

# INSPECTION REPORT

**WROCKWARDINE WOOD SCHOOL**

TELFORD

LEA area: The Wrekin

Unique reference number: 123572

Headteacher: Dr R Nash

Reporting inspector: ID Thompson  
12271

Dates of inspection: 11-15 September 2000

Inspection number: 223766

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	County
Age range of students:	11-16
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	New Road Wrockwardine Wood Telford
Postcode:	TF2 6JZ
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr A Talbot
Date of previous inspection:	22 January 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
I Thompson 12271	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?
			The school's results and achievements
			How well are pupils taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
			What should the school do to improve further?
J Harrison 11077	Lay inspector		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?
O Denson 14893	Team inspector	Science	
R Garrett 19913	Team inspector	English	
R Jones 1752	Team inspector	Geography	
L Kauffman 15051	Team inspector	Design and technology	
		Information and communication technology	
P Mitchell 12328	Team inspector	History	
D Morris 4757	Team inspector	Music	
J Oxley 2141	Team inspector	Physical education	
J Radford 15678	Team inspector	Religious education	
		Special educational needs	
D Shepherd 20412	Team inspector	French	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
J Simms 10053	Team inspector	Art	
I Waters 4829	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
W Wimshurst 8341	Team inspector	Mathematics	

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33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Wrockwardine Wood School is a mixed comprehensive school for students in the 11-16 age range. There are 1027 students on roll, which is about the same as most secondary schools. The school serves an area on the northern edge of Telford. Since the previous inspection, a larger number of students come from areas in which there are considerable social problems. The majority of students are white.

The intake is broadly comprehensive. However, fewer students than usual have above average levels of prior attainment and, over the last four years, the average attainment on entry has declined. A higher than average proportion of students has special educational needs and the proportion of students with statements of special educational need is close to twice the national average. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is broadly average. There are 47 pupils for whom English is an additional language, none of whom are at an early stage of language acquisition.

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

This is a good school that is oversubscribed. Leadership inspires students to do well and achieve high standards. The high standard of teaching has a positive effect on students' learning. The school is very well managed and provides good value for money.

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

- There is a shared commitment to improvement and the capacity to succeed.
- Students achieve well in the school.
- Good teaching that promotes learning is a key feature of the majority of lessons.
- The headteacher provides very good leadership. Management is effective in raising standards.
- Pastoral care and relationships throughout the school are very good, building self-confidence.
- Links with parents, partner institutions and the wider community are very good.
- Very effective use is made of resources, particularly the use of information technology across the curriculum.
- Development planning is very good.
- Additional funds and sponsorship are used very well to raise standards.

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

- Standards of attainment in mathematics and geography.
- The provision of support for students with emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- Teacher assessment procedures at the age of 14.
- The use made of tutorial time.
- Time provided for religious education at Key Stage 4.

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

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

There has been good improvement since the last inspection in January 1996. The key issues identified have been dealt with effectively. Improvement in the quality of teaching has ensured that standards of achievement have been raised despite declining levels of attainment on entry.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

In the 1999 GCSE examinations, results were in line with national averages in comparison with all schools and above average in comparison with similar schools. Results were above the national average for the award of five or more grades A\*-G. Although the trend of improvement in the school's results is below the trend nationally, the school has consistently exceeded both the targets set by the local education authority and its own targets, which are more demanding. Students' progress at GCSE, in relation to their performance in tests at the age of 14, is well above average in comparison with similar schools. Against a background of declining attainment on entry this is a creditable performance. The gap between boys' and girls' results is much less than found nationally and in 1999 boys' average points score was above their national average while that of girls was below. Results at Grades A\*-C were above average in drama and humanities. They were well below average in geography, German, physical education and science. Students' best overall results, compared with their achievements in other subjects, were in drama, food technology, history and music. Poorest results were in geography, mathematics, physical education and science.

In work seen during the inspection in English and mathematics, standards of attainment at the age of 16 match average standards nationally; in science, they are slightly below. In other subjects, standards are above average in design and technology, information technology, music and physical education. Standards match expected levels in art, history, humanities, and religious education. Standards are below average in French, geography and German.

Students achieve well at the school. Many enter with well below average standards of literacy and a well above average proportion has special educational needs. By the age of 16 they achieve above average standards at GCSE grades A\*-G.

## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good attitudes to learning support achievement.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Students generally behave well. Learning is occasionally affected by the behaviour of a minority with emotional and behavioural difficulties.
Personal development and relationships	Very good, mutually respectful relationships between teachers and students.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory.

Very good relationships contribute to creating an atmosphere in most lessons that helps learning.



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Consistently good quality teaching is a strength of the school. The overall quality of teaching is good at both key stages. Teaching is satisfactory or better in 99 per cent of lessons. It is good in 46 per cent, very good in 15 per cent and excellent in two per cent. The quality of teaching in English and science is good. It is satisfactory in mathematics.

The proportion of teaching which is good or better is higher in Years 10 and 11, reflecting teachers' better knowledge of their students and well-developed relationships. Occasionally teaching is outstandingly good. No poor lessons were seen during the inspection. In the very few unsatisfactory lessons, unsatisfactory learning was the result of planning which did not provide sufficiently varied activities to maintain interest. The common features of the outstanding lessons were the enthusiasm, patience and active support through which teachers involved students in learning. Teachers make good use of available support and the contribution to students' progress provided by learning support assistants is exemplary.

Teachers know their subjects well. This enables a confident approach in lessons, which are well planned to meet students' needs and create enthusiasm. However, there are occasions when teachers do not demand high enough standards or stretch the more able. In geography the quality of learning is affected by insufficient attention being given to depth of coverage of the programme of study and the development of students' skills. Teachers are successful in developing students' independence and self-confidence. Improvements in literacy and numeracy skills are less secure because a consistent approach has not been established. Opportunities to develop numeracy skills across the curriculum are too often missed, although there are some examples of good practice. Teaching of the personal and social education programme varies in effectiveness because some teachers are less confident when working outside the area of their subject expertise and the time given to tutorials is not as well used as elsewhere. Day-to-day assessment is generally used well to promote the progress of students with special educational needs across the school. Teachers make very good use of information and communication technology to support learning in subjects across the curriculum and to develop skills.

The overall quality of learning lags very slightly behind the quality of teaching, particularly in the early years. This is partly because Year 7 students are new to the school and have yet to fully appreciate the school's tradition of mutually respectful relationships and partly because many students throughout the school have difficulty in retaining or recalling knowledge, particularly following the long holiday. However, the principal factor impeding learning is the disruption caused by a minority of students with behavioural difficulties in classes where there are many students with special educational needs.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall, with good provision of extra-curricular activities. There is insufficient time for religious education in Years 10 and 11.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. The curriculum is well organised to meet students' needs.

Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Very good social development.
How well the school cares for its students	High quality care and support for progress.

The school works very well in partnership with parents. Procedures for ensuring students' welfare are very good. Progress is monitored and supported very well. The curriculum is well matched to students' needs but not enough time is provided to meet the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education in Years 10 and 11. The school has very good links with partner institutions and with the community, which contribute to the quality of education provided.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very good leadership and is well supported by other members of the senior management team.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors provide very good support. Strengths and weaknesses are well understood.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good continuous review. Effective action to secure improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Very effective use of available resources.

The school has good resources and adequate staffing and accommodation. There are weaknesses in the management of geography and modern foreign languages. Procedures for seeking best value are well developed. Resources are very well managed; very good use is made of sponsorship and additional funds to promote improvement.

## 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>• Exceptionally good induction system, including home visits by senior staff</li> <li>• The efficient way in which staff deal with concerns</li> <li>• Improvements in the building and information technology resources.</li> <li>• The educational standards achieved.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standards of behaviour.</li> <li>• The scheduling and amount of homework.</li> <li>• Information about progress.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views and investigated their concerns. Behaviour management is generally very effective, but there is a small number of classes where behaviour is not always good enough. During the inspection, the amount and quality of homework set were satisfactory. The annual written progress reports are of good quality and present a clear picture of standards and how students could improve.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The results of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in 1999 were close to the national averages in English and science. They were below average in mathematics. In comparison with the national averages for boys, results were close to average in science but below average in English and mathematics. Girls' results were below the national average for their age group in all three core subjects. The performance of girls was further below their national averages than boys – in mathematics and science the gap between performance and the national averages was almost twice that of boys. Taking the three core subjects together, results were below average overall in comparison with all schools and in comparison with schools in similar social circumstances. Although over the last four years the trend in the school's results has broadly matched the national trend, there have been considerable fluctuations, with a sharp fall in 1998 followed by an improvement in 1999. There has been further improvement in the 2000 results. Results in English show the best recovery, results in science have remained fairly stable and it is the results in mathematics that have depressed the overall average points score to below the national average.

2. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of students gaining five or more grades A\*-C was close to the national average. The proportion of students gaining five or more grades A\*-G was above the national average. Results were in line with national averages in comparison with all schools and above average in comparison with similar schools. Although the trend of improvement in the school's results is below the trend nationally, the school has consistently exceeded both the targets set by the local education authority and its own targets, which are more demanding. Students' progress at GCSE, in relation to their performance in Key Stage 3 tests, is well above average in comparison with similar schools. Against a background of declining attainment on entry this is a creditable performance. The gap between boys' and girls' results is much less than found nationally and in 1999 boys' average points score was above their national average while that of girls was below.

3. At grades A\*-C in 1999, results were above average in drama and humanities. Results were close to average in art, business studies, English, history, music and French. They were below average in design and technology, mathematics and religious education, well below average in geography, German, physical education and science. Results at grades A\*-G were above average in drama, French, German, history, humanities, music and religious education. They were close to average in art, business studies, design and technology, English, mathematics and physical education. Results were below average in geography and science. Students' best overall results, compared with their achievements in other subjects, were in drama, food technology, history and music. Poorest results were in geography, mathematics, physical education and science.

4. In work seen during the inspection in English, standards of attainment at the ages of 14 and 16 match are close to average standards nationally. Students enter the school with below average attainment. However, the emphasis given to reading and the support given to students with special educational needs enable the majority of students to read and write with reasonable competence by the age of 14. By the age of 16 most can read with understanding and structure their written work effectively. Nevertheless, weaknesses in spelling and presentation persist. Students generally listen carefully to teachers and to each other, respecting opinions and values. Many are confident speakers, participating actively in discussions and answering questions, although using a restricted vocabulary.

5. Other subjects make a satisfactory contribution to developing standards of literacy. Some, such as history, religious education and science, provide a variety of written tasks, including extended writing, which have a positive effect on standards.

6. In work seen during the inspection in mathematics, standards are below those expected nationally for students aged 14 and 16. Number skills are below average when students enter the school and remain weak for many at the age of 16. Students have difficulty in handling numbers mentally; measuring and algebraic skills are weak for all but the highest attainers. Students show a better understanding of shape and space and by the age of 14 problem solving skills are well developed.

7. Levels of numeracy are below those expected for the majority of students. Many students have difficulty in handling numbers in mental arithmetic and are unable to use formulae confidently. Measuring skills are underdeveloped. Although students in science and design and technology are able to use scales reasonably accurately, many students have difficulty with converting units of measurement. Data handling and graphical skills are best but by the end of Key Stage 4 they are only satisfactory for a small majority of students.

8. In work seen during the inspection in science, standards at the age of 14 are in line with those expected for students of the same age nationally but are slightly below national standards at the age of 16. Students enter the school with levels of attainment which are well below average and their achievements at the end of Key Stage 4 are better than might be expected in relation to their prior attainment. Students produce good standards of written work with appropriately labelled diagrams. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory and most students can use units correctly, make measurements, perform calculations and draw graphs. Students of all levels of attainment can describe what they are doing, using appropriate terminology.

9. In work seen during the inspection in the remaining subjects of the curriculum, standards achieved by students by the age of 14 are above the level expected in design and technology and religious education. Standards match expected levels in all other subjects except geography, in which they are below average. By the age of 16 standards are above average in design and technology, information technology, music and physical education. Standards match expected levels in art, history, humanities, and religious education. Standards are below average in French, geography and German.

10. Students achieve well at the school. There are few students who might be described as talented or gifted. However, teachers usually plan work to stretch students. For example, in science at Key Stage 4 higher attaining students are encouraged to form judgements and to think about experimental limitations. The majority of students achieve at least as well as might be expected and many do better. Students enter the school with below average levels of attainment and a higher than average proportion has special educational needs. By the age of 14 overall standards of attainment in the majority of subjects at least match those expected for 14 year olds nationally, indicating good achievement. The pattern of achievement is maintained. By the age of 16 overall standards exceed targets based on attainment at the age of 14 and progress is well above average in comparison with similar schools. Students with special educational needs, including those with English as an additional language, usually achieve at least the standards which teachers expect of them in relation to their individual targets. They make good progress in withdrawal lessons and generally satisfactory progress in mainstream classes. An exception to this is in lessons when the diverse needs of students are not matched by the support available and it becomes difficult for teachers to meet all individual needs effectively, despite their best efforts. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades A\*-G, which is above average in

comparison with all schools and in comparison with similar schools, indicates significant achievement for many students who enter the school with very low levels of literacy and those with special educational needs.

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

11. Students' attendance is satisfactory. In the last year the overall attendance rate was 91.3 per cent. The attendance level in Year 11 has improved slightly since the last inspection. Punctuality is satisfactory. Students generally arrive punctually in the mornings, but a few loiter in the corridors between lessons.

12. Parents indicated in the questionnaire returns that the great majority of their children enjoy coming to school. The majority of students show good attitudes towards school and an interest and enthusiasm for learning and participating in extra-curricular events and productions.

13. Students, including the majority of those with special educational needs, make good gains in personal responsibility and maturity at the school. The work of the Year 11 prefects is very good. They are trained in how to behave with younger children and help tutors with Year 7 at form times.

14. Students' behaviour at school is good overall, but it is not quite as good when unsupervised. In lessons, students behave well and often very well. During the inspection, only a few lessons were seen where students' attitudes and behaviour were not conducive to learning. These were in some lessons with a significant concentration of students with special educational needs when insufficient support was available. Around the school and at lunchtimes students' behaviour is generally good. Most are polite and helpful to staff and visitors, but minor tensions can break out in unsupervised areas or form rooms.

15. Despite the fact that there are students at the school with very challenging behaviour, it is creditable that there were no permanent exclusions in the last year. There were 72 short period exclusions, which is a relatively high number but well justified. This reflects the school's inclusive policy in which there is a determination to uphold good standards while using permanent exclusion only as a last resort.

16. Students report relatively little bullying; staff quickly resolve any reported incidences. Parents commented favourably on the way in which the school deals with difficulties and keeps them informed. A number of younger students, however, feel intimidated and are jostled in the school corridors or on stairs.

17. Students show satisfactory respect for others and for the school. There is no visible sign of graffiti, but there is too much litter outside. In lessons such as religious education and history, students' discussion shows good respect for other viewpoints and faiths.

18. Relationships in the school are very good. Most students show respect for their teachers and appreciate the way teachers give freely of their time to help them. The way in

which teachers organise many lessons helps pupils to develop independence and their self confidence.

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

19. There has been an improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. Consistently good quality teaching is a strength of the school. The overall quality of teaching is good at both key stages. Teaching is satisfactory or better in 99 per cent of lessons. It is good in 46 per cent, very good in 15 per cent and excellent in two per cent. This is particularly impressive when considering that the inspection took place early in the school year; in many lessons seen during the inspection teachers were with their classes for only the first or second time. In addition, several teachers were new to the school and two were new to teaching.

20. The proportion of teaching which is good or better is higher at Key Stage 4, reflecting teachers' better knowledge of their students and well developed relationships; occasionally teaching is outstandingly good. In the very few unsatisfactory lessons, unsatisfactory learning was the result of planning which did not provide sufficiently varied activities to maintain interest. In one case, the lesson was unsatisfactory because experienced teachers were unable to ensure appropriate progress for all of the very high proportion of students with varied special educational needs in the class. The common features of the outstanding lessons were the enthusiasm, patience and active support through which teachers involved students in learning. In two of these lessons, the contribution to students' progress provided by learning support assistants was exemplary, reflecting the very good use teachers make of available support throughout the school.

21. At Key Stage 3, the overall quality of teaching is good in art, design and technology, history, humanities, physical education, religious education and science. It is satisfactory in all other subjects. At Key Stage 4, teaching in music is very good. It is good in all other subjects except French, geography, German and mathematics, where it is satisfactory.

22. The overall quality of learning lags very slightly behind the quality of teaching, particularly in the higher quality of learning at Key Stage 3. This is partly because Year 7 students are new to the school and have yet to be fully inducted into the school's tradition of mutually respectful relationships and partly because many students throughout the school have difficulty in retaining or recalling knowledge following the long holiday. However, the principal factor impeding learning is the disruption caused by a minority of students with behavioural difficulties in classes where there are many students with special educational needs. Teachers work hard to promote the learning of many challenging students and classroom management is generally very good. A principal factor in this is the establishment of mutually respectful relationships, which parents commented on so positively. Students with special educational needs are generally well taught in mainstream classes. Teachers use their good knowledge and understanding of students' needs to tailor their teaching styles and learning materials to meet those needs. Classroom support is effective and has a positive impact on learning. Students learn with confidence and make good progress. However, in some classes there are so many different special educational needs that it is impossible for all to be met fully. Learning is good in the small withdrawal groups because of teachers' expertise in specialised techniques and their high expectations. In the majority of lessons teachers create a quiet, purposeful working atmosphere in which good learning takes place. This is evident when walking round the school during lesson time. Teachers set out to develop students' independence and to build their self-confidence. For example, in a Year 11 art lesson well established good relationships enabled the teacher to set standards and ensure understanding in a quiet confident manner so that students could work independently with the minimum of necessary support. In a Year 10 English lesson, the

teacher's lively direct manner demanded attention and drove the lesson at a good pace to ensure students' involvement and consequent progress. The success of teachers' attempts to build confidence is shown in the quality of students' willingness to talk about their work and in their contributions to discussions in lessons. This is a particular feature of many lessons in art, design and technology, history and science. In humanities, teaching methods ensure that listening skills are well developed and the use of role play and discussions helps to develop confidence in speaking. Improvement in literacy and numeracy skills is less secure because a consistent approach has not been established across the school. There is good practice in science, for example, where there is a focus on correct terminology, and opportunities for extended writing are provided in history. Opportunities to develop numeracy skills across the curriculum are missed, although there are some examples of good practice such as the work on bearings in geography.

23. Teachers know their subjects well. This enables a confident approach in lessons, which are well planned to meet students' needs and create enthusiasm. In an outstanding Year 10 mathematics lesson with a special educational needs class, the teacher's enthusiasm, use of well directed praise and short term targets, together with a lesson plan that owed much to a game show format, led to students working at a cracking pace to improve their use of number and develop their ability to add and subtract.

24. Work and the pace of lessons are generally well matched to students' needs throughout the school. For example, in art and music, projects are planned to be appealing and to challenge students of all attainment levels. Work in design and technology is well planned to challenge students of all levels of attainment so that they make good gains in learning. In a good Year 9 history lesson, the teacher's exceptional knowledge of local history captured students' interest, which was built on to increase their knowledge of the wider picture of industrial development. However, there are occasions when teachers do not demand high enough standards. For example, in an otherwise well planned Year 10 mathematics lesson students were allowed to work at a relatively slow pace and did not make as much progress as they should. In a Year 10 French lesson, students worked at a lower level than necessary because the teacher did not insist on them extending their one word answers when they could be reasonably expected to offer a complete sentence at this stage. In geography there are too few opportunities to develop enquiry skills, because students are given information rather than being encouraged to work things out for themselves and higher attaining students particularly are not adequately challenged. For example, a teaching booklet used with a Year 7 geography class, although well produced and attractive, lacked extension tasks to stretch the more able. Overall, in geography the quality of learning at Key Stage 3 is affected by not enough attention being given to depth of coverage of the programme of study and the development of students' skills. At Key Stage 4 teachers provide too few opportunities to reinforce new learning and to consolidate previous learning. Teaching of the personal and social education programme varies in effectiveness because some teachers are less confident when working outside the area of their subject expertise and the time given to tutorials is not as well used as elsewhere.

25. Although the use teachers make of assessment to guide lesson planning and to promote progress is satisfactory overall, the use of data to monitor progress, identify students who are not doing as well as they should and to set targets for them is inconsistent. Day-to-day assessment is generally used well to promote the progress of students with special educational needs across the school. In English, progress is well monitored and in design and technology and physical education the setting of targets for students is well developed. However, in some subjects this is less well developed. For example, in French, planning does not take adequate account of assessment results.

26. Teachers make very good use of information and communication technology to

support learning in subjects across the curriculum and to develop skills. This has been a focus of staff development as part of the school's role as a pilot school for the development of alternative teaching and learning methods. The benefits are clear. Particularly imaginative and creative use is made of resources in art and music.

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

27. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements at Key Stage 3, where it contains all the subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and personal, social and health education. There are a few weaknesses. The coverage of the National Curriculum programme of study in geography is not as well balanced as it should be because there is insufficient fieldwork and geographical enquiry is limited. At Key Stage 4, the time allocation for religious education is insufficient to allow full coverage of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Nevertheless, the range of learning opportunities at both key stages is good, with strong use of information and communication technology across the curriculum at Key Stage 3 and citizenship in the Year 9 humanities course. At Key Stage 4 there is a wide choice of options, including GNVQ courses in information technology, performing arts and the Skillpower entry level course. The length of the teaching week at 25 hours is in line with the model for comprehensive schools nationally at Key Stage 3 and for the DfEE recommended time at Key Stage 4. The school makes good provision for students with special educational needs. Although the school has an above average proportion of students for whom English is an additional language, none is at an early stage of language acquisition or requiring support. There is equality of access and opportunity to the curriculum across the school and the curriculum is accessible by all students on the special educational needs register. The recently established on-site learning centre makes it possible for students to continue their studies on an individual basis as an alternative to permanent exclusion from school. Individual education plans are effective in ensuring that students' particular needs are made clear. However, short term targets for improvement in basic skills, specific subjects and behaviour are not always accompanied by precise information on how these targets are to be achieved.

28. The school does not have a formal literacy policy, but good features of literacy development are found in many departments and a whole school policy is being prepared. Although there is an emphasis on numeracy in mathematics lessons, opportunities are missed in other subjects for using numeracy to develop skills.

29. The school makes available a wide range of extra-curricular activities that enrich curricular provision. About half the students take an active part in extra-curricular sport, supervised by a total of seven staff. Many departments offer clubs, activities and educational visits. Music and drama clubs are popular. A homework club is well attended.

30. The programme for personal, social and health education is taught by form tutors, not all of whom are confident in this role. There is some monitoring by heads of year during the lessons but the co-ordinator of the programme is unable to monitor it as she teaches her form group at this time. Recent staff changes have also made it hard to monitor and evaluate the course, which includes drugs education, sex education and skills for life and is being rewritten to include citizenship.

31. The school has very good links with the community and partner institutions. Excellent constructive links are well established with local primary schools. There are several joint projects, for example in English and mathematics, which help to raise students' standards of work.



32. The provision for careers education and guidance is good. The programme in Year 10 includes the opportunity for all students to have work experience, which is monitored, with careful preparation and follow-up during the placement by members of the teaching staff. Local industry is very supportive in helping with placements for work experience and in providing mentors for the STEP programme to prepare Year 11 students for the world of work and this has proved successful in helping to raise standards. Local industries have sponsored music and information and communication technology facilities, which have very positive benefits to students' attainment. There are close and productive links with local colleges, which enable students to make well-informed choices.

33. The school has very good relationships with its partner schools. Frequent meetings are held with the primary schools and there are effective arrangements for ensuring that students settle quickly and easily on transition. There are also very good relationships with further education colleges, whose staff attend open evenings. Effective support and monitoring are provided for students who are in the school as part of their initial teacher training.

34. Since the last inspection there has been satisfactory improvement in the curriculum, although the issue of time for religious education at Key Stage 4 has still not been resolved fully.

35. Provision for students' social development is very good. Opportunities for moral development are good. Spiritual and cultural development are satisfactory.

36. Members of the senior management team and heads of year conscientiously take assemblies. The number of assemblies held has increased since the last inspection. Students across the age range are very well behaved, but the impact of the message being delivered is often not strong enough to hold the students' attention in the period immediately before going home. Assemblies are most successful where there is student participation or some humorous content. Form tutors' delivery of thoughts for the week, provided for consideration in tutorials, is irregular and inconsistent in quality and needs to be improved. Statutory requirements for a daily act of worship are not met.

37. Religious education makes strong provision for students' spiritual knowledge and for their insight into values and beliefs. In lessons, students are helped to reflect on their own and other people's experience through a wide and demanding range of work. Humanities, history, child development and science departments help students to develop spiritual awareness but opportunities for this are frequently missed in other subjects. Staff training could show how usefully to encourage students to reflect.

38. A great effort is made in school to teach all students the clear difference between right and wrong behaviour. There is a high expectation of good behaviour in virtually all lessons. Staff are good role models in their care for individuals and in their hard work. Prefects have a high sense of responsibility and give invaluable help, such as in their care of Year 7 students in the first few weeks of the school year. Personal and social education topics usefully focus on attitudes to other people, on the work ethic and on issues such as stereotyping and equal opportunities. In geography students are taught to understand moral issues such as those surrounding exploitation in developing countries. Wider issues of right and wrong, of ethical dilemmas and of man's inhumanity to man are discussed, particularly in religious education, humanities and history.

39. The school regards the socialisation of students as a vital part of its work. There is a strong ethos in the school, which promotes appropriate and pleasant behaviour in the community. There are many opportunities for students' social development, ranging from the

school committees and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme to work experience and the school's enthusiastic collection for guide dogs for the blind. Many subject departments such as physical education, science, music and modern languages give good opportunities for collaborative work. The physical education department has good links with the leisure centre and students learn to share facilities with the public. At the outdoor education centre students experience challenges which enable them to tackle difficult climbs with other people. Routines in the music department are well developed where students often work independently. The large choir and smaller orchestra and rock group contribute effectively to the social life of the school in the concerts and musical productions held.

40. Cultural provision is uneven. Extra-curricular activities, industrial visits and departmental expeditions contribute well to students' understanding of their own cultural heritage and to a lesser extent of that of other nations. Humanities and history undertake many very good studies of the local area. Multicultural studies are built well into the art curriculum. Artists in residence have included Asian textile artists and in art attention is particularly given to cultures from which students derive their work references. Major world religions are examined in religious education. Societies very different from the students' own, such as the Roman civilisation and Shogunate Japan, are studied in history. Geography provides good insights into the cultures and beliefs of developing countries such as Bangladesh and Brazil. Consideration of traditions of other countries is not well developed in modern foreign languages. Dance is neglected. Although there is good singing of songs of various nations, there is little other attention to the cultural aspects of music.

41. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory. There needs to be more progress in developing the spiritual awareness of students.

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

42. The school takes very good care of students. Parents are impressed with the way their children are treated as individuals and the extra hours some teachers work to ensure that problems and concerns are dealt with. The school is flexible in adapting procedures so that students with particular medical, behavioural, attendance or learning difficulties receive the best and most appropriate support available.

43. Students settle quickly into the school routines after an excellent induction system. They are then supported by a stable team of tutors and heads of year which moves up through the school with them from Year 8 to Year 11. This enables both the students and their parents to build an effective working relationship with the pastoral team.

44. Effective child protection procedures, which comply with legislation, are in place. Teachers have clear guidelines and are well supported by the co-ordinator. More training for key staff would further strengthen procedures. The school takes appropriate care with health

and safety. Risk assessments have been carried out in all departments and of the site as required.

45. Procedures to monitor and promote attendance have improved since the last inspection and are now good. The school suitably stresses the importance of regular attendance, has issued parents with an attendance guide and is swift to contact parents if their children are not in school. This has secured a slight improvement in Year 11 attendance to clear the benchmark of 90 per cent.

46. There are very good procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour. Teachers provide good role models. In nearly all lessons seen during the week of inspection teachers had established a successful climate for learning. The school has recently introduced an assertive discipline policy, which is proving effective. There are a few classes where the particular concentration of students with diverse special educational needs is such that behaviour is not satisfactory despite the teachers' best efforts.

47. Procedures to support personal development are good because tutors and heads of year know their students well. Students meet their form tutors for a period of form time or assembly at the end of each day. In most cases, but not in all, this time is used suitably for personal development or ironing out the problems of the day. Students are given good advice about their options and post-16 choices. Representatives from local industry are helping to mentor the current Year 11 and this is proving effective preparation for their next stage of education or work.

48. Systems for identifying and supporting students in need of additional help and the arrangements for reviewing the progress of students with individual education plans and statements of special educational needs are good. The learning support department works well with subject departments to develop learning materials which help students improve their understanding and to organise their written work successfully. Liaison with external agencies and specialist centres is well developed. In addition to promoting confidence and progress in the classroom, the learning support assistants make an effective contribution to the general welfare of students.

49. The school's procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are very good. A very good policy on assessment gives clear guidelines for teachers. Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test results, and reading tests, are used to build up a clear picture of students' attainment when they arrive at the school. These are entered into a database to enable departments to identify students who may not be achieving the standards they should. The Year 9 National Curriculum test results, and the local education authority 10 plus results, are used well to predict GCSE grades and to target students in Key Stage 4 who could do better. Although procedures are well designed, they are not implemented consistently. For example, assessment is carried out well in child development, physical education and art, although it is unsatisfactory in French and German. In some subjects the assessments do not give an accurate picture of students' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3. For example, in history, geography and science they are too high and in mathematics they are not high enough. The assessment of students with special educational needs is very good.

50. The procedures for monitoring and supporting students' progress are satisfactory. However, the use of the data collected to monitor progress, identify students who are not doing as well as they could and to set targets for them is not yet well developed in all subjects. In some subjects, for example English, progress is well monitored and in design and technology and physical education the setting of targets for students is well developed. In child development students are kept very well informed about how they are doing.

51. The use of assessment information to guide curricular planning is satisfactory. The information is used well to determine the grouping of students and identify students with special educational needs. Assessment is used to modify the curriculum and to plan teaching in some subjects but this is not a common feature of the assessment process. In others, for example French, planning does not take sufficient account of assessment results.

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

52. The school has maintained the very good and effective links with parents that were evident at the time of the last inspection. The key strength is the excellent programme of induction for prospective students and their parents. This establishes an early strong rapport. A senior member of staff makes a home visit to all prospective entrants whose parents request it. This is followed up by a visit by the headteacher to about five per cent of these homes at the end of the year to gain feedback of their experiences at the school. Parents give good support to the school and their children's education by their regular attendance at consultation evenings with the teachers and their backing for homework. The school works particularly well in partnership with the parents of students who have special educational needs to promote progress and personal development. Communication between school and home is good. Parents contribute to the reviews of their children's progress and help with work at home. Parents are pleased with the way in which their children are supported and encouraged to make a positive contribution to the life of the school. The Friends group organises events to raise funds or involve parents in educational issues and has furnished the enclosed courtyard area with seating and flowers. The regular school productions are very popular events.

53. Parents are very pleased with the school and the exceptionally good induction. They feel comfortable to approach the school with any concerns and are impressed with the efficient way in which staff deal with these. Since the last inspection parents have noticed improvements in the building, computing facilities and educational standards achieved. Parents raised no significant concerns, but there was some concern over standards of behaviour, homework and information about progress.

54. Inspectors agree with parents' positive views and investigated their concerns. Management of behaviour is generally very effective, but there is a small number of classes where behaviour is not always good enough. Parents' concerns about homework appear to be largely historical, as now appropriate homework is set in accordance with the homework timetable. Some parents said that they would like more frequent information about their children's progress, rather than waiting until the end of the year. The inspectors consider that while this might be useful, the school already more than meets statutory requirements on reporting students' progress. The annual written progress reports are of good quality and present a clear picture of standards and how students could improve.

55. The school provides good quality written information. The newsletter published twice termly keeps parents well informed about school life and events. Parents find that the homework diary is useful for home/school communication. The prospectus is well presented and informative. The governors' report to parents provides a good summary of the year's work, but lacks sufficient detail on the school's special educational needs policy.

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

56. The quality of leadership and management in the school is very good. The headteacher provides strong and purposeful leadership. He is fully committed to raising standards in the school through management which aims to include all staff in the decision

making process. There is a strong commitment to very good relationships. The contributions of all members of staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are valued. The effectiveness of this inclusive approach is well illustrated by a rising trend in performance while the prior attainment of students on entry has been declining. The shared values of the staff and the school's mission statement are central to the work of the school and give it a very good capacity to succeed. The school's very good links with the community reflect the school's mission statement to "be a centre of learning serving the local community...." The school's management team gives strong support to curricular links with partner primary schools and post-16 institutions to promote continuity of education within the local community. A strong initiative of regular home visits by staff enables the school to monitor the concerns of both parents and the communities in which they live.

57. The members of the senior management team provide effective support in monitoring standards and in maintaining the very supportive atmosphere in the school which promotes achievement. The process of continuous self-review is very well developed, enabling strengths to be developed and areas for improvement identified.

58. The overall quality of leadership at middle management level is good. Most middle managers have established clear educational direction for the work of their departments and monitor standards effectively. The exceptions to this are geography and modern foreign languages. In geography there has been a failure to reverse a downward trend in results and insufficient monitoring of teaching of the programme of study at Key Stage 3. In modern foreign languages, the evaluation of standards is ineffective and there is a consequent lack of clear direction in planning for improvement. Very good management is an important factor in rising standards in design and technology, history, humanities and physical education. Although there is some good practice, assessment is not consistently accurate enough at Key Stage 3 to support planning and target setting.

59. Support for students with special educational needs is well managed and co-ordinated. This is reflected in the generally good gains in independence and personal development of the majority of students and in examination achievement. The co-ordinator gives clear educational direction, promotes high standards and ensures daily routines run smoothly. There is a shared commitment to improvement in the department and a strong team spirit.

60. The governing body has a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and supports the school well. Governors have strong links with the community, which enable them to consult and reflect opinion. They play an active part in monitoring the work of the school and hold it to account effectively. Improvements in accommodation and resources reflect the co-operation of the governors and senior management of the school in strategic planning. The governors' report to parents does not have enough detail about the school's special educational needs policy. Governors do not meet their statutory responsibilities in respect of the provision of a daily act of collective worship and the provision of sufficient time to meet the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education at Key Stage 4.

61. Development planning is very good. Priorities appropriate to the needs of the school are carefully identified and linked to targets to secure improvement. The emphasis is on increasing students' independence, building confidence and improving performance to raise standards. The improvement in information and communication technology resources and associated staff training in using them to support learning, together with the continuous review of progress that identifies further priorities, well illustrate the effectiveness of the school's approach.

62. Financial planning is very good. The school manages its budget very well and has very good procedures to monitor the effectiveness of spending and to ensure best value. The school is very good at securing additional funding, which is managed very imaginatively to support its priorities, for example developing information and communication technology resources. The administration of the budget is very good. The school makes effective use of technology to enable spending to be monitored against budget and to provide up-to-date information. Routine administration is very efficient and ensures that the school runs smoothly.

63. There is a satisfactory match of teachers to the demands of the subject curriculum. There are difficulties in providing adequate staffing for some subjects, such as business studies, arising from the heavy demands of students' choices. The provision of support for special educational needs is satisfactory overall but does not fully meet the school's needs in its efforts to keep and support students with emotional and behavioural difficulties in mainstream classes. Support in science lessons is often provided by other teachers and a number of staff have other management responsibilities, which reduces the time available for the development work that is particularly necessary at Key Stage 4. The school has good procedures for appraisal and performance management. Arrangements for the induction of staff new to the school are very good. Teachers participate in regular reviews. Heads of department and the senior teacher responsible for induction monitor their teaching. Teachers confirm that they receive good support from the school and from colleagues.

64. Overall, the school has sufficient accommodation of appropriate quality to enable staff to teach the curriculum effectively. Some subjects benefit from excellent accommodation; for example, the physical education department has the use of the nearby leisure centre and the music department has professional quality recording studios. There is an excellent information technology suite. The various elements of the design and technology curriculum are taught in geographically separated locations in the school, making departmental co-ordination difficult. Each discipline, though, has good quality accommodation. Accommodation has a direct impact on improving standards in these departments. The library provides a good facility that is used well at break and lunch times. The geography department has rooms scattered across the school, which makes teachers' access to resources difficult. Many departments such as science make very good use of their space for stimulating displays, which give both information and guidance to students about their work. Accommodation for mathematics was a key issue in the last report. Much has been done to improve this, with new buildings for some of the department. This does much to improve the overall status of mathematics in students' eyes. Two demountable classrooms still detract from the quality of students' experience in the subject and create difficulties for teachers in the sharing of resources and information and communication technology facilities. Accommodation for information and communication technology across the school is variable. Some rooms are good, creating good, well-ventilated environments for this subject. Poor ventilation in other rooms creates a less satisfactory environment for learning. Other aspects of accommodation cause some concern. The unsatisfactory amount of litter generated at each break, for example, spoils what is otherwise a graffiti-free, pleasant outdoor environment. A staircase leading to the business studies department is narrow and seems not to be included in the one-way system otherwise operating in the school. Smaller, often younger, students find this one of the most intimidating areas of the school.

65. The overall provision of resources to support teaching and learning is good. The school has adequate information and communication technology equipment, which is well distributed, around the school to facilitate use in departments. The library is well stocked with up-to-date textbooks and fiction; it is well organised to make access easier for students who are not willing readers. Most departments have good resources. Resources are excellent

for music and very good for physical education and make a considerable contribution to standards. Only in the history and modern foreign languages departments are there deficiencies which have an adverse effect on learning. In both subjects there are too few textbooks to allow students to take them home for work outside school. In French this leads to time being wasted on copying work from books to use for homework. Both departments are inadequately provided with audio-visual equipment and there is a lack of computers in the modern foreign languages department.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

66. To raise further the standards of work and the quality of education provided, the governors and senior management team should:

- (1) Raise standards of attainment in mathematics by:
  - increasing the level of challenge in lessons and improving the pace of learning at Key Stage 3;
  - improving progress and performance monitoring to produce a more accurate assessment of students' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3;
  - increasing the opportunities for the application of numeracy skills across the curriculum.(See paragraphs 6, 7, 22, 28, 58, 84, 88)
  
- (2) Raise standards of attainment in geography by:
  - revising the Key Stage 3 scheme of work to introduce more fieldwork, to extend the use of information and communication technology and to provide balanced coverage of the National Curriculum programme of study;
  - increasing the range of teaching and learning styles and extending the use of geographical enquiry;
  - increasing the participation of girls in lessons.(See paragraphs 24, 115, 116, 119, 120, 121)

67. The following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- Review the provision of support for students with statements of special educational need for emotional and behavioural disorders to enable all students in their classes to make appropriate progress.
  - Review teacher assessment procedures at Key Stage 3 to ensure accuracy and consistency.
  - Review and monitor the use of tutorial time to improve consistency and effectiveness.
  - Provide sufficient time to meet the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education at Key Stage 4.
- (See paragraphs 10, 14, 20, 22, 24, 25, 30, 34, 36, 46, 47, 49, 58, 60, 63, 86, 87, 139, 161)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	178
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	55

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	15	46	36	1	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7– Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1024
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	167

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	50
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	169

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	47

<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	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	18

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.7
National comparative data	7.9

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	1.1

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



### **Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	96	107	203

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	59	51	48
	Girls	79	56	49
	Total	138	107	97
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	69(42)	54(46)	49(46)
	National	63(65)	62(60)	55(56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	20(8)	29(21)	22(13)
	National	28(35)	38(36)	23(27)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	51	49	81
	Girls	71	50	83
	Total	122	99	164
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	60(74)	49(60)	81(68)
	National	64(62)	64(64)	60(62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	23(39)	20(24)	30(24)
	National	31(31)	37(37)	28(31)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	110	85	195

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	48	105	108
	Girls	33	68	83
	Total	81	173	191
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	41(40)	92(90)	98(96)
	National	46.3(43.3)	90.7(89.8)	95.7(95.2)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	38(36)
	National	37.8(36.8)

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

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	5
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	10
Indian	52
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	3
White	950
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	1	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	71	0
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)	59.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.2

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	303

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	80.6
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	26
Key Stage 4	25

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	2378297
Total expenditure	2378860
Expenditure per pupil	2317
Balance brought forward from previous year	50441
Balance carried forward to next year	49878

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1027
Number of questionnaires returned	185

### Percentage of responses in each category\*

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	37	51	10	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	37	44	4	0	15
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	50	11	1	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	50	11	2	15
The teaching is good.	28	61	2	0	10
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	37	13	2	15
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50	42	4	2	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	42	2	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	30	47	10	1	11
The school is well led and managed.	38	45	5	0	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	47	4	1	12
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	45	6	2	14

\*Rounded to nearest whole number

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

### **ENGLISH**

68. Standards of attainment in English are in line with those expected nationally at the ages of 14 and 16. Standards are as high as they should be in relation to attainment on entry and prior attainment.

69. 1999 Key Stage 3 National Curriculum test results, taking performance at level 5 or higher and at level 6 or higher together, were close to the national averages for all students. Using average points scores for comparison, students' performance was close to but slightly below the national average. Unusually, girls were further below their national average than boys. Compared with all schools and with similar schools, the performance of students was similar in English and science, and better than in mathematics. Results dipped severely in 1998 but recovered well in 1999, so that the trend in results over the last four years broadly matches the national trend. Provisional results for 2000 suggest a broadly similar picture, though raw figures for performance have fallen.

70. The proportion of students gaining GCSE grades A\*-C in English in 1999 were close to but below the national average. Again unusually, girls performed significantly worse than girls nationally; boys performed slightly better than boys nationally. Students' performance in the grade range A\*-G was very close to the average performance nationally. Comparison between these students' average points scores in English at Key Stage 3 and at GCSE suggests that they achieved as well as they should given their prior attainment. Entries for GCSE English literature have been rising over recent years, and in 1999 results at grades A\*-C were close to but below the national average. Performance in the grade range A\*-G was also close to but slightly below the national average.

71. GCSE English and English literature results for A\*-C grades have fluctuated widely since the last inspection. In comparison with 1995 English results in 1999 were lower, but English literature results were higher. Provisional figures for 2000 suggest that students' performance was well below national averages for these examinations. The English department has carefully analysed its results every year, and it is clear that several factors are involved in this variation. The most important is that results closely reflect prior (Key Stage 3) attainment. In addition, more students as a proportion of the year group have been entered for both examinations, and this has tended to lower the average grade. There have been problems with coursework completion, new syllabuses and staffing changes. Despite these, the department has succeeded in ensuring that students, particularly boys, have done as well as they should in relation to their prior attainment.

72. In work seen during the inspection, standards of attainment at ages 14 and 16 match average standards nationally.

73. Early at Key Stage 3 the range of attainment is as wide as might be expected from students whose attainment on entry is below average and who include a higher than average proportion of students with special educational needs. Nevertheless, the emphasis given to reading and the use of support groups for students with special educational needs enable a majority of students to read, write, speak and listen with reasonable competence by the age of 14. Higher attaining students can write at length, fluently and accurately, with good presentation. Their spoken responses are confident and thoughtful. Average attainers produce competent, plainly expressed written work that shows reasonable knowledge and understanding. Lower attainers, although showing more difficulty in understanding, can identify images, setting and atmosphere, and use these terms, for example when sorting out

the sequence of events in a text. Students with special educational needs can produce reasonably accurate, neatly presented work in full sentences, using capital letters and full stops. They obtain good scores with “Successmaker” software. In any year group there are wide variations in the standard of written work, but the most obvious persistent weakness is spelling.

74. By the end of Key Stage 4 most students can read with understanding, annotate texts appropriately and structure their written work effectively. Higher attainers produce written work that shows awareness of social or historical context and the author’s intention. They can write effectively about character and themes, using appropriate evidence from a text. Their coursework often shows involvement with texts, but would benefit from an emphasis on quality rather than length, and on a refinement of style by use of a wider range of vocabulary and sentence or paragraph links. The work of lower attainers shows more limited understanding of written texts, but they manage analysis of media techniques more successfully. The standard of boys’ attainment among this group is depressed by technical weaknesses, especially in presentation and spelling. Students with special educational needs show developing understanding of how language can be manipulated, and can use it to produce, for example, a positive or negative emphasis from a similar group of words.

75. The quality of contributions made by other subjects to standards of literacy is satisfactory overall. Some subject departments reveal strengths in particular skills arising from the opportunities they provide to practise them. In history, for example, speaking and listening skills have improved since the last inspection, with students showing greater confidence and attention as they take advantage of the opportunities to take part. Similarly, in music, students show themselves to be confident speakers when answering questions. In science, students listen attentively and their spoken confidence is boosted by good relationships. Speaking and listening skills are particularly strong in the various aspects of design and technology, although sometimes students are expected to listen for too long. Opportunities for creative writing exist in the child development course and also in religious education. This subject in particular encourages students to write sensitively and with insight into such issues as abortion. A variety of written tasks, including extended writing, is offered in science and history. Some care is taken to develop key vocabulary and accurate spelling of technical language. Many students’ writing skills remain weak or underdeveloped, however, and all students would benefit from a consistent approach to literacy across the school.

76. In English, students’ attitudes to learning are good at both key stages. Standards of behaviour are good. Students listen with interest, participate actively in group discussions and make use of opportunities their homework gives to carry out further research independently. They respond particularly well when teachers’ own liveliness, knowledge or enthusiasm stimulates their interest. For example, in a Year 7 lesson when responding to the teacher’s expressive description of a sinister place in “Travel Writing”, and in Year 8 when reviewing students’ knowledge of Dickens’ world in *Great Expectations*. Similarly, in Year 10, the teacher’s lively and direct manner when discussing Ted Hughes’ poem *The Wind* held students’ attention and brought a wide response. In a Year 11 class studying the techniques used in the opening scene of *Romeo and Juliet*, the teacher’s knowledge and enthusiasm involved the whole group and raised their level of attainment. Students with special educational needs in Year 9 responded positively to their teacher’s encouraging manner with sustained concentration and careful working.

77. Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. Taken overall, teaching is more often good than satisfactory. The quality of learning is similarly satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. Taken overall, it is more often good than satisfactory. Occasionally in Key Stage 3 lessons, although expectations were clear, they were not high enough in relation to the ability of the students. In a few lessons there was a

lack of flexibility in adjusting to the class and being prepared to change or drop an activity. Occasionally, teachers chose inappropriate grouping for an activity, or spent too long on one thing. As a result, students were sometimes not sufficiently stretched or engaged in fruitful work. However, strengths of teaching, which include a high level of preparation based around a well-planned scheme of work, careful choice of interesting resources, clear expectations about what is required, good relationships with students and good feedback to support individuals and groups, outweigh weaknesses and enable satisfactory learning to take place.

78. Those strengths are also apparent at Key Stage 4. A teacher's preparation for a Year 10 lesson on "fact and opinion" included clearly typed resource sheets with helpful frames so that students (many with special educational needs) could create tables of information and complete the task successfully. The teacher's lively and enthusiastic manner and the supportive help of a teaching assistant further encouraged them. In a Year 11 media studies lesson the teacher's high expectations, carefully structured work and effective use of praise kept students motivated, working hard and achieving at a level which gave them confidence in their ability to succeed. Teachers have good relationships with their students, which contribute substantially to positive attitudes to learning.

79. The department has dealt with the minor weaknesses referred to in the last inspection report. In particular, current schemes of work are carefully structured and available to students and staff on CD-ROM. Teachers work hard to counter the effects of declining attainment on entry and the department achieves appropriate results for its students given their prior attainment. There are coherent plans for future developments and the capacity for improvement is good.

## **MATHEMATICS**

80. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests, the proportions of students at the age of 14 achieving the nationally expected levels 5 and 6 were above the national averages. The average points score achieved was below the national average when compared with all schools and well below when compared with similar schools. Results in mathematics in 1999 were not as good as those in both English and science. Over the three years 1997 to 1999 test results fluctuated between below and well below national averages. The 1999 results were an improvement on those of 1998 though still not as good as they were in 1997.

81. In the 1999 GCSE examination, the proportion of students gaining grades A\* - C was below the national average. These results represent a significant improvement on 1997 and 1998 results. Boys' results, which were close to the national average, were significantly better than those of the girls, whose results were well below the national average. The proportion gaining A\*-G matched the national average. These results are as high as they should be given their prior levels of attainment. However, students achieved significantly worse results in mathematics than they did in most other subjects.

82. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment are below those expected at the age of 14. Number skills are weak and many students have difficulty handling numbers mentally. Year 9 average attaining students have difficulty with the concepts of percentages. Algebra is weak, although average attaining students in Year 8 are able to identify and plot coordinates for linear equations. Measuring skills are weak; higher attaining students in Year 8 lack confidence in converting units of measurement, although, in science and design and technology, students are able to use scales accurately. Students show a better understanding of shape and space; lower attaining students in Year 9 are able to use bearings confidently. Data handling is satisfactory. Year 7 students show a good understanding of tally charts and are able to draw bar charts accurately. Problem solving skills are developed well and by the end of Year 9 most students are able to identify patterns

and establish rules.

83. From work seen during the inspection students' standards of attainment are below those expected at the age of 16. Number skills are better but remain weak for many students. Algebraic skills are weak for all but the highest attaining students. Students in science, however, are able to use formulae confidently to calculate forces. Data handling skills are satisfactory. Students in geography show good graphical skills and in history cope well with population pie charts. Spatial skills are satisfactory. Lower attaining students in Year 10 deal confidently with areas of plane shapes. Problem solving skills are good with most students able to identify patterns and rules. More able students can identify and use formulae, predict and test results.

84. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and there is a high proportion of good and very good teaching. Teaching is best at Key Stage 4. As a result, the 1999 GCSE results showed a significant improvement on the previous two years. All teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and are able to explain skills and concepts clearly. Teachers plan lessons carefully and good links are made between lessons. Good use is made of different levels of tasks and resources to develop students' skills, knowledge, and understanding. However, appropriate challenge is not always provided in the activities. Teachers usually manage students well. When they do not, too much talking is allowed while students are working on their tasks and as a result the progress of many is not as good as it should be. Teachers question students well in lessons helping them to increase their understanding of the skills and concepts covered. Good use is made of the available time with good attention given to mental activities at the start of nearly all lessons. Homework is used effectively to consolidate skills and extend learning.

85. Good feedback is often given to students during lessons about their progress with tasks. Marking of students' work is generally good though not by all teachers. Appropriate methods are used to help students learn. For example, in a Year 9 lesson with lower attaining students, the teacher planned the lesson to provide short activities that helped to maintain the interest of the students.

86. The quality of learning is satisfactory. Satisfactory progress is being made at Key Stage 3 towards all attainment targets. All students are making at least satisfactory progress with the exception of the bottom set in Year 8, whose progress is unsatisfactory. The group is large and nearly all of the students have been identified as having special educational needs. Teachers are finding it difficult to ensure that all students are making at least satisfactory progress. Most students are consolidating learning well and good attention is given to improving number skills. Progress at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. Students are achieving standards that match their prior attainment. The most able students are making good progress in increasing their knowledge and understanding. Students with special



educational needs following the graduated assessment course make good progress because of the good quality teaching they receive. The productivity and pace of learning are better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3.

87. Attitudes to learning are generally good. When attitudes are not as good as they should be it is mainly due to teachers allowing students to talk too much while they are working on their tasks. Students usually listen attentively when teachers are talking, although often teachers have to remind students to pay attention during discussion sessions. Students generally behave well in class but there are lessons where the poor behaviour of a small number of students affects the progress of other students in the class. Relationships between teachers and students are generally good. Students usually respond well to the teachers' questioning although many students are not able to use the appropriate mathematical language. Most students concentrate on their tasks although many lower attaining students are unable to sustain concentration for very long. The presentation of work in books is generally good.

88. The department is well led. The head of department is providing a clear direction for the subject. Teachers work well together as a team and there is a clear delegation of responsibilities. A particularly good feature of the curriculum is the link topic done in conjunction with the partner primary schools. Appropriate priorities and targets are identified through a good development plan. Although the arrangements in place for assessing students' attainment are satisfactory they do not provide teachers with an accurate picture of students' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3. The use of the available information to analyse the performance students and monitor their progress, as they move through the school, is not developed well enough. Reports to parents are good.

89. The subject has made good progress since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved. The increased emphasis on mental activities has meant that students do not now rely too heavily on using their calculators. Accommodation has significantly improved. Better access is now provided to computers. The under-achievement of boys has been considerably reduced.

## **SCIENCE**

90. Standards of attainment in science are close to national averages at Key Stage 3 but fall below national averages at Key Stage 4. Students make considerable improvement during Key Stage 3 given their attainment on entry.

91. In 1999 Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests, the proportion of students reaching level 5 or above was below the national average and the proportion reaching level 6 or above was close to the national average and close to the average for similar schools. There was a considerable difference between the test results and the teacher assessments, which were not accurate in relation to National Curriculum levels of attainment. The trend over the last four years has been broadly in line with the trend in results nationally. Science results are similar to those in English and better than in mathematics.

92. In 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of students gaining grades A\*-C was well below the national average and the proportion gaining grades A\*-G was below average. Although the overall average point score which students achieved was close to the national average and boys achieved better results than girls, in science girls' results were slightly better than boys'. Girls' science results were better than those of girls in English and mathematics whilst boys' results were below those in English but better than in mathematics. Results for 2000 show a considerable improvement in the award of A\*-C grades and the newly appointed head of department has already introduced procedures to continue to drive

up standards in science. The trend in the GCSE results is improving but is below the national trend.

93. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are in line with those expected for students of the same age nationally but are slightly below national standards at the age of 16. Students enter the school with levels of attainment which are well below average and their achievements at the end of Key Stage 4 are better than might be expected in relation to their earlier attainment. For example, students of all levels of attainment can describe what they are doing using appropriate terminology, define terms such as force and work and can describe the properties of substances. They handle apparatus and make measurements confidently and correctly. Students produce good standards of written work with appropriately labelled diagrams. Standards of literacy are good because students are given a list of key words at the beginning of each topic and teachers test their knowledge of these at various times. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory and most students can use units correctly, make measurements, perform calculations and draw graphs. Most students express themselves clearly when answering spoken questions but some lower attainers are not as confident. At Key Stage 4 higher attaining students are encouraged to form judgements and to think about experimental limitations but in a lesson on homeostasis their knowledge of the terms control, variable and constant limited their discussion.

94. With the exception of a very small number of lessons at both key stages students' attitudes are good or very good in all lessons. Students arrive at lessons on time and are well prepared, with appropriate equipment and books so that lessons start promptly. Students with special educational needs make good progress in science and receive appropriate support. Students work together in practical lessons and share equipment and resources sensibly. In one lesson students were encouraged to plan an activity with a focus on how they should divide the tasks to make use of their time most efficiently. Students enjoy science and are enthusiastic, particularly in Years 8 and 9, and they are able to recall some previous learning where they made use of information and communication technology. Relationships between students and with teachers are generally good. When attitudes are less than good, students fail to listen when the teacher is talking and they chat instead of doing their work.

95. Teaching is satisfactory or good in all lessons and very good in a small proportion at both key stages. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and are usually consistent. They have very good subject knowledge and find interesting ways to explain concepts such as the structure of the Earth and how electricity moves around a circuit. They make good use of resources, including information and communication technology, to support learning. Lessons are well planned. The pace of lessons is good and teachers vary the pace according to the progress students are making. Teachers explain what students need to do to improve in many lessons and encourage them with praise when they are successful. Teachers provide appropriate learning activities for students of all levels of attainment and students with special educational needs make progress that matches that of other students in their group. Teachers keep excellent records of students' progress but day-to-day marking of work is very variable and students are not clear about how they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Teachers are aware of individual strengths and weaknesses and set targets in lessons, although in some lessons opportunities to follow up on students' own interest and further develop individual study skills are missed.

96. The department is well led and managed and the newly appointed head of department has a clear vision, with appropriate strategies, to raise students' achievement. These include student self-assessment, a full review of the curriculum at Key Stage 4 and a structured revision programme in Year 9. The handbook is very clear, comprehensive and up-to-date.

Technical support is very good and equipment is well maintained in good working order so that students are able to get reliable results. Teaching is monitored and there is very good support for the newly appointed teachers. Monitoring of students' performance is good. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Students' attainment is improving with the encouragement and commitment of the teaching staff. There is a focus on improving teaching through classroom observation and the monitoring of test results. Standards of literacy are good and teachers expect proper use of language and students' knowledge of scientific terminology is checked. Numeracy is satisfactory: students are able to use graphs, handle data and use measurement. Good use is made of information technology, particularly in Year 9. Homework is regularly set and checked and is used to extend students' learning.

97. The department needs to carry out a review of the curriculum at Key Stage 4 to ensure that there is sufficient depth and challenge, particularly for higher attainers. There is too much repetition of the content of the curriculum between the two key stages, which wastes time and attainment is below expectations in some lessons at Key Stage 4. There are too few opportunities for students to develop independent learning.

## **ART**

98. Students enter the school with attainment in art that is below the national expectation. By the end of Key Stage 3, their attainment matches the expectation for 14 year olds. This represents good progress for all students; particularly commendable progress is made by boys, who raise their attainment levels to match average standards. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is also broadly average, with little very high or very low attainment evident. Again, boys' attainment is better than girls' by more than the usual margin.

99. Recent years' GCSE results at A\*-C have been good. In 1999 they were just above average. Although this represented a fall from results in 1998, these results were very good given the large proportion of boys taking the subject. Boys' results in 1999 were above average for boys nationally, and the results represented further good progress for all students, especially boys, at Key Stage 4.

100. Standards of work seen in successive years at Key Stage 3 improve significantly. In Year 7, many students' standards are below average mainly because of weak spatial awareness and observational skills. Very few students have above average attainment in their use of line and shape on entry. By the end of Year 9, good progress in different media brings most students' standards in line with those expected for 14 year olds nationally. In their recently started projects about Op Art, for example, many Year 9 students can link their study of artists such as Bridget Riley to their own work and describe these ideas using appropriate vocabulary. These have good understanding of the geometric aspects of this work, and can make the characteristic optical illusions successfully. Others, especially those in the selected lower band groups, studying surrealism at present, still have difficulty with the observational drawing being done as preparation for their project. Where students rely less on observation skills, for example when using three-dimensional media such as clay, wire sculptures or collage, standards represent the average range. The pattern is one of good progress and rising attainment in relation to students' abilities in their acquisition of key art skills throughout the key stage. This arises from a well-planned programme of study, taught effectively.

101. Key Stage 4 classes include a far greater than usual proportion of boys, so standards would be expected to be lower than the overall average to reflect the national picture. In many cases, however, boys do well in their GCSE work and overall standards are average. Some students still lack key skills, so teaching includes these, and the fairly prescriptive projects cater very well for the needs of lower and middle-band attainers. These students often

exceed expectations and the work of students with special educational needs progresses well. The work of higher attaining students at Key Stage 4, particularly girls, lacks depth in reflective, personalised connections between theory and practical work. They need more investigative experimentation in sketchbooks and critical studies, to bring work up to the standards of which some are capable. This could be achieved through more creatively annotated sketchbooks, for example, and the use of more stimulating, unusual media.

102. Students' attitudes to art are generally very positive. Art creates success for most students, and contributes significantly to students' developing self-esteem, and to their understanding of the cultural aspects of the curriculum. Students usually behave very well in lessons, creating a purposeful, harmonious atmosphere.

103. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teaching is always satisfactory and sometimes very good. Class management is always a strength. Contributions from teachers from other departments, and those of the very newly qualified teacher are strong, leading to effective support for the head of department's commitment to the department's success. Teachers now integrate the study of artists' work well into every project, so that students can understand the whole scope of the subject. This, and the very good use of computers and other information technology in the schemes of work, represents good improvement since the last inspection. Students throughout the school now use information and communication technology very imaginatively as a tool for creative expression in their projects. From being a weakness at the last inspection, assessment is now a strength, with some simple, useful instruments devised to assess students' standards and progress. An effective, quiet, firm style of teaching pervades many lessons, with all teachers using individual interactions with their students as the principal method of challenging students to achieve their best in art. Good teaching of skills and high expectations of behaviour create lessons where students can learn well. Less prescribed direction of higher attaining students at Key Stage 4 would allow their own individuality to emerge, to create higher standards for these students.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

104. The proportion of students gaining grades A\*-C in GCSE examinations in 1999 was just below the national average and matched national standard for the award of grades A\*-G. The school has shown a year by year improvement in relation to the local authority's targets set since 1998. A higher than usual proportion of students is entered for examinations, including many with special educational needs, and this tends to depress the proportion of higher grades gained. Standards are also affected by the unsatisfactory attendance of a substantial number of students in Year 11, because this interferes with the completion of coursework. Comparison with national figures shows that girls are doing less well in relation to their national averages than boys. The improvement in boys' results is an indication of success in tackling the issue of boys' performance that was raised at the last inspection.

105. Child development, although a vocational course, comes within design and technology. Standards in this subject are above average and well above average point scores in other subjects.

106. By the age of 14, standards are in line with those expected of 14 years olds nationally. Students bring a range of experience from their primary school, which is recorded and informs subject planning to meet their needs. Work seen during the inspection shows the improvements that are being brought about by developments in the department. These include improved assessment procedures, which use self-assessment to engage students in shaping their progress and emphasise consistency across all aspects of technology. Students understand clear criteria for success and this helps consolidate progress. Progress

over time is improving as students learn to make rigorous critical analysis of their work and understand the need for regular evaluation of the project in hand to identify improvement needed. Good use of information technology, including computer aided design and manufacture, helps students understand the constraints of manufacturing in industry. The application of basic skills in literacy and numeracy improves presentation and accuracy of final products. Study guides used in aspects of technology, for example the textiles booklet, map out the complete unit of work including the planned homework. These booklets guide the design and make approach that students will eventually use in their GCSE courses and build confidence. During Key Stage 3 students develop good tool handling skills. They learn to work with a range of materials and practise a wide variety of cutting, shaping, joining and combining techniques to make products fit for their purpose. Accurate working drawings and good modelling techniques were seen in the mechanical toy product. Students fully understood the use of a fulcrum and fixed pivot in introducing movement to their mechanical toy. The results of this project show success in producing an appropriate toy for a 0-3 year old that is fun to use.

107. Lower attaining students achieve good standards of work in all aspects of design and technology, practical work being their strongest feature. They flourish in a “can do” climate where teacher intervention plus the use of the support assistants and their individual education plans, helps them to reach higher than expected standards. Students with English as a second language integrate well into the department and in areas such as textiles they are given the opportunity to share their cultural differences with the class, which strengthens their self-confidence.

108. In work seen during the inspection, standards of attainment at the age of 16 are above average national standards. Students have learned the need for good presentation and rigour in research and analysis of their chosen project. As parents mentioned at the meeting, some projects remain unfinished, with a negative impact on final examination results. This is being dealt with by providing clearer deadlines and assistance to meet targets. Students learn more sophisticated designing and making techniques and use their knowledge from Key Stage 3 to improve skills. Although there is detailed feedback from staff through assessment of project work, students do not always know what they need to do to improve. Students say that they think they must work harder but do not know what specific issues need attention. The recently introduced self-assessment scheme is leading to improvement. The stimulation of independent learning and independent thinking in designing is raising standards in food and textiles technology. Excellent use of the digital camera to record results in food technology gives impetus to analysis and product development discussion, which improves standards.

109. In child development, high expectations and work placements are the key to the subject’s success. All new concepts are taught and tested, with results fed back immediately. When results of their first assessment were fed back to students in a Year 10 lesson, the buzz of excitement made it obvious that they were totally involved in their learning and assessment. In a Year 11 lesson, students had individual tutorials during the lesson to ensure they understood their assessments and knew what to do to improve. This approach has a very positive effect on lower attaining students by building confidence in their independent work.

110. Attitudes in design and technology are good. Students respond well to expectations of behaviour, including health and safety considerations as well as expectations of high standards. Equipment and materials are respected. Conservation of resources is a concern that students understand. The encouragement of group work and discussion in some aspects of design and technology ensure that students learn to respect each other’s skills and talents.

111. Teaching in the department is consistently good, with elements of very good teaching. Specialist teachers have a passion for their aspect of technology, which is infectious and has a positive influence on learning. Teachers bring personal industrial experience to lessons that gives depth to learning. Collegiate planning ensures consistency across the department in teaching basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information technology as well as teaching the principles of good designing and making, which guarantees that students are able to succeed. Teaching methods are generally exciting and challenge learning. Lots of practical activity with materials and processes inspires learning through experimenting and students have fun in finding out and sharing their results. This is stronger in food, textiles and child development. When teachers fail to use the end of the lesson to consolidate learning, valuable time for recall is lost, which affects retention and understanding. Management of behaviour is good and strengthened by regular reference to the school's code of conduct, which promotes good behaviour. Praise is used effectively and honestly to underpin behaviour expectations. Time and resources are used effectively to support teaching. In the most successful lessons, the two-hour timetable slot is divided into a series of shorter targets, to maintain a good pace to the lessons. Support staff are a particularly valuable resource. Learning support assistants are integrated well and have knowledge of the plans and aims of the lesson. The technicians support teaching by their attention to detail in organisation of materials. The review and implementation of a revised assessment system are important features in the department's improvements. This is the responsibility of one team leader who guides the outcomes and monitors any issues concerned with improving standards. The use of homework is planned into each module and its value is established by its importance in forming the basis for the following lesson.

112. The result of effective teaching is that learning overall is good and students develop a good range of practical, theoretical and presentation skills across the design and technology modules. The pace of work and students' progress are more effective when time in lessons is divided into short, sharp sessions with clear targets for completion. However, this is not consistent in all lessons. Students generally work hard but a minority of Year 10 students are easily distracted when teachers' explanations are too long. Students respond well when they have the opportunity to experiment with materials and work independently, exercising their thinking and problem solving skills. This is a strong feature in food, textiles and child development and ensures that more able students' learning is extended.

113. Management of the department is good because it is well co-ordinated by two team leaders. This has a positive impact on bringing together a department separated across the school site. Teachers and support staff work as an effective team. They are complementary in characteristics and skills and provide a balance that consolidates the quality of teaching and learning. Line management support for the department is appreciated and has helped negotiate the considerable match funding from industry and the governing body that has improved students' access to computers to improve their learning. Departmental development planning and curriculum development bids have been successful because they target the wider needs of the school as well as those of the department.

114. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Positive action on boys' attainment and the development of information and communication technology have led to improvements in results and facilities. Class questioning has been revised and now challenges students to make rigorous self-assessment judgements. Modified roles and responsibilities have led to more effective management. The role of support staff is well integrated and has a positive impact on students' learning.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

115. In the 1999 GCSE examinations the proportion of students gaining passes at grades

A\*-C was well below the national average. GCSE results in geography have shown a marked decline since the last inspection. Provisional results for 2000 indicate that the percentage of students gaining passes at grades A\*-C declined still further. The proportion of students gaining passes at grades A\*-G is also below the national average. There is a marked contrast in the performance of boys and girls. The average points score for boys in GCSE examinations has risen steadily over the past three years and is now close to the national average. However, the average points score for girls has shown a very sharp decline and is significantly below the national average. While the decline in performance at GCSE does reflect a decline in attainment on entry to the school over the same period, students' performance in GCSE geography is below that achieved in other subjects they take. In the case of girls, performance in geography is significantly below that in other subjects. In 1999 teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3, almost 70 per cent of students in geography were assessed as having attained level 5 or above. This level of attainment was not reflected in the standards of attainment seen during the inspection and is not reflected in GCSE results.

116. In work seen during the inspection, overall standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are below the national expectation and only the highest attaining groups are at the national average. Students have gained a satisfactory knowledge of place through case study work on Bangladesh, Japan, Spain and Brazil, although there is insufficient depth in the coverage of physical aspects of the environment in a large number of the students' workbooks. Students are not confident in locating places on maps of the United Kingdom, Europe and the world. However, they have acquired a good knowledge of environmental issues such as global warming, ozone layer depletion and alternative sources of energy. Students do not have a consistently secure knowledge and understanding of geography by the end of Year 9 owing to a lack of depth and balance in the department's coverage of the National Curriculum programme of study. At Key Stage 4, standards of attainment in work seen during the inspection are below the national expectation. They are better in Year 11, where they are often close to the national expectation, than in Year 10, where the lack of a sound base of geographical knowledge, understanding and skills is depressing the attainment of students. This was evident in observations of some Year 10 lessons where students displayed an inadequate understanding of processes at plate boundaries that inhibited their grasp of new material on tectonic processes at plate margins. In contrast, students in Year 11 are gaining a sound knowledge and understanding of the use of investigational skills in their field study of the Cardingmill Valley. Outcomes are being placed on a web-site that they are developing. They successfully use maps of the local area, photographs and other web-sites to conduct personal investigations.

117. Students' behaviour in lessons is always satisfactory and usually good. Most show a satisfactory level of motivation in geography that is reflected in the good take-up of the subject as a GCSE option. Teachers are usually sensitive to students' varying spans of concentration and skilfully vary activities and experiences to sustain student interest. Students have good working relationships with their teachers and respond well in question and answer sessions. Their capacity for personal study needs further development at Key Stage 3 through more opportunity to carry out enquiry projects and to work collaboratively in groups. At Key Stage 4, students work well independently in carrying out GCSE coursework assignments. Students show sensitivity for others, for example in lessons on the impact of famine in Ethiopia where they showed empathy for the problems of those living in this drought hit area.

118. The quality of teaching is always satisfactory and is good or very good in almost 40 per cent of lessons. All specialist teachers apply their subject knowledge well, while non-specialist staff competently deliver lesson plans using workbooks provided by the head of department. The quality of teaching is better at Key Stage 4 where specialist teachers carry

out more of the teaching and there is more opportunity for student investigation and the use of information and communication technology. The majority of teachers have high expectations of their students and plan their lessons thoroughly, making use of differentiated tasks prepared specifically to match the learning needs of students of a particular attainment level and providing a good level of challenge. However, a significant number of lessons lack sufficient challenge and are too teacher-directed, with mundane tasks such as copying from the board or colouring in maps or diagrams taking up valuable lesson time and inhibiting students' development as independent learners. There is insufficient use of enquiry approaches in the teaching of geography. Classroom organisation and control are good and lessons are usually taught at a brisk pace but there is scope for the much wider use of information and communication technology and fieldwork at Key Stage 3. A range of teaching and learning resources is used, particularly well chosen video films, information technology at Key Stage 4, overhead projectors, newspaper cuttings and maps and photographs. Numeracy and listening skills are developed satisfactorily in most lessons but there is insufficient opportunity for students to develop their skills in oracy, information technology and reading aloud. Support staff are of high quality and provide effective support to teachers and to students with learning difficulties. Such staff are well deployed in lessons and relationships with class teachers are productive and ensure that students with statements of special educational needs gain full access to the school's curriculum. Marking is accurate and regularly carried out with the use of helpful diagnostic and encouraging comment. However, at both key stages there is unfinished work in students' workbooks and the lack of labelling on diagrams in Key Stage 4 books inhibits the effectiveness of revision for GCSE examinations. Homework is set regularly and is used effectively to extend classroom learning.

119. At Key Stage 3, the quality of learning is satisfactory overall but there is significant variation between different classes. In many cases, learning, although satisfactory, is inhibited by the use of strongly teacher-directed tasks where all students complete identical worksheets. Variations in the quality of learning at Key Stage 3 also occur because of significant differences in the breadth and depth of coverage of lesson material by different teachers. In one Year 7 lesson, excellent learning took place when students studying the compass made use of the floor space of the classroom to locate each of sixteen points of the compass and calculate the angles between different points. Changing the roles of each student in the exercise to ensure there was complete understanding effectively reinforced new learning. At Key Stage 4, the quality of learning is also satisfactory overall and in a number of lessons is good or very good. Students in Year 11 respond well to enquiry tasks and very good quality learning results. Written work reveals that many Key Stage 4 students fail to retain new learning and that there is insufficient opportunity to consolidate the acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding through reinforcement. As a result, students are insecure in interpreting maps and diagrams.

120. While day-to-day management of the subject is satisfactory, there are serious shortcomings in the planning and monitoring of the curriculum, especially at Key Stage 3, that make management overall unsatisfactory. The outcome has been the steady decline in GCSE results and inconsistencies in the depth of coverage of the Key Stage 3 curriculum, giving a significant number of students an insecure foundation from which to begin their Key Stage 4 studies in geography.

121. Since the last inspection standards of attainment at both key stages have declined from the national expectation to below the national expectation. The performance of girls in GCSE exceeded that of boys; the reverse is now true and there is significant underachievement by girls. The quality of learning and quality of teaching were both good in the last inspection, they are now satisfactory. There has been some improvement since the last inspection in GCSE coursework, the use of graphs and in opportunities for extended writing.



## HISTORY

122. In work seen during the inspection, standards are broadly in line with national expectations at the ages of 14 and 16. This indicates good progress from the time of entry to the school. Teacher assessments at the age of 14 in 1999 were above the national average and higher than the standard observed in the current Year 9 which is broadly at the level expected. In the past three years, standards in GCSE examinations have kept up well compared to other subjects in the school. In 1999 the proportion of students achieving A\*-C grades was close to the national average. Unusually in this subject, boys performed considerably better than girls. The proportion of boys gaining A\*-C grades was above the national figure for boys. The proportion of A\*-G grades achieved in 1999 was above the national average. In 2000 girls achieved a little better than boys. There was a wide range of results which included two A\* and four A grades.

123. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at age 14 matches expected standards overall, with some students achieving good and a few very good standards. Students demonstrate the ability to acquire and consolidate historical information, successfully fitting new knowledge into an historical context, often aided by illustrated time lines. One Year 9 class quickly identified links between trends in population growth and industrialisation from statistical data. In work seen at age 16, overall attainment is broadly average. Good GCSE standards are reached by some students. The causes and consequences of events are well worked out, for example in students' in-depth study of the Irish Question. Course work is a strength. The best is outstanding and well beyond the standards expected. At both key stages, students' knowledge of history is often at a higher standard than their ability to write. Spelling and use of capital letters are too often careless. The department is developing successfully the use of information and communication

technology to support learning. Students' recall of earlier work is often very good: much emphasis is made in the department of the importance of accurate knowledge as well as of the ability to make deductions.

124. Students respond well to the interesting work, the orderly classrooms and the firm discipline of the department. They feel secure and expect to have to work hard. At Key Stage 3 the great majority of students have positive attitudes and are frequently engaged by the topics studied. There are healthy signs of enquiry by individuals. Teachers take time to listen. At Key Stage 4, the atmosphere in class is serious and hard working. Students gain confidence from positive feed back and some students are ambitious in the subject.

125. The quality of teaching is a strength. All lessons observed were at least satisfactory. Most were good and a third was very good. All teachers are competent historians and believe in the value of their subject for the young. They prepare work thoroughly and are generous with their time. The enthusiasm of the established teachers is infectious and has a strong impact on students' learning. They are good communicators. The head of department is a specialist in the history of the local area and much of the work done in this field at both key stages is impressive. Students of all levels of attainment and, notably, lower attaining students are often excited by their historical discoveries in their home area. Resource and revision booklets, compiled by the department, are of high quality. Much attention is paid to historical and general vocabulary, although more effort should be made to encourage students to use the new words they learn in their own work. This was done in one Year 10 class where students had just begun to study the history of medicine and were quickly able to use the technical terms themselves. In-class support is of great value in the department. Students with special educational needs are well integrated. In some mixed ability classes in Year 8 more challenging tasks are needed for higher attainers.

126. Learning at both key stages is at least satisfactory and usually good or very good. The good variety of oral and written work reinforces knowledge and understanding. Some students, especially higher attainers, take on extra work. The brisk pace of lessons holds students' attention. At both key stages students learn to tease out historical information from primary written and pictorial sources. At Key Stage 4, students learn very well the importance of people's embedded beliefs, such as from a study of medicine in early civilisations, or from analysis of the background of disparate Irish groups today. The progress of students with special educational needs is good in relation to their prior attainment.

127. The history department is a lively, purposeful and well organised department. There is very clear leadership and direction for the subject. At all stages there are balanced elements in the teaching of hard historical facts, of causes and results and of interpretation. Consideration of societies so different from their own such as the Roman Empire or Shogunate Japan makes a good contribution to students' social and cultural development. The emphasis on local history brings awareness of students' own cultural heritage. Interesting, relevant expeditions are a feature of the department.

128. Since the last inspection older students now talk readily in class, departmental documents are up-to-date and the respective roles of the heads of history and humanities are clear.

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

129. Standards in information technology at the end of Key Stage 3 match those expected for 14 year olds nationally. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards are above average. Standards are improving because better access to computers and the quality of equipment have enriched students' experience, boosting their confidence and improving their standards of work. In addition, the increased use of new technology to support learning in departments across the school is having a positive impact on students' learning.

130. Key Stage 3 teacher assessments in 1999 found standards to be well above average. This is generous in comparison with the work observed during the inspection. For example, Year 8 students have difficulty in recalling basic techniques and skills such as spell checking and cut and paste, although these skills were taught in Year 7. Comparing inspection findings with the external assessment in May by Her Majesty's Inspectors also highlights inconsistencies in what was seen then and now. Work seen during the inspection indicates that students have difficulty in retaining knowledge and skill over a period when they have no access to a computer – like the summer holiday - hence recall is limited and students' skills, knowledge and understanding vary considerably, depending on the time of year. The assessment process has been revised and is now weighted in different areas to ensure that teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 is more accurate.

131. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the age of 14 matches the standard expected for 14 year olds nationally. Although many students have difficulty in retaining knowledge, students can often use the more challenging aspects of information technology with confidence. For example, they can use the Internet for research and produce an animated presentation with the production of a written script for a weather forecast. However, students are too dependent on teachers' support. For example, in science students could not remember how to control the cursor on the screen to complete their work, which affected their independent learning. There is a lack of prompt sheets at Key Stage 3 to enable students to recall their skills, which particularly limits more able students who waste time waiting for the teacher to solve their problems. In work seen during the inspection at the age of 16, standards are above average. Boys' standards, in both skill development and application of skills, are better than girls'. Lower attaining students make good gains in confident use of all aspects of information technology, as seen in the group presentations on research into work placements given by Year 10. Although there has been no examination at Key Stage 4 in previous years, students have been given a clear statement about their capability in their National Record of Achievement. The statements are a positive reflection of their learning during Year 10 and 11 modules in personal and social education, such as the production of a curriculum vitae. The challenge of recording their strengths and weaknesses improves their self-esteem and their application of information technology and literacy skills. Some students still rely heavily on teachers but help sheets give step-by-step instructions, enabling more independent work. Many lower attaining students have developed very good skills through the use of school and home computers. Boys' skills, knowledge and understanding of hardware and software remain better than the girls'. In GNVQ classes the mixed gender groups have brought together the technical skills of the boys with the broader research and presentation skills of the girls; the natural exchange of skills within these groups is leading to general improvement.

132. Standards in literacy and numeracy are improved by computer work both in the subject and across the school. For example numeracy skills are extended through the use of

graphics applications. In the special educational needs unit, the use of an interactive learning system enables students to track their own progress through feedback on screen from the computer, which motivates them to improve their scores.

133. Attitudes to learning are good. However, the learning environment in some areas causes some difficulties. Ventilation is poor and classwork is often disrupted because a corridor runs through the department. Open access at lunchtime and break times is used to capacity, is well monitored by a member of the support staff and enables practice and peer support, which improves learning. Despite the open access there is little damage because students respect the trust they are given.

134. Teaching in specialist information technology is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. There is considerable innovation in the use of information and communication technology across the school, giving an overall picture of good teaching. For example, the challenges of computer aided design and manufacture of a key fob in design and technology and the creative work with composing packages in music inspire learning and independence. There are limited strategies in place at Key Stage 3 to help students to retain information. Lessons lack skills recording, prompt sheets to aid recall and teachers make limited use of consolidation to establish learning that needs to be remembered. Planning is purposeful and injects fun into learning. For example, the use of animation and colour to enhance a presentation gives students pride in their work. New initiatives, such as the questionnaire for Year 7, give a clear, reliable picture of students' prior attainment and enable teachers to plan work to match students' needs. Class management is good. At Key Stage 4 teaching styles encourage students to be responsible for their own learning. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding that underpin their work and give confidence to their teaching. The use of time and support is effective. When teaching is very good, teachers are imaginative in planning and encourage independent learning and personal responsibility. Group work plays an important part in these sessions and consolidation at the end of the lesson encourages students to explain what they have learned, for example in GNVQ group presentations. Searching questioning at the end of each presentation clarified understanding and built the confidence of all. The quality of learning across the department is good overall. It is most effective when the problems of recall and independent learning are dealt with at Key Stage 4. Progress made in lessons at Key Stage 3 is impeded because of the difficulty in recalling basic skills. Students with special educational needs enjoy the success in accuracy and presentation that information technology brings, which motivates and improves their capability. More able students at Key Stage 3 are held back by a lack of help sheets to prompt their recall. They respond very well to the challenge of sophisticated information technology across the curriculum, for example, when using the interactive white board in humanities and computer aided design in design and technology.

135. Management within the department and across the school is good and promotes information technology as a learning tool across the curriculum. At the time of the previous inspection, the school was in the vanguard of computer development and the standards seen were above average. Now the national picture in information technology has improved, but at the same time the attainment level of the school's intake has declined. The previous report highlighted control and measuring to be at a modest stage of development; this has now been successfully established in mathematics and design and technology. Key Stage 4 was identified as an area in which to develop cross-curricular activity; this is now in place. As a result of student demand, a GNVQ course has been introduced and has made a very positive start this year.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

136. Standards in French and German are broadly average at Key Stage 3, and in line with

what they should be, given the attainment profile of students on entry to the school. In 2000, teachers assessed students of German as working at the national level and this was confirmed by the work seen during the inspection. In French, teachers assessed students as working well above the national level whereas in work seen during the inspection their standards were broadly average.

137. The proportion of students gaining A\*-C grades in German in the GCSE examinations in 1999 was well below the national average. The performance of boys was marginally better than that of girls. In French, boys' achievement is in line with national average figures, but that of girls is below. This contrasts with the national picture. The proportion of students gaining A\*-G grades was higher than the national average in both French and German. GCSE results in French at A\*-C were only slightly below the national average in 1999 but fell by 11 per cent in 2000. In 1999, students of both French and German gained results that were about half a grade below their other subjects, but in 2000 this was only the case for French.

138. In work seen during the inspection, by the age of 14, standards in listening, speaking, reading and writing are average. French and German are not used routinely by all teachers as the main means of communication in class, although there is some good practice. Students speak with reasonable accents and are keen to participate in paired work activities. They are able to understand French and German when these are used by their teachers for general classroom communication and taped material spoken by a variety of native speakers about everyday topics. Reading skills are satisfactory. In their written work, students complete exercises and copy conversations, but this material is not drawn together to provide short passages of extended writing with relevance to the student. However, some good written work was seen by higher attaining students in Year 9 French classes. Students with special educational needs make progress that is in line with their ability.

139. In work seen during the inspection, by the age of 16, standards are below average in French and German. Higher attaining students of German in Year 10 answer questions about themselves with satisfactory pronunciation. Lower attaining students in Year 10 have difficulty in developing a short conversation with greetings. In Year 11, higher attaining students produce written work that shows that they have acquired a sound knowledge of tenses and vocabulary. Students of French have difficulty in accurately recalling how to describe themselves and their family although they participate well in pair work. Written work needs further development to ensure that a wider range of tenses and structures is used. Lower attaining students make good progress in lessons, but find it difficult to recall earlier work. This means that their rate of progress overall is slow. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, except when the poor behaviour of a few students interrupts the lesson.

140. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in French and German. Almost half of the lessons seen were good. Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and know their students well. The best lessons have a range of activities, which cover the four attainment targets of listening, speaking, reading and writing. A good lesson at Key Stage 3 enabled students to make good progress in their learning because it was carefully planned, with a good variety of activities in the four skills. The teacher had high expectations. Students took their work seriously, responding well to the teacher and enjoying the lesson because they were fully involved. The support assistant gave good help, which was carefully planned and meant that students with special educational needs were able to participate fully in the lesson. Students were motivated to learn and the lesson helped them to consolidate and develop skills. In another lesson, slower progress was made because the activities were not well timed and the teacher made not enough use of the language. Students did not do enough work for them to make satisfactory progress. Teachers assess students' work during lessons, with more formal assessments taking place at the end of each unit of work. Marking

is completed regularly but at Key Stage 3 does not give enough information about what the students know and can do and what they need to do to improve their work.

141. Most students show interest in their work and have a positive attitude to it. Behaviour in lessons is usually good and sometimes very good. The presentation of students' work is inconsistent.

142. Since the last inspection displays have been improved but the use of the foreign languages in the classroom remains inconsistent. Management is unsatisfactory because the department is not given clear enough direction. Assessment and marking, particularly at Key Stage 3, are areas for development in both French and German. Resources are inadequate. The textbook used for French at Key Stage 3 is not well matched to students' abilities and plans are in place to purchase a replacement when there is sufficient money. Few students have their own copy to take home, and this limits the tasks which can be set and leads to class time being spent on copying from the book. Examination results at Key Stage 4 are not sufficiently evaluated to identify ways of raising achievement and good practice is not shared effectively to support planning.

## **MUSIC**

143. Attainment by the age of 14 is average. By the age of 16, attainment is above average.

144. Teacher assessments in 1999 at the end of Key Stage 3 show girls' attainment to be above national standards, and boys' attainment well above. 1999 GCSE examinations results for grades A\*-C were close to the national average and for grades A\*-G were above it. More boys attained A\* results than girls. Subject comparisons show that students performed better in music than in any other subject. The 1999 results were a significant improvement on those of 1998. Results for 2000 show a further improvement, thus indicating a rising trend over three years.

145. In work seen during the inspection, attainment by the age of 14 is average. However, attainment of many Year 7 students on entry to the school is below average; they have little or no knowledge and understanding of the basic elements of music. By the end of Year 9 such omissions are effectively dealt with and students show a satisfactory grasp of the elements and apply them appropriately in composing, performing and listening activities. Singing is a strong feature of the curriculum, which boys and girls engage in with confidence and enjoyment. Resources for music are unusually good, facilitating practical music making activities. These factors, combined with good teaching, which includes praise for work well done, lead to secure gains in musical attainment throughout the key stage.

146. About 90 students enhance their attainment by learning to play musical instruments. Many gain further experience in orchestra, choirs and other groups which achieve good standards in the many musical events which take place during the year and are much appreciated by the community.

147. In work seen during the inspection, attainment by the age of 16 is above average. Thanks to generous sponsorship from a local business the department is unusually well equipped with computers, touch sensitive keyboards and a good range of software. Students make good use of these excellent resources to create imaginative, extended compositions exploiting appropriate compositional devices such as variations, ostinati, layered textures and so on. A generous contribution from another company has added excellent recording equipment to the department's resources enabling students to listen to high quality reproductions of their compositions and performances, with consequent gains in critical analysis and presentation. Students show a satisfactory awareness of styles and musical

vocabulary.

148. Attitudes, behaviour, personal development and relationships are good at both key stages. Music is a popular subject for GCSE and extra-curricular activities are well supported. In lessons, students show positive attitudes and are well behaved. They pay attention and concentrate well and have good relationships with each other and with their teachers. They participate confidently in musical activities.

149. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4, with an occasionally excellent lesson. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding. Lessons are well prepared and student management is good. Teachers take positive steps to develop students' confidence by allowing sufficient time for them to practise their allotted tasks, by setting achievable goals, by judicious repetition and reinforcement of ideas and by giving praise for work well done. This is part of a drive across the school to develop confidence, which is successful, especially in the case of boys and students with special educational needs. An excellent lesson was with a group of GCSE students, of whom half had special educational needs and many below average musical attainment in certain aspects. However, such are the equality of opportunity and quality of teaching that all the students made excellent gains in knowledge and understanding. Their confidence was impressive, as was the teacher's belief in their potential to do well; an example of teaching at its very best.

150. The quality of learning is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. Students of all levels of attainment make good progress in acquiring knowledge, skills and understanding, frequently from a base of little musical knowledge when they enter the school. Students with special educational needs make good progress. Good teaching, very good resources and the good response these inspire from the students are fundamental to the creation of this very positive state of affairs.

151. Two of the teachers in the department are new to the school, and the head of department is newly in post, having served as an assistant previously. The new head of department gives a strong lead, building on previous good practice. Documentation is exemplary, arrangements for assessment are excellent, taking full account of the new National Curriculum orders. The changeover has gone smoothly and the department is full of potential for good future developments.

152. Since the last inspection there have been considerable improvements. GCSE results show an improving trend over time and the notable additions of computers and recording facilities have made a significant impact on standards and learning.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

153. Teacher assessment in 2000, at Key Stage 3, recorded most students as achieving exceeding national expectations, an improvement on 1999 assessments. In 1999, results in GCSE examinations were well below the national average for the award of A\*-C grades but all students achieved grades A\*-G. Results in 2000 show a marked improvement. These results compare favourably with results in other subjects and the upward trend is being maintained. Practical skills are improving and the gap between girls' and boys' attainment is closing.

154. Attainment at the age of 14 is in line with national expectations in hockey and badminton. Students show control in hockey dribbling skills in different situations and, in

badminton, basic skills are being developed in overhead shots. They evaluate each other's work and generally co-operate to raise standards. Students in the Year 9 trampoline class are performing below expected standard but show knowledge and understanding in planning and evaluating each other's routines. Standards in other year groups vary according to the activity offered. For example, a Year 8 class demonstrated very good technique in swimming. Another Year 8 class, in a rugby lesson, found difficulty catching and passing the ball in group work. A Year 7 class in the same activity mastered the basic skills and could play a modified small team game. Students with special educational needs are given effective support in the games lessons and progress at a rate similar to that of others in their classes. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the age of 16 is above national expectations. In soccer, ball control is good, but the quality is not maintained in attacking and defending practices. Students in a Year 11 GCSE theory group are achieving above national expectations in their knowledge and understanding of topics. The practical GCSE trampoline group is progressing to a high standard in performance of set routines and the understanding of the various techniques. In the Year 11 core swimming class, the students practising various strokes were competent, but as over half the group were non-participants, an accurate class assessment was not possible. All students in Year 10 follow a Certificate of Education course and the qualification is raising more interest in the subject because the choice is wide and it brings rigour to the lessons. Both in table tennis and soccer standards are in line with national expectations and students' knowledge and understanding are beginning to have a positive effect on learning.

155. There is a positive attitude towards the subject and most students are keen to attend both curricular and extra-curricular sessions. Relationships are good and students co-operate effectively in paired and group work. Most activities are performed with enthusiasm and energy, particularly in games and trampolining. One Year 9 class showed a lack of care in looking after equipment and had to be reminded on a few occasions. At Key Stage 4, attitudes to physical education are positive, apart from the non-participants in Year 11 swimming. Trampolining is a popular option and interest and enthusiasm are high. The Year 11 GCSE group is responsive, attentive and eager to learn.

156. Teaching is good overall. All the specialist staff follow the schemes of work consistently. Objectives are made clear and effective feedback is given in all lessons. Students are encouraged to warm up and evaluate their performance. Well-planned teaching, with clear instructions, praising of good behaviour and skilful class management assist progress for the majority of students. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is very good in games, trampolining, swimming and examination work. Matching work to students' individual needs and the use of support staff help to maintain standards in students' progress through the key stages. In two lessons, instructions were lengthy and curtailed activity. However, the overall progress by students through the key stages is good. A balance of activities is offered and an opportunity to extend performance levels through the extra-curricular programme. The co-operative working relationships and the promotion of support rather than criticism enhance progress. Most of the time, lower ability students are encouraged to reach individual targets, which help them to progress to partner and small group work. The GCSE groups are progressing well. However, there is a need to give more attention to oral skills through paired and group work to enhance learning. Very good teaching was observed in swimming at Key Stage 3 and trampolining at Key Stage 4, when effective demonstrations and use of resources promoted students' learning.

157. The extra-curricular programme is very good, partly because of the links with the leisure centre that provide excellent opportunities for the students. Approximately 50 per cent of the school's population take part in the after school games programme and seven teachers conduct the sessions. Assessment procedures have been well documented and practised and records are kept up to date. The department is aware of the impending



changes to the assessment arrangements and has planned appropriate in-service training. Leadership provides very effective direction for the department. A newly qualified teacher is given strong support and her teaching is monitored. There is a strong work ethic that pervades the department. Staff are well qualified and contribute to the learning environment because of the positive relationships they establish with the students. The staff at the leisure centre contribute to student attainment because of the preparatory work they do before lessons take place. The indoor accommodation is very good, particularly the sports centre, the grass areas and athletic track are well maintained and the recently completed tarmac area is ideal for promoting student learning in games such as netball and tennis. Outdoor facilities for cricket should be a consideration for future development. Resources are very good.

158. Since the last inspection, GCSE physical education results have improved and are on an upward trend. The introduction of a Certificate of Education for Year 10 has provided more rigour to the Key Stage 4 curriculum. The quality of teaching has improved. Assessment procedures have continued to improve.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

159. The proportion of students gaining grades A\*-C in the 1999 full course examination was below the national average. Most achieved the grades that their teachers expected of them. Given students' prior attainment, results are as good as might be expected.

160. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the age of 14 is above the expectations set out in the Locally Agreed Syllabus. High standards of oral work have been maintained since the previous inspection and standards of written work have improved. The active programme of study at Key Stage 3 successfully stimulates students' enthusiasm and interest so that by the end of Year 9 most students have a good knowledge and understanding of the similarities between Christianity and other major world religions. They have a well developed appreciation of spiritual and moral values. Students understand why people become committed to a religious belief or way of life and they can relate the concept of commitment to their own lives. In class discussions many pupils are able to express their innermost feelings and describe memorable experiences without embarrassment. This is a significant achievement for students of this age. The standard of written work is generally better than might be expected. Students are good at using diagrams, graphs and information technology to illustrate their work. The work of higher attainers is well above expectations in depth of understanding, range of vocabulary and creativity. Poems are often beautifully crafted and very moving. Lower attainers produce work that is satisfactory, although they write in short sentences with limited vocabulary. Spelling is a weakness.

161. Most students do not follow an examination course at Key Stage 4. The limited time available only allows for teaching a few modules of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. There has been little change since the last inspection, when the recommendation that statutory requirements in respect of religious education at Key Stage 4 should be met. In the selected modules, the majority of students attain higher than expected standards. This is because of good teaching and the good foundation at Key Stage 3. In a Year 11 lesson, students listened very attentively to a discussion on the theme of responding to suffering and many made very thoughtful contributions. However, overall attainment is below expectations because students do not complete the whole course. Students following the GCSE course attain broadly average standards. In discussion they are able to make carefully considered observations, justifying their point of view by reference to the text. In written work, the majority of students present their arguments in a satisfactory way but their knowledge of Old and New Testament scriptures is too limited.

162. Attitudes to learning are very good. Most students show interest and enthusiasm. They are attentive and responsive and concentrate well on the work in hand. They begin to take responsibility for their own learning in Year 7 through research projects and become confident in organising their work, often using information technology to obtain required information. Relationships are very good. Pupils respect the views and feelings of others and support each other very well in group work. Behaviour is usually very good.

163. The overall quality of teaching is good and never less than satisfactory. This has a positive impact on achievement and attitudes to the subject. In three out of every four lessons teaching is very good. The department has many strengths. Leadership is clear and purposeful. Teachers are well qualified and experienced; they have good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Staff are enthusiastic and work well as a team so that students make consistent progress. There are good relationships with support staff who are well briefed and fully involved in lessons. Students' interest is captured and maintained by lessons, which are carefully planned and well prepared with good quality learning resources. Homework is used effectively to encourage personal research or to reinforce what has been learned in lessons. A particular strength is the way in which oral and literacy skills are developed throughout Key Stage 3 so that students become familiar with different ways of presenting information. However, there are a few weaknesses in teaching. Although teachers have high expectations, lesson objectives are not always clear at the outset so that learning activities are not sufficiently purposeful. In some lessons, teachers do too much of the work, providing information instead of devising ways in which students could work things out for themselves, as happens in the most effective lessons.

164. The quality of learning is good with examples of very good development of spiritual and moral awareness. At both key stages, students with special educational needs are well supported and achieve well in relation to their levels of prior attainment.

165. There has been an improvement in standards of written work since the last inspection. However, the school's response to the issue of meeting the statutory requirement for religious education at Key Stage 4 has been unsatisfactory and students do not have sufficient opportunity to build effectively upon their achievements at Key Stage 3.

## **BUSINESS STUDIES**

166. The proportion of students achieving GCSE grades A\*-C in recent years has matched the national average and the department exceeded its target for higher grades. Teaching is always satisfactory and most often good. Teachers make the business topics from the syllabus interesting and meaningful to students, relating them well to students' own experience. Students' attitudes to the subject are extremely positive, with far more opting for business studies than can currently be accommodated. In lessons, students respond well to good teaching and contribute effectively to discussions. Even in the extremely large classes that have resulted from the high demand for the subject, students retain interest and motivation. Current arrangements for splitting the largest class in Year 10 to alleviate this situation are not entirely satisfactory and the school plans to alter these. The subject is well accommodated in a refurbished room, with ready access to good resources, including computers. Information and communication technology is integrated effectively into students' work. Assessment is used well, with useful databases to inform staff of students' progress. The information from these is used effectively to motivate students to higher attainment levels. Departmental management is good and, because of its popularity, the department is growing. Contributions to the curriculum from businesses and others, for example parents, in

the local community could usefully be further developed. The department is successful and lends an enriching dimension to the school's curricular provision at Key Stage 4.

## **DRAMA**

167. Drama is provided throughout Key Stage 3 as a separate subject and as an option at Key Stage 4. GCSE results in 1999 were higher than the national average for both A\*-C grades and A\*-G grades. Provisional results in 2000 suggest a performance below national averages, but still higher than those for 1994 and 1995 recorded in the last inspection report. In the limited observation undertaken in this inspection, standards of attainment in drama reach national expectations by the end of both key stages. Students work collaboratively and develop understanding of key skills and techniques. They have well developed speaking and listening skills. Their movement control and improvisation work reach satisfactory standards by the end of Key Stage 4, although some students still lack awareness of space and audience and are unimaginative in creative work. Attitudes to learning are good: most students are involved and co-operative as a result of good relationships with their teachers, and they enjoy their drama work. Only occasionally are the motivation and self-discipline of some students questionable. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teachers quickly establish good relationships with students, use a variety of imaginative ideas for relaxation exercises or improvisation, and give good feedback on work in progress with a judicious mixture of praise and evaluative comment. They provide good models when introducing new concepts or skills. As a result students quickly learn the routines of drama and acquire the skills, self-confidence and self-discipline to perform effectively. Occasional weaknesses do occur, for example when an introduction is over-extended, or not all students are involved in an activity, or not enough time is allowed for reflection and evaluation at the end of a lesson. The latter point was also made in the

last inspection report. Drama makes a positive contribution to the life of the school and its wider aims. Students gain additional confidence from their many successes in examinations.

## **HUMANITIES**

168. In 1999, GCSE results exceeded the national average for passes at grades A\*-C and A\*-G. Provisional results for 2000 indicate that GCSE results have remained above the national average. Results in GCSE examinations have been consistently above the national average for grades A\*-C for the past four years. In these examinations boys' performance exceeds that of girls, the reverse of the national trend.

169. In work seen during the inspection, standards of attainment at the end of both key stages are in line with the national expectation. Students on the one year course in humanities in Year 9 gain a sound understanding of citizenship and enhance their study skills, especially skills of writing, speaking and information technology. They acquire a good understanding of the problems of economic development and a sensitive appreciation of the moral issues surrounding trade between rich and poor nations. Work seen in Year 11 lessons confirmed that standards of attainment are close to the national expectation.

170. Students' attitudes to learning are very positive and this reflects the very good working relationships between teachers and students. Behaviour is always good and students show a mature approach to their studies. They respond well to the many opportunities presented to enhance their independent learning skills through the use of role play, discussion and business games.

171. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages. A particular strength is the quality of teachers' planning of lessons. In a very good lesson in Year 11, a well planned role play exercise was used in which students represented various interest groups in a planning dispute over the development of a quarry. Students enhanced their oral skills through well-structured argument and also their listening skills through the opportunity to appreciate the standpoint of others. Teachers successfully employ a range of stimulating teaching and learning styles and introduce students to a wide range of learning opportunities through the use of information and communication technology. Marking is thorough and teachers' record keeping is assiduous. Homework is regularly set and provides challenging tasks that enhance students' knowledge and understanding. Students with special educational needs are well supported in lessons.

172. The quality of learning is very good at both key stages. This reflects enthusiastic students' attitudes to the wide range of learning opportunities provided for them by their teachers. Significant value is added to students' attainment between Years 9 and 11 with students achieving well above the levels indicated by the results of standardised tests.

173. Students benefit from a well planned, balanced curriculum that not only introduces the concept of citizenship to all students but also extends coverage of the programme of study for both history and geography.