriculum tests at 14 and are good. Pupils make good progress in Years 10 and 11.
7. The school publishes internal targets for the percentage of passes in the A*-C and A*-G ranges and the average point score. These are realistic and determined by using a combination of the scores of tests undertaken on entry to school and National Curriculum tests at 14. The school regularly achieves above the targets. As the school grows more confident in the consistent value that it is adding, it will be in a position to set targets for further improvement which provide more challenge but are realistically achievable.
8. The 1999 GCSE results indicate that the percentage of pupils achieving A*-C grades was above the national average in almost every subject. The exception was in religious education, where the percentage of A*-C grades was below; but overall standards as reflected in the average point score per pupil are in line with national averages. The number of pupils taking religious education in 1999 was low and the performance of an individual pupil has a significant effect on overall percentages.
9. Nearly all the Year 11 cohort take combined science, mathematics and English language. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs therefore includes a very high proportion of pupils achieving success in these three core subjects.

10. The school operates a relatively open sixth form. Entry to it is not governed by strict academic requirements based on GCSE results but on more general personal qualities. As a result there is a wider range of ability than is the case in some sixth forms. The post-16 results indicate that the average A/AS level point score of candidates entered for two or more GCE A levels or AS equivalent was close to the national average for 1999 and over the past three years.
11. There has been a significant rise in standards since the previous inspection.
12. Across the school standards of speaking and listening are good. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their reading skills across the curriculum. Writing skills develop in accuracy and perception as they move through the school. Basic mathematical skills are developed and supported appropriately across subjects. All pupils take a combined award examination in science, ensuring a balanced science programme, and build their knowledge and understanding across the scientific disciplines. The majority of pupils have at least a competence in information and communication technology and are able to use word processing and spreadsheets, for example, to support their studies.
13. The school has undertaken considerable work in developing teachers' planning with the result that pupils with special educational needs make at least steady progress towards their targets. Higher attaining pupils are generally given appropriately demanding work to do in class and have access to further, more advanced work. They are also able to take GCSE examinations early. Pupils with statements of special educational needs are supported effectively.
14. There has been a steady increase in the percentage of pupils who feel competent and wish to pursue their studies in further education. In 1999 this was 80 per cent of the Year 11 cohort.
15. There are opportunities outside the academic framework for pupils to achieve success - for example, through the Duke of Edinburgh scheme. In addition, 25 pupils gained grades, (half of them achieving grades with merit or distinction) in playing instruments in the summer term 2000.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. Attitudes are very good. Pupils come to school prepared to work and participate fully in what the school has to offer. There is a very positive atmosphere throughout.
17. Pupils' behaviour is generally very good. There is an expectation in the school that pupils will behave well and most pupils respond to this, including some who have previously had problems at other schools. Behaviour is particularly good at lunch and breaktimes, when supervision is minimal and pupils are trusted to respect their surroundings. Pupils are attentive in assembly and move around the school efficiently between lessons. In the majority of lessons seen behaviour was a positive aid to the learning taking place and enabled teachers to start briskly and do what they intended. Concentration in classes is usually very good and pupils are well motivated, working hard and responsibly. In very few lessons was behaviour a little silly or distracting.
18. Normally the school's exclusion rate is low both for fixed term and for permanent exclusion. The rate for fixed term exclusion was inflated last year by an isolated incident in school.
19. Pupils have a strong sense of individual responsibility and this is reflected by the policy of open access to most classrooms during lunchtimes so that pupils can use them to socialise sensibly. They respect displays, equipment and belongings. The school council enables them to bring up matters of concern to their fellow pupils. Pupils in the sixth form showed by their demeanour and actions that they respond well to the judicious mix of supervision and academic freedom that the school has adopted.
20. Pupils were confident that if bullying occurred it would be dealt with swiftly and effectively. Pupils and parents reported that there is a secure and pleasant atmosphere in the school. Pupils with special needs are an important part of the school community and there is a positive feeling of recognition and support from pupils and teachers alike. The ethos for inclusion is very strong. Relationships between boys and girls are very good, characterised by a friendly camaraderie.

21. Relationships in the school are very good. Staff and pupils like and respect one another. Pupils and teachers have a mutually beneficial attitude and easy relations. Tutors and senior management, including the headmaster, have a literally open door through which many pupils pass during the course of the week. The strength of relationships has a positive effect on some of the pioneering work which the school is able to carry out in the field of support, advice and counselling. The quality of the relationships also means that people do more than their role requires. The site manager cares about the way the site is managed and the reception in the office is particularly welcoming; for example, a pupil, new to the school, upset over some matter, was supported with particular sensitivity by the office staff, as was an older student who had received a minor injury.
22. Attendance is in line with the national average. Unauthorised absence is below average.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

23. The quality of teaching across the school is good. It is very often very good and occasionally outstanding. It is never less than satisfactory. Good teaching is observed in all subjects. This consistent, good quality teaching ensures that pupils are motivated, make good progress and work with very high degrees of enthusiasm, interest and concentration. There has been a significant improvement in the overall quality of teaching since the last inspection.
24. Throughout the school, teachers have very good knowledge of their subjects and they have therefore the confidence to question effectively and use pupils' answers to support learning. In English, for example, the best teaching taps into pupils' interests to draw out what they know as well as to impart knowledge. In mathematics good questioning draws on pupils' previous experience in, for example, applying their knowledge of symmetry and isosceles triangles to the solution of right angled triangles, or in the sixth form, drawing on a wealth of students' knowledge to outline concepts used to study projectiles. In science, a Year 11 class, learning about the process of separating crude oil by fractionating, was given the opportunity not only to learn from pictures and text, but also to form a human working model of the separation process. In science at A level, teachers act as 'facilitators' in the learning process, presenting students with resource materials and practical equipment; for example, in three experiments on the interactions of force and current, teachers intervened only when required.
25. Teachers act as good role models across the school and show a good understanding of young people and how to relate their subject to them. Relationships throughout the school are very good and teachers create an effective, constructive working ethos and environment. Expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement are high and teachers use a good range of teaching strategies. Time is generally used well and pupils come to lessons prepared and ready to work.
26. Overall, the quality of planning is good. There have been very significant developments in the provision of special educational needs since the last inspection. Although continued professional development is required to support teachers in translating individual education plans into subject planning, teachers show a greater awareness of the needs of these pupils and ensure that work is matched appropriately to their needs to a greater extent than the previous report indicated. Where a learning support assistant works with an individual pupil there is effective co-operation. The school has also successfully undertaken work to raise teachers' awareness of higher attaining pupils. Planning now takes into account the full range of pupil ability to a far greater extent than indicated at the time of the previous inspection, with the result that pupils are generally given work which is appropriately demanding.
27. Literacy skills are supported well across subjects with pupils having good opportunities to develop and consolidate reading and research skills, writing for a range of purposes and discussion work. Pupils' listening skills across the school are good. Numeracy skills are supported and developed satisfactorily, although the numeracy policy is not yet fully implemented in all subjects. Information and communication technology skills are currently insufficiently developed across subjects. Members of staff have the specific skills, but current opportunities to use information and communication technology skills are limited, principally because of lack of access to equipment.
28. Teaching in English is good across the school. Class management is good and the quality of support for special educational needs pupils is also good. Teachers are patient and show a good understanding of the needs of young people. The vast majority of pupils at all key stages study sensibly, albeit often in crowded classrooms; most work well collaboratively or on their own. They

have positive attitudes to lessons and behave well. Through the literature they study they consider serious issues in life and present their ideas in a thoughtful fashion.

29. In mathematics the quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is very good and ensures that pupils make rapid progress within a topic and over time. Teaching of older pupils is good in mathematics. As a result pupils recall factual information quickly, they make logical deductions, explain their reasoning and postulate further ideas. Teachers carefully and unobtrusively ensure that all pupils are engaged in suitable activities throughout each lesson.
30. Overall, the quality of teaching is good in science. All members of staff in the department are enthusiastic about the subject. All lessons are planned well, giving pupils a variety of tasks, many of them practical activities. Pupils respond well and want to learn in science. They behave very well in lessons and without exception carry out practical activities safely, handling apparatus with care. In the very best lessons, pupils are challenged to think for themselves.
31. Teaching of art is good. Teachers show great enthusiasm in their work, and are skilled in classroom demonstrations and questioning techniques, setting high expectations of work and behaviour so that lessons are always challenging. The quality of learning is almost always good and frequently very good. Pupils feel special and consequently most are keen to get down to work and maintaining concentration for long periods of time, often in complete silence.
32. In business education the quality of teaching and learning at Key Stage 4 is good. It is satisfactory in the sixth form. Teachers have good subject knowledge and effectively promote pupils' interest in the topics being studied. Most lessons are planned well. Relationships are very good and pupils make good progress in most lessons. Learning is handicapped by the lack of books for use at home.
33. In design and technology, teaching at all key stages is good and sometimes very good. Teachers are knowledgeable and hardworking. Lessons are well planned and often delivered with enthusiasm. Much of the high standard of work is derived from the specialised skill of teachers, particularly at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. There is a positive learning atmosphere and teachers use a range of teaching methods to maintain pupils' interest. Explanations are clear but on occasions pupils are over-directed.
34. The quality of teaching in drama is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge; relationships with pupils are very good and the teaching effectively develops pupils' self-esteem, confidence and their ability and disciplines in using and developing their drama skills.
35. Geography teaching was good or very good in three quarters of lessons observed. Lessons are well informed, planned and enthusiastically delivered. As a result pupils are interested and work at a good pace. Clear aims, good questioning and constant reinforcement give pupils confidence.
36. History teaching is very good in all key stages, with some excellent features, which means that pupils in all key stages are able to make excellent rates of progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills. There is an excellent balance between imparting historical information to pupils and enabling them to develop as independent young historians.
37. Teaching information and communication technology is at least sound at Key Stage 3 and 4 lessons. At Key Stage 3 it is often good. The teachers are well qualified and have appropriate expectations. Pupils with higher information and communication technology capability could be given more encouragement to raise their overall standards. Sixth form students gain a comprehensive understanding of information and communication technology because of the wide-ranging expertise of staff. Pupils have a good attitude to the work so that the quality of learning very closely follows the quality of teaching. Learning is satisfactory in all Year 10 and 11 and sixth form lessons and is good in Key Stage 3. Learning would benefit from pupils using newer equipment comparable to that available in many of their homes
38. Overall, the quality of modern foreign language teaching across the school is good and pupils make good progress in their learning. Teachers are well qualified and talented. Lessons at both key stages and post-16 are well planned, with clear objectives, to include a variety of methods. Class management is good and pupils' behaviour creditable.
39. Music teaching overall is satisfactory, with some examples of good and very good teaching and learning in the GCSE examination courses and A level. Staff display good subject knowledge and

lessons are planned well despite difficulties with the accommodation, which impede the range of teaching styles. Pupils are encouraged to become independent learners. Teaching and learning would improve with more frequent and rigorous monitoring of written work.

40. The quality of teaching and learning in physical education is good. Some very good teaching was observed in A level physical education and some excellent teaching observed in dance. All teachers are experienced, knowledgeable specialists in a range of activities. They have high expectations, are good role models, committed and give generously of their time. Lessons are well planned and organised with a balance of activities. Management and organisation of the pupils is very good. Members of staff develop very positive relationships with all pupils, fostering trust and respect. Constant praise, encouragement and evaluative comment during the lessons give pupils the confidence to practise and improve their performance skills. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school and learning accelerates in the examination groups.
41. The quality of teaching of religious education at both key stages is always at least good and frequently very good. Preparation and planning are meticulous, enthusiasm pervades the lessons, pace and demands are sustained. Clear exposition coupled with judicious questioning and prompting makes pupils think. Lessons build on pupils' knowledge and experience, and appropriate strategies are employed to ensure that content and approaches are matched to pupils' needs.
42. Given that the quality of teaching and learning in the school is of a consistently good quality across the school, there are nevertheless three aspects which, if developed more fully, would enhance the quality of pupils' learning. There is very good practice available within departments in the school to act as exemplars in all three aspects.
43. The first is related to the consistency in setting and the quality of homework. Most subject departments set homework in accordance with school policy. There are, however, issues relating to the consistent setting of homework in accordance with the school's homework timetable. The quality of the homework being set was, however, variable. At its best, work was challenging and extended the learning in lessons; sometimes, however, it was finishing off work started in lessons. Parents in their written responses and pupils spoken to indicated that homework is not always set in a consistent fashion. The homework timetable was not always adhered to, with the result that multiple demands were sometimes being made on pupils on a given night.
44. The second aspect relates to the quality of marking, which does not always meet departmental or school policy. In the best practice pupils are clearly aware of what they have to do in order to improve their work. In these instances marking is not only supportive in broad terms but also indicates clearly targets for the individual pupil to achieve.
45. The third point relates closely to the above point and concerns the use of assessment information, not only in planning what needs to be taught to take a pupil to a higher level, but also involving the pupil in the process as part of the target setting procedures. This will help pupils have a clearer understanding of where they are and what they have to do in order to move to the next level or grade.
46. Finally, the school has difficulties with accommodation, which are not easy to resolve and impose limitations on teaching and pupils' and students' learning. Some teaching spaces are cramped and crowded. During the inspection they were hot and stuffy. The quality of the teaching space sometimes limit the range of teaching and learning styles and occasionally forces teachers to distinguish between practical and theoretical sessions rather than allowing the one to inform the other.

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

47. The school offers a good range of curricular opportunities for pupils, enhanced by very good extra-curricular provision.
48. Members of staff work hard to ensure that what they teach is relevant and interesting to the pupils and provides appropriate challenge to all of them. Learning is structured in a progressive way to ensure that pupils make good progress and achieve well. With the exception of provision of information and communication technology in some subjects and the control aspect of the subject, religious education in the sixth form and, in design and technology, the need to explore electronics, the school meets statutory requirements in providing balanced courses. The ethos of the school is inclusive; all pupils

have access to their full curricular entitlement. The concept of achieving according to 'personal best' is well established and in consequence there is a focus throughout the school on what pupils are able to do. The pupil community is generous to the success of others. The provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now sound. Pupils with special educational needs are included fully in the life of the school. Pupils are presented with a broad, rich curriculum, which provides considerable opportunities for them to achieve success. Higher attaining pupils are usually appropriately challenged. The arts are valued in the school, refreshingly, but not at the expense of other subjects. Pupils have the opportunity to study two languages from the start of school.

49. At Key Stage 4 pupils study a central core of subjects, which includes a balanced double science programme. Pupils also opt for additional subjects and the school organisation works hard to ensure that what is offered reflects pupils' choice. The time allocation for English is a restriction on the GCSE course given the study of two subjects. Time pressures also have an impact on the religious education course. Throughout the school the very good personal, social and health education programme makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development, ensuring that specific issues such as drugs and sex education are taught in a sensitive and informative manner. Residential experiences providing outdoor adventure activities, along with opportunities to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award programme, enhance this programme even further. Opportunities for work experience are effectively provided at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form and pupils and students value the range of careers and counselling services provided within the formal and informal curriculum. In addition, the quality of relationships of staff with pupils is such that much informal advice and help is asked for by the pupils and is freely given. The school is trialling some of the personal social and health education course elements as part of a certificated programme. Additional opportunities are provided for appropriate pupils through a personal skills course called 'ASDAN'.
50. The school has currently just introduced opportunities for the sixth form to increase their skills in information and communication technology, numeracy and literacy along with a range of A level and AS levels and is looking to widen the range of provision through alternative accredited courses.
51. There is a very rich range of extra-curricular activities and the school makes particularly good use of the local community and visitors to enrich the curriculum. There are good links with the partner primary schools, reflected, for example, in the close links established by the special educational needs co-ordinator and in the re-appraisal of the Key Stage 3 mathematics curriculum as a result of the National Numeracy Strategy in Key Stage 2.
52. Overall, the school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The provision for moral and social development is very good, for spiritual development it is satisfactory and for cultural development it is good. The aims of the school embrace high aspirations for the life of individuals and the community. These find clear expression throughout the life and work of the school. There is an explicit and positive ethos, which permeates the lessons, relationships and the many activities that go on.
53. The arrangements for spiritual development are satisfactory. The school does not meet the requirements for collective worship, although assemblies and tutorials are conducted in an orderly and thoughtful way. There are currently no themes or calendar of topics that can be used to overcome the considerable physical problems of holding larger assemblies. Assemblies do focus on moral and community issues and values. An assembly with senior pupils was an impressive occasion. Here, reflections on their own position and that of pupils in Tanzania, to whom the school had sent contributions, were uplifting and thought provoking.
54. The care the school exercises over individuals is particularly evident in Year 7, where it became quite evident that within a few days of the new school year's opening most pupils were known by name. This reflects the value that is placed upon each individual.
55. While there is no overt expression of the spiritual dimension, development is positively fostered through some lessons and a wide range of activities. Pupils participate in the Cheltenham Festival of Literature and there are poetry workshops. Dance is a particular strength of the school, and various concerts are mounted. These may be informal, or be a 'Gala' event, or take the form of a choral performance or carol concert. In English lessons pupils have the opportunity to reflect on human nature, through such novels as 'Animal Farm'. In a geography lesson there was a dramatic opportunity to reflect on the consequences of an earthquake. In music, pupils enjoyed some plainsong. In addition to this 'hidden' spiritual dimension, religious education makes a major

contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Here, there are substantial opportunities to consider the underlying meaning and significance of stories from major religions, illustrating how faith affects actions. Pupils reflect on what their own beliefs are and how these are formed. In religious education there is very good emphasis on personal reflection and searching for meaning. An atmosphere has been generated where pupils feel at ease when discussing personal and religious issues.

56. The provision for moral development is very good. The great majority of pupils follow well-understood codes of conduct. Members of staff provide especially good and effective role models. Through occasions such as form time and assemblies, pupils develop a clear understanding of right and wrong. The positive culture of self-discipline and reliability are evident in behaviour in corridors, the dining area and the school grounds. The respect with which they treat the school buildings and amenities is particularly evident in the way pupils use the Memorial Garden. Achievements in all areas of school life are encouraged, rewarded and celebrated. Moral concerns are dealt with in many subjects and throughout the personal social and health education programme. There is a clear emphasis in the sex education programme on attitudes and values, on a moral framework and the rights and responsibilities of others. Right and wrong are explored through English novels; observance of rules and fair play is fostered in physical education. The 'Young Enterprise' initiative in the sixth form emphasises moral approaches and decision-making.
57. Provision for social development is very good. There is a large range of extra-curricular activities. In the area of physical education the school has twice been awarded the prestigious 'Sports Mark' award. In addition to many examples of collaborative work in lessons, and in sporting activities, there are many rich examples of opportunities for social development through drama, dance and music. There is a wide variety of visits, workshops by professional artists, visits to plays, concerts, ballet, musicals, galleries and museums. The citizenship programme includes areas of study such as third world debt relief issues. Pupils are continually learning about taking responsibility, competition, fair play and personal discipline. Sixth-formers have links with local primary schools – for example, through a 'Young engineers club' and as community sports leaders. Opportunities for personal growth and social development are increased through extensive Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme provision. Personal and community awareness and identity are fostered through the regular publication of "The Pelican", a half-termly newsletter. The school supports a number of charities, both in this country and abroad. Support for charities can be by direct giving, through presenting a range of gifts collected by the school, and by events such as the sixth form charity ball. Recently this last named event was held in memory of a student.
58. The provision for cultural development is good. Many of the activities already described promote cultural development. Pupils widen their horizons and experience, celebrate their own culture, and explore new ones. Literature, drama, music, art, history and geography, and the personal social and health education programme all explore issues relating to British, western and other world cultures. Multi-cultural texts are used in English. In history, pupils gain insights into Islamic civilisation. In design and technology different sources are used for designing appliqué work. There is effective use of a wide range of artistic traditions, including studies of Indian, Egyptian and early Christian art. In religious education there is good exploration of the Christian tradition. In addition, the way in which beliefs and cultures are celebrated and affect life styles in other faiths is sensitively handled. Issues such as suffering are explored through gaining insights into the way in which various faith traditions approach such issues. The culture and achievement of the pupils and of the school are well celebrated. This can take the form of personal communication to parents about pupils' particular achievements, notable efforts and contributions. The achievements of pupils and students are given public recognition through, for example, award ceremonies celebrating 'national student of the year awards' at sixth form level. The regular production of the "The Pelican" provides an important medium through which news can be shared, achievements celebrated, and the potential to enhance parent, community and school relationships be fostered.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

59. The educational and personal support and guidance for pupils is very good. Parents praised the pastoral care which pupils receive and it underpins much of the way the school is able to be a tranquil yet at the same time lively place where pupils flourish. Teachers and staff know the pupils well and there are many informal and formal ways in which individual development is charted.

60. The system of tutors and heads of year is working well, with staff committed to addressing the particular problems and exigencies attached to each academic year, such as settling in during the course of Year 7 and dealing with coursework and deadlines in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. There is good careers advice and useful work experience in Years 10 and 12, which is incorporated into the curriculum. Students felt they receive good, supportive advice when applying to university. Pupils and students appreciate the school's counselling services.
61. Pupils' personal development is very well observed and supported. There is particular emphasis on bringing together and liaising with various outside health and care agencies in the confidential 'Time4U' clinic. These services are accessible in a pupil friendly atmosphere, and the ground-breaking work in integrating medical, psychiatric and counselling services has been recognised by other local authorities who visit to observe the model. The school nurse has been a lynchpin of this facility, providing a valuable bridge between school, pupils and families.
62. Child protection and health and safety procedures are clearly set out. The school is a safe and secure place. The school is good at working on issues of poor attendance and behaviour with individuals; regular consultation takes place with the education social worker who liaises with pupils and their families with some success.
63. Academic guidance is beginning to become more detailed, with a system to check on whether pupils are working according to their predicted potential. Time is given to tutorial staff to set targets with pupils so that they and their parents know what has been agreed. However, the quality of the information on which some of these targets are based is not yet sufficiently linked or informed by departmental assessment to be able to form a basis for a real analysis of where pupils need to direct their efforts.
64. At departmental level assessment is often not focused well enough for pupils to know in detail where they are in particular subjects, how they can improve, and how parents could support them. In history, however, the school already has a high quality model to which to refer. The excellent assessment arrangements in this department mean that pupils know exactly how they are progressing and what they can do to improve their work. This is reflected in very high results in the subject at all stages. Physical education procedures for assessment are also very good and provide useful detail for staff and pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

65. The school has an active and good partnership with its parents. The school has become very popular in the locality, and there has been a substantial increase in parents opting for the school, with a particularly marked increase in numbers of students in the sixth form.
66. There was a substantial return from the questionnaires issued before the inspection (434) and the vast majority of these were very positive on most aspects of the school's provision. In addition, several parents wrote extra comments on the back of their returns. The inspection took place at the beginning of the new academic year. A very significant number of returns pointed out that their children had only just started at the school. This accounts for the high percentage in the 'do not know' column.
67. There were three areas which caused some disagreement with the questionnaire statements. One was the quality of information which the school provides on progress and the curriculum. The second, closely related area was the links with parents. The third was to do with homework.
68. Most subjects set homework in accordance with school policy but it is not always consistently set. Parents find it difficult to monitor the homework when the homework timetable is not followed. Good examples of homework being set were seen. These extended the learning taking place in the lessons. Sometimes, however, the work set was finishing off work started in lessons, which consequently made fewer demands on higher attaining pupils. The school does work hard to publish and inform pupils and parents of the deadlines for submission of GCSE course work.
69. Parents are well involved with selection of options in Year 9 and with target-setting during the year, but these targets are sometimes too general to be very useful. Annual reports, although informative about attitudes and coverage of the curriculum, do not always chart progress in subjects in a sufficiently detailed way to enable parents to support their children's work. The school makes good efforts to involve parents. General information about the school calendar and events is well covered in the

school's lively newsletter, which actively involves pupils and students. Parents support the wide range of events and activities provided by the school, and some of them are actively involved with sporting events and coaching. The Friends Association raises substantial funds for the school and provides a dynamic forum for parents and staff.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

70. The quality of the headmaster's leadership is very good. He provides a clear direction for the development of the school and has established an ethos which values individuals and their contribution. Pupils and students, their development and achievement, are central concerns. He is sensitive to the pressures facing the school and has created a team of staff which shares his commitment to pupils and works hard to achieve the best for them. Standards in the school are good, as is the quality of teaching, and there is a strong commitment by all staff to improvement, reflected in the steady progress since the last inspection and rising standards in examinations. The headmaster has effectively retained, by his presence around the school and his influence, the core values of the school as it has expanded to its current size.
71. Although the school is not large, it has reached a critical size whereby informal procedures and personal style of leadership require underpinning by more rigorous self-evaluation procedures at departmental and school level. The clear aims and aspirations for the school need to be translated into a development planning cycle which draws on information gathered from whole-school evaluation. This should set out shared priorities to be tackled within a time frame with clearly defined responsibilities. Such an analysis of the path of the school's development should be seen as supporting the leadership and vision and the shared values of the school's development.
72. A similar management process needs to operate within departments. Leadership is often good at a personal level but is not underpinned by sufficiently rigorous evaluation or use of, for example, comparative assessment information. Change tends to operate incrementally rather than through a process of action planning which ensures the identified priorities are achieved within a given time-scale.
73. The school's senior management team operates as a central management group co-ordinating the work of the school. Each member carries significant departmental or faculty responsibilities. Recently they have been assimilated onto the leadership scale and their roles are in the process of being developed. The school was successful in achieving 'Investor in People' status in 1999 following earlier success in obtaining the award. Appraisal is currently a largely informal process. More formalised procedures regarding appraisal and the management of performance are in the process of being adopted by the governing body for implementation in 2001.
74. The day-to-day management of the school, primarily the responsibility of the deputy headteacher, is very good. The school operates smoothly. Overall, the management across the school is secure.
75. The special educational needs co-ordinator manages the department well, and there is a strong sense of teamwork with learning support assistants. There is effective partnership between learning support assistants and teaching staff. Extending this partnership approach to support pupils on the lower stages of the register, from within the school's budget, to support teaching staff would contribute significantly to the development of the school's special educational needs provision.
76. Overall, the governing body is effective. The governors bring to their role considerable personal and professional expertise. They also bring considerable commitment to and support for the school's development. They are acutely aware of their responsibilities as a corporate body and seek to ensure that they fulfil them appropriately and undertake training. Members of the governing body are sensitive to the distinction between governance and management; although some tension can exist over this issue, particularly when individual members feel that they have particular expertise which the school would find useful. The fact that the school's aims and priorities are currently not presented in a format which enables relevant governors to fulfil their monitoring role more effectively adds to this tension. Very good relations exist between the governing body and the headmaster, individually and corporately, and they clearly recognise the leadership qualities of the headmaster. Informal lines of communication are good but more formal communication, such as receiving information in good time, less so. The school's budget is monitored carefully and overall financial planning is good and allows for specific initiatives. Specific grants are used well. Best value principles are applied. Members are aware of the considerable strengths of the school and are very concerned about the implications,

particularly the expansion in numbers and the impact this might have on the school's overall ethos, of accommodation pressures.

77. The school was at the time of the inspection in the process of making significant investment in the information and communication technology facilities. Until this upgrading is complete, however, this aspect of resourcing will continue to be unsatisfactory and limit pupils' access to information and communication technology. Because of the upgrading and specific difficulties which accrued with building modifications, the library was out of use during the inspection and the books not on display.
78. The school accommodation marries very effectively the older part of the school with newer buildings in an attractive, well-maintained site. Nevertheless, the school has pressure on its teaching accommodation and the quality of learning and teaching is limited on the occasions where lessons take place in cramped conditions. The proposed building of the sports hall will provide some release of spaces in the school. Given the success of the school, the numbers within the sixth form are likely to grow and this will place additional pressures on specialist accommodation, particularly if alternatively accredited courses are to be considered.
79. Members of staff are well qualified and bring considerable subject expertise to their role. Induction procedures are good and teachers are well supported. The school was awarded 'Investors in People' in 1999 for the second time. Support staff across the school share and support the school's ethos and are very effective in the support they provide to the teaching staff.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

To build on the many existing strengths of the school and secure future improvement the governors, headmaster, and school staff should:

- Move from the use of the informal approaches possible when the school was smaller to the adoption of more formalised procedures for monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school to underpin the leadership and support school development and the school's self evaluation:

in particular the school should:

- establish rigorous self-evaluation procedures at departmental and school level undertaken by all staff;
 - establish a cycle of development using monitoring and evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses to inform planning;
 - translate the aims of the school into priorities for action planning at school and department level;
 - make greater use of comparative assessment information at departmental level. (paragraphs 63, 71, 72)
- Use marking and other assessment information even more effectively in the target setting procedures so that pupils:
 - have a clear understanding of where they are; and
 - know what they have to do in order to improve in a specific subject. (paragraphs 44 ,45)
 - Develop information and communication technology skills across the curriculum by:
 - improving access to computers and associated software throughout the curriculum;
 - developing assessment systems to monitor pupils' progress in information and communication technology. (paragraphs 105,118,125,142, 156, 173,184)

In addition there are minor issues relating to:

- consistency in setting homework (paragraphs 63,68)
- consistent information about pupil progress in reports to parents (paragraph 69)
- aspects of accommodation (paragraphs 78,88,105,117,126,132,174,191)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	154
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	30 approx.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	30	49	17	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons. The table does not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	739	100
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	31	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	11	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	83	1

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	7.8	School data	0.3
National comparative data	9.0	National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	68	68	136

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	38	44	43
	Girls	58	52	47
	Total	96	96	90
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	71	71	66
	National	63	62	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	41	44	30
	National	28	38	23

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	37	45	41
	Girls	58	53	51
	Total	95	98	92
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70	72	68
	National	64	64	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	38	43	32
	National	31	37	28

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	1999	50	76	126

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	31	48	49
	Girls	56	73	75
	Total	87	121	124
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	69	96	98
	National	46.6	90.9	95.8

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	48
	National	38.0

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	-
Black – African heritage	-
Black – other	2
Indian	2
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	-
Chinese	-
White	834
Any other minority ethnic group	-

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	-	-
Black – African heritage	-	-
Black – other	-	-
Indian	-	-
Pakistani	-	-
Bangladeshi	-	-
Chinese	-	-
White	28	-
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
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7– Y11

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	374

Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.3
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Average teaching group size: Y7– Y11

Key Stage 3	26.6
Key Stage 4	23.0

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	1,737,115
Total expenditure	1,721,450
Expenditure per pupil	2,193
Balance brought forward from previous year	37,481
Balance carried forward to next year	53,146

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	839
Number of questionnaires returned	434

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	31	56	8	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	35	51	5	1	8
Behaviour in the school is good.	21	59	6	3	12
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	51	14	4	11
The teaching is good.	25	61	4	0	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	21	46	19	5	9
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	42	44	8	2	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	44	46	4	0	6
The school works closely with parents.	21	47	17	6	9
The school is well led and managed.	32	51	4	2	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	53	5	2	10
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	48	9	3	16

Other issues raised by parents

- The inspection took place at the start of the academic year. A significant number of responses were from parents whose children had just started at the school and they therefore felt unable to comment on some of the questions. This accounts for the high percentage of response in the 'don't know' column.
- A number of parents raised specific points in letters to the team. There was no pattern in these comments. Sometimes they fell outside the remit of the inspection. Others raised points relating to individual concerns. All were considered and informed the team's approach but comments on individual cases are not possible.
- The inspection team supports the very positive views parents have of the school. Some pupils' annual reports would be improved with greater emphasis on information on progress and what the pupil needs to do in order to improve. There are inconsistencies in the setting of homework. The school works hard to inform parents of what is happening.

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

ENGLISH

80. Attainment in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 was well above the national average for the proportion of pupils gaining Level 5 and above, though below average in comparison with schools which have a similar free school meal eligibility. The percentage of pupils reaching Level 6 or above in 1999 was also well above the national average. Taking the four years 1996 to 1999 together, the performance of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 was close to the national average.
81. The attainment at grades A*-C of both boys and girls in GCSE English language and English literature in 1999 was significantly above the national average. Although girls performed better than boys, the difference was less than that for the nation as a whole. Attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 4 has risen steadily since the previous report in 1995. Attainment in GCSE English in 1999 was higher than that in mathematics and science. Attainment in A level GCE English Literature in 1999 was good.
82. By the end of Key Stage 3 the vast majority of pupils talk with clarity and confidence; for example, pupils talk with animation on the use of language in poetry. By the end of Key Stage 4, the vast majority of pupils at all levels of attainment communicate their thoughts clearly and listen to the ideas or instructions of others with understanding. Pupils learn confidence in speaking on topics of concern to them. For example, they draw on their knowledge of Stalin from history lessons when discussing the misuse of power in 'Animal Farm'; this, in turn leads them to reflect upon modern examples of the manipulation of people's minds. They make appropriate use of standard English in more formal situations - for example, when speaking to visitors to the school. Students at A level in English and media studies offer well-argued discussion, demonstrating maturity of thought.
83. Emphasis is given to the regular practice of silent reading at Key Stage 3 when pupils receive a library induction course. The 'Passport to Reading' scheme raises the status of reading with awards being presented at assemblies. Higher attainers at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 pay careful attention to the exact meanings of their texts; the vast majority of average attainers at both levels are proficient in their reading. Lower attainers and those with special educational needs understand key ideas but rely on support to enable them to gain sufficient understanding of texts. Vocabulary exercises, with new words appearing in meaningful contexts, are used effectively. A level students show increasingly sensitive responses to texts, which, in turn, nourish creative thought.
84. At Key Stage 3 classes are taught in mixed ability groups. By the end of Key Stage 3, higher attaining pupils write imaginatively and with accuracy on a variety of subjects; middle attainers write with clarity on subjects they know well but a minority make errors in spelling and punctuation; lower attaining pupils have difficulty with extended writing; those with special needs write with reasonable clarity on carefully defined and straightforward tasks. Handwriting is legible and generally in a cursive hand. At the end of Key Stage 4, where classes are taught within attainment bands, higher attainers produce clear and well-arranged writing on a range of topics. Middle attainers organise their thoughts well. Lower attainers experience difficulty when attempting to express wider concepts in their writing; those with special educational needs and who are well supported in class write with reasonable clarity on carefully prepared subjects. In response to the previous report, pupils at all levels of attainment and at all stages now make wider use of the word processor during lessons (and often at home) to improve standards in their writing. A level students write with clarity and precision and the best produce work that is a pleasure to read. One sixth-form student was awarded runners-up prize at a local young writer's competition in Malvern. Interesting wall displays of pupils' writing enhance classroom atmosphere - for example, there is a display of pupils' humorously outrageous advertisements.
85. In response to the previous report, the rate of attainment of the less well-motivated pupils is carefully monitored and, apart from an occasional minor relapse, pupils' rates of attainment in learning are good. At Key Stage 3 the vast majority of pupils at all levels, including those with special educational needs, become more confident in their speaking, more competent in their reading and more accurate in their writing. At Key Stage 4 the vast majority of pupils at all levels build upon the foundations formed earlier and learning accelerates. A level and AS level candidates studying English Literature and media studies enjoy the challenging nature of their courses and make confident progress with their studies.

86. The vast majority of pupils at all key stages study sensibly, often in crowded classrooms; most work well collaboratively or on their own. They have positive attitudes to lessons. The vast majority behave very well, are supportive of one another in class and, with only a rare exception, take appropriate notice of teachers' instructions and advice. They are capable of thoughtful reflection on serious issues in life while presenting ideas in a balanced way. They take good care of textbooks and are careful in the presentation of their coursework folders.
87. Teaching is a strength in the department. Three quarters of the teaching observed was good or very good; some was excellent and some was satisfactory - none was unsatisfactory. The best teaching taps in to pupils' interests to draw out what pupils know as well as to impart knowledge. Teachers' class management is good and their relationship with their pupils is harmonious. The quality of learning support for pupils with special educational needs is good. The teachers show an ever-patient understanding of young people. They serve as very good role models. They create a constructive ethos for learning. For example, sixth form students explored the nature of 'irony' and its use in 'Pride and Prejudice' and were then set a writing task to develop their understanding of Jane Austen's methods and humour and a Year 9 class examined 'clichés' prior to working at fresh and original similes. Homework extends classroom tasks. Marking is supportive and informative across the school. However, pupils' work at Key Stage 3 is not continuously assessed in terms of the National Curriculum levels prior to the end of the key stage. It is difficult, therefore, for pupils to assess precisely the levels of their attainment as they progress through Key Stage 3 and to know what they have to do in order to improve.
88. The department (as was mentioned in the previous report) lacks a full quota of specialist rooms; movement of resources between scattered teaching bases is time-consuming. Moreover, the allocation of teaching time at Key Stage 4 is inadequate for full and satisfactory coverage of the two separate courses in English language and English literature.
89. The department is well managed and efficiently organised. Effective departmental documents clearly outline principles of good practice. Responsibilities are shared among members of the department, creating a team atmosphere; members of staff are keenly aware of the importance of their subject and its contribution to many aspects of their pupils' lives. Morale is high. In response to the previous report the range of learning in English has been extended; texts are selected which appeal to both boys and girls. Pupils' use of information and communication technology in their English studies has been extended, although gaining access to information and communication technology facilities is often difficult. At GCSE, the choice of topics for coursework has been increased, giving greater emphasis to the study of culturally diverse texts; interesting multi-cultural issues are also tackled at Key Stage 3. English is a popular subject; the department attracts sufficient candidates to a variety of post-16 A and AS courses in English literature and English language & literature, and the newly introduced course in media studies.
90. The English department organises theatre and film visits, the Young Writer's Circle, the poetry week, drama productions, events in conjunction with the expressive arts and the publication of the Hanley Pelican News Letter. This successful department makes an important contribution to the moral, social and cultural development of pupils - and, therefore, to the healthy spirit of this school.
91. In response to the previous report the school introduced, in 1999, a literacy strategy, which is improving pupils' use of English across all subjects. Each department now has a literacy representative. Each departmental handbook contains a literacy statement, which outlines strategies for upgrading literacy skills. The progress of Year 7 pupils with low levels of literacy is being monitored in every subject. This policy is to be extended throughout Key Stage 3. Attainment in speaking is good throughout the school. Pupils are clear in their speaking and listen with understanding to the ideas of others. They address adult visitors to the school with courtesy and with clarity, and in standard English. Standards in reading are good across most of the curriculum and, in response to the previous report, pupils are encouraged to read for information and research in most subject areas. However, at the time of this inspection the library was being refurbished and was temporarily out of use. Writing standards are varied - good in some subjects - for example, in religious instruction and history and English - but lower in some others.

MATHEMATICS

92. Attainment in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 1999 exceeded the national average for pupils reaching Level 5 and above. Twenty-one per cent of pupils achieved Level 7 in comparison with 14 per cent nationally. Performance at 14, for boys and for girls, returned to well above the

national average following a dip the previous year. Standards achieved at 14 show sound progress when compared with pupils' attainment before joining the school but they are well below those of pupils in schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

93. In lessons during years 7 – 9, the majority of pupils were observed working at above the typical standard for their age. Higher attaining pupils at the beginning of Year 9 can solve applications of Pythagoras with competence. Towards the end of Year 9, higher attaining pupils' work shows standards in line with the highest Key Stage 3 levels, in the use of trigonometry in right-angled triangles, accurate manipulation of algebraic fractions and factorising quadratic expressions. Substantial work by pupils of average attainment shows an understanding of standard form, solution of equations by trial and improvement, algebraic solution of simultaneous equations and use and construction of pie charts. There is an emphasis on number work and algebra up to level 5 for lower attaining pupils, together with appropriate development of spatial concepts including symmetry and angles. There is less evidence in pupils' work of the application of mathematics. Even during their first week at the school, however, Year 7 pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, were observed discussing the concepts of correlation. Others were developing their understanding of probability to explain the results of their data collection from dice-throwing experiments.
94. The proportion of pupils achieving Grade C and above in 1999 GCSE examinations was 59 per cent. This standard, similar to that of the previous two years, is significantly above the national average of 43 per cent. The achievement of the higher attaining pupils in mathematics places the school in the top quarter of schools recording similar National Curriculum results at 14 and for overall attainment in mathematics at the national average in comparison with similar schools. These data may be interpreted to indicate that in contrast to higher attainers, progress by lower attaining pupils during Key Stage 4 is less than those in similar schools. Pupils' attainment in mathematics is relatively poorer than that in their other GCSE subjects.
95. The work of higher attaining pupils in Year 11 reflects the standard of their GCSE examination (Intermediate Level), which they sat at the end of Year 10. Some 40 per cent achieved grades B and C, with the majority reaching the higher grade. This bodes extremely well for Higher Level results at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2001. Pupils carefully explain coursework on deducing general rules using higher-level algebra. Pupils of average attainment manipulate linear equations and their graphs, time graphs and two-way tables. Their understanding of number extends to equivalent fractions, decimal equivalents and use of negative numbers and percentages but they are not familiar with contextual applications using their own data. Carefully presented coursework - for example 'The Tower of Hanoi' - shows logical deduction in line with GCSE grade C standard. Lower attaining pupils' work emphasises number, including work on time, percentages and fractions.
96. Virtually half of the A level mathematics students in the three years 1997 to 1999 achieved A and B grades and three out of the four candidates for the examination in further mathematics achieved this level. The year 2000 results were not of this standard but five candidates achieved grades in the range B to E at A level. Work observed in the first mechanics lesson for Year 12 reflected the high standards achieved by the students in their GCSE examinations. Four out of five Year 13 students embarking on a statistics module have achieved an AS level pass in mathematics and are working at a generally satisfactory standard for A level. The work of two students observed in a Year 13 further mathematics lesson extending understanding and application of the binomial series was in line with the demands of the higher A level grades.
97. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is very good indeed; they arrive punctually and become fully engaged in mathematical activity from the outset. Enthusiasm for learning is evident among pupils of all ages and abilities. Younger pupils are eager to understand and interpret statistical data which they collect about themselves. Year 11 pupils demonstrate that they relish the challenge of Higher Level GCSE mathematics. Pupils are very interested in the work they are doing, there is a pleasant atmosphere in all lessons, and good work habits are displayed in listening, oral and written work. Pupils are equally attentive to explanations of new concepts as well as to the reasons for errors. During one of the first lessons of the new school year a pupil was heard saying, "Oh, I know what I am doing now, my brain is gradually ticking over!" This sincere expression reflected pupils' typical commitment to their work.
98. Pupils' relationships with each other, teachers and other adults in the classroom are very mature in all respects, ensuring a very purposeful learning environment. Typically, while pupils freely express opinions and give reasons for their answers, all other members of the class listen attentively. 'Number fans' have recently been introduced, enabling all pupils in Key Stage 3 classes to respond

independently and simultaneously to mental questioning. This works very effectively; pupils of all levels of attainment were observed silently and enthusiastically displaying their answers, with no attempt to turn to see those of others. In contrast to the readiness with which they are prepared for their lessons, a significant proportion of pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 do not bring their calculators to school.

99. The overall standard of mathematics teaching is very good for pupils in Years 7-9 and good for older pupils. Teaching was at least satisfactory in every individual lesson observed. The teaching results in a rapid development of pupils' understanding within individual lessons and of a particular topic over time. In Year 7 lessons teachers develop pupils' concepts of, for example, probability, by drawing on data collection work and outlining the objectives of determining the chance of obtaining a winning throw in a dice game. Good questioning techniques by teachers lead pupils to draw on a wide range of previous learning; Year 9 pupils respond very well to questioning, applying their knowledge of symmetry and isosceles triangles to the solution of right-angled triangles. Lower attaining Key Stage 4 pupils, including those with special educational needs, are able to explain why the zeros are used in the working for long multiplication. Sixth form teaching was observed drawing on a wealth of students' knowledge to outline concepts used to study projectiles. Pupils are very responsive to the well-judged question and answering techniques used in lessons. They recall factual information quickly, they make logical deductions, lucidly explain reasoning and postulate further ideas. A significant exception among higher attainers at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is slow and often inaccurate recall of basic multiplication tables.
100. Teaching in the majority of lessons is typified by teachers' very good command of mathematics, relating concepts to pupils' experience. They consistently use appropriate mathematical terminology and clearly explain techniques so that pupils' knowledge and understanding are extended at pace. Pre-prepared overhead projector slides are used to advantage from Year 7 (scatter diagrams) to Year 13 (binomial series). Setting of simple practical work is an integral part of teaching; Year 11 pupils gain a clearer understanding of properties of the angles of a polygon by cutting out shapes. In oral work pupils correctly use the wide range of mathematical vocabulary which has been emphasised, and set out their calculations with care following the teacher's example. Teachers carefully and unobtrusively ensure that all pupils are engaged in suitable activities throughout each lesson. In Year 7 there is a very wide range of ability within the classes of 30 pupils. Some pupils with special educational needs were observed to be well supported by the teacher; one pupil was helped with note taking and in another class a teacher partnered a pupil for practical work. In Years 8 and 9 there is a good relationship between pupils with a statement of special educational needs and support assistants. One supported Year 9 pupil obviously enjoyed mathematics and was experiencing success in multiplying numbers. For a number of years the most able pupils have experienced success in GCSE examinations taken at the end of Year 10. It is proposed that some of the current Year 10 will attempt the Higher Level papers with grades A* and A as targets. One pupil currently in Year 11 is following an A level course, having achieved an A* at GCSE at the end of Year 9.
101. Substantial homework for higher attaining pupils is an integral part of their learning. For sixth form students, questions to be attempted and a schedule of those to be handed in for marking is distributed at the beginning of each module. Homework is, however, not generally identifiable in the books of Key Stage 3 pupils. It is often to finish an exercise begun in class rather than challenging extension work. Marking is a weakness at Key Stage 3; the work of most pupils is infrequently marked by a teacher. Where it is, impression marking and grading for overall quality and presentation are carefully recorded by the teacher. There is very little guidance or constructive comment to help pupils written by teachers in exercise books. Although Key Stage 3 pupils mark much of their own work, significant sections, particularly those involving diagrams - for example, graphs and symmetry exercises - are left unmarked. The department's policy of recording all end of chapter test marks in a database is adhered to by all teachers. Marking is not used to inform teaching on a day-to-day basis. The work of older pupils is appropriately marked and teachers maintain records. Higher attaining pupils at Key Stage 4 and sixth form students are particularly aware of targets achieved and what is needed for success in those they are working towards. At Key Stage 3, teachers outline shorter-term objectives and refer to standards required as an integral part of teaching but there is no formal tracking of pupils' progress towards specific targets.
102. Mathematics teaching satisfies the National Curriculum requirements for all pupils. Although all attainment targets are covered, there is insufficient use and application of mathematics to substantial relatively complex problems. Appropriate emphasis according to pupils' attainment is given to numeracy, particularly at Key Stage 3 in the mental work at the beginning of most lessons. No use is currently being made of information technology in mathematics lessons. Teachers are very well

prepared for all lessons, so that the impact of the use of small non-specialist rooms for large classes is minimised. The teaching and learning of the lowest attaining pupils, particularly those in Year 9, would be enriched if they experienced mathematics in the conducive atmosphere of one of the specialist rooms.

103. The seven teachers of mathematics are all competent, experienced and enthusiastic. The leadership provided by the head of department is very effective in providing detailed schemes of work and management of resources, including provision of differentiated texts and extension materials. Clearer direction is required to ensure robust marking of Key Stage 3 work. Materials used for mental arithmetic need careful trialling and criteria should be determined to measure the impact of single gender teaching in Year 8. Half-termly departmental meetings always include a report from the department special needs representative but are too infrequent to include discussions about teaching methods, target setting and monitoring standards against national benchmarks. In contrast there is good liaison with primary schools, which has resulted in modifications to the Year 7 scheme of work. At the first of the new fortnightly curriculum development meetings, teachers enthusiastically and profitably discussed teaching methods, worksheets and extension materials. The teacher recently appointed second in department is responsible for directing this initiative and minuting meetings.
104. A numeracy policy recently written by the head of mathematics and revised after consultation with the science department is not in general use. Some departmental handbooks include a section about numeracy. The strong emphasis on basic skills in mathematics lessons at Key Stage 3 ensures that pupils of all levels of attainment can use calculators, have measuring skills and can represent data with simple statistical diagrams. Pupils show good spatial skills in design and technology and in art: Key Stage 3 pupils use perspective; Year 10 textiles pupils calculate enlargement when working with patterns. In geography, pupils can measure line and angle in scale and compass work and can use coordinates. There is considerable emphasis for Key Stage 3 pupils in information technology on the use of spreadsheets to determine averages and percentages. In science the applications range from line graphs, lines of best fit and the prediction of further values at Key Stage 3, to complex calculations and substitution in A level work. Year 11 business studies pupils use graphs and numeracy with competence. Pupils' competence in numeracy overall is adequate to support the curricular requirements of a wide range of subjects.
105. At the last inspection weaknesses included the lack of information technology and the use of inappropriate accommodation for some classes. This is still the situation. There is still very little monitoring and observation of colleagues' lessons by the head of department. Since 1995 there has been significant improvement in basic numeracy and algebra and presentation of work is now excellent. With the exception of marking, teaching is a strength. A good range of learning resources is now in place and well used. Overall, good progress is being made in the mathematics department; the team has the potential and commitment to continue to raise standards.

SCIENCE

106. At Key Stage 3, the attainment of pupils in National Curriculum tests has been above the national average for the three years up to 1999, with no consistent pattern or trend, girls overall attaining slightly better than boys. In 1999 the proportion of pupils attaining Level 5 or above was above the national average compared to all schools and well above for those attaining Level 6 and above. The teacher-assessed levels for 1999 followed closely those attained in the tests and the unvalidated test results for 2000 indicate slight improvement over the previous year. Key Stage 3 results for 1999 are, however, well below those achieved by similar schools.
107. At GCSE all pupils take double award science and in 1999 results were significantly above the national average, with 57 per cent attaining the higher A*-C grades. Girls' attainment of the higher grades was better than boys', but neither gender performed as well in science as in other subjects. The data for 2000 were unvalidated at the time of the inspection and no national average for 2000 was available. The results, while being below the 1999 national average for the subject and the prediction by the department, were better than the results achieved two years earlier in the National Curriculum tests would indicate, with boys attaining more of the higher A*-C grades than girls.
108. For the three years up to and including 1999, the attainment in all three science A level subjects has been consistently above national results but, with a small entry each year, comparisons are difficult.

109. The inspection found that pupils are attaining levels above national expectations. This closely matches the end-of-key-stage results, particularly in Key Stages 4 and in the sixth form. At Key Stage 3 attainment is in line with national average and was higher in three out of ten lessons observed. Higher attainment was more evident in Year 9 than in Years 7 and 8. This can be explained by the fact that, because it was very early in the academic year, work, often based on the pupils' primary experience, was being consolidated. For example, Year 8 pupils used Key Stage 2 work on pushing and pulling forces to develop ideas of resultant forces. At Key Stage 4, in half the lessons observed attainment was above that expected nationally, with only one lesson where it was below. In the sixth form, attainment of students in all three sciences is consistently above course expectations.
110. Almost all pupils are achieving satisfactorily or better in science, making progress and learning as they work through the different key stages. However, there is some variation within different groups of pupils; for example, pupils with special educational needs achieve more than expected when resources are specifically matched to their needs or they have the support of a learning assistant who can help with writing and keep the pupils concentrating on their tasks.
111. At Key Stage 3, where consolidation of Key Stage 2 work and ideas were being developed, achievement was satisfactory in the early years but better as pupils reach Year 9. Achievement above that expected was seen in Year 9 lower attaining pupils, who were able to identify and name types of joints from x-rays. In both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, many pupils are achieving above expectations. The department and the school have done much analysis of pupils' prior attainment and have set targets for achievement, particularly in public examinations. Any evidence of underachievement was with higher attaining pupils, especially in mixed ability classes, where occasionally they are not presented with sufficiently challenging tasks or with development or extension work.
112. The standard of teaching is a strength of the department and no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. In three quarters of all lessons the teaching was good or better, with the very best teaching overall in the sixth form. At Key Stage 3, in almost all lessons teaching was good or very good and at Key Stage 4, half the lessons were good or better. All members of staff in the department are enthusiastic about the subject and have very good subject knowledge, which allows them to question pupils' understanding and consolidate learning in a variety of ways. For example, a Year 11 class learning about the process of separating crude oil by fractionating were given the opportunity not only to learn from pictures and text but also form a human working model of the separation process. At A level, teachers act as 'facilitators' in the learning process, presenting students with resource materials and practical equipment such as in three experiments on the effect of force and current, only intervening when required.
113. All lessons are planned well, giving pupils a variety of tasks, many of them practical activities. An efficient team of technicians very ably supports members of staff.
114. Pupils respond well and want to learn. They behave very well in lessons and, without exception, carry out practical activities safely, handling apparatus with care. Those with special needs are helped to learn when supported by additional staff or are given resources matched to their needs, such as large print sheets for pupils with visual impairment. In the very best lessons, teachers set and maintain a brisk pace and give pupils tasks which challenge them to think for themselves, such as when preparing explanations of the application of electrostatics to the everyday processes of photocopying, paint-spraying and dust-extraction. Another feature of good lessons is that pupils are given opportunities to improve their literacy skills of speaking by group work and reporting and develop scientific language with the use of key words displayed or on help sheets. Pupils generally present their work well, although there is some evidence of untidy work and diagrams in all years and at all attainment levels.
115. Homework set is designed to build on or consolidate the work covered in the lesson. It may contain a variety of tasks at different levels. For example, Year 8 were given questions on food and diet in which every pupil could have access to some of the work according to their ability. Pupils of different attainment levels also produce homework in different depth, such as when describing the scientific principles of how to put out fires. While all work seen was marked regularly and mostly follows the department marking policy, there is still much scope for sharpening the focus of marking and this is one area for future development. This will help pupils know why mistakes are made and more importantly what they need to do to improve.

116. The few weaknesses seen in teaching occurred when higher attaining pupils were not given tasks to challenge them and make them think for themselves such as copying notes, or when questioning was general and not directed to individuals. In addition, some lessons lack the rigour of others and here pupils' learning rate is not so marked. Taken as a whole, the teaching profile has improved since the last inspection and reflects the commitment to improvement evident in the department. To build on the considerable good practice seen, a more formal system needs to be set up to monitor teaching and learning. Good practice can be shared and will give the opportunity to evaluate methods and resources for new courses but also to develop tasks matched to the needs of every pupil.
117. Several of the laboratories are too small for large groups of pupils and this rather restricts the teaching methods that staff can employ. The limited space also has a direct effect on the rate of learning and pace of the lesson by some larger groups of pupils as they often have to wait to collect or use equipment and this slows down the lesson.
118. The department is well led by an experienced subject co-ordinator who heads a team of committed teachers who are mutually supportive. Departmental planning and budget forecasts cover at least one year but this needs developing to include criteria for success, time scales and staff responsibilities. One area that has shown little improvement since that last inspection is in the use of information technology as a tool to enhance science teaching. The department makes some use of the very limited resources at its disposal. Most staff teachers have sufficient knowledge and a definite willingness to improve the opportunities for pupils to use all aspects of information and communication technology in science lessons. The major development with information and communication technology has been in the A level courses but in the other key stages there is little evidence, either in exercise books or in lessons, of information technology being used as a tool to aid or support learning. In this respect the department does not satisfy the requirements of the National Curriculum.

ART

119. Since the last inspection report the quality of art teaching has improved considerably. Examination results are well above national averages at GCSE level. Pupils enjoy art, as can be seen in the higher than average numbers of pupils choosing to take art at GCSE level and the growing number of sixth formers enrolling for A level courses.
120. Attainment in the sixth form, in A level examinations, remains broadly in line with national levels. Many students begin to develop an individual style in their work and show high levels of skill, particularly in drawing and painting. The quality of one student's figure painting was certainly in line with foundation art college levels. Many show clear influences from other artists, reflecting their art knowledge. Some of the work, however, lacks individuality and fails to express the personality of its creator. The A level group continues to grow in size each year and with it the imaginative responses to assignments.
121. GCSE results have improved since the last inspection, peaking in 1999 with 82 per cent of the cohort gaining A*-C scores, 20 per cent higher than national average. Although results in 2000 dipped to 75 per cent, attainment at this key stage still remains well above national levels. The proportion of the year group choosing to take art at GCSE is also above national levels, usually by some 10 per cent. Traditionally in the school the boys have done as well as the girls in this subject. Since 1998, however, there has been a growing gap between the girls achieving the higher grades and the boys.
122. By the end of Year 11, many pupils become very skilled in drawing and painting techniques and some have already begun to develop their individuality. They understand the requirements of the examination and can successfully select and modify their work. All increase their knowledge of art history, in particular that of Surrealism and Expressionism, but most have little insight into the particular movements or the artists involved in them, beyond being able to recognise examples of their work. A minority of pupils remain over-reliant on their teachers, failing to fully extend their own skills in research and analysis.
123. By the end of Year 9, attainment is usually in line with national standards, although in over half the lessons observed it was slightly above. Most pupils have acquired skills in a variety of two-dimensional and three-dimensional work, a good understanding of the key elements in art, such as line, texture, or colour, and some knowledge of art history, such as that related to Egyptian, Asian and native-American artistic traditions.
124. Teaching across the school is good. In lessons observed it was always at least satisfactory and frequently good and very good. Teachers show great enthusiasm in their work, and are skilled in

classroom demonstrations and questioning techniques, setting high expectations of work and behaviour. Lessons are always challenging and well paced, with timed activities punctuated by sessions of support and evaluation. Programmes of study are regularly updated to keep them fresh; for example, work last term included a topic on the Millennium Dome. The quality of learning is almost always good and frequently very good. Pupils feel special and consequently most are keen to get down to work and maintaining concentration for long periods of time, often in complete silence. Their attitude and behaviour in class are always satisfactory and frequently very good. Teachers also have a good knowledge of gifted pupils and those with special needs and spend time with individuals to ensure that tasks are appropriately adapted to meet their specific needs. Some issues, however, still remain to be addressed. Individual lesson plans are not directly linked to the National Curriculum, nor are specific objectives identified, so that activities sometimes lack focus. The absence of regularly set homework or helpful comments on marked work, also constitute missed opportunities to further support learning.

125. The art curriculum meets statutory requirements and is supported by a good programme of extra-curricular activities. The department, under new leadership since the last inspection, has clear vision, supported by considerable teaching expertise. Departmental planning, however, is not detailed enough to ensure rigour and continuity. Marking, assessment and target setting procedures to maximise pupils' progress require greater rigour. The lack of information and communication technology in programmes of study, commented upon in the last report, has still not been addressed.
126. Accommodation is good, although the lack of storage space restricts the scale of the work that can be undertaken. Displays of artwork are of a high quality and a positive feature in many areas of the school.

BUSINESS STUDIES

127. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C in the 1999 GCSE examination was above the national average, with girls achieving higher standards than boys. Boys' attainment, however, was significantly higher than for boys nationally. Pupils' results were below those in most other subjects, but were an improvement on 1998 and higher than in 2000. In the 1999 A level examination the students' achievements were above the national average and higher than those in 2000. Girls have maintained standards equal to the national average in recent years but boys' results show a falling trend at A level in the last 3 years.
128. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that pupils' attainment at Key Stage 4 is in line with that expected nationally, though a significant minority is above. Most pupils are achieving appropriate standards. They have knowledge of business terms such as 'capital' and 'sole trader', and gifted and talented pupils are able to apply theoretical understanding in a business context. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on business needs for production such pupils were able to discuss the impact of advertising on product demand and price. Written work is well structured and many show research and computing skills in GCSE coursework assignments. Many are competent in numerical applications, using data and graphs to illustrate and respond to tasks. Most pupils, however, make insufficient use of computers in class and the theoretical aspects of study are not well linked to the real world context.
129. Attainment at GCE A level is broadly at the level expected nationally, with a minority attaining at the higher levels. Most students acquire knowledge of business principles and are competent in applying numerical applications in topics. Year 13 students, for example, are able to undertake network analysis to show business cash flow and time use in identifying ways to improve efficiency of production. Written work is detailed, structured, and well supported by graphs and charts. Gifted and talented students provide detailed analysis in assignments, with good use of examples. In many cases, however, students make insufficient use of case studies in written work and computer applications are under-used.
130. Teaching and learning at Key Stage 4 are good and in the sixth form they are satisfactory, though some is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge; they give clear explanations and this promotes pupils' interest in topics. Good lesson planning is a feature of most lessons. Teachers draw on pupils' earlier learning to assess and consolidate understanding. Class discussion in a Year 10 lesson, for example, built on pupils' prior knowledge of business terms and organisation and extended learning through studies of the merits of different business structures. On some occasions, however, too few opportunities are given for individual and group work, pupils are not fully engaged and progress slows. Teachers enjoy very good relationships with pupils. Discipline is sound and learning proceeds smoothly, enabling good progress to be made in most lessons. Homework is well used at Key Stage 4 to extend pupils' learning but opportunities for varied experience are reduced owing to

the unavailability of books to use at home. Learning tasks set are generally common for pupils of different attainment; extension work is often available but lower attaining pupils do experience difficulty, written answers are brief and often confused and this reduces progress. The use of assessment to monitor pupils' progress is weak and does not lead to the setting of targets for improvement. Teachers make good use of assessed work in the sixth form to inform about individual strengths and weaknesses but do not extend learning through inter-student discussion on the merits of assignments. Teachers set appropriate standards and provide opportunities for initiative and self-reliance. Students' attitudes to their studies are good. They listen attentively to explanations and contribute to discussion and this leads to effective progress being made.

131. The school provides good opportunities to study the subject at GCSE and GCE levels and the curriculum is appropriately broad and relevant to pupils' needs. There are established links with the business community, such as with banking, but they are insufficiently developed to make a full contribution to learning. There is little use of computers to further learning in the subject. This is recognised and current departmental planning seeks to develop curricular opportunities.
132. The newly appointed head of department recognises the potential of the department and the developments needing to be addressed. The writing of schemes of work at Key Stage 4 and for the sixth form is a priority, along with sound developmental planning. The contribution of the subject to pupils' literacy and numeracy development is not identified and fully supporting whole-school policy. The shortage of text books at Key Stage 4 reduces pupils' opportunities for learning, and the deficiencies in accommodation limit the range of teaching and learning methods that can be employed.
133. The subject is popular throughout the school. Academic results are good but there is potential for improvement. The department is ready for new challenges and under new leadership improvements are beginning to emerge.
134. There was no report on business studies at the last inspection.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

135. GCSE results, taken overall, are well above the national average, with 78 per cent of candidates gaining A*-C grades in 1999 against a national figure of 49 per cent. This was a considerable improvement on the previous year and represents a rising trend. The figures for 2000, while a little lower, are still well above the likely national average. The good overall figure disguises a variation in performance between the components of the subject. Textiles, food technology and graphic products each produce very high results, while results in resistant materials have fluctuated considerably. With the exception of 1999, when lower achieving pupils were entered for a non-GCSE Certificate of Competence, resistant materials results have been well below the national figure. Pupils achieve well in technology subjects in comparison with their performance in many of their GCSE entries. The small numbers of students entering for A level examinations in design and technology have usually achieved results in the upper grade range.
136. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is at the national expectation for pupils aged fourteen. A limited amount of practical work was seen in progress owing to the early timing of the inspection, but the evidence from previously completed work indicates that pupils reach a good standard of practical skill and that they are able to use their skills to produce good quality practical results. Pupils in a Year 8 graphics lesson, for example, were able to use drawing instruments in a confident and competent manner to produce accurate preparation work for their 'pop-up' project. Pupils can give good oral answers to questions and have good background knowledge from which to draw. For example, a pupil in a Year 7 resistant materials group not only knew the term 'photosynthesis' but could explain a little of how it worked. Many other good examples of pupils' use of appropriate technical vocabulary were seen during the inspection. Pupils' folders indicate that design projects are carefully structured and well supported by appropriate worksheets. Pupils' responses to a project are occasionally restricted to the confines of the worksheet and achievement is greater when pupils are given the opportunity to extend their work by greater personal input.
137. Attainment at the end of Year 11 is above what is nationally expected of pupils aged 16, and, in some cases, well above. Many pupils are able to build upon positive Key Stage 3 experiences to produce design work of good quality. They are able to use a range of sources to research their projects, including use of the Internet and CD-Rom. Much of this research is undertaken on home computers, since access to appropriate hardware is limited during lesson time. Higher achieving pupils use

computer presentation techniques to enhance their folders, word process text and represent data. With the exception of pupils on the specialist graphics course, some hand-produced graphics and text are disappointing. Pupils of all abilities can write extended evaluations of their work and apply research and analysis techniques. Standards of literacy are high and pupils can write fluently to explain their choice of project, draw up a specification and identify consumer needs. In a Year 11 food lesson, boys and girls contributed equally well to the discussion of systems and production methods.

138. Attainment in the sixth form is good. Students are generally confident about their work, make notes in an independent way and engage in mature discussion.
139. Teaching at all key stages is good and sometimes very good. Teachers are knowledgeable and hardworking. Lessons are well planned and often delivered with enthusiasm. As a result of the overall good teaching, pupils in Years 7-9 make good progress. By the end of Year 9 pupils are beginning to acquire the independent working skills necessary to work through a design project successfully. During lessons most pupils gain a greater understanding of the knowledge base and the working procedures of the subject area. Effective support ensures pupils with special needs make good progress. A pupil in a Year 9 food technology lesson, for example, was well supported by a learning assistant and was able to compile a useful vocabulary list of words suitable for describing food tasting. Teacher assessments at the end of the Key Stage are not yet refined enough to provide a reliable standard against which to measure progress.
140. The specialised skill of teachers ensures that progress throughout Years 10 and 11 and at sixth form level is good and pupils achieve high standards of work. Skills of personal organisation and independent learning develop rapidly as pupils take on more responsibility for the progress of their own work. Good examples were seen of this in food and textiles folders. In Year 11 textiles, for example, pupils engaged in a variety of tasks for GCSE projects were able to use the knowledge of quality control methods discussed in the early part of the lesson to explain how they could be incorporated into their work. Practical skills develop alongside design skills. Many textiles projects are made with care and modelling skills in graphics are often done to a high standard. Teachers use an appropriate range of teaching methods and vary activities to maintain pace and interest. A Year 10 textiles lesson, for example, contained a good balance between teacher-led, paired, individual and practical work. Pupils' interest was maintained throughout and the progress of six special needs pupils matched that of the rest of the group. Explanations and class demonstrations are clear and concise so that pupils move on to practical activity with a clear idea of what is expected of them. Occasionally, the learning situation is too teacher dominated.
141. Teachers have established good working relationships with pupils and have made great efforts to know them all by name. Pupils respond well to this and the learning atmosphere is predominantly positive and pupils' attitudes to the subject are good. Pupils enjoy work in technology. Behaviour is good and pupils are generally polite and considerate. They co-operate well when asked to work together. For example, pupils in a Year 10 food technology lesson worked in groups to identify the consumer needs of a particular target-group, summarise their findings and report orally to the whole group. All pupils contributed constructively to the exercise.
142. Leadership and management of the department are good. The department operates in traditional materials based areas, with effective co-ordination provided by the head of department, who has established good teamwork and common working procedures. Teachers willingly undertake in-service training and possess the skills needed to teach the statutory curriculum. Limited resources and curricular time have prevented the development of any work in electronics and it will be important to initiate more discussion to establish how these elements of the programmes of study can be included. Some progress has been made towards the introduction of computer-aided design and manufacture but this is not yet fully integrated into project work. New machines have been ordered for resistant materials and textiles, which will help to alleviate the situation. Accommodation is limited. Improvements have been made to the food technology area and space increased in textiles, but space is still at a premium. With the exception of information and communication technology, resources and funding are adequate to support present requirements but it will be necessary to discuss the level of capital investment needed to extend the curriculum. Accommodation and resources are managed well. The use of data to set departmental and pupils' targets will become an increasingly important factor in improving standards. The monitoring of teaching and learning, both by the head of department and by senior management, does not take place regularly and needs to be carried out more rigorously if it is to be an effective strategy for improvement. Assessment procedures now used in Year 7 should enable pupils to have a clearer picture of the National Curriculum level they are working at and what they have to do to make progress. The department makes a good contribution to

the moral, social and cultural development of pupils through a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular activities, but opportunities are missed to promote spiritual values through technology work. Contact with parents and the community is beneficial to pupils. Parents particularly appreciated the efforts to explain GCSE coursework at a departmental open evening.

143. The department has made a positive response to the last inspection and has improved GCSE results, refurbished the food technology area, improved training for its technicians and has made improvements to its procedures for assessing pupils' work.

DRAMA

144. Only a small sample of drama lessons was seen. Standards are good across the school. Pupils' results at GCSE in 1999 were above the national average in the percentage of pupils gaining an A*-C.
145. The quality of teaching is good. Although sharing common values, the team of staff teaching the subject bring to it particular interests and strengths, particularly at sixth form level. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Relationships with pupils and students are very good; there is a friendly easiness that does not slip into familiarity. Pupils are engaged and interested in the subject, and work well together; they are able, for example, to work as a group with concentration on a particular task relating to their group project. Throughout the school they steadily acquire the necessary drama and personal disciplines to interpret or create a theatrical or dramatic piece.
146. Leadership of the department is good. There is a detailed scheme of work which ensures that there is progression in the work. The subject makes a significant contribution to the school's provision for pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development through the work in lessons and in its extra-curricular contributions.

GEOGRAPHY

147. In 1999, 80 per cent of candidates obtained A*-C grades at GCSE, well above the national average of 53 per cent and well above the levels achieved in previous years, which were just above and in line with the national averages. Provisional A*-C grades for 2000 give a figure of 58.5 per cent. This suggests that the 1999 results are the result of an exceptional cohort. The provisional figures represent a steady improvement on those before 1999.
148. In 1998 the proportions of boys and girls gaining A*-C grades were similar but for the last two years, girls' grades have been approximately 10 per cent better than boys'. However, relative subject performance figures, incorporating national data, show that boys are performing better than girls in comparison with other subjects they take. At GCSE, almost all pupils have obtained A*-G grades in the last three years.
149. A level results over the last four years, from an entry of between eight and eleven students, have been erratic. Only in 1998 did A-B grades, at 50%, surpass the national average. In 1998 and 2000 the A-E scores were above the national average.
150. Although in recent years GCSE results have been in line with or above the national average, there is concern over the limited number of candidates attaining the highest grades. This requires a review of departmental strategies in such areas as coursework, pupil recruitment and the curriculum.
151. In Years 7-9 attainment is satisfactory or good in all lessons seen. Pupils have acquired basic geographical skills by the end of Year 7. Use of number is good and pupils are adept at constructing graphs of all types. In Year 7 there are good examples of tabulation in settlement studies. Pupils in Years 7-9 are able to follow up simple hypotheses, seen in work on conservation in National Parks in Year 9 and questioning whether coastlines should be conserved and in enquiry work on Mappleton in Year 7. The volume of written work is good. Note-taking and completion of worksheets is satisfactory but despite some good writing on earthquakes and volcanoes and ecotourism in Years 8 and 9, overall development of extended and imaginative writing is slow. Suitably chosen materials allow lower attainers and the more able to reach their potential. There is no evidence for the use of information and communication technology in Key Stage 3.
152. In Years 10 and 11 attainment was satisfactory or better in all lessons seen and in the sixth form attainment was good. Standards of written work improve steadily and there are examples of well-

structured investigations in course and project work in which students show that they can hypothesise, gather data, analyse and reach conclusions. This is clearly demonstrated in projects comparing Worcester and a comparative study of two local rivers. In these studies there are many examples of students' ability and willingness to use statistical and modelling methods, such as Spearman Rank Correlation, Theoretical Reilly Spheres and Cailleux roundness index. There is also a much greater use of information and communication technology than in Key Stage 3. Much of it is created at home.

153. The work of girls is better presented than that of boys but overall there is little obvious difference in attainment.
154. Teaching observed was never less than satisfactory; in three quarters of lessons it was good or very good. Lessons are well informed, planned and enthusiastically delivered. As a result pupils are interested and work at a good pace. Clear aims, good questioning and constant reinforcement give pupils confidence. Pupils are very involved and as a result levels of understanding steadily rise. Expectation of pupils in the great majority of lessons is high: pupils are expected to think about their responses and this was clearly seen in sixth form lessons, where an independence of thought is encouraged. The use of a good technical vocabulary is promoted across all years and can be seen in Year 7 exercises using a Dictionary for Settlement. Teachers use the resources they have well and also a variety of techniques, seen to good advantage in a Year 9 lesson in which the teacher used a combination of books, television, video and music to help pupils imagine and put into words the experience of being in an earthquake. Unfortunately, teaching and learning are inhibited by lack of audiovisual and computer hardware in classrooms. The effectiveness of the teaching is reflected in the progress made by pupils at all levels, through the increasing use of suitably adapted materials, both commercial and home produced.
155. Behaviour is good. Pupils and students enjoy being in the lessons, where they perform well and co-operatively. They are not cowed but are sensible to the needs of good order. Pupils are friendly and willing to talk, they respect one another and their teachers and are able to ask for and take advice. A sympathetic and humorous atmosphere prevails in the department. However, the lack of a unified subject-specific area has an adverse affect on the use of resources.
156. Since the last inspection there have been improvements. Then, pupils achieved standards 'at least comparable to national expectation with many achieving better'. Now, 50 per cent of pupils are attaining above the national average and 50 per cent are in line with it, from the evidence of lessons seen. Then, the highest grades at GCSE were below the national average and now the A*-C grades are above. At the last inspection learning was 'at least sound', now it is good in three quarters of lessons. There were some criticisms in the last report concerning fieldwork, differentiation, schemes of work and the lack of information and communication technology. These have been largely addressed although efforts made by the department to train in and prepare software for the delivery of information and communication technology have been nullified by the lack of access to computers.
157. In order for the department to continue to improve, urgent attention should be given to some aspects of management, including a regular system of monitoring teaching and learning. The last report did not mention assessment. At present there is no comprehensive system of long-term assessment, based on national curriculum levels. As a result there is insufficient target setting and review and pupils do not have a clear idea of their progress in Years 7-9.

HISTORY

158. Standards in history at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, based on assessments made by teachers, were well above what is achieved nationally by 14 year olds. In the GCSE examinations in 1999, 96 per cent of the candidates gained grades A*-C. These figures are significantly above the national average of 60 per cent. They also represent the best history results in the county. The results at A level are equally encouraging. Although it is not possible to make significant statistical comparisons because of the small number of students opting for the subject, three out of the four candidates gained A-B grades in 1999.
159. At the end of Year 9, standards in work seen during the inspection are well above the expected level for 14 year olds; standards at the end of Year 11 and at the end of the sixth form were also well above average. These high standards bear witness to teachers' efforts and high expectations. Pupils have knowledge and understanding of a wide range of historical facts, situations and characters. They are aware that historical situations have both causes and effects. Skills in analysing reasons for, and results of, events and changes are well above average. Pupils are learning to use historical evidence

critically and are able to arrive at substantiated conclusions. The vast majority of pupils communicate this knowledge and understanding effectively in writing and their written work generally does justice to their ideas. These skills provide an excellent foundation for the GCSE. Lower attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, who find written expression difficult, have a good understanding of key historical events and can explain them orally. A good range of structured tasks helps them to develop their understanding in writing.

160. Written work by pupils in Years 10 and 11 is well constructed, with good use of specialist vocabulary. All understand that it is important to use written evidence in carefully structured ways in order to meet the requirements of the examination syllabus. Pupils carry out research for their coursework and they use this effectively to plan and write their answers. They build effectively on existing skills and are acquiring sufficient depth of knowledge and understanding to produce a very good range of written responses.
161. In the sixth form, progression from GCSE to A level is smoothly achieved. By the age of 18, students are producing good quality work. Their written work shows a very good response to the consistently high expectations of their teacher. Oral contributions are knowledgeable and confident.
162. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. Most are clearly interested in the subject. History is a popular choice at GCSE and is becoming increasingly popular at A level. Behaviour in lessons is very good and pupils derive great benefit from the positive relationships that exist among themselves and with their teachers. They work well together in pairs and small groups and are supportive of one another. This means that the atmosphere in lessons is very positive and successful learning can take place. Sixth form students are articulate, purposeful and confident.
163. The quality of teaching is very good in all key stages, with some excellent features. There are many significant strengths in the teaching that have a very positive impact on both pupils' attitudes and the quality of their learning. This means that pupils in all key stages are enabled to make excellent rates of progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills. A detailed analysis of the GCSE examination results, comparing them with attainment at the end of Year 9, suggests that pupils' progress is substantial and consistent. Teachers' increasing use of a wide range of tasks matched to pupils' abilities enables similar levels of progress to be made both by pupils with special educational needs and by higher attaining pupils. Teachers show a high level of planning and preparation for lessons. Lessons have clear objectives, which support pupils' learning so that they are clear about what they have to learn. There is an excellent balance between imparting historical information to pupils and enabling them to develop as independent young historians. Teachers use an excellent range of strategies to develop key examination skills. This was evident, for example, in a Year 11 lesson where pupils were given a variety of answers to mark using a GCSE mark scheme and then discussed why particular marks were awarded and how answers could be 'upgraded' to a higher level. They thus gained an excellent understanding of how knowledge and understanding should be used in order to gain the highest grades at GCSE. Abstract historical concepts are taught in a very effective manner, which, for example, enables pupils, to develop a sustained understanding of what historians mean by concepts such as success and failure. Teachers are enthusiastic and understand how to motivate pupils by discussing, for example, how much even the most everyday Viking artefact can teach the historian. Very good use is made of the local environment to enhance pupils' understanding, evident, for example, in a Year 8 lesson where pupils visited the local church. There is scope to improve the consistency with which teachers provide pupils with opportunities to improve their skills in developing more detailed verbal responses in discussion and debate.
164. Excellent use is made of the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress in order to clarify what they need to do in order to improve and to help teachers monitor standards in the department. Comments written in exercise books are detailed and subject-specific, helping pupils to understand what they have done well and what they need to work harder on. Pupils in Key Stage 3 are aware of what levels they have reached; similarly pupils who are in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form have target grades to work towards and are enabled to reach their highest potential. The examination board has kept a sample of A level internal marking as an example of good practice.
165. Management of the department is excellent, with a clear commitment to the highest standards. Teachers work well as a team and have effective strategies to share good practice. Departmental documentation is comprehensive and useful. The departmental development plan gives clear direction. Display of pupils' work and other materials helps to create a positive learning ethos.

Effective use is made of resources, although the overhead projector is rather old and very difficult to focus. No issues were identified in the last inspection. Pupils at Hanley Castle are provided with a rich diet of historical experience.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

166. Most students are moderately competent in their use of information and communication technology but the poor provision of suitable equipment is detrimental to their progress in school. A network has been installed, finance has been allocated and comprehensive plans have been made to update the computers.
167. Key Stage 3 teacher assessed results in information and communication technology have declined over the last 4 years from above the national average to well below the national average. Increasingly, fewer pupils have gained the higher National Curriculum levels, as was also noted at the time of the last inspection. The most recent GCSE results in information technology were well above the national average but fewer pupils were entered than in previous years. A significant number of A and A* grades were obtained by this small group. GCSE results for 1999 show that girls gained above average results but boys gained below average results when compared with the national averages. Key Stage 4 and post 16 students continue to increase their information and communication technology experience through a variety of courses so that a high proportion are reaching a standard close to what is nationally expected. However, there are very few examples of excellence.
168. Observation lessons in Years 7-9 and analysis of pupils' folders shows that pupils are near the national expectation when compared with schools nationally. In Years 7 and 8, about one third of pupils show above average capability in their use of spreadsheets and use of 'Microsoft Publisher', with very few failing to achieve that. Most are able to place text and clip art on the same page to create information pamphlets. Pupils' ability when writing extended explanations is above expectations and most know how to use a spell check. Competence in numeracy is assumed when pupils insert formulae to add, subtract, multiply and divide. In Year 9 most pupils are close to fulfilling the national expectation.
169. Analysis of work in Years 10 and 11 shows attainment to be below expectations overall, although pupils have gained some competence in the use of desktop publishing programmes previously and while following the 'ASDAN' course. There is little evidence of above average attainment and the work of many pupils is very similar to that completed in Year 8. Students post 16 use information and communication technology as part of a 'Key Skills' course or in 'Office Applications' or 'General Studies'. They are able to select appropriate software for specific tasks.
170. Teaching during Key Stage 3 lessons is sound and often good. The teachers are well qualified and have a good understanding of the applications of information and communication technology. The massive development in complexity of computing hardware and software is well described. The use of the Internet as a means of obtaining information is recognised as presenting social and moral opportunities and problems. Expectations are generally appropriate but pupils with a higher information and communication technology capability could be given more encouragement to raise overall standards. Lesson plans need to be more carefully considered and firmly based on the schemes of work for each year. Pupils with special needs are given extra help by the teacher and occasionally by a classroom assistant when necessary. Relationships between teacher and pupils are good. Control is effective. An assessment scheme is needed so that day-to-day monitoring can take place in addition to the planned longer-term tests. Key Stage 4 teaching is sound. Where the end of the lesson required a precise target, pace was generally good and pupils had a sense of achievement. Pupils sometimes choose to use home computers to assist the presentation of their work. The wide range of teaching experience enables post 16 students to gain a comprehensive understanding of information and communication technology.
171. The pupils have a good attitude to the work and the quality of learning very closely follows the quality of teaching. Learning was sound or better in all lessons observed and is good in some Key Stage 3 lessons. Pupils follow instructions well, so that all can achieve the objectives. They maintain concentration and respond well to a challenge. However, all pupils would benefit from further incentives such as the use of National Curriculum levels. Learning is satisfactory in all Key Stage 4 and post 16 lessons but would benefit from newer equipment comparable to that available in many of their homes. Relationships and behaviour are good or very good although a few Year 10 pupils were slow to co-operate. The students respect the school and its equipment. They would welcome more frequent display of their work on walls and notice boards.

172. A basic scheme of work is available for Key Stage 3, which includes the necessary requirements of the National Curriculum. However, as reported at the time of the last inspection, the control element is not being taught, so statutory requirements are not being met in either key stage. It is a feature of the school that all students have the opportunity to develop basic information and communication technology skills through the 'ASDAN' course during Key Stage 4, although GCSE information and communication technology is no longer available as an option. Pupils of all abilities have equality of access in all years but the most able pupils are given too few opportunities to develop their full potential. Monitoring of day-to-day attainment and progress is not being addressed in either the timetabled information and communication technology or the cross-curricular input. It is important that this should be put in place so that pupils, teachers and parents have a clear idea of the progress achieved and to guide curricular planning. Reporting to parents needs to be more precisely qualified and quantified. Although curricular opportunities have been identified for information and communication technology to assist in the teaching of other subjects, there is a need for the work to be included on a regular basis, by each class in each year. The inspection team identified English, design and technology, history and science as subjects where a moderate amount of information and communication technology is being used to help learning in the subject. English and history regularly encourage work to be word processed, design and technology uses computers for design drawing and science uses sensors and data logging, particularly in the sixth form. Other subjects, such as modern foreign languages, have used information and communication technology to assist learning but have no record of progress. There is therefore little evidence of cross-curricular progress since the last inspection.
173. The information and communication technology teacher representatives from many departments have identified the following as being serious problems: access to computing facilities, suitability of computer hardware and software, time to include information and communication technology work in their lessons, knowledge of suitable applications, information on pupils' capabilities in information and communication technology. Many departments now have the necessary knowledge and enthusiasm but the hardware problems remain. In addition, the present accommodation is insufficient to provide facilities for whole classes to use specific subject software. Although the school has a web site, the pupils do not have access to the Internet and e-mail facilities until the library is re-established. However, they are encouraged to search for information on the Internet using home facilities where possible.
174. A new co-ordinator who is well qualified and experienced has been appointed. At this early stage (second week of term) much of the information needed by the co-ordinator is not easily available. The plans for the development of information and communication technology have been made clear but continued support is needed by the senior management team if implementation is to be completed quickly. It is necessary for each aspect of the department to be re-evaluated in order to maximise learning and avoid inefficient repetition. These aspects include the accommodation, the resources, the schemes of work and the assessment and reporting process. The technician is very competent and keeps in touch with developments in information and communication technology. He is able to provide the essential continuity owing to his excellent knowledge of the planning process and the installed network.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

175. In both French and German, the attainment of most pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is at least in line with national expectations, with many pupils exceeding it. Progress in both languages across Key Stage 3 is good.
176. In the 1999 GCSE examinations the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades was above the national average in French and in German. In French at Key Stage 4 there has been a noticeable increase in the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades in 1998 and 1999. In 1998 45 per cent of pupils achieved this threshold and in 1999 61 per cent. Similarly, in German there has been an increase in top grades. In 1998 these were 53 per cent and in 1999, 60 per cent. The results of the 1999 examinations saw a high number of A* and A grades. Sixth form students are also successful and all gain A-C grades in 'A' Level Examinations in 1998 and 1999.
177. Overall, the quality of modern foreign language teaching across the school is good. In Years 7-9 teaching is good and was never less than satisfactory in the lessons observed. In all lessons at Key

Stage 4 teaching was least satisfactory and well over half was good or better. In the sixth form it was good or better. This good quality teaching ensures that pupils make good progress across the school.

178. An enthusiastic, well-qualified and talented team of linguists teaches the curriculum. Teaching is lively and the pace is brisk. Teachers are role models in the use of the foreign language. Pupils make good use of attractive wall displays to refer to commands and questions in the particular language they are studying. Appropriate homework is set regularly. However, marking is inconsistent, with some work being thoroughly marked, showing detailed comments, and other pieces of work remaining unmarked or showing just notional ticks. Careful monitoring of marking is needed, with procedures established for the use of assessment data in target setting for pupils and the department. Lessons at both key stages and in the sixth form were well planned, with clear objectives, and used a variety of teaching approaches. Class management is good and pupils' behaviour is creditable as a result.
179. For both languages pupils are encouraged to use the language they are studying in lessons. Oral work is lively, and pupils have good accents and intonation. The more able pupils are able to control the foreign language and expand on minimal answers. Tasks are suitably demanding. Listening skills developed enable pupils to understand key phrases and more complex sentences. There are opportunities for independent and extended reading through use of readers and the sixth form students are encouraged to use Authentik, read novels and to make use of authentic materials. Written skills vary according to ability.
180. Pupils are well motivated, attentive and co-operative. Behaviour is good. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good. A lively round the class activity in a Year 7 German lesson required alertness and concentration. The pace was brisk and pupils were visibly delighted at their success. Pair work and group work are well established in both languages and at all levels. Grammar came alive in a lower ability Year 8 French class. There was constant reinforcement by the teacher and pupils concentrated, putting maximum effort into building sentences up, using prepositions.
181. Motivation and progress continue into Years 10 and 11 and there is a significant number of pupils who are studying both languages. An outstanding Year 11 lesson in German involved group work, with individuals describing various stages of the German exchange trip. This was a valuable experience and the pupils were 'buzzing' with excitement. They checked and re-checked phrases with their peers and teacher, eager to reach perfection. The lesson ran like clockwork!
182. In the sixth form, despite small numbers there is good interaction between students and the teacher. The teachers have high expectations and they encourage the students to want to succeed. High standards are being met.
183. The department is well managed and the documentation clear and practical. The arrangements for the subject meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. Members of staff meet regularly and share ideas. Foreign trips and exchanges are well established and their impact on the subject is evident. The teaching rooms are attractive and well equipped. Most lessons are taught in the specialist rooms. Curricular time is good and well used.
184. The previous inspection raised a number of issues such as the need for more frequent access to reading materials, use of a greater range of teaching skills and a more accurate match of work to pupils' ability. There has been steady progress in addressing the issues. For example, new setting arrangements have been introduced, and a wide range of methods and teaching strategies are being used effectively, although the curriculum remains very text-book based, readers have been introduced to allow for independent reading. Access to information and communication technology remains an issue.

MUSIC

185. Statutory teacher assessment of standards in music at pupils at the end of Year 9 indicates an improving trend. In 1999, 88 per cent of Year 9 were said to be working at the level expected or going beyond it, against a national average of 67 per cent. This trend has not been maintained in 2000. The attainment of boys is below that of girls, but boys still do better than the national average for their age group. Results in GCSE examinations are consistently well above the national average. In 1999 81 per cent gained a grade in the A*-C range against national average 66 per cent. Results are also above the national average for pupils gaining a grade in the A*-G range (100 per cent against 97 per cent). However, in 2000 the number of pupils obtaining A*-C grades has fallen. There are more girls than boys studying music and girls gain better results than boys. Numbers of A level students are

small but results during the last three years have improved, with 100 per cent achieving grades A–E. This has been maintained in 2000, with an increased number studying music.

186. The samples of work available for inspection, from all key stages were limited. At Key Stage 3 they consisted of a small number of recordings and mark sheets. No written work was available. From the work seen, pupils are achieving in line with expectations and there are examples of achievements above expectations. Recordings show that pupils can perform fluently with awareness of phrasing, rhythm and appropriate use of instrumentation within ensembles. This was evident in the performances by Year 7 pupils. In lessons pupils discuss their work clearly and show evidence of musical knowledge and understanding. For example, Year 9 pupils demonstrated setting words to music using simple melodic patterns. The scheme of work indicates that National Curriculum requirements are fulfilled but the emphasis tends to be towards practical work at the expense of listening and singing. There is no evidence of any significant practical use of information and communication technology to support learning.
187. Standards in work seen in lessons at Key Stage 4 were above average. Those who choose to study music generally all play instruments and their instrumental competence aids their musical skills. They can identify aurally features of music new to them and become emotionally involved with their compositions, expressing pride, for example, in hearing their string quartet composition performed by professional players. Achievement for GCSE pupils would improve if clearer assessment and monitoring criteria were applied, and improved technological resources, such as computers, were available to support composition.
188. Students studying for A level examinations are reaching or exceeding the level expected and some compositions show evidence of imaginative and stylistic understanding. Opportunities for historical research are limited as is their access to computers.
189. At all key stages learning is well supported by good relationships. Improved facilities and resources would contribute to higher achievements by pupils. Many pupils participate and achieve good results in instrumental examinations. These are well organised and supported financially by the school. Pupils take part in a variety of extra-curricular activities, including the school choir, led and accompanied by senior students. The standard of musicianship within ensembles is very good as is the understanding of rehearsal techniques. There are strong musical links with the local community and opportunities are taken to encourage visiting professional performers.
190. Teaching overall is generally satisfactory with some examples of good and very good teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. Staff display good subject knowledge and lessons are well planned. For example, Year 10 pupils were introduced to the concept of motif and how to develop a motif within a composition using examples to illustrate the concepts drawn from Beethoven and Berlioz. Aims and objectives are communicated to pupils and examination candidates are aware of course requirements. Pupils are encouraged to be independent learners. For example, as an examination group worked on their notation the teacher challenged pupils and encouraged self-criticism and reflection. Teaching and learning would improve with more frequent and rigorous monitoring of written work. Homework is not set at Key Stage 3 appropriate use would enable musical skills and concepts to be reinforced.
191. Some aspects of music have improved since the last inspection. The department is under new management and there has not been time to implement a clear vision and strategy for development. The teaching styles are more varied, but at times restricted by the accommodation, which in the main classroom is cramped. Storage facilities are limited. Provision for computer-aided learning in music has not developed adequately and pupils rely on home equipment in order to complete their work. There is still a lack of non-European instruments and resources, limiting pupils' experience of music in other cultures. The issue of underachievement at Key Stage 3 has been addressed. Pupils at Key Stage 4 would be helped to improve by more detailed marking and by the setting of individual targets, as has already been done for A level students. Pupils no longer spend much of their lessons listening attentively to the teacher or to music and are encouraged to discuss and give musical opinions about their work.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

192. Attainment in lessons observed by the end of both key stages is in line with national expectations with a number of pupils achieving above. GCSE results in physical education over time are well above national averages. The numbers of pupils opting to take this subject are high and increasing. GCSE,

AS and A level dance examinations have been introduced since the last inspection. GCSE dance results are currently being reviewed. AS and A level dance results are well above average. A level physical education results are consistently above average with a number of pupils achieving well above average. This is a popular examination subject and numbers taking the exam each year are also increasing.

193. In Years 7-9 lessons were observed in athletics, dance, games and gymnastics and in most instances it was the first lesson or near the beginning of a course. In athletic activities, pupils demonstrate good levels of physical fitness and have a good knowledge and understanding of the principles of stamina, strength and flexibility and can describe the muscle groups, using the correct technical language. In gymnastics, by the end of Year 9 pupils are able to plan and perform a floor sequence with increasing control and fluency. However, their performance lacks body tension and quality and their movement vocabulary is limited. In Year 7 dance lessons, pupils' standards are good or very good. Pupils have a good vocabulary of movement and are able to compose, perform and appreciate dance phrases and ideas with increasing control, demonstrating a good sense of balance. Pupils respond well to the rhythm and phrasing of the music, dancing with expressive qualities.
194. By the end of Year 11 pupils increase their knowledge, understanding and performance skills in a range of activities. In games they demonstrate a range of sending and receiving skills with increased control and accuracy and have a sound knowledge and understanding of the rules and positional play. In the examination groups in basketball, pupils demonstrate the ability to anticipate moves and to change pace and direction in order to outwit their opponents. In A level physical education and dance, pupils are able to observe and analyse their acquisition of skills in movement with confidence, using appropriate technical language.
195. Pupils have very positive attitudes to their work. They are well behaved, willing to be physically active and their participation rate is very high. Pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy their lessons. As pupils progress through the school they develop good social and co-operative skills. They are sensitive to one another's needs and support one another in a range of situations. The ethos in physical education is inclusive and ensures that pupils with special educational needs participate in lessons. In both key stages pupils are aware of their own and others' safety and use the specialist facilities with due care and attention.
196. Teaching and learning are good: some very good teaching was observed in A level physical education and some excellent teaching observed in dance. In one dance lesson, for example, there was a good balance of progressively challenging activities and pupils were clearly motivated by the enthusiasm and knowledge of the teacher. All teachers are experienced, knowledgeable specialists in a range of activities. They have high expectations of standards of behaviour, clothing, participation and attitudes to work; they are good role models, committed and give generously of their time. Lessons are well planned and organised with a balance of activities. In a basketball session there were clear instructions and demonstrations to develop pupils' observation and performance technique. As a result pupils not only developed their expertise in the game but also developed their confidence to analyse each other's performance using appropriate technical language. The teaching of literacy skills is satisfactory in both key stages and good in the examination groups. Management and organisation of the pupils are very good. Members of staff develop very positive relationships with all pupils, fostering trust and respect. Constant praise, encouragement and evaluative feedback during the lessons give pupils the confidence to practise and improve their performance skills. For example, at the end of an endurance test the levels were recorded and individual achievement celebrated and shared with the class. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school and learning accelerates in the examination groups.
197. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is broad and balanced. Outdoor and adventurous activities in Year 8 enhance the provision with orienteering and a residential experience leading onto the highly successful and popular Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 is broad and balanced, offering opportunities to study two areas of activity in depth, supported by a range of complementary activities. The curriculum is further enriched by pupils' being able to study GCSE physical education and dance. However, pupils do not currently have the opportunity to study accredited vocational courses. The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. The department is committed to offering a range of sporting, recreational and dance opportunities to complement and extend the curriculum for both performers and spectators. Pupils play in a range of sporting fixtures and many pupils go on to represent the school at district and county level. The provision of sport and the development of a sporting culture within the school and beyond is a significant strength and has been recognised by receiving Sportsmark 2000 with distinction.

198. The head of department is new to the school and is already effective in continuing the previous very good leadership and management. The department's handbook is very good, with effective aims, policies, structures and procedures. There is a comprehensive development plan for both physical education and sport. Schemes of work need reviewing to bring them into line with the National Curriculum 2000. However, the department does not make full use of data and information and communication technology; indoor specialist accommodation is restricted especially in poor weather and reduces the activities on offer especially at Key Stage 4. Half the surface area of the netball courts is in poor condition. Specialist facilities are well maintained. Displays are very good and celebrate pupils' achievements and contemporary issues in physical education, sport and dance.
199. Since the last inspection teaching and learning have improved and pupils are given more responsibility for planning and evaluating their work. The range of opportunities and standards in health related exercise have improved. Examinations in dance have been introduced and developed to support the strength of dance in the school in providing a balanced arts programme.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

200. Standards of attainment are close to the expectations of the agreed syllabus at the end of Year 9. They are also moving towards those expectations by the end of Year 11 in those aspects of religious education that form part of the accredited ASDAN course. Standards of those taking GCSE examinations are encouraging, and are currently in line with the national average. Throughout the year groups, there are good and very good examples of interesting and thoughtful oral work, and of insightful and sensitive writing. The attainment of boys and girls is similar. Pupils with special educational needs show a satisfactory grasp of areas studied and a good insight into the issues where the implications of living out a faith in lifestyle and behaviour are discussed.
201. At both key stages pupils show a good knowledge of major religions and some of their distinctive features. During Years 7-9, they show a thorough grasp of the life, teaching and impact of Jesus, and explore ways in which this has affected the lives of individuals and the growth of the Christian church. In Year 9 they explore concepts such as right and wrong, prejudice, and rites of passage. In years 7-9 they learn about major world faiths-Judaism, Islam and Sikhism- and come to appreciate the ways in which such faiths affect daily life and practice. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 expand these horizons by further probing of others' beliefs, and through exploring Christian perspectives on issues such as suffering, human rights and ethnic cleansing. All pupils learn about religious symbolism, and move beyond the externals of religion to probe deeper questions of meaning and morality. They use stories effectively, not simply to narrate events, but to think about some of the reasons underlying events and their significance for us today. Pupils' writing shows a range of styles used for particular purposes. As well as straightforward accounts or answers to questions, many show a good grasp of, for example, reporting in 'newspaper style' and make thoughtful attempts to compose brief poems. A distinctive feature of work at all levels is the emphasis on personal exploration of the Christian and other faiths in terms of how these can affect our thinking and beliefs.
202. The school complies with statutory requirements for religious education in Years 7 to 11. However, there is not enough time to fully develop all areas of the agreed syllabus in some years. In Year 9, a single lesson each week limits the kind of work that can be undertaken, even though teachers push pupils on at a considerable pace. Arrangements in Years 10 and 11, where religious education is an integral part of the ASDAN course, have raised the profile of religious education. However, current timetable arrangements mean that the total time available is limited and continuity and development of the subject are affected. After a lapse of some years, there are now GCSE courses in religious education, with encouraging numbers of pupils. There is no formal provision for religious education in the sixth form. So, while substantial progress has been made in the provision of religious education, there are issues still to be resolved. During the last two years, good progress has been made in generating a new scheme of work. This positively focuses on underlying ideas and concepts, key questions and teaching methods. This planning raises the quality of pupils' learning. The opportunities for reflection, and for applying knowledge and skills to pupils' own experience of life, not only enhance understanding of religious faiths and practices, but also enlarge their appreciation of personal, social and national issues.
203. A distinctive feature of many lessons is the way in which pupils listen well to the teacher and to one another. There are often sustained periods of listening, concentration and reflection. They are open to one another and receptive to others' beliefs and values: for example, the dietary rules of Jews are seriously considered when drawing up a dinner menu. They respond well to difficult challenges such

as thinking through issues related to suffering, and in so doing, explore ways in which other faiths approach such difficult matters. Pupils' good behaviour has a positive effect on standards. Research into controversial issues such as contraception and euthanasia, where adherents of faiths and the wider communities genuinely hold very different views, is well balanced and sensitively dealt with.

204. The quality of teaching at both key stages is always good and frequently very good. Preparation and planning are meticulous, enthusiasm pervades the lessons, pace and demands are sustained. Clear exposition, coupled with judicious questioning and prompting, makes pupils think. Lessons build on pupils' knowledge and experience, and teachers ensure that content and approaches are matched to pupils' needs. In a Year 7 lesson, key vocabulary, displayed on the board, helped to ensure that the class was able to cope with new language and understand technical terms in texts and discussion. In a Year 9 lesson, particular support was given to those finding extended writing difficult by providing a specially prepared worksheet. Study of the Christian faith and of major world faiths is always linked with how that belief affects peoples' lives and actions. Many contemporary examples are used. At one level, underlying beliefs and moral issues are highlighted by thinking about an episode of a soap opera such as 'EastEnders': at a very different level, the murder of Stephen Lawrence appropriately focuses work on racism. Teaching thoroughly involves pupils in thinking through issues for themselves. Approaches to assessment are sensitive to the nature of the subject. There is an awareness of the need to introduce the use of agreed syllabus 'attainment levels' for some pieces of work.
205. The leadership of the subject is good. In a short time, significant progress has been made. There are now GCSE groups in both Year 10 and Year 11. A new scheme of work has been produced, in line with the agreed syllabus, which provides clear guidance on priorities and methods. Resources have been changed and improved; the texts acquired are appropriate for a range of pupils' needs. The handbook of guidance demonstrates clear vision, and appropriate strategies for lesson planning and assessment. Initiatives such as a newspaper board and quotations from notable individuals are beginning to take effect. Use of Gloucester Cathedral's resource centre for artefacts enhances the teaching of major faiths. Religious education makes a significant and important contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The emphasis on careful reflection, and response to Christian and other world faiths, enlarges pupils' spiritual horizons. Relating beliefs to behaviour in practical ways brings matters of right and wrong to the fore, both at a personal level and in terms of our relationships with one another. Respect for other cultures and faiths is embedded in the way in which other religions are studied.
206. A good response has been made to the previous report. Standards of learning and pupils' response have been raised. This is especially evident in the connections made with every day life issues. Provision for religious education has been improved even though issues relating to lack of time remain.