

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **SEAHAM SCHOOL**

County Durham

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114286

Headteacher: Dr R J Dingle

Reporting inspector: Tony Byrne  
(OFSTED No: 2561)

Dates of inspection: 16 – 20 October 2000

Inspection number: 223750

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

© Crown copyright 2000

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Burnhall Drive Seaham County Durham
Postcode:	SR7 0EN
Telephone number:	0191 516 1600
Fax number:	0191 516 1638
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs P Ramshaw
Date of previous inspection:	15/01/1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Tony Byrne (Ofsted No: 2561)	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities	What sort of school is it?
		English as an additional language	How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements
			How well are pupils taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
Marion Howel (Ofsted No: 19343)	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
John Barton (Ofsted No: 30911)	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
Kenneth Boden (Ofsted No: 30899)	Team inspector	Design and technology	
Raymond Cardinal (Ofsted No: 22695)	Team inspector	History	
		Special educational needs and assessment of special educational needs	
Monica Christian (Ofsted No: 4689)	Team inspector	Information technology	
Vincent Gormally (Ofsted No: 10209)	Team inspector	Art	
Janet Harvey (Ofsted No: 23323)	Team inspector	Music	
Bernard Mason (Ofsted No: 18989)	Team inspector	English	

Allen Paver (Ofsted No: 12118)	Team inspector	Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Anthony Pearson (Ofsted No: 19452)	Team inspector	Religious education	
Andrew Piggott (Ofsted No: 1223)	Team inspector	Science	
Barry Simmons (Ofsted No: 14446)	Team inspector	Physical education	
William Wimshurst (Ofsted No: 8341)	Team inspector	Mathematics	

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates Ltd  
Demeter House  
Station Road  
Cambridge  
CB1 2RS

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Registrar  
Inspection Quality Division  
The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

# REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7 - 10</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>11 - 13</b>
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>13 - 14</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?</b>	<b>14 - 17</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>	<b>17 - 18</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>18 - 19</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>22 - 25</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>26 - 42</b>

## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school is a large (1111 pupils) comprehensive school and is the only secondary school in the town of Seaham. The number of boys and girls in each year group is evenly distributed except in Year 8 where boys are in a significant majority. There is a very small number of ethnic minority pupils, none of whom have English as their second language. The number of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs is above the national average and the number of those who have statements of special educational need is above average. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average.

There are indicators that show the school serves an area of socio-economic disadvantage. Data prepared by the county council to support a bid to be an Education Action Zone (EAZ) show that deprivation is severe in some areas. Numbers on roll have been stable and new housing development is anticipated. Attendance, identified as a concern in the previous inspection report, has improved to be in line with the national average.

Since September 2000 the school has been in an EAZ partnership with primary schools and a secondary school serving a neighbouring town. The school is making an additional bid to become a specialist technology college. There have been some temporary closures and disruptions over several years, arising from problems affecting premises and equipment.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Seaham School is an improving school. Standards are below average but a significant trend of improvement in GCSE results has been established. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and manage behaviour well, based on good relationships with pupils, but they do not have sufficiently high expectations of all pupils. The energetic leadership of the headteacher, supported by governors, has involved the school in a range of initiatives that are contributing to improvement. Strategies for further improvement are being actively pursued, but clearer action plans are required to ensure progress is made at a suitable rate. Given what has been achieved, the school's success in attracting funding to extend opportunities available to pupils in an area facing socio-economic difficulties and the good relationships with pupils, the school is providing satisfactory value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- The school has improved standards at Key Stage 4.
- Pupils have a positive attitude and relate well to staff.
- There is good access to information technology and extra-curricular opportunities.
- Energetic leadership by the headteacher and the support of governors has involved the school in wide-ranging initiatives that provide a good opportunity for further development.

#### **What could be improved**

- Clear action plans should support important initiatives so that deadlines and goals are set by which progress can be judged.
- Higher levels of attainment, especially in English and mathematics, should be supported by teachers providing higher levels of challenge in pupils' learning.
- Assessment data should be more widely used to determine appropriate expectations of pupils.
- Development of literacy and numeracy should be given more attention.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was inspected previously in January 1996. Action was required to continue and strengthen strategies for improvement and raising achievement. The results at GCSE reported on then have improved considerably but remain well below average; results at Key Stage 3 were not available. New strategies for improvement such as new courses at Key Stage 4 have been pursued. The school is now at the point of developing a range of initiatives as an EAZ partner. The senior management regularly monitors consistency and implementation of policies in departments. Monitoring of teaching has begun after some delay and is not yet sufficient to support further improvement in teaching. The requirement for a daily act of collective worship has not been met. Special educational needs policy has been developed thoroughly and meets statutory requirements. Good progress has been made in improving attendance. On the whole the extent of improvement has been satisfactory.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14-year-olds based on National Curriculum test results and by pupils aged 15 (at the start of the academic year) in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
KS3	E	D	E	C
GCSE	D	E	E	D

**Key**

well above average      A

above average            B

average                    C

below average            D

well below average      E

Standards are low in both key stages, but a trend of improvement at GCSE has been established and the latest results awaiting finalisation indicate that the school's improvement targets for 2000 will be exceeded at the end of Key Stage 4. At the end of Key Stage 3, results in English were well below average compared to similar schools, mathematics was in line and science above similar schools. The results at Key Stage 3 for 2000 show that pupils will fall well short of the target set by governors. The relative achievement of boys and girls is similar to the national picture but boys are closing the gap at higher level GCSE.

Standards are above average in art and in performance in music at Key Stage 4. In physical education, standards meet the nationally expected levels. In other subjects standards are variable and there are persistently low standards in history. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in the majority of subjects but gifted and talented children do not reach the highest levels of which they are capable.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes are good. They show interest in lessons and respond well to teachers and to each other. They make good use of extra-curricular opportunities including access to computers, art and music in their own time.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is generally good. In some lessons, small numbers become distracted but this does not disturb the majority. Around the school, pupils' conduct is usually good, though sometimes boisterous; they mix well during breaks.
Personal development and relationships	There are good relationships between pupils and between teachers and pupils. Personal development is supported through personal, social and health education lessons and by approachable teachers. The school encourages initiative and personal responsibility.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory. Rates have improved steadily over the last three years. Pupils are sometimes late after leaving the site at lunchtime. Occasionally, a few pupils do not attend lessons after registration.



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	N/A

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

Teaching is at least satisfactory in over 90% of lessons. It is good or better in over half the lessons taught. The successful teaching is based on good subject knowledge and supportive relationships with pupils. The effectiveness of teaching is reduced when there is a lack of challenge for pupils, particularly in undertaking independent work.

In English, teaching is mainly satisfactory or good in the range of work undertaken but response to low levels of literacy, particularly in Key Stage 3, is insufficient. Teaching is best in Key Stage 4 when pupils are challenged in imaginative ways, whereas sometimes in Key Stage 3 dull materials are used and the pace is slow.

Teaching in mathematics is good. The main strengths are good subject knowledge, planning and use of resources. There is a tendency to tell or explain rather than drawing understanding out. More able pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Teaching is satisfactory and occasionally good in science. Investigational learning is accorded a lot of time in science and is well taught. There is insufficient challenge in scientific knowledge, particularly for more able pupils. The approach to learning is not sufficiently varied.

Teaching is strong in art, information technology, music and physical education. Teaching is satisfactory with some good features in design and technology, geography, modern foreign languages and religious education. There is an element of unsatisfactory teaching in history. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory.

The best features in teaching are good relationships, management of behaviour and clear explanations based on good subject knowledge. Weaknesses are lack of challenge and low expectations of pupils' capacity for working independently; assessment data is not used well to set targets and the same work is set for pupils of differing ability. The teaching of literacy is weak. There is not enough emphasis on writing correctly and well. No policy has been developed on numeracy, consequently it is weak and it is not planned into learning. Pupils acquire knowledge and skills at a better rate in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. The effort made by pupils in response to demands is satisfactory. More able pupils are rarely extended to their full potential.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality and range of the curriculum are satisfactory on the whole. Statutory requirements are met. Not all pupils in Key Stage 3 have balanced access to art and music. The coherence of the curriculum in Key Stage 4 for pupils who "drop" or reduce subjects, or who attend college is unsatisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is satisfactory except for the response of some departments who identify pupils as being at stage 1 (needs relating to the subject only) and do not then pursue appropriate action.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Spiritual and social development of pupils is satisfactory. Moral and cultural development is good. The school places emphasis on caring for others and on good behaviour.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides good personal support and guidance for pupils, particularly in behaviour. Monitoring of academic progress is satisfactory. One matter of health and safety regarding the chemical store requires attention. Attendance is supported well. A closer check is needed on pupils who leave the site at lunchtime and on pupils absenting themselves after registration.

The school works hard to develop constructive links with parents and the current arrangements are satisfactory. Further improvement would result from communicating in advance about new opportunities, such as the student learning account.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management are satisfactory at present. The energetic leadership of the headteacher has been at the heart of improvements made. However, the rate of progress in addressing issues and the impact of policies on all areas indicate the need for clearer planning and monitoring. This is being addressed through the expansion of the senior management team and an EAZ funded project to develop middle managers.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their duties well, although they have not implemented a daily act of collective worship. They maintain good relationships and are involved in review and evaluation, but they do not challenge plans in terms of deadlines or levels of expected improvement.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory at senior management level; appropriate priorities have been selected for development. The school collates extensive data on pupil performance and sets adequate targets for improvement but, with the exception of design and technology, not enough use is made of this information to influence department planning. The quality of teaching is not sufficiently supported by observation and review but this issue is being pursued with the assistance of external expertise and the involvement of staff.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory; some areas such as physical education and information technology have been maintained or developed well. Finance is carefully controlled and fully utilised. A strength of the school is its pursuit of grants to support developments that will benefit pupils.

There is a good match of staff expertise to subjects taught. The level of staffing is adequate except in special educational needs, where the necessary involvement of the coordinator in reviews reduces teaching time and where there are insufficient support staff and in technician support for science, information technology and design and technology. Accommodation is unsatisfactory in science and music. Learning resources are satisfactory. The school is well led by the headteacher but, although loyal, middle managers do not sufficiently challenge their areas to improve. Governors seek best value by spending and evaluating carefully but do not challenge plans sufficiently.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school has high expectations of pupils</li> <li>Pupils like the school and make good progress</li> <li>They can raise any concerns they may have</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More extra-curricular activities</li> <li>Some parents do not feel well informed about their child's progress</li> <li>Some parents feel that behaviour is not good</li> </ul>

The inspection team found that the school does not have sufficiently high expectations of all pupils, but agreed with the parents' other positive views. It was also found that the school provides good extra-curricular opportunities and supplies satisfactory information about progress. The behaviour of pupils is good in school.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. Standards are low in comparison with national averages in both key stages. However, a trend of improvement from a low base has been established in GCSE results since the previous inspection report. For example, the analysis of results in 2000 returned for confirmation to the Department for Education and Employment indicates 35% of pupils gaining five or more higher grade passes (A\*-C) as compared with 19% in 1995.
2. In the end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests standards are lowest in English. Results for English in 1999 were well below the national average and the average points score placed the school on the boundary of being well below similar schools. In mathematics and science results were below national averages to a lesser extent and in line with similar schools for mathematics, whilst science results were above similar schools. Boys and girls are below their national levels to a similar extent, though girls do a little better in mathematics. The marginal improvement in unconfirmed results for 2000 indicates that targets set by governors will not be met.
3. It is in Key Stage 4 that there is convincing evidence of improvement. Results in 1999 remained below average for national figures and for similar schools (based on pupils eligible for free school meals). However, comparison with results in 1995 shows an increase in the proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at A\* - C from 19% to 31% and at five or more A\* - G from 78% to 83%. Pupils gaining at least one grade remained at 90%. The trend has continued in the 2000 results awaiting confirmation; this year 35% of pupils gained five or more A\* - C grades, 88% five or more A\* - G and 94% at least one pass. Girls have generally done better than boys over time but the gap is closing, with the latest results showing boys gaining five or more A\* - C grades at a higher percentage rate than girls for the first time.
4. In English, results are well below the national average in both key stages and well below average for similar schools in Key Stage 3. Lower than average standards of literacy hamper progress. Although high ability pupils read for pleasure and write well, a significant proportion of pupils experience difficulty with reading and are poor at writing. In Key Stage 4 the written work contains too many errors in expression, spelling and punctuation.
5. Results in mathematics in Key Stage 3 are well below national average and close to average for similar schools. Results are well below national average in higher grades at GCSE and although this improves to the category of below average at A\* - G, account must be taken of the higher proportion of pupils not entered. In Key Stage 3 number skills are under-developed for many pupils and most have difficulty in handling numbers mentally. These skills continue to be weak for all except higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 4.
6. Although attainment in science in Key Stage 3 is below national average, it is better than average compared to similar schools. At the end of Key Stage 4, more than double the percentage gain A\* - C as compared with results in the previous inspection report and the proportion gaining A\* - G is at the national average. In both key stages most pupils achieve in line with their ability and lower ability pupils and those with special educational needs do well in investigational work. However, higher ability pupils are not sufficiently challenged to achieve their highest potential.
7. Standards are rising in information technology. Pupils make good progress in mastering a range of operations in Key Stage 3 and their attainment at the end of the key stage is above average; they present text well, using desktop publishing. Attainment of pupils following GNVQ courses at Key Stage 4 is above the national average.
8. Standards are below average for the local Agreed Syllabus in religious education at the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils have some knowledge of major faiths, but do not appreciate their impact on believers and their personal response to religious questions is limited. Written work at the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with average expectations for pupils following the local Agreed Syllabus but the work of pupils following the GCSE course is below average.

9. In art attainment is above average at the end of key Stage 3 and results are above average in Key Stage 4 with a high proportion of high grades. Standards in design and technology vary with, for example, good results in systems and control, but weaker performance in food technology; overall attainment is below average at the end of both key stages. In geography results have improved but standards are below average at the end of both key stages. History is below average, including at the end of Key Stage 4 when account is taken of the number of pupils not entered for examination. In modern foreign languages standards are in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3 but, while results are good in GCSE, they are obtained from a very limited entry. In music most pupils achieve standards expected at the end of Key Stage 3 and at the end of Key Stage 4 performance standards are good. Standards in physical education are in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages.
10. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in the majority of subjects. They make good progress at both key stages in art and physical education. All make good progress in mathematics, geography and French at Key Stage 3. In mathematics pupils at Key Stage 3 make good progress in developing their understanding of number patterns. In design and technology, pupils working with resistant materials at Key Stage 4 produce logically arranged design folders with good research and analysis. Pupils make satisfactory progress in religious education and can talk about the key features of different religions. They make satisfactory progress in music and are fully involved in both performing and composing. There is some unsatisfactory progress in English, when in Key Stage 3 a group works with support but without teacher input and in Key Stage 4, when boys lack concentration. They make unsatisfactory progress in information technology at Key Stage 3 with low literacy skills limiting progress.
11. Standards of literacy are low throughout the curriculum. Pupils rely heavily on direct instruction from the teacher rather than researching for themselves. Writing is often marred by frequent errors and poor presentation. Numerical skills are infrequently called upon in work undertaken and consequently pupils are not developing them at a suitable rate of progress.
12. Except in art, physical education and music, there was little evidence of gifted and talented pupils having an opportunity to take their work to the highest level of which they are capable. Consequently standards achieved by this group of pupils are unsatisfactory.
13. Governors set ambitious targets at Key Stage 3 and have taken into account the expectation that being an Education Action Zone partner requires higher targets to be set. In the light of Key Stage 4 targets being likely to be exceeded in 2000 when results are published, reconsideration of future targets is necessary.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

14. The majority of pupils have good attitudes to their learning. They are well behaved and show an interest in their work. The attendance rates at the school are satisfactory.
15. Pupils show an interest in their lessons and respond well to their teachers. They take an active part in the lessons and work well together in small groups. They are eager to answer questions and join in discussions. There are generally good levels of concentration during lessons. However, when this is not the case, it is because small groups of pupils, mainly boys, become less involved in the activities and lose their concentration. There is good support for extra-curricular activities, particularly for sport, opportunities to practise music and to access computers.
16. The general behaviour of pupils is good. They know and understand the system of the "behaviour curriculum" and feel it is consistently applied. During lessons the majority of pupils behave well and even when small number of pupils become distracted, their behaviour is not disruptive to the whole class. The behaviour when moving around the school is satisfactory but, at times, boisterous. The pupils mix well together at breaks and at lunchtime. They wait in an orderly manner to enter the dining room and behave sensibly whilst eating their meals. The classrooms and grounds are generally tidy with little graffiti or litter seen. The exception to this is the main toilets, which are misused by some pupils, both boys and girls.
17. There are good relationships within the school. The pupils listen to one another and offer help when working in small groups. Through the personal, social and health education lessons they learn to appreciate how their actions can affect others and to respect differing opinions. There are equally good relationships between teachers and pupils. Pupils know to whom they can turn for help and

teachers provide opportunities for pupils to talk to them. Some bullying does occur in the school but is not seen as a major problem. The pupils know how incidents will be treated and are confident they will be listened to and helped. The number of permanent exclusions is not excessive. Short exclusions are used as a sanction more frequently, since they occur as an appropriate response within the structure of the behaviour management system.

18. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and show initiative. All year groups have representatives on the school council, although at present they are not given the time to report back to their individual classes after council meetings. The school produces an annual newspaper and each form helps with the production. Pupils greet parents during open evenings and help at other school events. Pupils from Years 10 and 11 act as councillors and are available at a 'drop-in' centre during lunchtimes, whilst other pupils help in the library. There are charitable collections arranged throughout the school year, with some classes involved in helping refugees in S.E. Asia and others sponsoring endangered animal species. All these activities provide effective opportunities for the pupils' personal development.
19. The attendance rates for the school are satisfactory and have shown a small but steady improvement over the last three years. The school makes good use of the education welfare officer who visits the school every day and works closely with individual pupils and their families. A significant number of pupils arrive late in the afternoon because they go off site for their lunch. Also, due to the size and layout of the school, not all pupils arrive at lessons on time, and this can cause some distraction at the start of the lesson. Registration is completed satisfactorily.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

20. Teaching is good or satisfactory in just over 80% of lessons and very good or excellent in a further 12%. In the few unsatisfactory or poor lessons, unclear focus results in a slow pace for pupils.
21. In the great majority of lessons, teachers enjoy good relationships with their pupils. There is mutual respect and teachers try to ensure that pupils understand the work and are encouraged to succeed. Lessons often begin with a thorough explanation of the topic based on the teacher's good subject knowledge. In art, teachers provide effective demonstrations of technique. Resources are used well: for example in English, artefacts associated with characters and events in a novel were used to stimulate recollection and discussion. Visual materials were used well in religious education, mathematics and modern foreign languages. Effective methods are chosen in many lessons to engage pupils' interest. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour effectively, often basing this on evident care for the pupils' welfare and progress.
22. The effectiveness of teaching is reduced when there is a lack of challenge in the level and pace of the work undertaken, particularly for gifted and talented pupils and low expectations of pupils' capacity for independent work. Often the same work is offered when a wide range of ability is represented. Assessment data is not well used to interpret attainment and set appropriate targets. The response to pupils with special educational needs is less effective for pupils at stage 1 and when support staff are not present to assist pupils at more advanced stages of need. Low expectations of pupils' literacy and a tendency to avoid the need for individual writing are associated with the lack of opportunities for independence. With the exceptions of science and, to an appropriate extent music, insufficient demands are made on pupils to write at length in lessons or homework.
23. In English, teaching is mainly satisfactory or good in the range of work undertaken but response to low levels of literacy, particularly in Key Stage 3 is insufficient. Teaching is best in Key Stage 4 when pupils are challenged in imaginative ways, whereas sometimes in Key Stage 3 dull materials are used and the pace is slow.
24. Teaching in mathematics is good. The main strengths are good subject knowledge, planning and use of resources. There is a tendency to tell or explain rather than drawing understanding out. More able pupils are not sufficiently challenged.
25. Teaching is satisfactory and occasionally good in science. Investigational learning is accorded a lot of time in science and is well taught. There is insufficient challenge in scientific knowledge, particularly for more able pupils. The approach to learning is not sufficiently varied.

26. In art, teaching is mainly good or very good; expectations are high but account is taken of individual needs. In design and technology, teaching is satisfactory and sometimes good with thorough planning and good management of the working situation, Teaching in geography is satisfactory overall, but better in Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4, where not enough is expected of lower ability pupils. History has satisfactory teaching overall but there is an element of unsatisfactory teaching with a lack of challenge when too much time is spent on preliminary discussion. In information technology, teaching is good with clear starts to lessons followed by pupils experimenting for themselves and receiving good guidance. Modern foreign languages have satisfactory teaching, which is sometimes good; presentation is lively but sometimes the lessons are too teacher-centred and too little use is made of diagnostic assessment. In music, teaching is good with some very good features deriving from the teachers' expertise and the way they encourage pupils. There is no unsatisfactory teaching in physical education; teaching is constantly challenging. In religious education, there is satisfactory teaching with a reasonable variety of methods used.
27. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. In one to one tuition the standard of teaching is very good, with activities clearly linked to lesson objectives.
28. Teachers are concerned to support less able pupils so that all pupils can take part in lessons. However special attention is rarely given to planning lessons to enable gifted and talented pupils to make progress in line with their ability.
29. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is weak. The school's literacy policy is at a very early stage of development. The extra teaching for pupils who needed to attend summer schools to improve is based on materials that do not address individual needs and offer little sense of direction and progress. Nor do the lessons connect with what pupils attempt in the rest of the curriculum. In many subjects demands are not made on pupils to undertake extended writing and to improve upon it. There is insufficient emphasis on re-drafting work to achieve correct English. The school has not developed a policy for numeracy and there is no emphasis on this important skill in planning learning opportunities.
30. Pupils acquire knowledge and skills at a better rate in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. The effort made by pupils in response to demands made is satisfactory. However in some lessons all pupils could be challenged to give more attention to correctness and presentation of work. More able pupils are rarely extended to their full potential. Pupils concentrate well on what the teacher sets out, but they are very dependent on the teacher. The consequence is that they do not grasp the direction their learning is taking and do not thoroughly understand the targets for improvement they need to set. This limitation is compounded by the lack of opportunities for independent learning.

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

31. The quality and range of learning opportunities are satisfactory and with the exception that the obligation to hold a daily act of collective worship is not met, the statutory curriculum is in place. There are some problems with the monitoring and coherence of the curriculum.
32. Whilst the breadth of the curriculum at Key Stage 3 is good, there are some problems of balance related to choice, numbers and the allocation of time, the effects of which have not been monitored. In the time allocated to English, the department offers in addition, drama and media studies; there is insufficient time to teach the whole programme. There is an imbalance of time over Key Stage 3 in the amount of art and music offered to some pupils, whilst the creation of a top set in art in Year 9, the effect of which is to begin the GCSE course a year early, draws pupils away from music and three-dimensional art in Key Stage 4. The numbers opting for music at Key Stage 4 are small. Dance is offered in the Key Stage 3 curriculum in physical education to girls but not to boys. The absence of a scheme of work in history restricts planning and curriculum coordination.
33. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 is increasingly flexible in meeting the needs of individual pupils. The school has reduced the standard number of GCSE subjects offered from ten to nine in order to increase the time available for study. It remains possible for some to study physical education and music in addition by taking those subjects outside the time allocated to lessons. It is also possible to reduce the number of GCSE subjects by opting to take a GNVQ subject as a double option within the timetable and high numbers opt for these popular work-related studies in one of three available subjects. The time allocated for the study of geography and history at Key Stage 4 is significantly

below what is usual nationally. There are significant difficulties in the arrangements for modern foreign languages that result in some pupils working at a lower level than they achieved at the end of Key Stage 3.

34. However, problems arise when the school attempts to widen its work-related courses by offering subjects based at local colleges; this causes disruption to other courses but the effects have not been monitored. For Year 11 it has not always been possible to coordinate the school timetable with those of two different colleges. There are 17 pupils in Year 11 who attend local colleges for a variety of courses at NVQ level or at the level of college certification that may not be recognised nationally. They were placed after the school and college timetables were set up and are accommodated by local arrangement as and when it is possible to fit them in, so that they may or may not receive their statutory entitlement to the other subjects they study in school. A further 36 pupils attend for sub-GCSE courses in an option block of time.
35. This has been partly resolved in Year 10 because the timetable was built around arrangements with the colleges. However, whilst the school has taken good advantage of a loosening of regulations to broaden its work-related curriculum, it has not yet disappplied the National Curriculum for those pupils in Years 10 and 11, about 50 in number, who are studying for certificates below GCSE level, or taken fully into account the effects on other subjects within school of pupils' participation in college courses.
36. The school also allows some who have difficulties completing work in one subject to cease to study another subject where their performance is weaker. Three other pupils spend part of their time with a senior teacher working on information technology and one follows an extended work experience course. The consequence of this is that pupils may study a subject for two years without gaining any certification for it. Also, a subject like history, for example, may appear to have a favourable pass rate at GCSE, but when the numbers of pupils who are not entered for the examination are counted, then the actual pass rate is below average.
37. Most of these irregularities will be removed when funding from the Education Action Zone to buy in time from the local colleges becomes available, because it will then be possible to resolve most timetable problems.
38. The strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are unsatisfactory. Whilst there are good developments in several areas, the departments have no concerted plan. This is particularly the case for low attainers and for those with special educational needs where departments require further assistance.
39. Provision for extra-curricular activities is good. It is strong in physical education; pupils represent the school in a good range of sports and some represent the area in regional and national competitions. Pupils practise music regularly and take part in recording music and occasionally performing in concert. An opportunity is missed for pupils to perform in assemblies. The English department have regular visits to the theatre, including to Stratford-upon-Avon. The school staged a drama production in 1999 and plans another in this academic year.
40. Provision for personal, social and health education, including sex and anti-drugs education, and that for careers and vocational education are satisfactory and policies and schemes of work are in place. All pupils have work experience and interviews with a careers adviser; Year 11 pupils know about required qualifications for career paths. They know where to obtain further information and closing dates for application. The numbers about whom the school has no information about career path on leaving school is twice what would be expected nationally.
41. Links between the school and the community are strong and the contribution made by the community to the education of the pupils is satisfactory. Local sports clubs hire the premises in the evening on a regular basis, extending access to activities for pupils and there are strong links between the physical education department and a number of clubs. The religious education department has good links with local churches. There are good links with a local youth theatre that meets on the premises every week; some pupils perform with the group and the group recently performed in the school to assist Year 9 classes with understanding Shakespeare texts for the National Curriculum tests.
42. Relationships with partner institutions are satisfactory. Relationships with primary schools are sound at senior management level, but those between departments and their feeders are less secure. Year

10 pupils work with primary pupils in drama, but the geography department, for example, received only one reply from a recent survey of attainment at primary level, and the mathematics department has only limited links and is unaware that attainment on entry is improving. Relationships with institutions of extended education on the level of careers advice are secure. The school hosted a training day for local teachers of drama and was chosen as an exemplar school to work in a live theatre project.

43. The equal opportunities policy points to the need to develop awareness among staff and pupils and to identify areas in which there could be improvement. There is little evidence that action has been taken to implement the policy since the last inspection, although the appointment of a new deputy headteacher with responsibility for equal opportunities as part of her job description suggest that this will change in the near future. During the inspection two problems in this area were identified:
  - Dance is only offered to girls at Key Stage 3;
  - The predominance of art causes problems of equal access for pupils who want to study music, particularly at Key Stage 4.
44. The school has not focused thinking on how curriculum provision contributes to the personal development of pupils beyond raising self-esteem by raising achievement. Most departments do not have an audit of spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision.
45. In religious education and in art provision for the spiritual development of pupils is very good; it is good in English but is less strong in other subjects of the curriculum; it is barely satisfactory overall. The curriculum for religious education provides good opportunity to reflect upon fundamental questions and consider the religious and ethical issues surrounding life, death and miracles. Year 9 considers questions of understanding belief and spirituality through images of Jesus. In art, pupils are thoughtful and clearly impressed after looking at examples of the work of aboriginal peoples; consequently pupils learn against an appropriate background of respect and awe. In English, strong emotions are roused and considered in well managed discussions of carefully chosen texts, for example of "Madame Doubtfire," about the effects of broken relationships in a class where a number come from one-parent families. There are numbers of opportunities to reflect upon and write about the human condition. In geography, powerful images of Prince William Sound in Alaska before and after the Exxon Valdez oil spill provoke deep reactions from Year 9 pupils that are reflected in good writing. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to develop care for others: collections for war refugees in the Far East is stimulated by the individual action of one teacher provokes a powerful reaction which is no less strong than one tutor group's support for a bird sanctuary at Kielder or the annual shoe box appeal to help Kosovan refugees.
46. An opportunity was missed in an assembly promoting this last appeal to allow pupils to reflect upon their generosity and its effects upon others. An opportunity is lost to use the garden built by the geography department three years ago, which is now maintained by the school gardener as an area of quiet reflection. It is kept locked.
47. Provision for the development of moral education is good because pupils develop a strong sense of right and wrong from the behaviour of teachers in the classroom; for example, there is a strong emphasis in physical education on fair play and the rules. Moral development is provided through opportunities to care for others and through the strong use of the issues-based curriculum of religious education and English and in Key Stage 3 in subjects like geography. Here, good pupil talk is not always converted into good writing and pupils' clear understanding of quite complex issues is poorly written because there is no strong policy for the development of literacy across the subjects of the curriculum.
48. Provision for the social development of pupils is satisfactory overall. Discipline is reinforced in most tutor groups where tracking sheets and, therefore, good and bad behaviour are carefully monitored. Importance is given in physical education to pupils supporting each other in teams and in tolerating each other's strengths and weaknesses. Where subjects like design and technology and information technology provide for group work and shared tasks, pupils develop social skills and a sense of responsibility. Pupils generally act responsibly by helping with routine tasks of giving out books and tidying up and collecting equipment.
49. Provision for the cultural development of pupils is good. Extra-curricular provision is good in art that, like music, operates an open studio policy and organises visits to local studios, art schools and galleries. Product analysis in design and technology illustrates how objects came to be designed and food technology deals with food from other countries. Subjects such as geography, art and religious



education use the Internet or CD-ROM to obtain information with a cultural content. There is strong provision for multi-cultural education in English, for example, in the study of, "Journey to Joburg" where issues such as racism, segregation and apartheid are discussed, and in religious education where there is a firm multi-faith approach to planning the curriculum. The geography curriculum provides daily opportunity to teach and learn about the global variety of cultures.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

50. The school provides good pastoral care for its pupils. There are satisfactory arrangements to monitor pupils' progress and broadly satisfactory procedures for health and safety matters.
51. There are appropriate policies relating to behaviour, attendance, homework, child protection procedures and health and safety matters. Staff are aware of the policies through the staff handbook and appropriate training has been provided where necessary. The school's behaviour curriculum is consistently used by all staff, who receive regular data relating to the pupils' tracking sheets. The individual form tutors and heads of year move through the school with their classes and year groups. This system ensures a continuity of care for the pupils and enables teachers to gain a greater knowledge of the pupils in their groups. The 'first day call system' is used to contact parents whose children are absent from school and letters are sent home if pupils' attendance records give rise for concern. The educational welfare officer plays an important role in the school and is used to help pupils who have experienced a variety of problems.
52. Many pupils leave the school site during lunchtime. At present there is no secure system in place to enable the school to know the exact number of pupils who remain on the premises. A small number of pupils fail to attend lessons after they have registered in the morning or afternoon and there is no regular check on pupils involved. The impact on learning and safety considerations require action to be taken.
53. There is an appropriate policy for health and safety matters and the necessary records and procedures are in place. However, during the inspection areas of concern were noted in the science department. There is no ventilation provided in the chemical store and unsuitable cupboards are used to store flammable materials. These matters were brought to the attention of the school.
54. There is a recently introduced assessment policy in the school and student learning accounts are just being introduced to Years 10 and 11. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are generally satisfactory throughout the school with some areas of good practice in design and technology, religious education and physical education. The whole-school assessment policy is not clear and is not having the intended impact in securing a consistent approach across all departments. The introduction of student learning accounts entails pupils being set specific targets for both academic and personal development and the pupils should be involved in the choice of the targets. Some pupils are fully aware of the new arrangements; they know their targets and were involved in setting those targets. However, this is not the case with all pupils. Some do not understand the new system and appeared to have taken little part in setting their targets.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

55. There is satisfactory support for the school from the parents. The returned questionnaires show that parents feel the school has high expectation of its pupils. Parents say that their children like going to school and are making good progress. Parents are comfortable about contacting the school if they have any concerns. There are less positive views about the number of extra-curricular activities provided by the school. A fifth of parents do not feel they are well informed about the progress their children make or that the behaviour in the school is good. The inspection team found that the school does not have sufficiently high expectations of all pupils but did agree with the other positive views of the parents. It was also found that the school provides good extra-curricular activities and supplies parents with satisfactory information about progress made by pupils. The behaviour of pupils is good whilst they are in school.
56. The improving attendance figures indicate increasing parental support, as does the good response to the home/school contract. There is a small but active parent/teachers association, which organises social and fundraising events. These occasions receive moderate support from the parents. There is good support by parents for the school's musical and drama productions.

57. The school holds annual parents' evenings, though the turn-out for these meetings is not as high as the school would wish. There are also open evenings for prospective pupils and a careers convention. Letters are sent to parents who do not attend the parents' evening. At the start of the September term the school issues a calendar showing events for the forthcoming year and this provides parents with good advance notice of important school dates. The informative annual newspaper that the pupils help to produce is delivered to all houses in the area and is a good way of keeping the community in touch with the school.
58. The annual reports which parents currently receive are satisfactory. They provide information about the topics studied during the year and the grades reached but do not set any targets for pupils. The format of annual reports is to be changed from this year and will be linked to the new system for setting personal targets. The school has yet to ensure that the parents fully understand the new system, yet parents' involvement is an important element of the new strategy.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

59. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory at present and plans and funding are in place to build on what has been achieved. The key aims of the school to widen pupils' horizons, raise their expectations and achieve their full potential are understood by staff and are being developed in the curriculum and through recent initiatives that have brought extra funding to the school. There is scope to further embed these aims and to extend them to reach more pupils.
60. The energetic leadership of the headteacher is at the heart of improvement in the school. The upward trend of results since he has been in post, readiness to take up initiatives to benefit pupils and parents' perception that it is an improving school owe much to his influence. The school has expanded the range of GNVQ courses to provide new opportunities at Key Stage 4. The successful bid to be an Education Action Zone is supporting new opportunities such as the World Expedition Group, as well as motivating older students by supporting target setting in all subjects. The headteacher monitors implementation of policy in departments and reviews performance. A system of tracking pupil behaviour, intervening and following up as necessary has been effectively implemented, using computer logged information that is readily available.
61. Other senior managers, who have followed through on new tasks, expanding their established roles, loyally support the drive for improvement. However, the rate at which progress has occurred in addressing issues identified by self-evaluation, the previous inspection and external advice has not been sufficiently rapid. The impact of initiatives has not reached all areas. For example, development of a literacy policy is at a very early stage and the school has not engaged with a numeracy policy. Departments' plans to respond to improving standards achieved by pupils in their primary schools are not in place. Data held centrally on pupil performance is reviewed annually by senior management meeting with heads of department, but with the exception of design and technology and physical education, there is little evidence of it influencing departmental planning. The school is preparing for performance management and, although senior managers have monitored teaching of staff on an individual basis, there is no monitoring within departments and no shared planning to develop quality. This means that a key recommendation of the previous inspection report has not been sufficiently addressed. Plans are now underway to address this situation.
62. The range of initiatives engaged in or planned places the school on the threshold of radical transformation. However, to support coherence and consistency in implementing initiatives, detailed action planning with step by step measures of progress, widely published for staff and governors is not in place. Recognising the need for extending leadership, governors have taken decisive action by appointing an additional deputy headteacher from September 2000. Part of the brief of this senior manager is to develop leadership potential and middle management. Funding from the EAZ and expertise from the LEA are being combined with staff participation in planning a programme of improvement. The scheme is placed in the context of a bid for Investors in People status to provide a structured process and measurable outcomes. To capitalise on leadership potential, the headteacher has given governors a clear briefing on the opportunities for expansion and new expertise presented by the new Leadership Group arrangements.
63. The governing body is supportive of the school, committed to the welfare and achievement of pupils and maintains a climate of good relationships with staff. Governors meet regularly and form appropriate committees to transact business efficiently, maintaining communication through

additional meetings of members who chair committees. Governors meet their statutory responsibilities well, with the exceptions of one matter of health and safety (detailed later in this part of the report) and not implementing a daily act of collective worship. They are regularly involved in review and evaluation of school development. They consider requests for funding and receive reports on its effect. They visit department areas. They report fully and clearly to parents on what has been achieved in their annual report.

64. Governors are not sufficiently involved in considering action plans at an early stage and setting more challenging deadlines and levels of expected improvement. Whilst they recognise the importance of achieving best value, they need to do more to challenge the level or pace of improvement expected.
65. Financial arrangements are soundly managed. Governors have kept within a tight budget over a number of years, working to planned limits without creating unduly large contingencies. Increasingly large sums available through Standards Fund grants have been well used for the designated purpose, such as improving provision of information technology, or appointing support staff for pupils with special educational needs. Recent funding from the EAZ is being utilised quickly to support key priorities. The recommendations of the auditor's report (1998) have been implemented and the bursar operates systems very confidently.
66. There is good management in art where high expectations are set, in design and technology and information technology where results analysis is applied effectively and in physical education where resources are used well. Provision for special educational needs is managed well although resources to meet heavy demands are over-stretched. In English, religious education, science, mathematics and modern foreign languages, management has contributed to good relationships and team spirit, but clear planning to deal with priorities is lacking and the monitoring of pupil progress is weak. In geography, the handbook and resources are well organised and there is sound planning to address other issues. Music manages well to provide opportunities for pupils despite limited space. There is a backlog of management issues to be addressed in history.
67. The match of staff expertise to subjects taught is good. In science and modern foreign languages where a small number of temporary or non-specialist staff have been deployed they have been well supported and appropriately utilised. Newly qualified teachers are very well supported in their induction although they do not receive their full entitlement of 10% reduction in contact time on a regular basis. Technician support in science, design and technology and information technology is spread thin and there are insufficient support staff to meet demands with regard to special educational needs.
68. Accommodation is generally adequate with most teachers working in their own classroom base but space and facilities for music are inadequate and many problems arise in science. There is an important issue of health and safety in science that must be addressed urgently; there is no ventilation in the chemical store.
69. Good use has been made of governors' targeted funding and other grants to provide a good range of information technology facilities throughout the school. The library is well stocked and effectively run. There are good resources in physical education where the pool, pitches and indoor spaces are used well. The failures of equipment and other factors, which have caused temporary closures of the school, have not been due to negligent management.
70. Considering the improvement in results, the school's success in attracting funding to extend opportunities for pupils, the difficult socio-economic circumstances faced by the area the school serves and the good relationships with pupils, satisfactory value for money is being obtained at present.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

71. Seaham School is achieving a significant trend of improvement in GCSE results. The trend has been built up from a very low base and standards are still below average in both key stages. The teaching is satisfactory with scope for further improvement. Energetic leadership by the headteacher, a climate of good relationships and willingness to engage in a wide range of relevant initiatives place the school on the threshold of radical transformation. Given the socio-economic difficulties of the area and what has already been achieved, the school is providing satisfactory value for money. To ensure that the school reaps the full benefit of planned developments and that standards continue to rise for all pupils, governors and staff should address the following issues.

- (1) For all initiatives produce clear and detailed action plans with interim goals and deadlines by which progress will be measured and reported on. This applies immediately to:
- Monitoring and developing the quality of teaching;
  - Improving middle management;
  - Implementing a policy for literacy;
  - Student learning accounts.

(See paragraphs number 61, 62, 64)

- (2) Continue to raise levels of attainment, especially in English and mathematics, in both key stages by providing higher levels of challenge in pupils' learning in lessons and in homework. This should include:
- More opportunities for independent learning;
  - Extending gifted and talented pupils to their full potential;
  - In English making sure pupils spend enough time in becoming competent readers and writers;
  - In history put a scheme of work in place and improve the element of unsatisfactory teaching;
  - Monitoring the curriculum in Key Stage 4 to maintain coherence alongside flexibility, particularly in modern foreign languages.

(See paragraphs number 4, 5, 22, 30)

- (3) Use assessment data within departments to determine appropriate expectations of pupils:
- Departments should use centrally held data to set ambitious targets for cohorts and individual pupils;
  - Departments should take into account rising standards being attained by the intake.

(See paragraphs number 22, 54, 61)

- (4) Develop literacy; particularly by providing in Key Stage 3 opportunities, across the curriculum, for extended pieces of writing that are accurate and well presented. Develop and implement a policy for numeracy.

(See paragraphs number 11, 23, 29, 38)

### Other issues for the school to consider

- Ventilation must be provided in the chemical store.
- Keeping a closer check on pupils leaving the site at lunchtime. Deterring any truancy that occurs after registration.
- Improving levels of support staffing for special educational needs and other appropriate areas.
- Adapting or extending to improve accommodation for science and music.
- Departments' responses to pupils identified at stage 1 on the register of special educational needs.
- There is no provision for a daily act of collective worship.

## **OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

### **Special educational needs assessment**

72. Assessment procedures for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory. There are very good procedures for the initial identification on entry of pupils with special educational needs. The co-ordinator maintains very good links with feeder schools with full use made of information provided. Feeder schools provide written information on each pupil with each pupil's needs subsequently discussed by the co-ordinator and feeder school representative. Good use is made of available data from feeder schools including teacher assessments. The co-ordinator then provides school staff with comprehensive information about new pupils on the first day of the school year. Full use is made of appropriate tests early in the first term of the school year to inform placement on the school's register of special educational needs. The means whereby individual departments propose placement at stage 1 of the register is a weaker area of the identification and assessment procedures. There are no agreed criteria for referrals and no procedures for monitoring the action plans that departments use to address individual needs. The whole staff annual review of placement on the register is an effective part of the process. Procedures for progress reviews at stages 2 – 5 of the Code of Practice are very good with all pupils reviewed at least once each year and with parents kept fully informed with copies of current individual education plans provided. Parents respond well to these procedures with a good level of attendance at review meetings. All reviews are conducted by the co-ordinator and the loss of a considerable amount of support teaching time to conduct the reviews is an unsatisfactory consequence of the procedures. Individual education plans are fully in place with clear and appropriate targets identified. Departments do not make full use of individual education plans in terms of identifying individual learning needs and devising appropriate strategies to meet those needs. The school is introducing the use of computer software, which is strengthening the involvement of departments in the production and review of individual education plans.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	166
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	49

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1%	11%	45%	36%	6%	1%	0%

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

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1111	0
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	264	0

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	41	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	361	0

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	31
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	33

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.4
National comparative data	7.9

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.2
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	111	113	224

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	46	59	49
	Girls	55	56	47
	Total	101	115	96
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	45	52	43
	National	53	62	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	14	25	16
	National	28	38	23

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	45	54	44
	Girls	59	56	44
	Total	104	110	88
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	47	50	40
	National	64	64	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	16	17	23
	National	31	37	28

### ***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	104	108	212

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	29	85	95
	Girls	37	90	96
	Total	66	175	191
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	31	83	90
	National	46.6	90.9	95.8

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	29
	National	38

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	5
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	3
White	1098
Any other minority ethnic group	1

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	88	4
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

*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)	59.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.7

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	6.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	208

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	81.8
---	------

#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	23.1
Key Stage 4	22.5

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999-2000
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	2454004
Total expenditure	2410502
Expenditure per pupil	2163
Balance brought forward from previous year	17844
Balance carried forward to next year	61346



## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1111
Number of questionnaires returned	126

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	26	63	3	6	1
My child is making good progress in school.	33	56	2	0	10
Behaviour in the school is good.	21	47	16	3	13
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	63	9	3	3
The teaching is good.	24	63	3	1	10
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	20	46	16	4	14
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	44	45	6	1	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	35	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	20	51	20	0	10
The school is well led and managed.	26	53	6	1	14
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	50	7	2	10
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	20	43	11	3	23

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

### **ENGLISH**

73. Pupils' attainment in English at level 5 and above at Key Stage 3 in the 1999 national tests was well below the national average and on the boundary of being well below average for similar schools. Improvement in 2000 results awaiting publication is modest.
74. The attainment of both boys and girls at grade C and above in GCSE English language and English literature in 1999 was well below the national average, with girls having more success than boys. However, taking the four years 1996-1999 together, the results in GCSE English language represent an overall improvement in standards. In 1996 22% of pupils achieved grade C and above; this figure rose to 35.5% in 1999 and the indicative GCSE results for 2000 suggest a further improvement, particularly amongst boys. Pupils' attainment in GCSE media studies in 1999 was good with 59% of pupils achieving grade C and above; indicative results for 2000 show 52% achieved at grade C and above.
75. By the end of Key Stage 3 the speech of the majority of pupils at all levels of attainment becomes clearer as pupils gain in confidence. For example, they talk with animation on sensitive moral issues arising from their reading of "Madame Doubtfire". By the end of Key Stage 4 the majority of pupils contribute sensibly to class discussion, often showing maturity of thought - for example, in discussions on poetry describing the good and the evil within human beings. The vast majority listen with understanding to instruction and discussion.
76. By the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils read a range of texts with reasonable understanding but pupils with special educational needs and those experiencing difficulty with reading require in-class support to follow continuous lines of meaning. Most middle attainers become more efficient readers though a minority (mainly boys) are not sufficiently accurate in their interpretation. Higher attainers are developing the habit of reading for pleasure as well as for exact information. By the end of Key Stage 4 lower attaining pupils whose range of vocabulary is more limited and those with special educational needs are becoming more competent in their reading of texts appropriate to their levels of attainment. Most middle attainers read with reasonable accuracy. Higher attainers read more demanding texts requiring an effort of continuous thought.
77. Higher attainers at the end of Key Stage 3 write well for a variety of purposes; for example, their coursework files contain interesting and imaginative pieces. Most middle attainers organise their ideas clearly when writing on carefully defined tasks, but a significant minority have difficulty sustaining acceptable levels of accuracy in their extended writing. Spelling errors are frequent and punctuation is often weak. Lower attaining pupils write with reasonable clarity on straightforward tasks that have been carefully discussed and prepared. Those pupils with special educational needs experience difficulties with their writing and require close attention and support. At the end of Key Stage 4 higher attainers handle language effectively. The writing of most middle attainers is usually reasonably explanatory, but there are too many errors of expression, and errors in spelling and punctuation. Lower attainers and those with special educational needs write with reasonable clarity on briefer, straight forward tasks, but still experience considerable difficulty with some of the fundamental mechanics of extended writing. Most pupils throughout the school write legibly, although not always neatly. Pupils are accustomed to using word processing facilities to draft and redraft written tasks; most take a pride in the presentation of their folders of coursework.
78. The vast majority of pupils at both key stages behave well and hold positive attitudes towards their lessons. Most teaching takes place in orderly classrooms with the majority of pupils studying constructively. Most pupils at both key stages can reflect upon serious issues in their literary studies - the majority take appropriate notice of teachers' instructions and advice. Only a small minority - mainly boys - react in a negative way.
79. Teaching in 78% of lessons observed was good or satisfactory. 11% of teaching was very good and 11 per cent was unsatisfactory or poor. The good teaching at Key Stage 4 occurs when pupils are challenged in an imaginative way; it draws out pupils' thoughts and ideas as well as instils knowledge. Unsatisfactory and poor teaching occurs at Key Stage 3 when the material presented for study is pedestrian and the pace slow, and when resources confuse rather than enlighten pupils. In the vast majority of lessons teachers' relationships with pupils are harmonious. Teachers are firm

with pupils when required without being confrontational; in the vast majority of lessons teachers are respected.

80. The management and leadership of the department are sound. The departmental handbook provides a foundation for the work of the department. Schemes of work cover National Curriculum objectives. Lower than average standards in literacy amongst a significant number of pupils at the start of Key Stage 3 present a particular challenge. Summer literacy schools provide valuable remedial work. However, the literacy programme for low attainers in Year 7 is too generalised, often insufficiently imaginative in its approach - nor is it always sufficiently interesting in its content. The department's literacy booklet has been devised for use at home by parents with a child needing extra support. Although a database for monitoring pupils' progress has been established, closer co-operation is required with the special educational needs department concerning the nature of support given to Year 7 withdrawal pupils. Pupils' attainment in public examinations, especially that of boys at Key Stage 4, has risen since the previous report. Moreover, the department now offers drama and media studies as successful options at Key Stage 4.
81. In media studies a joint Key Stage 3/4 news group organises broadcasting and recording activities. These video/broadcasting facilities were purchased with the first-prize (£10,000) awarded in a British Telecom school competition. A further sum of £1000 was contributed when pupils came 3rd in a British Telecom "Talk Out" competition.
82. Each year the department organises visits to Stratford-upon-Avon to attend plays by Shakespeare. Exciting links have been formed with "The Live Theatre Company". The school produced the "Wizard of Oz" last term and its GCSE drama students organise drama activities in a local primary school. The school newspaper, 'The Beacon', is delivered to local households. The head of department's involvement with The Karen Refugee Education Project in Thailand places the plight of Burma's young refugees under scrutiny within the classroom. The department's annual participation in the fundraising charity, "Readathon", draws pupils' attention to the needs of sick children nearer home. Thus the work undertaken within department promotes pupils' social, moral, and cultural development, thereby contributing fully to the spirit of the school.
83. Overall attainment in speaking and listening across the curriculum is satisfactory; attainment in reading is improving. However, the standards of attainment in writing are low within many areas of the curriculum. The school's programme to improve attainment in literacy, at present being piloted in Year 7, requires further refinement. Not all departments in the school have a literacy policy. Further improvements in pupils' writing skills would benefit attainment across the curriculum.

## **Drama**

84. Indicative GCSE results for 2000 show that attainment in drama is sound with 55.5% of candidates achieving at grade C and above.
85. Drama is an integral part of the English scheme of work and offers a popular GCSE option at Key Stage 4. Pupils collaborate with enthusiasm, using drama as a vehicle to explore themes and issues encountered in life. They are becoming more confident, fluent and expressive in their speaking, and are acquiring a knowledge of dramatic conventions and disciplines. Key Stage 4 students pay visits to a local primary school to work in drama with younger pupils.
86. Management of the subject is good; plays are produced in school. The close links with the local company, "Live Theatre", have added significantly to pupils' understanding and enjoyment of this subject.

## **MATHEMATICS**

87. In the 1999 Key Stage 3 national tests, the proportion of pupils achieving the nationally expected levels 5 and 6 was below the national average. In relation to points scored attainment was below the national average when compared with all schools although close to average when compared with similar schools. Results in mathematics were better than English and similar to science. Over the three years 1997 to 1999 pupils' average levels have fluctuated. They improved in line with national trends in 1997 and 1998, though fell back slightly in 1999.

88. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was well below the national average. These results are as high as they should be taking into account pupils' prior attainment. The proportion gaining A\*-G was below results nationally with a higher than normal proportion of pupils not entered. Boys performed better than girls. Pupils performed less well in mathematics when compared with their performance in other subjects. A significant improvement has been made in the year 2000 though results are still well below average.
89. In the work seen, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are close to those expected at the age of 14. Number skills are still underdeveloped for many pupils. Most have difficulty in handling numbers mentally. Measuring skills are not well developed for many pupils. Average attaining pupils in Year 9 have difficulty with estimating lengths and heights, although Year 8 pupils are able to use angle measurers confidently and accurately when drawing pie charts. Shape and space is better; average attaining pupils are able to identify lines and planes of symmetry. Data handling is best. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 have a good understanding of different measures of averages and average attaining pupils in Year 8 have a good understanding of different ways of displaying data. Problem solving skills are satisfactory; by the end of Year 9 most pupils are able to identify patterns, establish rules.
90. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards in the work seen are below those expected at the age of 16. Number skills are weak for other than the highest attaining pupils. Many average and lower attaining pupils are having difficulty in using numbers mentally. Algebraic skills are improving; Year 11 average attaining pupils are able change the subject of a formula and higher attaining pupils have a good understanding of how to plot algebraic graphs. Data handling skills and an understanding of shape and space are satisfactory. Problem solving skills are satisfactory with most pupils able to identify patterns and rules. Higher attaining pupils can identify and use formulae, predict and test results.
91. Levels of numeracy are generally below those expected at both key stages. These are reflected in, for example, science, where pupils have difficulty handling calculations and measuring accurately, and geography. Pupils in design and technology have difficulty measuring in millimetres. The lack of any policy for numeracy in the school is resulting in a lack of support from subjects across the school in improving numeracy skills.
92. The overall quality of teaching is good. All teachers have good subject knowledge. They explain skills and concepts clearly, which helps pupils to make good progress with their tasks. Lesson planning is generally good; good links are made between lessons. Teachers manage pupils well. This results in pupils listening attentively and applying themselves well to their tasks. Lessons are usually conducted at a satisfactory pace although it could be better with some of the higher attaining sets. Questioning of pupils is good. It does not always, however, explore well enough what pupils already know and understand. Good use is made of different levels of tasks and resources, especially in mixed ability classes in Year 7, to allow pupils to develop their skills, knowledge, and understanding at an appropriate pace. Homework is set regularly and supports and extends work done in lessons. Good feedback is often given to pupils during lessons, which is helping pupils assess how they are doing with their tasks. Marking of pupils' work is satisfactory though comments about what pupils should do to improve their work are not used often enough. The available time is often well used with good attention given in Year 7 lessons to improving pupils' number skills through regular mental activities. In most of the lessons, however, the teacher directs the learning with few opportunities provided for pupils to learn by themselves.
93. The overall quality of learning is good. Most pupils are making satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3. The effective use made of support teachers, and assistants, is ensuring good progress of pupils with special educational needs. In lessons where support is not provided, however, the progress of all pupils is being affected by teachers having to spend a lot of time dealing with this group of pupils. Most pupils are consolidating understanding well and many are increasing their skills and knowledge appropriately. Good progress is being made with numeracy skills in Year 7. Progress at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory; pupils usually achieve expected results in line with their prior attainment. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Higher attaining pupils are making good progress with increasing knowledge and understanding at both key stages.
94. Attitudes to learning are generally good. In most lessons pupils listen attentively when teachers are talking. They generally behave well. The presentation of work in books is generally good for most pupils. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and pupils usually appear interested in what they are doing. Pupils are usually keen to respond to teacher questioning and they concentrate

well on their tasks. Concentration levels were not as good as they should be in classes containing large numbers of pupils with special educational needs for whom support was not provided.

95. The day-to-day running of the subject is well managed. Schemes of work are good, there is a good match of teaching staff to the curriculum, the budget is effectively managed to provide a good supply of text books and other resources and the available staff and accommodation are well used. There is not, however, a clear direction provided for the development of the subject. Although the development plan identifies some priorities for the subject it is not sufficiently focussed on raising levels of achievement. The available data is not being used well enough to monitor the progress of pupils as they move through the school or to analyse the performance of pupils in external examinations. Although senior staff monitor teaching there is no formal process for the head of department to monitor teaching. Some attention has been given to numeracy in Year 7 but there is no written policy for improving numeracy standards throughout the school.
96. Good improvements have been made since the last inspection. Standards of achievement have been improved significantly. Improved quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 has resulted in an improvement in the quality of learning. The introduction of a new scheme of work has meant that tasks are now matched to the needs of pupils. However, some weaknesses from the previous inspection have still not been improved adequately. There are still no formal procedures for monitoring the work of department and opportunities for pupils to work independently of the teacher are still not provided often enough.

## SCIENCE

97. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 in recent national tests is above that of similar schools, while remaining below the national average. This represents some improvement since the last inspection. In the national tests, and in assessments made by teachers, pupils with higher abilities are closest to the national average. Pupils entering the school are increasingly nearer the national average in attainment.
98. GCSE results in Double Award Science have improved markedly since the last inspection; more than double the percentage of A\*-Cs being obtained in 1999 than at the last inspection. The number of pupils obtaining grades at A\*-C is still below the national average for all maintained schools but the number obtaining grades A\*-G is at the national average and all pupils are now entered for the Double Award examination. In the coursework section of this examination (investigations) pupils do particularly well.
99. In both key stages, middle and lower ability pupils achieve standards that accord with their abilities. Lower ability pupils and those with special educational needs often exceed expectations in investigational work; benefiting from the emphasis that teaching places on this area. There is, however, still some way to go before higher ability pupils achieve at their highest potential. They are rarely given access to the highest limits of scientific knowledge in the National Curriculum. This restricts their achievement overall and also standards in investigational work. Numbers in top sets regularly exceed thirty, which restricts teacher-pupil interaction.
100. Pupils generally work well with their teachers. Lower ability pupils and those with special educational needs concentrate and use the support that is on offer. Higher ability pupils tend to follow what is set but are not always prepared to use their own initiative. Many pupils in a Year 11 class of high ability pupils investigated heating of a wire and were content to use the variable initially discussed. Unfinished work remains a problem, especially for pupils of lower ability. Writing, especially spelling, is holding back pupils of all ages and abilities.
101. Teaching is satisfactory overall and occasionally good. Effort put into developing coursework skills has improved standards, although the time devoted to this area can be excessive. Equally, there is plenty of teaching that is lively and humorous and relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by teachers in class, with adapted resources and supportive marking. For instance, in one Year10 group of low ability pupils, around two-thirds with special needs, special demonstrations were devised for showing the structure of blood. However, there is insufficient challenge in scientific knowledge, especially for those pupils of higher ability. There is currently little planning for the use of the best teaching and learning styles in lessons, nor for different activities for pupils with differing needs. Literacy, numeracy and information technology (data logging) are currently weak and need attention in science lessons. There is a lack

of awareness of the work that pupils do and the standards that they achieve in science before they arrive at Seaham School and this limits pupils' progress in the early stages of Key Stage 3.

102. Resources are generally of a good standard but there are insufficient textbooks for pupils to have one each at home and no data logging equipment within the science department. The laboratories themselves are old and very well used. Lack of maintenance, poor standards of maintenance work and lack of provision are resulting in many minor problems, which are affecting pupils' learning. Existing accommodation, both laboratories and storage, needs to be reviewed in order to provide the best possible learning and working environment for pupils and staff.
103. The management of the department is satisfactory and promotes good relationships. Long-term supply teachers are effectively covering a long-term absence. At present there is only one hard-working technician to support science in eight laboratories and this is insufficient.
104. There are a number of other issues within the management of the department that also need to be addressed. Planning for clear progression of scientific knowledge across all key stages is needed, as is the planned development and monitoring of teaching and learning. Schemes of work in particular need to be developed to take these issues and those of health and safety into account.
105. The chemicals' store lacks ventilation; this is a health and safety issue.

## **ART**

106. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is above average. A feature observed in all the work in art and design is the careful and thoughtful approach adopted by pupils. This results in well-presented work with a high standard of finish.
107. At the end of the key stage pupils draw well from observation and produce imaginative designs from a variety of sources. Designs derived from the art of other cultures, including African and Aboriginal art, are particularly strong. Natural forms based on plants and seeds, are used effectively in both two-dimensional and three-dimensional work. Good observation is evident and pupils construct good ceramic work from these studies. Art history is incorporated in projects and used as a basis of pupils' own drawing and painting. This combines the two main areas of the National Curriculum, the practical and the theoretical, and promotes good learning and progress in both. Computer aided design is well used as an extension of pupils' printmaking but, in general, work in information technology is in course of development rather than fully established.
108. The attainment of boys and girls is not markedly different at this stage in general though there is some difference across different activities, boys being stronger in drawing and girls stronger in design. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well, benefiting from the nature of the art and design curriculum which permits progress at a rate suited to individual needs and attainment at a wide range of levels. Progress across prior attainment levels is good. From a below average level of general attainment on entry, pupils acquire basic skills in drawing and design in a step by step manner and learn to apply them in their individual project work. Pupils work purposefully and their learning is helped by good concentration in lessons and good behaviour.
109. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is above average and this is reflected in their results in GCSE examinations.
110. In the most recent year the A\* - C grades gained by boys and girls collectively averaged 72.2% against a national average of 61.2%. The number of higher grades achieved is also above average. This is revealed in pupils' average points scores, which have consistently exceeded the national average in recent years. As at Key Stage 3, there is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. In the most recent examination pupils scored an average of 5.6 points against the national average of 4.8. Drawing from both observation and imagination continues to be a strength and pupils are able to construct drawings using perspective well, even in the observation of comparatively small objects, bathroom taps for example, viewed from different angles. Colour is used confidently and there are bold designs in textiles, particularly by girls. Strong work is evident in three-dimensional design. Boys, in particular, produce good work in ceramics with well-constructed forms and good control of glazing. Information technology is not systematically built into the curriculum. Where used, however, as in aspects of design, information technology is used effectively. Pupils with special education needs make good progress in relation to the targets set for

them and show effective learning at their own pace. Progress generally is good and is aided by the structure of the curriculum, which provides for progress at a rate appropriate to individual needs. The good pace of progress reflects pupils' interest and enthusiasm.

111. The quality of teaching in the department is good. At both key stages all lessons seen were at least satisfactory and the majority were good or very good. There are a number of strengths and few weaknesses. Lessons are carefully prepared with appropriate provision of resources. Learning is helped by clear description of tasks in the introduction of lessons and good analysis of techniques accompanied frequently by effective demonstration. The level of expectation in the teaching is high but realistically adjusted to individual needs. There is a strong emphasis on thoroughness and completeness in all areas of work. This aspect of the teaching persists throughout both key stages. As a consequence, work at all levels displays evidence of serious involvement alongside enjoyment. A further main strength is the use of display as a learning resource as well as an expression of pupil progress. The quality of display is a particularly valuable feature of the study of the work of other cultures, which additionally enriches the working environment. Learning is advanced by sensitive individual tuition in the course of which teachers' subject expertise and versatility is evident. An additional spur to learning is provided by the good relationships between teachers and pupils. Two minor weaknesses observed were a tendency to over-extend introductions causing some pupil restlessness and an over-emphasis on construction at the expense of observation in drawing in some lessons.
112. Assessment is thorough and reflects whole school policy and National Curriculum recommendations. New assessment criteria have been drawn up to meet the needs of the revised National Curriculum at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4 the assessment objectives of the GCSE syllabuses are applied. Pupils are involved in self-assessment in both key stages. Statutory requirements are fully met.
113. The curriculum is broad and varied and provides for a full range of creative activities in both two and three dimensions.
114. At Key Stage 4 pupils may take either the general art, syllabus 'A' or the three-dimensional design syllabus 'B'. This allows pupils to make continuous progress from Key Stage 3 and to pursue particular interests and strengths.
115. The department is strongly led by a head of department who makes a full contribution to the teaching programme. Documentation is comprehensive and informative and staff share a strong commitment to pupils' progress and success but monitoring is less well established.
116. The accommodation made available to the department is good with well-furnished and equipped rooms and very good display space. Due to the demands of pupil numbers and the teaching programme there is some limited, though effective, use of non-specialist teachers. In some instances their lessons take place in non-specialist rooms, which do not come up to the standard of the designated art and design studios. Despite these difficulties the department plays an important role in the life and academic success of the school.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

117. GCSE results, for design and technology subjects taken together, are well below the national average. Thirty five per cent of pupils gained A\* to C grades in 1999 in comparison with a national figure of fifty per cent. However, there has been a significant improvement in results since the last inspection. Inspection evidence indicates that this rising trend should continue. The percentage of pupils gaining A\* to G grades has improved considerably and in 1999 was a little above the national figure. The overall figure for technology subjects disguises a wide variation in the performance of each component of the curriculum area. Systems and control has achieved very good results over time. Seventy nine per cent of pupils gained A\* to C grades in 1999, well above average. Resistant materials results are poor but show an improvement over time. Food technology results are declining and the school has taken steps to address this. Comparative figures show that pupils achieve better in technology than in many of their other GCSE entries.
118. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is below average. Lower achieving pupils respond well to specific questions and tasks in project booklets but where they are required to give extended answers the response is usually poorly written. Poor literacy and numeracy skills are a limiting factor. Examples of very low standards of work were seen in some resistant materials folders where work was untidy,

poorly organised and not done with sufficient care and attention. For example, in a Year 9 lesson pupils working on a project to design a moving toy had no clear design brief and their folders consisted mainly of worksheets. Pupils are being introduced to basic research techniques and some higher achieving pupils can produce detailed work that is well researched and imaginative in its content. For example, folder evidence from a Year 9 electronics group demonstrated that some pupils can work with complex concepts and use information technology skilfully to present their work well. In general, however, research skills are underdeveloped and the information collected is not always used constructively. For example, cuttings from magazines are not always fully annotated or analysed and the results of questionnaires are not always used to draw conclusions. Many pupils do not develop the skills of personal organisation and independent working necessary for good design work, both during the lesson and over time, because of a lack of expectation that they should produce work to the best of their ability.

119. The quality of learning at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory overall and sometimes good. Progress is better where pupils are interested in the task, have sufficiently well developed powers of self-organisation to build on Key Stage 3 experiences and are given the opportunity to work independently. For example, pupils in a Year 10 electronics lesson working in the computer area and in the electronics area, were given lesson objectives which challenged their personal and practical skills. All made good progress towards completion of the project to create printed circuit boards and the lesson contributed significantly towards development of their ability to work in an independent way. Progress is less evident where pupils are not given this degree of challenge.
120. Attitudes to the subject are mainly good. Pupils enjoy lessons and generally respond positively. Behaviour is usually good and pupils are polite and considerate. The occasionally inappropriate behaviour observed in some resistant materials lessons was directly attributable to a lack of involvement in the task as, for example in a Year 9 group, where pupils waiting to use a machine behaved inappropriately. Where expectations are high, pupils take care with their work and have a pride in what they do. Pupils listen attentively and younger pupils are keen to contribute to lessons. Some older pupils lack the self-confidence to contribute to discussions.
121. Teaching is mainly satisfactory and sometimes good. One unsatisfactory lesson was seen. The best teaching seen was characterised by clear explanations of the work and the lesson objectives, thorough planning, good management of the working situation and a confident manner. All these factors contribute to good relationships and a positive learning environment. For example, in a Year 10 electronics lesson the teacher was confident enough in his relationship with the group to allow them to work unsupervised in two different areas. His degree of trust was not abused. Teaching was unsatisfactory when low expectations failed to improve basic skills. The quality of marking seen in pupils' folders varies in quality. Where work is marked thoroughly, with constructive and helpful comments, it is usually accompanied by an improvement in the quality of pupils' responses. However, much marking is done in a cursory manner.
122. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department has a clear sense of purpose and provides a strong sense of direction. Assessment procedures are good. All assessment information is held on a database that forms a valuable tool for monitoring progress and setting targets. National Curriculum levels are regularly used at the beginning of each design project to inform pupils of their current level of attainment and to show how they can improve. Control technology and textiles technology are omissions from an otherwise broad curriculum that gives good opportunities for pupils to use computers in their work. The department has plans to integrate computer work further and to develop control technology. The generous allowance of curriculum time at Key Stage 3 is offset by a significant number of pupils receiving additional help with literacy during this time. Curriculum time at Key Stage 4 is less than the national average. Teaching and learning are monitored by the head of department and should continue to be developed as a key strategy for improving standards. There is a need to identify good practice and promote this across all areas. Schemes of work are detailed and matched to National Curriculum programmes of study but policy documents need strengthening. In particular, literacy and numeracy strategies should be developed and opportunities for implementing them more explicitly stated. Accommodation is managed well but is cramped and equipment is showing signs of wear and tear. Accommodation for food technology is limited to one specialist room and this causes difficulties when two groups are timetabled simultaneously. Because food technology is located away from other technology areas it has limited access to computer resources. The department benefits from the services of a skilled technician.



123. Since the last inspection the department has made improvements in its assessment procedures and in its monitoring of teaching and learning. These have been a significant factor in the greatly improved GCSE results.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

124. Attainment is not yet satisfactory, although GCSE grades A\*-C have more than doubled over the last four years, from a very low base, and the numbers gaining A\*-G rose from below average to 100%. However, in 1999, the last year for which reliable comparisons are available, attainment for all remained significantly below what is expected nationally at A\*-C. Pupils performed less well in geography than in most of their other subjects. There was a further improvement in 2000, but pupils of low prior attainment did not perform well and there were fewer of the higher grades than would be expected nationally. Analysis of examination results made during the inspection shows that pupils gain much higher marks on course work than on their written papers. The numbers choosing to study geography are below the national average for boys and well below for girls.
125. The estimation by teachers of pupils' performance at the end of Key Stage 3 as expressed in National Curriculum levels is increasingly accurate. Those for 1999 are still a little over-estimated. The scrutiny of exercise books and the inspection of lessons confirm that attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below what is expected of most pupils nationally, with few attaining higher levels.
126. There is a strong database of information about attainment of pupils across Key Stage 3 that provides an accurate rank order. It is a powerful tool for identifying the attainment of individuals, in order to support them, and in planning improvements in the courses offered, but this is not yet used to its full potential. The pre-module planning sheets have the power to involve pupils in improving their own work though all staff do not yet use them and some statements of intent are too general to give pupils targets they can hit.
127. Teaching is satisfactory overall: it is good in almost half of lessons seen and is, sometimes very good. Teaching is better at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4 where it is occasionally unsatisfactory; this happens when not enough is expected of lower attaining pupils who are not involved in their work.
128. Teachers' marshalling of information and materials enables pupils to gain appropriate knowledge of geography. The teaching of basic skills is more varied. Information technology skills are developed because the humanities faculty acquired a suite of fifteen computers at the beginning of term. Pupils search the Internet for information about earth movements and write up a diary of events before and after the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Prince William Sound, Alaska. The computers are well used after school for the completion of homework. The development of literacy skills is unplanned. Pupils are required to write in a range of styles and there is some good use of the imagination to compose the front page of a newspaper reporting the eruption of Mount St Helen. However, writing over time does not give those with the highest prior attainment access to the highest levels of the National Curriculum: pupils have good factual knowledge which they can speak about well, for example about their field work in Year 11 or about earth movements in Year 8, but they lack the writing skills to mould what they can easily comprehend into an effective answer to the question.
129. Teachers habitually use number in geography; pupils were observed to use scale, direction, coordinates and graphs and they used tally charts and transacting in fieldwork. This is unplanned so that it does not systematically reinforce the use of number.
130. Some good practice is seen in providing word frames to structure writing and in providing structured tasks for those of low prior attainment. This is not yet used by all staff but is crucial to raising standards because such exercises give access to improvement to those of low prior attainment and those with special educational needs. Where additional classroom support is made available to the latter group of pupils, at both key stages, they make as much progress as expected; classroom assistants cooperate with teachers to prepare suitable materials in advance of the lessons to meet well the individual needs of pupils. Not enough of this good quality of support is available. Whilst class teachers can identify those pupils with individual education plans and visit them more frequently in class, they do not yet practise the necessary skills to raise attainment other than to offer encouragement.
131. Good use is made of video and display. In Year 9 powerful loops of the Exxon Valdez disaster provoke deep reactions from boys and girls which reflect in their good writing; a good video on earth

movements allowed a lower-attaining Year 8 class to understand the complex situation which they were able to begin to record with the use of a good word frame. Some teachers use power point to illustrate the course of a lesson. The effectiveness of both video and power point is reduced by light penetration. Pupils react well to visual stimulus of good diagrams and photographs in their work to understand the structure of the earth's interior.

132. Behaviour is never less than satisfactory and is often very good at Key Stage 3 where teaching is more stimulating than at Key Stage 4. Teachers work hard, often more so than their pupils of whom they do not expect enough, particularly at Key Stage 4; here learning is unsatisfactory in a lesson where pupils with poor learning skills are heavily teacher-dependent. In a lesson for Year 7 where pupils were trusted to go by themselves into the grounds to sense and measure the microclimate of the school, they repaid that trust by managing their own learning well. Teaching and learning became more of a problem for another class doing the same exercise as a whole class going round the grounds together; the focus of the lesson shifted to control and away from the pupils' work, whereas in the other lesson control was managed through their work.
133. The setting of homework to be completed over a period to support learning in class is strong. Those completing GCSE course work at Key Stage 4 and those doing courses on earth movements or environmental damage at Key Stage 3 were all set medium-term time targets to complete research.
134. Attainment on entry is improving but remains low and many pupils know surprisingly little geography. Some arrive with poor learning skills and a few do not value their learning. Some are unaccustomed to working at pace and have a short attention span and poor listening skills, while a few do not bring basic equipment and forget planners, exercise books and homework. Nevertheless, by the end of Key Stage 3, progress across Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Though pupils begin and end Key Stage 4 at low levels of attainment, they make enough progress to add better value to their prior attainment than more than 50% of schools nationally.
135. Accommodation is well above average: the department is housed in a suite of adjacent rooms with its own computer suite, staff room, photocopier and very well organised stock room. Apart from poor blackout, resources for learning are good. The head of department is very experienced and knows what he has to do. His departmental handbook is very good. The teaching team has been strengthened during the summer and teachers are committed to making the big improvements required. However monitoring is not yet in place.

## **HISTORY**

136. In 1999 teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 were just below the national average and GCSE results were below the national average at grades A\* - C and at grades A\* - G. A significant number of pupils who followed the course were not entered for examination in 2000.
137. In the work seen at Key Stage 3 standards are below those expected nationally. Their studies lack informative depth. Pupils study historical sources showing life in England in the sixteenth century and draw conclusions about whether life was pleasant or unpleasant. They use pictures of Henry VIII to describe his character. They choose from amongst the contenders for the throne in 1066 and give reasons for their choice. In their study of the slave trade, pupils write accounts of life on board a slave trader's ship. They give reasons why the armour and weapons of Roman soldiers were effective in battle. Imaginative writing is a strength, including the writing of pupils with special educational needs, but pupils do not effectively combine information from historical sources into their imaginative writing. They explain the link between developments in transport and the slave trade in oral work but their written explanations in follow-up work are weaker. Pupils' work in selecting information from historical sources is stronger than their work in combining sources of information and evaluating their usefulness.
138. In the work seen at Key Stage 4 standards are also below those expected nationally. Pupils write imaginatively to describe life in the trenches during the First World War. They analyse cartoons to describe the attitudes of different countries on the outbreak of war. They demonstrate good research skills in finding out about methods used by opposing forces to try to break the stalemate on the Western Front but they are less secure in applying their research findings to an examination question. They identify the tactics used at the outbreak of both world wars but are less confident in reaching conclusions on the differences. They describe the ambitions of members of the Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance before the First World War. They summarise the positions of

different countries at the time of the Treaty of Versailles and the achievements of the League of Nations. They are less confident in writing explanations, for example of why war broke out in 1914 and of how life changed as a consequence.

139. The standard of teaching is satisfactory overall and some is good, with pupils making satisfactory progress in the majority of lessons and good progress in some lessons. However, more than 20% of teaching is unsatisfactory, including some that is poor, with pupils making unsatisfactory progress. In the most effective teaching lessons have a clear structure, pupils know what is expected of them at each stage and there is a sequence of linked activities offering progressively more challenge. Time is well used with pupils undertaking a variety of activities enabling them to consolidate their learning. Pupils make good progress in consolidating their understanding of the contenders for the English throne in 1066 by studying information on each contender, selecting a preferred candidate, taking part in an election, designing an election poster and giving reasons for the candidate selected. The level of challenge is further enhanced by the teacher's questions and by the resources provided. Oral work is well managed and clearly linked to writing activities with pupils given guidance on structuring their ideas with, for example, the use of writing frames enabling pupils with special educational needs to make good progress in developing their understanding of the slave trade.
140. The most striking feature of the least effective teaching is a lack of challenge in lessons, with too much time spent on discussion. Some oral work relies on pupils' previously acquired general knowledge and does not move their learning forward in terms of subject specific knowledge and skills. In other oral work, pupils' contributions are not well used. Pupils spend too much time in some lesson introductions at Key Stage 3 discussing important things in their own lives, such as freedom, before looking at the history of slavery, with unsatisfactory progress made in gaining historical knowledge and understanding. Similarly, too much time spent on the characteristics of famous people in modern times prior to a study of historical sources results in unsatisfactory progress in gaining an understanding of the character of Henry VIII. Questions in oral work lack challenge and this lack of challenge is reinforced by pupils having to rely on too narrow a range of sources of information, which does not enable pupils to acquire a sufficient depth of knowledge and understanding. Pupils' progress in acquiring knowledge of weapons of war at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory but limited by the resources available. In some lessons there is not a clear distinction between when class discussion ends and when individual activities begin which restricts the pace and productivity of pupils' work. Insufficient time is spent on assessing pupils' work as lessons progress with opportunities lost to clarify understanding.
141. Pupils' attitudes are good and some are very good. Pupils behave well and are keen to participate in discussion. At Key Stage 3, pupils show enthusiasm when taking part in lesson activities. At Key Stage 4, they display initiative when undertaking research and work with concentration both independently and in groups.
142. Schemes of work in the department are currently being revised and new methods of assessment are being introduced. However, much remains to be done in terms of producing the new schemes of work and links with the new methods of assessment have not yet been established. The range of resources available in the department does not provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to deepen and extend their understanding. The significant element of unsatisfactory teaching was not reported at the time of the last inspection. Monitoring and evaluation is not in place.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

143. Pupils enjoy information technology and they produce some attractive and well-researched work. Standards are rising steadily in the subject.
144. Pupils enter school with a basic knowledge of computers and make rapid progress in Year 7, becoming accustomed to working with different types of computer and a range of programs. Attainment in information technology at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average. Over half the year group attained Level 5 in the recent end of key stage school tests, which is well above the national average, but fewer pupils attained Level 6. Pupils can all log on to the network, use passwords, choose programs and recall previously stored work. Mouse control is good. Pupils know how to save work and use the printers. Keyboard skills are satisfactory but slow. By the time they are 14, pupils have made good progress from simple word processing to using desktop publishing. Pupils produce letters, leaflets and newspaper-type pages, showing they understand about changing style and using graphics and clip art. Pupils in Year 9 worked well on a multi-task project that involved

presenting information to a specific audience. Most pupils were skilful in downloading still and moving pictures from the Web and produced some worthwhile texts. This project aided pupils' literacy skills, as they had to show care in their choice of words. Pupils know about creating questionnaires and can insert the information into a database but many, especially the lower-attaining pupils, need help with framing questions to gain accurate results. Spreadsheet work is sound. Artwork is sound. Pupils use packages, mainly in art lessons, and can change images and colours successfully. Standards in computer control are good, but pupils have relatively short modules in the design and technology department on this aspect. Data monitoring is weak and pupils are unfamiliar with the data logging equipment.

145. The overall attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is above the national average. 18 out of 24 pupils were awarded the full Part 1 Certificate at Intermediate level in GNVQ and 6 out of 7 gained the full Part 1 Foundation Certificate. In work seen during the inspection, pupils built on the skills gained during the first three years in school. Most of them produce a good amount of work in folders and files and much of it is well researched. During the key stage, pupils become used to making decisions about how to solve problems and the best piece of software to use to present their findings. Skills in word processing, data handling, modelling and in searching for information are good. By the time they are 16, pupils can assess the quality of their work and give reasoned arguments about the impact of computers on society. They also have a good general understanding of where, why and how computers are used in business. The higher-attaining pupils present their work carefully, and annotate their work to show where and why the printed pages are different, but the lower-attaining pupils tend to leave this out and encounter difficulties when revising for the examinations. Pupils who take the GCSE courses in business studies and office practice use the computers mainly for word processing and their work is at least sound on this aspect. Most pupils who take these examinations take a key skills course in information technology and the pass rate is increasing at Level 2. By the end of Year 11, all pupils gain some form of certification in information technology.
146. The response to information technology is good. Throughout the school, pupils have good attitudes to the subject. They are interested, especially when they are doing something new, listen and watch attentively and settle to their own tasks without undue fuss. Pupils generally concentrate well, and most of them try hard. Behaviour is good in Key Stage 3 classes and is very good in Key Stage 4. Most pupils are polite to teachers and make efforts to answer questions. There are a few silly boys in some of the Year 9 groups and a few who make the minimum of effort in lessons, but most pupils are cheerful and willing to work. Pupils take care of the computers and know that they should not tamper with equipment or access inappropriate information. They know not to alter files or deface work on display. Some boys take responsibility for checking that the machines are left ready for the next groups. During lessons, pupils are lively and co-operative. As class sizes are often double the number of computers available, pupils have to share. In lessons, the collaboration is very good. Pupils swap tasks and make joint decisions and share information sensibly. At Key Stage 4, pupils show increased maturity as they work independently and a few of the higher attaining pupils produce extra work independently. Pupils' books show that the higher attainers are more likely to act upon the advice written by the teachers.
147. The quality of teaching is good. In 15 lessons observed during the inspection, 5 were very good, 7 were good and 2 were satisfactory. There was one unsatisfactory lesson. Teachers are enthusiastic about the subject and are well skilled. They ensure that pupils gain in knowledge and understanding of the workings of the computers and the software. Planning is good. The scheme of work covers the requirements of the National Curriculum and is broken into manageable parts so that pupils can focus on aspects and it gives them plenty of time to practise and become proficient. The modules of work are made interesting for the pupils by having good links to pupils' interests. For example, groups of pupils in Year 8 are working on databases and collected information about their friends' sports and hobbies. Formal teaching at the start of sessions is clear. Pupils have good instruction and information that allows them to gain the basics before they experiment for themselves. Resources are used well, but task sheets do not sufficiently support lower-attaining pupils who cannot always take in all the information and instructions at the beginning of lessons. In the one unsatisfactory lesson, a group of pupils with poor literacy skills could not get to work speedily enough as they had no support sheets and hence made unsatisfactory gains. Teachers know the pupils well and all are treated fairly. The one-to-one help and advice given during lessons serves to help pupils who are struggling and to stretch the ones who can cope with extra techniques. Marking is generally clear, but in some instances does not tell pupils how their work should be improved. Assessment procedures and practices are good. The department work together to ensure pupils are assessed correctly and analyse the results to determine where lessons need altering or aspects

need strengthening in the following year. Homework is given regularly and returned on time. The work follows on well from the lesson and reinforces and extends the learning.

148. It is an aim of the school that the skills that pupils learn in information technology lessons are used in other subjects. Some departments, such as design and technology, geography, music, physical education and special needs use the equipment well and often. Pupils benefit from this additional tuition and enjoy using additional equipment, such as control boxes and plotters in design and technology, electronic keyboards in music; computer aided design packages in art and video conferencing facilities in modern languages. Other departments do not fully exploit the potential of information technology and miss opportunities to extend pupils' interests. Data logging, for example, is not attempted in science and although the mathematics department intends to use Logo and spreadsheets, there is no evidence in pupils' workbooks.
149. Leadership is good. The head of department is respected as an effective leader. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. The quality of teaching is higher as are standards at both key stages. There is a general upward trend in results in information technology, business education and office practice in Key Stage 4. In addition to the response to the comments in the last inspection report, there have been significant changes. The development plan is clear and focuses on raising attainment. The scheme of work has been rewritten and some pupils have won prizes for communication skills in national competitions. The school has invested heavily in equipment and the department ensures the pupils derive as much benefit as possible from using it. New members of staff have brought new ideas to the department. There is now a full-time highly skilled technician who gives good support to teachers during lessons and who keeps the equipment in good working order. There is a training programme for subject teachers, but as yet there are no accredited courses offered. There are more computers and a wider range of modern software which pupils can use both in and out of lessons.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

150. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with national averages except at the highest level. In 1999 the majority (87%) of pupils achieved what is expected at the end of the key stage. There has been a significant improvement in the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level over the last three years though results for 2000 are not as good as in previous years. The number of pupils achieving higher than expected level for the age group (level 6 and above) is below the national average and has shown very little improvement over the last three years. Girls perform significantly better than boys.
151. Results at the end of Key Stage 4 in French show that 72.2% of pupils who were entered for a GCSE examination in 1999 achieved grades A\*-C. This is well above the national average. 97.2% of pupils entered for the examination achieved levels A\*-G. This is also above the national average. These figures are, however, based on a small entry. A more significant figure would be that the average points score for pupils in French is broadly in line with the average points score for those pupils in other subjects. This indicates that French is only matching attainment in other subjects in the school. Boys perform less well than girls though the gap has narrowed from their performance at Key Stage 3.
152. In German a similar pattern emerges. In 1999 47.1% of pupils entered for the examination achieved grades A\*-C and 100% achieved grades A\*-G. These figures are above the national average but are based on a small entry. Once again a more significant figure would be that the average points score for pupils in German is marginally better than the average points score for the same pupils in other subjects. This indicates that German is performing slightly better than other subjects in the school.
153. At Key Stage 3 pupils' performance represents satisfactory progress for their ability, including pupils with special educational needs. The best pupils in Year 9 are on target to achieve level 6. At Key Stage 4 progress by pupils in GCSE French is in line with expectations for their ability. Observation of work in a GCSE German group, however, shows that higher and lower ability pupils are not achieving as well as they ought to. Pupils who are not following GCSE courses are making little or no progress because the courses they follow do not allow them to fulfil their potential. Some high ability pupils in a Year 10 GNVQ class were working at a lower level than they were in Year 9.

154. Teaching is overall satisfactory and sometimes good. Good teaching occurs more frequently in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4. Lesson-planning is good. Presentation of new work is invariably done in a lively way. Good use is made of visual aids and the overhead projector. Teachers have developed good techniques for engaging and keeping pupils' attention. This is a strength of the department. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Homework is set regularly and is always based on work done in the lesson.
155. Summative assessment and recording of National Curriculum levels is thorough. The setting of lesson objectives stated in terms of pupil outcomes, which are reviewed at the end of the lesson, is done well by most teachers but not by all. Teaching is less effective when teachers do not maintain pace and challenge throughout the lesson. Less effective lessons are too teacher-centred. Too few opportunities are given to pupils to move from whole-class practice of new structures to pupil-centred activities. Diagnostic assessment is not yet integral to the work of the department. There was no evidence that the department uses assessment to inform planning in any organised way. There is too little differentiation of work, particularly in mixed-ability classes though there are examples of good practice.
156. When teachers are not experienced in teaching a particular language, there is lack of confidence, which detracts from teaching performance. The target language is not used sufficiently by any teachers to be effective. Consequently pupils do not use it themselves as the main means of communicating in the classroom. This has a detrimental effect on the development of their listening and oral skills.
157. Since the last inspection there has been a decline in the number of pupils being entered for a GCSE examination in a modern foreign language. Levels of attainment have improved and are now in line with national averages at Key Stage 3, except at the highest levels. The progress of pupils in lower sets is no longer a problem. All pupils now show good levels of motivation and confidence. There is no longer a problem with resources. There was no evidence from lesson observation that independent reading skills were being developed, though the departmental action plan indicates that all pupils should read one text in the target language every half-term. The problem of provision at Key Stage 4 has become more acute because the curriculum model is now affecting pupils' progress.
158. The curriculum model at Key Stage 4 is having a detrimental effect on progress for a considerable number of pupils. Only one lesson per week is allocated to modern foreign languages as a core subject. Pupils who want to study a language to GCSE level have to choose it as an option subject. For this reason the number of pupils studying a language at GCSE level is low by national standards. Consequently:
- Option choices have meant that there is only one GCSE group for German in Year 10. Teaching a modern foreign language in mixed-ability groups is difficult, particularly at Key Stage 4 when the knowledge gap is very wide. This is having a detrimental effect on the progress of pupils at either end of the ability range.
  - Pupils in GNVQ groups, in particular, are making little or no progress. Because they are only studying the language for one lesson a week, they do not have the opportunity to improve their skills to any significant extent. Often pupils, particularly those of high ability, are working at lower levels than they were in Year 9.
159. The head of department has only been in post for one term. In that time she has managed to create a good working relationship with her colleagues. This is a cohesive department in which teachers support each other and have a genuine desire to move forward. They meet regularly, on an informal basis, to exchange ideas and discuss problems. Documentation is clear. Schemes of work are comprehensive. The head of department is beginning to impose standardisation of procedures. All members of the department record summative assessments thoroughly and follow the marking policy. The head of department has some good ideas about what has to be done to raise standards but she needs assistance from senior management in prioritising and assessing the financial implications of departmental plans so that expenditure can be cost-effective. The department is heading in the right direction.

## **MUSIC**

160. By Year 9 most pupils achieve standards in line with their ability. In performing and composing, most pupils reach the nationally expected standard, with a small minority above and below. They can select appropriate dynamics, speeds and timbres for their compositions and make satisfactory

individual contributions to group performances. They can compose to achieve the effects they want, for example when writing music that raises tension to breaking point by careful selection and use of musical motifs. Pupils appraise their own work effectively and identify improvements needed in content, or in performance, but they are weaker at assessing the music of others. They lack the confidence to offer comments. When encouraged by teachers, pupils can use the right musical words to describe their work, but their spelling of these words is often incorrect.

161. In comparison with national figures, GCSE results have fluctuated over the last three years, but in summer 2000 pupils' pass-rate at grades A\* to C, awaiting confirmation, look set to surpass the previous national average. Lower results in the previous year were still above expectation for the pupils concerned. The performing skills of pupils in Year 11 are good; they are confident and enthusiastic music makers and have been encouraged by open access to the music department at lunchtimes and after school, where staff are on hand to support their rehearsals. Both boys and girls are keen and competent singers. Composing skills are not quite so strong, but are still satisfactory and talented students have produced exceptional compositions for GCSE. Pupils are less confident in appraisal, they can identify styles of music but cannot explain clearly what musical features differentiate, for example, jazz from gospel music.
162. Progress across Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Pupils make good progress in performing but are hindered by poor listening skills from making maximum progress in listening and composing, despite supportive teaching and well-planned lessons. Progress across Key Stage 4 is good, especially in performing, thanks to teachers' support and to the students' tremendous enthusiasm; they seize every opportunity at lunchtime and after school to practise, both individually and in groups. However, progress in listening is not good. The development of listening skills of all students is constrained by over-crowded, over-resonant classrooms, whose poor acoustics make critical listening impossible, and by the heating system which 'sings' at its own pitch.
163. Both boys and girls are enthusiastic about music, and almost all work hard in lessons. Pupils' behaviour is generally good, sometimes very good, despite the crowded conditions of the classrooms. Where it falls short it is usually due to boisterous boys with poor concentration but teachers quickly encourage them back to work.. The numbers taking GCSE are small, filtered by inequitable time allocation to develop skills and enthusiasm in Key Stage 3, when some classes have fewer music lessons than others. There is no arrangement to ensure that, over the complete key stage, no pupils 'lose out' on lesson time. Setting of creative arts subjects in Year 9 compounds this problem.
164. Teaching is good, with some very good features. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, often shown by skilled questioning, also indicated by the prompt sheets of relevant technical words in classrooms, and consistent use of those words in class. Plenty of support is given to pupils, in groups or individually. An exciting variety of activities is offered in each lesson to develop and reinforce learning in, for example, Year 7 about rhythm patterns and note values. This diversity shows improvement from the last inspection. Pupils are kept working throughout lessons because teachers regularly summarise work done so far and remind them what they are expected to do by the end of each lesson. Plenty of encouragement is given, particularly to those who find the work difficult. Sometimes time runs out at the end of a lesson; this needs to be managed more effectively. Occasionally boys are allowed to dominate, answering more questions than girls. Lesson planning does not specify methods of support for pupils with special educational needs, but teachers give them appropriate help and resources. Talented pupils are also supported through extra levels of challenge. Teachers plan well the use of information technology for composing and performing and for sequencing work in Key Stage 4. Work is regularly marked. Often, helpful comments are made and spellings corrected, but neither of these things is done consistently, and targets set in reports are often not specific enough to be helpful.
165. The curriculum is impressively planned, including clear links to previous and future learning and in Key Stage 3 it also makes a good contribution to literacy through a range of written activities to extend pupils' use of relevant vocabulary. However, pupils have insufficient opportunities to appraise each other's work. They are weak at this because they do not get enough regular practice. There is no evidence of thought being given to the contribution which music can make to spiritual development, though there is a broad contribution to pupils' cultural education through world music, e.g. Chinese music (Year 8) and Blues (Year 9), and a wide variety of ethnic instruments is used, including genuine samba whistles.

166. A modest amount of ensemble work offers performing opportunities for higher attainers. Open access to the department at lunchtime and after schools encourages pupils to practise. Major performing opportunities are confined to the Christmas concert and the annual production. While valuable, these do not offer pupils sufficient chances to share their skills with a wider audience. Pupils do not even play in assemblies. Departmental planning recognises this weakness and further opportunities are being sought. During the inspection, pupils played at open evening. The department is so short of storage space that keyboards have to be put on the floor, further reducing classroom space and creating a safety hazard. The department grasped enthusiastically recent opportunities for pupils to work at the Northern Recording Studio, a very good opportunity for them to develop musical and social skills and to learn about career opportunities in music.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

167. In July 1999 the school entered 35 pupils for the GCSE examination and the number of pupils that gained A\* - C grades was well below the national average. However in the July 2000 examination the school entered 28 pupils and there was a very significant improvement in the number of pupils gaining A\* - C grades.
168. The overall attainment at the end of Year 9 has improved since the last inspection and is now in line with national expectations. Swimming is a strength. Many pupils arrive at the school unable to meet the Key Stage 2 standard of swimming 25 metres, but by the end of Year 9 the vast majority of pupils can swim confidently with good techniques in a variety of strokes. Pupils also demonstrate good levels of attainment in personal survival techniques. In games activities, most pupils are confident performers and display the ability to apply tactics in competitive games. In gymnastics, pupils perform a good range of balances and movement using the floor and on apparatus, with an increasingly competent ability to link them into fairly complex sequences. Pupils are involved in the planning and evaluation of their work, but in order to meet fully the requirements of the National Curriculum, this aspect needs to be developed.
169. The overall attainment at the end of Year 11 is also in line with national expectations with many pupils, especially those in the examination groups, achieving higher standards. Good levels of skills development are clearly evident in a wide range of activities, particularly in swimming and cricket. Many pupils are able to transfer the skills practised in lessons into a full game situation. They are able to use this ability to undertake a range of roles including performing, officiating and coaching. In health related education, pupils are attaining an understanding of fitness issues and practices, with some pupils able to devise their own fitness programmes. Pupils in the examination groups are developing their understanding and expertise in both theoretical and practical aspects of the subject, and are producing course work folders that are detailed and well presented.
170. Pupils with special educational needs, although receiving no extra staff support, are very well integrated, given much support both by teaching staff and other pupils and reach levels which are commendable for them.
171. Many school teams participate in local school competitions and gain much success. Many pupils have represented Sunderland and some have gained County of Durham representation.
172. The overall quality of teaching continues to be at least satisfactory with no unsatisfactory teaching being observed. In the majority of lessons observed, the teaching was judged to be good. It has a clear purpose derived from well-devised schemes of work. All lessons begin in an orderly manner with objectives clearly stated which help pupils understand what is expected of them, and how to improve. Teachers are constantly demanding, and often getting, good standards of work and behaviour. Pupils respond positively to the good teaching. They show themselves able to work productively together in pairs and group work. Relationships between teachers and pupils are sensitive and positive.
173. Following the comments in the last report, the content of the physical education curriculum has been revised with the result that it is now broad and balanced and offers pupils a wide range of activities. However, at the moment, only girls are given the opportunity to have dance lessons, creating a situation of unequal opportunities for the boys. Pupils taking the GCSE in the subject now have a discrete time allocated for the course, rather than having to cover the course in core physical education time. Many teachers, including some non-specialists, give freely of their time to provide a wide variety of extra-curricular activities and after school games, which are supported by large and



enthusiastic groups of pupils. Procedures for assessing and recording pupils' attainment have recently been revised and comprehensive records of pupils' achievement are kept and the information gathered is used to inform planning and set targets for individual pupils. Good use is made of the department's information technology expertise to produce comprehensive data about pupils' attainment.

174. Accommodation for the subject is of high quality, is well maintained, and has a positive effect on the attainment of the pupils. The time allocation for the subject is good and enables the pupils to meet the demands of the National Curriculum. The department's capitation is satisfactory with the money being wisely spent, and the equipment well maintained.
175. Strong leadership, clear direction and a positive ethos characterise the management of the subject. There is comprehensive and high quality documentation. Departmental issues are discussed and well documented. The staff who teach physical education work well together, support each other and show a strong commitment to the pupils.
176. Since the last inspection there has been an improvement in the overall standard of work in Key Stage 3. The curriculum revision has resulted in a more balanced offer being made to the pupils. The concerns about the upkeep of the swimming pool have been overcome. The department is now using the information technology expertise of the department to produce high quality performance tables for the pupils.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

177. In relation to the attainment targets of the local Agreed Syllabus for religious education, standards by the end of Year 9 are below average. Most pupils have a reasonable knowledge and understanding of the aspects of Christianity and other major world faiths that they study. However, their understanding of the impact that membership of a faith community has on its members, and their capacity to make personal responses to religious questions is below average.
178. In 2000, about half the pupils in Year 11 chose to be entered for the short GCSE course in religious studies and 32 % achieved the higher A\* to C grades. Girls' results were better than boys' results. This represents an improvement in comparison with 1999 when only 13% of pupils achieved the higher grades, which was well below the national average. In 1998 results were good. Half the pupils who were entered for the examination achieved the higher A\* to C grades which was above the national average and the proportion obtaining at least a grade G was above average. No statistics are available to compare boys' and girls' performance separately against the national picture in the short GCSE course. The inconsistency in achievement in the GCSE examination, year on year is largely due to the school's policy of allowing pupils to choose for themselves whether or not to be entered for the short GCSE course, which all pupils entering Year 10 take as an alternative to the Agreed Syllabus. Although the achievement of pupils not choosing to take the examination is assessed against the expectations of the local Agreed Syllabus, nevertheless there is some subsequent effect on motivation and interest among all pupils, as they continue to be taught together. At the end of Key Stage 4 most pupils have met the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus but standards achieved by those following the GCSE course are below average.
179. Pupils' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. They develop a sound knowledge and understanding of the key features of Christianity, Judaism, Sikhism and Islam, which they study in Years 7 to 9. Higher attainers write at length, for example, on the events of Holy Week and some work is imaginatively presented. However, the work of many pupils tends to be limited in length and the quality of their writing and presentation is weak. Pupils' understanding of the impact that belief has on the lives of members of faith communities is underdeveloped and they seldom make personal responses to the religious issues that they study. However, there is evidence in the lessons observed that this weakness is being addressed. For example, pupils in Year 8 can describe their responses to different images of Jesus and Year 9 pupils understand the importance of the Passover in reminding Jewish people of their history. Pupils who have special educational needs make generally similar progress to other pupils although the large numbers of such pupils in some classes restrict the level of individual attention which can be given by the teacher.
180. Most pupils maintain this sound progress in Years 10 and 11. Pupils in Year 10 develop an understanding of the basis of moral authority in Christianity and the other major world faiths that they study. By Year 11 most pupils can express their own views on a range of moral issues such as

abortion and euthanasia, and can describe Islamic, Jewish, Anglican and Roman Catholic views. Higher attainers write at length and support their findings with appropriate Biblical reference. Lower attainers and pupils who have special educational needs can make simple personal response to difficult questions such as the nature of God, but their written work on moral issues is sometimes restricted to description without sufficient challenge to their understanding. However, in the lessons observed, the teachers' use of adapted worksheets and textbooks ensured that these pupils were able to make adequate progress.

181. Throughout all years, the response of the majority of pupils is good. Pupils in all years co-operate well with each other in group work, and classroom displays of the results of their investigations are well presented. Most older pupils appreciate the challenge which their studies have brought to preconceived ideas and respect views and beliefs which differ from their own. However, a minority of pupils lack motivation and are not always fully involved in lessons.
182. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. The scrutiny of pupils' work also revealed generally satisfactory teaching but the quality of marking was inconsistent, and the teaching, particularly in Years 7 to 9, concentrated on the development of pupils' factual knowledge and understanding at the expense of their capacity to evaluate the impact of belief on the lives of members of faith communities. This weakness in planning was not evident in the lessons inspected, where each of the attainment targets of the Agreed Syllabus received due attention. In a lesson on Jesus' authority and teaching in Year 8, the teacher gave the pupils a very clear understanding that their work would be assessed for qualities of empathy as well as imaginative description. Teachers' good subject knowledge is used well in explanations and in questioning pupils. Only one class is taught by a non-specialist and the department provides good support for the teacher concerned. Teachers use a reasonable variety of teaching methods including pair and group work as well as opportunities for independent research including the use of information technology. Their classroom organisation is good. A Year 7 class was able to make good progress in learning about the symbolism contained in religious objects because the pupils worked in groups which meant that they all had time to handle the objects and talk about them as well as use a variety of written resources to investigate their use and meaning. The weaknesses in otherwise satisfactory lessons were largely due to lack of detailed subject knowledge or lack of experience, which resulted in a level of challenge that was not well matched to the pupils' attainment, or in a slow pace of learning.
183. The response to the subject issues raised at the time of the previous inspection have been good, particularly in improvements made to the provision for pupils' spiritual development. Religious education now makes a strong contribution to this important aspect of pupils' personal development as well as their moral, social and cultural development. In addition, good procedures for assessing pupils' progress in Years 7 to 9 are currently being implemented, ensuring that all attainment targets of the local Agreed Syllabus are appropriately represented. There is a developing use of information technology in lessons to support pupils' learning. Arrangements for the induction of newly qualified teachers are good. Leadership is good and the subject is well placed to continue to improve. All pupils start to follow a short GCSE course in religious studies but the current policy of allowing pupils to choose whether or not to be entered for the examination is having a detrimental effect on overall motivation and commitment, particularly in Year 11, and requires review. Greater rigour is required in the analysis and use of assessment information in monitoring pupils' progress, particularly in Years 10 and 11.