

INSPECTION REPORT

PENISTONE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Penistone, Sheffield

LEA area: Barnsley

Unique reference number: 106653

Headteacher: Mrs C G Gower

Reporting inspector: Marian Burdon
10179

Dates of inspection: 25-29 September 2000

Inspection number: 223800

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Huddersfield Road
Penistone
Sheffield
South Yorkshire

Postcode: S36 7BX

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Fax number: 01226 370328

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Councillor J Unsworth

Date of previous inspection: November 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Marian Burdon (10179)	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
Eva Mills (13459)	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Alan Waters (4817)	Team inspector	Geography	How high are standards - the school's results and pupils' achievements?
Paul Simmons (8840)	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Geraint Howell (2583)	Team inspector	History	
Brian Dower (23393)	Team inspector	English	
Chris Savory (4227)	Team inspector	Science	
Keith Gordon (30892)	Team inspector	Mathematics	
David Mason (17925)	Team inspector	Art	How high are standards - pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
John Lewis (3909)	Team inspector	Design and technology Information technology	
Kathryn Pink (31560)	Team inspector	Vocational education Religious education	
Avril Ellis (18244)	Team inspector	Music	
Howard Todd (27622)	Team inspector	Physical education Equal Opportunities	
Adrian Finbow (7570)	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages - Spanish	

Angela Brushett (1797)	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Penistone Grammar School is a mixed comprehensive school that serves the small town of Penistone as well as a wide rural area and the western outskirts of Barnsley. The small and scattered villages which make up a significant part of the catchment vary in nature from rural and old industry-based economies to dormitory commuter communities with a full range of socio-economic status. There are areas of social and economic disadvantage as well as relative wealth. Penistone is a large 11-18 school with 1,562 pupils on roll - much bigger than the national average. This school is the largest in the local education authority and the only one to offer post-16 education. The school is always over-subscribed. Pupil places at Penistone are well sought after by parents due to its good reputation in the area. Pupils entering the school have standards at least in line with and increasingly above the levels expected nationally. Pupils at the school are mainly white, with just one pupil of "minority" ethnic origin. There are 7.9 per cent of pupils listed under the code of practice for special educational needs. This is below the national average. There are 7.3 per cent of pupils on free school meals, which is below the national average. The school has had two headteachers and an acting headteacher since 1997. A new headteacher was appointed in May 2000.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Penistone school is effective in its work but has some clear strengths and clear weaknesses in equal balance. The recent appointment of the headteacher and the direction in which she is taking the school indicates that the school is well able to improve in the future. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Achieves good standards in many subjects and high standards in English, mathematics, history and in the sixth form
- Encourages and generally achieves good attitudes and behaviour in lessons
- Ensures good attendance
- Provides a high proportion of good teaching and learning at Key Stage 3 and very good teaching and learning in the sixth form
- Provides effective links with external agencies and parents
- Provides good leadership by the headteacher and works well with the governing body who are very committed to the school
- Monitors and controls the budget effectively and provides good value for money

What could be improved

- Accommodation, resources and health and safety
- Standards in information and communication technology, science and geography
- The monitoring and improvement of pupils' behaviour in some lessons and in and around the school
- Provision for personal and social education, religious education, information and communication technology, wider study opportunities in the sixth form and a fuller range of extra-curricular activities, especially at lunch time
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- Special educational needs
- Strategic management, and monitoring and evaluation by the school and the governing body
- Teaching and learning, particularly in Year 11 lower sets

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made some limited improvement overall since the last inspection. The school and the governing body have addressed some of the key issues since the last inspection but others have only been tackled in the last three months. The management of the school has been weak during this period, which has led to a decline in some key areas.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Performance data shows that, overall, pupils enter the school with standards at least in line with and increasingly above the levels expected nationally. By the end of Key Stage 3 standards in national tests are in line with, and in a few cases above, the national averages in all subjects except in information and communication technology. Comparisons with the achievements of schools in similar circumstances show low relative performance but there are variations between subjects. Standards in terms of GCSE results have not improved since the last inspection, but remain around the national average. This is a relative decline in comparison to the national picture. Attainment in English, mathematics and the sixth form is high, and remains well above the national average.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes are positive in lessons. They are less positive in and around the school
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Generally good in lessons. Unsatisfactory at lunch time and in some lessons
Personal development and relationships	Unsatisfactory. Provision for personal development is underdeveloped in the school. Personal development in the sixth form is good
Attendance	Very good

Pupils' attitudes to lessons is generally good. Pupils show commitment to and take an interest in their work. They respond positively to good teaching. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is usually satisfactory and often good. Behaviour around school is unsatisfactory particularly at lunch time.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Overall quality of teaching is good	Good teaching	On balance satisfactory, but some teaching is unsatisfactory in Year 11	Good teaching

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

The overall quality of teaching is good. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 93 per cent of lessons observed, outstanding in one per cent, good in 34 per cent, very good in 14 per cent and unsatisfactory or worse in six per cent of lessons. Teaching is for the most part good in English and mathematics and satisfactory in science. Good teaching was seen in most areas of the curriculum. Unsatisfactory teaching was seen in English, mathematics, art, science, geography, design and technology and modern foreign languages. More unsatisfactory teaching was seen in the lower sets in Year 11 than in other year groups. Literacy and numeracy are taught appropriately in English and mathematics but this is not extended sufficiently across the curriculum. Generally the school meets the needs of the pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Provision of the basic curriculum is satisfactory. However, provision for personal, social and health education, careers and information and communication technology at both key stages is unsatisfactory. Provision for religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is unsatisfactory and fails to comply with statutory requirements. The school provides a limited range of, but good, extra-curricular activities. Alternative accreditation to GCSE is good. There are effective links with outside agencies.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Some good support is given in some subjects. Pupils are making satisfactory progress but overall provision is unsatisfactory.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Unsatisfactory and has not improved since the last OFSTED report. Policy is weak. There is no constant approach to promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pastoral arrangements are improving. Procedures for monitoring attendance are good. Procedures for monitoring behaviour are inconsistent, as they are also for monitoring pupils' progress. Health and safety arrangements are unsatisfactory.

The school works well in partnership with its parents. Parents' evenings are well attended. Parents feel the school provides sufficient information and the day-to-day information is good. The school has good support from parents for productions and concerts. The school does not fulfil the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship. Sex education policy and provision, reports to parents and the governors' annual report to parents are unsatisfactory.

The school has introduced a new pastoral system to improve support and guidance. Personal development is well monitored. Health and safety procedures are unsatisfactory. Monitoring of attendance is good. Systems in place to monitor behaviour are inconsistent.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Effective leadership and management by the headteacher. Good leadership and management in the sixth form. Leadership and management of departments is satisfactory in most cases. Leadership and management of special educational needs is poor. Planning for improvement is weak.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Weak. Governors are committed and have a good understanding of the needs of the school. However, they have not helped the school plan strategically or tackle some key areas such as information and communication technology and special educational needs. They are not fulfilling their statutory duties in some key areas. The governors manage the budget well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Weak. There has been limited monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance by the school and governing body since the last inspection.
The strategic use of resources	Weak. The school does not strategically plan for resources, especially information and communication technology. The school does not apply principles of best value.

The school has sufficient well-qualified staff to fulfil the requirements of the curriculum. It has insufficient administration staff to carry out the work of the school. Accommodation is poor in the school. The school has inadequate resources to fulfil the requirements of the curriculum. The school has made limited improvement since the last inspection under the temporary management of the school. Strategic development is a weakness. The school and governors have only recently begun to consider the principles of best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is approachable and helpful • Day-to-day information is good • Teaching in the school is felt to be good • Children like the school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour in and around the school • Homework • Higher expectations of pupils • More information on pupils' progress

Communications with parents are generally good and better than reported by parents. Other aspects that parents raised were generally in accord with those observed by the inspection team.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. When standards are compared to all schools nationally the school continues to perform well in all key stages and this pattern has been sustained since the last inspection. Such comparisons are particularly favourable in the sixth form, where attainment is high. However, this overall picture hides some significant variations: between subjects; between key stages; between higher and lower attaining boys and girls; and between year groups, especially given the increasingly higher attainment of pupils on entry over recent years. Furthermore, comparisons with the achievements of schools in similar circumstances are less favourable though there are some differences between subjects and also depending on how such comparisons are made.

2. Performance data in the form of test results and teacher assessments from primary schools show that overall pupils enter the school with standards at least in line with and frequently above the levels expected nationally. The proportion of pupils entering the school, having already achieved a level in English and mathematics (Level 5) above that expected for an average 11-year-old (Level 4), has increased steadily in recent years.

3. By the end of Key Stage 3 standards in the national tests are in line with and in many cases above the national averages in all subjects except information and communication technology (ICT). The picture is complex however. Mathematics performs well above the national expectation, especially for pupils attaining at the higher levels. In English standards are also high for the majority but remain in line with the national picture for the higher levels. Standards in science are significantly lower: they are above the national level overall but do not compare well to schools in similar circumstances especially in relation to higher attainers where they are well below expected levels. The overall picture of attainment at age 14 when compared to schools in similar contexts, is that test results are below the levels expected, though English and mathematics compare slightly more favourably than science.

4. The school's own assessment of performance in other subjects at the end of Key Stage 3 is favourable, and is generally supported by inspection evidence. Art, music and physical education (PE) are in line with the national picture. Religious education (RE) and design and technology (DT) are also in line, but have significant numbers of pupils performing at higher levels. The situation in DT is more complex, however, with resistant materials reaching lower standards than other aspects of the subject. Furthermore, the procedures for the assessment of standards in this subject are not judged to be secure. Geography reaches standards which are also either in line with or above expectations, as does modern foreign languages (MFL), especially for the boys. Standards in history are above expectations. As mentioned earlier, standards in ICT are well below the national norms and show signs of deterioration over time. This remains the case into Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form for ICT and represents a significant weakness in the current overall picture for the school. The continuing weakness in science, evident in the previous inspection, also remains. Ongoing concerns over standards in science were noted by parents and this remains an issue for the school to rectify.

5. Standards in terms of GCSE results are in line with those expected nationally but have not improved overall since the last inspection. Pass rates for those gaining five or more A*-C grades have remained above the national average but the difference has narrowed significantly since the mid 1990s when the school was last inspected. Using point score measures for the grades achieved by all pupils the school remains close to the national average. This shows a relative decline in comparison to a rising national trend. Again there are significant variations between subjects. Results in English have made a marked improvement since the last inspection but there is a significant difference in favour of girls in the grades achieved. Results are above the national average but fewer pupils than expected gain the highest grades (A*-A). Mathematics results have remained consistently above the national picture since the last inspection and are in line with those for schools in similar circumstances. Science results remain in line with national averages but, as in Key Stage 3, they are well below levels reached in similar schools. Standards in geography have now slipped below those achieved nationally and as such do not

build on the attainments within Key Stage 3. Similarly, attainment in RE falls below national averages, but there is a significant lack of direct teaching time for this subject in Key Stage 4. The picture in other foundation subjects is more positive. In modern foreign languages pupils attain results above the national norms, with a growing proportion of pupils reaching the highest grades A* and A. Pupils perform well above the national level in history and the rising trend especially for boys is worth noting. Music and DT also attain results above the national norms. However, results in DT resistant materials are well below the national average. Results in business studies show a rising trend since the last inspection and now compare favourably overall with national averages, but in the last two years girls have attained less well than boys both compared to national figures and to their performance in other subjects. Performance in PE and art are both broadly as expected nationally, though the pattern of results for art is variable over time. Inspection evidence suggests that the trends and patterns of results as described are likely to continue.

6. The average point score of students taking two or more A-levels has remained comfortably above the national average since the last inspection. The overall standards reached by the relatively small proportion of students who elect to stay on into the sixth form are a strength of the school. Again, there are significant variations between subjects. Both English and mathematics results are high, and an increasing number of students gain the highest A-B grades. This pattern is also evident in history, art and PE. Similarly business studies students have attained well in recent years with an overall upward trend in results. In 1999, those achieving the highest grades in business studies was well above the national average. As in earlier key stages, however, science and, to a lesser extent, geography results are less secure. Science results are close to the national norms overall but there has been a steady decline since the last inspection in those achieving the highest grades (A/B) in physics and chemistry to a point which is below the national average. This lack of improvement since the last inspection is similar for geography. Results in DT and general studies have remained around the national norm since the last inspection. For other subjects such as MFL and music, the numbers are too small to make valid comparisons with national figures.

7. Much of the current work in the school reflects the standards and trends outlined above. The patterns of performance in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and ICT are worth a particular mention. In English, in the majority of Key Stage 3 lessons seen, pupils are achieving at levels appropriate for their age. In Key Stage 4 written standards are satisfactory or better and pupils read well. This represents good progress since the last inspection. Work of a high quality was seen in the sixth form, especially in Year 13. Whilst present standards of speaking and listening were judged to be good in English, this was much less evident in many other subjects. In mathematics the standards in some lessons in Key Stages 3 and 4 fell below those suggested by the pattern of examination results. Where this was the case it was frequently related to lessons which lacked challenge, took insufficient account of pupils' prior attainment, or offered few opportunities for pupils to explain their work orally and thereby deepen their understanding. Inspection evidence shows that in science standards in relation to national expectations are above average in Key Stage 3, broadly in line towards the end of Key Stage 4 and slightly below in the sixth form. Whilst there are clear differences between higher and lower achievers within this pattern, the overall trend is not good for this subject. Standards of work seen in ICT fall well below the levels expected nationally and currently the school is not meeting its statutory requirements for provision in this subject.

8. The school has a very small proportion of its pupils, around eight per cent, registered as having special educational needs, compared to a national average much closer to 20 per cent. However, mainly as a result of teachers and in-class support staff having a good knowledge of these pupils and working to meet their needs, they make satisfactory or better progress and reach standards which are in line with their expectations. Better progress would be made if all such pupils had their special needs appropriately recognised and provided for.

9. As required, the school has set targets for its own performance in terms of examination success in recent years. The school relies heavily on predictions based on diagnostic tests for 14 to 16 year olds to inform the target setting process, but is prepared to amend these predictions in the light of other information. Targets for performance in GCSE examinations are appropriately ambitious when compared to pupils' past performance and to these predictions. This is especially the case for the future where the school is aiming to consolidate and improve on the most recent results, over and above the predictions.

However, the current use of Key Stage 3 statutory assessment data to aid target setting is underdeveloped in the school, both within Key Stage 3 and to inform likely performance in Key Stage 4. In 1999, for example, pupils' achievements in tests in Key Stage 3 were five per cent above the level predicted in English and five per cent below in science. In both of these subjects there was also a difference between the teachers' own assessments of pupil performance and that attained in the end of key stage tests, by as much as 20 per cent in English. Mathematics tends to show greater consistency between assessments and performance.

10. During the inspection some very good practice was seen within departments, as in mathematics, to accurately assess and monitor pupils in order to inform targets for improvement. In other subjects, whilst there appeared to be plenty of data available, there was less appreciation of its value or practice in its use to chart progress. There were significant variations in the extent to which departments had adapted National Curriculum levels to help shape the process. There are gaps in the data available to subject leaders to compare to the national picture and there is no systematic encouragement or coaching in the use of such data by senior managers. The procedures for accurately assessing pupils' performance and for systematically setting ambitious but realistic targets for improvement should be reviewed to ensure consistency between subjects.

11. The school should now:

- address the issue of underperformance in some subject departments, including science, geography and aspects of DT;
- improve provision and standards in ICT in all key stages;
- improve overall standards through monitoring performance against schools in similar circumstances;
- improve and increase the consistency of the assessment and monitoring of pupils' performance in all subjects by sharing and adopting best practice and by the consistent use of National Curriculum test and assessment data;
- reverse the relative decline in GCSE performance in Key Stage 4;
- summarise and share best practice in relation to improving the performance of boys.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good. They show commitment to, and take an interest in their studies and respond positively to interesting and challenging work and to good quality teaching. In English most pupils show commitment to their work and are eager to learn, with older pupils willing to reflect on their experiences and share them with other members of the group. In history, at all key stages, pupils willingly work hard, stay on task and work well together. Pupils take a keen interest in practical work and respond well to well-planned opportunities, both within lessons and in extra-curricular sessions. In physical education pupils show high levels of motivation and work for sustained periods, refining and developing their skills. In music pupils respond well to the good opportunities provided for them to perform in groups of different sizes. In design and technology pupils are keen to learn new skills and are willing to ask questions, whilst in art sixth form students in particular respond most positively to their teachers' enthusiasms and make a substantial commitment to their studies outside of lesson times. Sixth form students in general respond most positively to the opportunities provided and their high levels of commitment and willingness to become fully involved in their work are reflected in the high standards they achieve.

13. Whilst most pupils were positive in their attitudes towards learning, their responses were often too closely dependant on the teacher. Where teaching was challenging and exciting pupils responded well, but where teaching was dull and did not take account of pupils' needs they responded unenthusiastically and took little interest or pride in their work. For example, in geography pupils responded well when they were required to bring their own ideas to their work, but enthusiasm was less apparent when pupils were passive recipients of instructional teaching. In modern foreign languages even higher attaining pupils in Year 11 and the sixth form were passive and did not engage sufficiently with their work, volunteering little in terms of foreign language answers. In both art and design and technology, pupils moved off-task when the work set was unimaginative and failed to engage them.

14. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is usually satisfactory and often good. Their behaviour around school, particularly at lunch times, is often unsatisfactory. In most lessons pupils behaved well and were courteous both to their teachers and to other pupils. In English pupils' self-discipline was good, and their use of language in communicating with their teachers was both appropriate and respectful. In music pupils behaved well at all times – in response to high teacher expectations. They were courteous and respectful and interacted well both with other pupils and with adults. A feature of good behaviour in lessons was the trustworthiness and respect shown for property and displays. This was noticeable in design and technology, English and also in physical education lessons. Here, the pupils operated according to sound principles of safety at all times. Where behaviour was unsatisfactory in lessons it was often not tackled by the teacher, and therefore escalated. For example, in a mathematics lesson, girls used inappropriate language and one boy refused to do his work and was verbally abusive to the teacher, neither of these incidents being appropriately addressed by the teacher. Behaviour around school was variable and often unsatisfactory. A combination of the long lunch break, inadequate supervision, the high proportion of pupils who through necessity remain on site, and the lack of indoor communal areas for the pupils, contributed to some poor behaviour on the part of some pupils. However, there are too many examples of poor behaviour. Some pupils barged into dinner queues and through doors, without any regard for the well-being of other people in the immediate vicinity, including adult visitors to the school. There were also instances of bad language being used and inappropriate comments being made about adult visitors. Parents were right to express their anxieties in this regard. This pattern of behaviour has been reflected in the number of fixed term exclusions over the past year, which is high in comparison with schools of a similar size. Many of these exclusions have been for disrespectful or abusive behaviour.

15. Pupils' personal development is unsatisfactory overall and this is directly linked to the fact that provision in this area is underdeveloped. When teachers provide the opportunities in lessons, pupils show considerable initiative and personal development. For example, in some lessons in history pupils readily take the initiative by asking questions to further develop and extend their knowledge. In physical education pupils listen well to each other's views and respect each other's feelings and values, whilst in English pupils are tolerant and supportive of those who struggle to express themselves. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are often good, as is the relationship between pupils with special educational needs and their classroom support assistants. In other subject areas however, the dominant style of teaching limits the fullest development of pupils as learners and does not provide sufficient opportunities for the pupils to develop independence or to show initiative. Outside of lessons, opportunities for pupils to show responsibility and use their initiative by acting with consideration for the feelings and safety of others are ignored by a significant minority of pupils. This is seen at lunch times in particular and, to a lesser extent, in movement between lessons, when these pupils ignore the unsettling and potentially dangerous impact of their actions on other members of the school community. During this time bullying does occur. This situation is worsened by the failure of some staff to tackle incidents of poor behaviour.

16. The school council is a welcome development in giving pupils the opportunity to make a positive contribution to the school community. The effectiveness of the school council in providing a voice for pupils is doubted by some pupils, however. The personal development of students in the sixth form is generally good, and this is directly linked to the increased opportunities provided for students to take responsibility and show initiative. There were no incidents of racism observed.

Attendance

17. Attendance at the school is very good with rates above levels achieved nationally. Measures are in place to encourage good attendance and to ensure that explanations are received for absence. Rates of unauthorised absence are similar to the national average. Attendance rates have improved since the last inspection.

18. Although most pupils arrive in school on time, there is often a problem due to the late arrival of public transport. A number of pupils are regularly late for school through no fault of their own. Pupils move between lessons with reasonable promptness but the layout of the site often means that lessons do not begin on time.

19. The school should now:

- put mechanisms in place to tackle poor behaviour at lunch times and around the school;
- cut down on the high level of exclusions;
- give pupils opportunities to personally develop.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

20. The overall quality of teaching is good and is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. Teachers are dedicated and committed and work hard at providing the pupils with a good education.

21. The overall quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in 93 per cent of lessons observed. Teaching was good in 34 per cent of lessons and very good in 14 per cent of lessons. Teaching was outstanding in one per cent of lessons. Unsatisfactory teaching was observed in six per cent of lessons and poor teaching was observed in one per cent of lessons. Teaching in the sixth form was good with 92 per cent of lessons observed being satisfactory or better, 35 per cent being good, 20 per cent very good and five per cent outstanding. There was unsatisfactory teaching seen in eight per cent of lessons. However, this was only in three lessons observed. Teaching was better at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3, 95 per cent of teaching observed was satisfactory or better, 32 per cent of teaching was good, 14 per cent very good and one per cent of lessons were excellent. Teaching in three per cent of lessons was unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 4, 88 per cent of teaching observed in lessons was satisfactory or better. Teaching was good in 34 per cent of lessons, very good in 11 per cent and unsatisfactory in 12 per cent of lessons. Teaching observed in Year 10 was much better than in Year 11. In Year 11, 18 per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory - however this was observed in lessons with lower attaining pupils.

22. Examples of very good teaching were observed in the sixth form, mathematics, English, geography, modern foreign languages, art, science and physical education. Good teaching was seen in most subjects of the curriculum at both Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. A minority of unsatisfactory lessons were observed in English, mathematics, art, science, geography, design and technology and modern foreign languages. More unsatisfactory teaching was seen in the lower sets in Year 11 than in any other year group.

Strengths of teaching

23. Most teachers have good subject knowledge; lessons are well planned with clear objectives and are often well sequenced to offer variety and interest. Often these lessons have a brisk pace, which keeps pupils on task and motivated. Good lessons were often characterised by effective questioning that encouraged pupils to think. For example, a Year 7 class working on a unit considering the nature of religion and its significance as a subject to study was carefully led through the recall of previous work, a good story was told by the teacher and there was a carefully structured closed and open questioning session to a written task on the sources of personal beliefs. Vocabulary used in good lessons was often appropriate to the task and the subject and helped pupils develop a deeper understanding of their work, especially when technical vocabulary was needed to explain a particular procedure or function as in art and design and technology.

24. Relationships with pupils were often very good in effective lessons. Support given to pupils and the positive feedback helped pupils progress with their work. Pupils valued the praise they were given.

Weaker features of teaching

25. The least effective and unsatisfactory teaching at both key stages and in the sixth form was often caused by poorly planned lessons that did not challenge the pupils or provide them with a range of stimulating activities to engage them. Often the pace of these lessons was slow and not always matched to the ability of the pupils. In a minority of cases the behavior of pupils was poor and the teacher could not control the situation. In some of these lessons provision for pupils with special educational needs had not been planned for and they were making limited progress. For example, pupils with special educational needs at Key Stage 4 in business studies do not progress because their Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) do not include subject specific targets, and the support assistants were not involved in planning the learning of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs.

Lesson planning in unsatisfactory lessons did not always take account of prior attainment and learning. For example, in mathematics classes in Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 were all observed doing work on reflections where the skills and concepts taught were very similar in each case.

Literacy and numeracy

26. Literacy across the curriculum has only recently been promoted in the school. Standards vary across subjects but this is often due to the extent of opportunities given to pupils to improve the literacy skills. For example, skills are well promoted in English, whereas in other subjects pupils are not encouraged to concentrate on literacy. Often pupils are not given enough opportunities to listen to each other or to get involved in debate or discussion.

27. Numeracy skills displayed by pupils are good, particularly in Years 7 and 8. However, there is no whole school approach to improving numeracy skills. Good practice to support numeracy was observed in physical education and science but there are significant inconsistencies across other subjects.

Pupils with special educational needs

28. Where teaching is good, pupils with special educational needs are well taught and learn well. The teachers identify their needs and use the support assistants effectively where they involve them in the planning for these pupils. This good practice was seen in mathematics, history and geography; however, support for special educational needs across other subjects in the curriculum is inconsistent. This is mainly due to the lack of school procedures in place to identify and support pupils with special educational needs. Staff are given insufficient support and guidance to plan effectively for pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs.

Pupils' learning

29. Pupils generally enjoy learning. The quality of learning reflects very closely the quality of teaching which pupils receive. In the lessons observed across the school as a whole the quality of learning was at least satisfactory in 90 per cent of lessons, it was good in 32 per cent of lessons, very good in 13 per cent and excellent in one per cent. The quality of learning was unsatisfactory in nine per cent of lessons and poor in one per cent. The quality of learning in the sixth form was particularly good in 32 per cent of lessons, very good in 20 per cent of the lessons observed and excellent in five per cent. The quality of learning at Key Stage 3 was better than Key Stage 4. However, at Key Stage 4 much of the unsatisfactory learning was observed in Year 11 lower sets. When teaching was good pupils often learned well and made progress. Generally pupils were highly motivated and enthusiastic, concentrating on their work and persevering with it. This was apparent in most subjects. Unsatisfactory learning was often due to poor behaviour in those lessons which did not offer a range of interesting, motivating or stimulating experiences. Sometimes poor learning was connected to inappropriate work given to pupils that did not match the pupils' needs or requirements.

30. Assessment procedures vary across departments. English, mathematics, history, MFL and design and technology have effective practices in place to help pupils' progress. Assessment in other areas is underdeveloped and does not help pupils' progress by setting secure targets to help them improve. Marking, however, is often thorough.

31. Parents expressed a concern regarding homework. During the inspection week it was found that homework was consistently given to children across all year groups. However, the quality varied across departments. Some departments tended to give homework by finishing off work not completed in the lesson, whereas other departments gave homework that extended and supported their studies.

Improvement since the last inspection

32. Teaching in the school has steadily improved since the last inspection particularly at Key Stage 3. However, there are some areas of shortcomings, particularly teaching in Year 11 lower sets where there is a higher proportion of teaching (18 per cent) that is unsatisfactory.

33. The school should now:

- concentrate on improving the weaker features of teaching, in particular in the lower sets in Year 11;
- improve the provision for special educational needs to ensure that pupils' IEPs are sufficiently detailed to support their progress across all subjects and that teachers make effective use of them;
- involve support assistants closely in planning the learning of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs;
- promote literacy and numeracy in a consistent way across all subjects;
- tackle aspects of poor behaviour that are effecting pupils' learning;
- employ teaching strategies to improve pupils' learning, particularly in Year 11.

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

34. Overall, the quality and range of opportunities for learning are unsatisfactory.

Subject curriculum

35. At Key Stage 3 particular strengths are the induction to library and skills in English, and the ways in which drama is well integrated into the teaching and well supported by the active drama club; the provision for all pupils to learn Spanish as a second foreign language, and the size of teaching groups and the broad range of provision in PE. At Key Stage 4 the strengths are the use of the Certificate of Achievement in a number of subjects as an alternative accreditation to GCSE for lower-attaining pupils. In PE the range of activities is good and the curriculum provides well for pupils to develop independence, show initiative and accept responsibility. In the sixth form the strengths are the broad curriculum for students studying English, the provision for A-level sports studies and the provision for art, where students are able to establish, develop and refine a personal response in their work. Examples of good planning include business studies, with a detailed scheme of work outlining teaching strategies and learning outcomes.

36. The curriculum has weaknesses. Provision for ICT is poor at Key Stage 3 and does not meet statutory requirements. Planning is also poor, with insufficient emphasis on the inclusion of ICT in lessons. ICT skills development is planned at A-level which is too low. Overall pupils have insufficient time in which to develop their information and communication technology skills. The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is poor: the school does not provide adequately for pupils. No PSHE is taught in Years 8 and 9. A weakness is the policy and provision for sex education. A sample of older pupils recognised that their learning in both ICT and PSHE relied to a large extent on their experience outside school. Provision fails to provide equality of opportunity. School policies demonstrate a strong commitment to equality of opportunity for all pupils. This commitment is not yet clear in practice. Lack of facilities prevents the school from offering PE to sixth form students, and this is unsatisfactory. There is also a lack of equal opportunities for boys and girls to study dance at Key Stage 3: boys receive ten hours of teaching, whereas girls receive 30 hours.

37. Provision in the sixth form curriculum is too narrow. A significant minority of the students admitted on to A-level courses are unlikely, on the basis of prior attainment at GCSE, to achieve at A level - for example, in science. Curriculum provision in the sixth form has not changed since the last inspection. The range of courses available to sixth form students is limited to a satisfactory range of A and A/S level courses. Pupils wishing to follow GNVQ or other courses post-16 attend Barnsley College of Further Education. Consequently less than 40 per cent of pupils stay on into the sixth form at Penistone.

38. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is a weakness. The curriculum provides an informal approach to meeting the needs of these pupils. In the short term provision is frequently successful because of the individual skills and energy of teachers and the work of classroom support assistants in a number of subjects – for example, in modern languages. The forward planning of such work across the school is insufficient to ensure the highest achievement of pupils with special educational needs over the longer term, however. Teachers are not sufficiently well informed of the learning needs of pupils. An exception is design and technology where the practical provision is good and has a positive impact on the achievement of pupils.

39. The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements because of the inadequate time for RE at Key Stage 4 and the lack of time in the sixth form curriculum.

40. The time needed for the movement of large numbers of pupils between lessons leads to a loss of teaching time at the start and in the middle of the afternoon. The timetabling of 70 minute lessons has a negative impact on the teaching of foreign languages and is not an effective use of the curriculum time available.

41. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is developed both in English and mathematics. However, it is not promoted sufficiently in other subjects to further extend pupils' knowledge.

42. There are strengths in the school's provision for extra-curricular activities: the theatre visits, extra art sessions, field trips, study visits and industrial visits to support history, design and technology, together with visits to Normandy in Year 8 and to the French Alps in Year 10. The visits also provide good opportunities for sixth form language students to support and supervise younger pupils. Extra-curricular opportunities in PE and music are very good. There is a strong social identity among sixth form students. A good variety of social activities are organised - for example an introductory event for new Year 12 students and a summer ball. A lively sixth form committee organises social events and sponsored events to raise money for charity. The school provides well for pupils of all levels of achievement. The school's provision for extra-curricular activities is limited however, particularly at lunch times.

43. Careers education is taught well. However, there is insufficient provision in Year 9 and at Key Stage 4 to offer pupils their entitlement. Work experience is satisfactory.

44. The school takes pupils from a large number of primary schools and makes adequate provision to ensure a smooth transition into secondary education. Curriculum liaison has improved since the last inspection. In English pupils in primary schools work on an agreed project and in physical education A-level pupils help with sports coaching for primary children. In July a music workshop was held when primary children from many contributory schools visited. This was very successful and culminated in a concert.

45. Constructive relationships have also been maintained with higher education establishments. The school provides training for student teachers from Sheffield University and this has a positive effect on pupils' learning. Sixth form staff have good links with universities and local colleges which provide students with both information and personal experience. These are beneficial when they are making choices. A visit to Sheffield University is also organised for Year 11 pupils.

46. The school has successfully developed further business links since the last inspection in addition to maintaining those which were already established. These are used in many areas of the curriculum, including food technology, textiles and business studies. The Young Enterprise scheme is well supported by local business and an 'Enterprise Day' used the expertise and advice of personnel from local firms to enable pupils from Year 9 to make informed choices. Work experience is well organised. Year 11 pupils are placed with both local firms and establishments further afield. This experience is followed up in curricular work.

47. The school has improved provision for the second foreign language, has successfully developed the Certificate of Achievement and has introduced GCSE PE. Issues identified at the time of the previous inspection remain in ICT, PHSE and RE.

48. The school has developed constructive relationships with its local partner institutions. Curricular connections between the school and primary schools are good in English and in mathematics and are very good in PE and music. Effective links have also been developed with universities and colleges of further education. The school also has good contacts with business through the Young Enterprise scheme, which are well supported through design and technology. Teaching is well planned to build on pupils' work experience in Year 11 both in English and in modern languages.

Social, moral, spiritual and cultural aspects

49. The school's provision for the moral and social development of its pupils is unsatisfactory and provision for their spiritual and cultural development is poor. The school has made little improvement in any aspect of spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision, and provision has deteriorated in some aspects, since the time of the last inspection. The school policy statement on spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision is weak. Whilst it identifies the importance of these areas to the development of the pupils, it does not provide clear indication of how these areas will be delivered or of how they will be monitored and evaluated. As a result of this weakness in whole school policy, subject policy

statements lack commitment and therefore provision across subjects is variable and often unsatisfactory.

50. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual development is poor. The school's assembly policy and programme does not satisfy statutory requirements for a daily act of broadly Christian worship. Assemblies are used to promote a supportive ethos, but do not contain sufficient opportunities for pupils to engage in quiet reflection and contemplation. Within lessons, provision for pupils' spiritual development is inadequate. In religious education, pupils are provided with some opportunities to reflect on their own experiences through the taught syllabus at Key Stages 3 and 4. In A-level art, some students explore and reflect on personal spiritual issues through their work. There is no provision for collective worship in the sixth form. Assemblies are held once a week for each year group, led by the head of sixth form. These are generally administrative in nature, and held in unsuitable accommodation - the sixth form common room which has insufficient seating for the number of students. They do not make a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social or cultural development of the students. Apart from these isolated examples, there is no evidence of any planned provision for promoting pupils' spiritual development in any subject area.

51. The school's provision for pupils' moral development is inconsistent and is unsatisfactory overall. Many teachers provide appropriate role models for the pupils in terms of their behaviour, but this provision is not consistent and some instances of poor behaviour are ignored by teachers. Where teachers make a strong commitment to establishing a high level of care and respect, this is recognised and appreciated by pupils. Moral issues are considered in some subjects. For example, in one geography lesson pupils considered moral issues around the removal of hedgerows in Britain, whilst in design and technology, pupils were given some opportunities to reflect on issues to do with sustainability and the environment. In physical education, pupils obey the rules and laws of games being played and show respect for the strengths and weaknesses of other pupils' performances. In Year 7 PHSE and Year 11 religious education, pupils address the moral issue of bullying; in the latter case, this involves local magistrates working with pupils in the classroom. In other subjects, however, there are no planned opportunities for exploring moral issues or dilemmas through the curriculum and no evidence was observed during lessons.

52. The school's provision for pupils' social development is unsatisfactory overall. The school provides some opportunities for pupils to work together and to relate to one another, both within the curriculum and through a limited programme of extra-curricular activities. However, both the structure of the school day - particularly the long lunch break - and the lack of any indoor social communal area for pupils, act against the development of positive social relationships and skills, and contribute to unsatisfactory behaviour at lunch times in particular. A number of subjects provide planned opportunities for pupils to work together. In food technology pupils work together well when preparing menus and food, whilst in science good opportunities are provided for pupils to both plan and execute practical work in groups. In both music and physical education good extra-curricular opportunities are provided for pupils to work together in groups and teams. However, there were no opportunities in lessons observed for paired or group work in mathematics, and in geography social learning contexts are seriously underdeveloped.

53. The school provides a small number of good opportunities for the pupils to take responsibility, participate in the community and develop an understanding of citizenship. In physical education sixth form sports studies students provide support in lower school lessons and organise competitions and tournaments as part of their Junior and Community Sports Leader Award work. Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility in other subjects are however limited, largely by the strong focus on direct instruction in much of the teaching in the school. Year 11 pupils are provided with a two-week work experience placement and Year 9 pupils have the opportunity to take part in a Young Enterprise competition. The school promotes awareness of the need to help others through a range of charitable work, some of which is initiated by pupils. Charities supported in the past year include: Comic Relief, RNIB, the Kosovo appeal, Barnardo's and the Bosnian Mission.

54. The school's provision for pupils' cultural development is variable, but poor overall. In history planned provision has recently been improved at Key Stage 3 to build in a local history visit, whilst in art the department contributes to the Penistone "Well Dressing" ceremony. In other subjects, however, opportunities for the pupils to develop an understanding of their own cultural traditions are undeveloped.

55. A small number of good opportunities are provided for pupils to develop an understanding of other cultural traditions. For example, in design and technology, pupils develop awareness through research into the foods and fashions of other cultures, whilst in music, sixth form students have the opportunity to hear classical Indian music and to consider differences in musical organisation and structure between Indian and western music. In art there are some opportunities to learn about art works from other cultures, as well as those from the Western European tradition. In modern foreign languages pupils have good opportunities for visits and work experience in Europe. In other subjects, however, provision for the development of pupils' awareness of other cultures is underdeveloped.

Personal, Social and Health Education

Sex education

56. Provision for sex and relationship education is poor and consists of a four-week unit of study in Year 10 within the personal development programme. There is a sex education policy in place, but it does not describe how sex and relationship education is provided, nor who is responsible for providing, monitoring or evaluating it. Within the very tight constraints of a four-week unit, however, teaching in Key Stage 4 is good, with clearly stated appropriate aims and objectives, support from the community nurse, and a sensitive approach which engages and involves all pupils.

Drugs Education

57. There is a drugs education policy in place but it is a superficial statement of intent rather than a clear description of principles, policy and provision. Limited drugs education takes place within the Key Stage 4 personal development programme. Current development of a policy to deal with drug related incidents does not address drug education. The existing drugs policy is undermined by the fact that a smoking room for the sixth form is provided, and in a building which is used by other pupils for some lessons.

58. Provision for personal, social and health education is poor. In Key Stage 3 no discrete PSHE is provided for Years 8 and 9 and although cross-curricular delivery has been audited, it has not been monitored and evaluated. Scrutiny of departmental schemes of work indicates that PSHE is not seen as a significant feature. In Year 7, PSHE is taught as a discrete subject for one period a week. The scheme of work is a list of content to be covered, and does not include intended learning outcomes or planning for progression. There has been no professional development in the teaching and learning of PSHE for the teacher who has sole responsibility in Year 7.

59. In Key Stage 4 PSHE is taught as part of the personal development programme, which also includes career guidance and religious education. The curriculum is overcrowded and staffing of the programme is inconsistent. There has been no improvement in provision or standards since the last inspection. Teaching accommodation provided for PSHE lessons is inadequate and inappropriate, limits the teaching and learning strategies that can be employed, and has a negative impact on pupil learning.

60. The management of PSHE across the school is unsatisfactory. The head of personal development is overloaded in terms of responsibilities, and staffing is not prioritised with the result that units within the personal development programme vary from year to year. This has a negative impact on planning, both for pupil progress and learning, and staff development.

61. The school should now:

- improve policy and provision for the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of pupils;
- ensure the sixth form curriculum meets the needs of all students;
- ensure that all students receive appropriate guidance on options and choices for their post-16 education;
- monitor and evaluate the impact of curriculum provision on the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school;
- improve provision for ICT;
- improve provision for religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form;

- improve provision for the personal, social and health education of pupils at both Key Stages 3 and 4;
- plan for and implement appropriate professional development for teachers involved in the PSHE programme.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

62. The school has recently carried out a reorganisation of the pastoral system in order to improve the support and guidance provided for pupils.

63. Through form tutors and year heads, pupils' concerns are adequately dealt with and their individual needs are met. Twice-yearly reviews are carried out in order to identify any problems and to set targets for pupils. Information from these reviews is used well to monitor the personal development of pupils. The school has identified the need to place more emphasis on raising standards through the guidance system and heads of school are now more involved in linking the pastoral care of pupils with their educational support. Heads of year now remain with the same group throughout a key stage and the changing role of the pastoral teams is intended to improve the tracking of pupils' progress and the identification of underachievement.

64. The school's procedures to ensure the health and safety of pupils are at present unsatisfactory and need to be reviewed. In some key areas, risk assessments are not undertaken and recorded. During the inspection matters were brought to the attention of staff which were potentially hazardous. Some of these related to the buildings; others included the storage of equipment and lack of maintenance. The school should take urgent steps to ensure that it fulfils its legal obligations in matters of health and safety. The school employs a qualified matron and first aid arrangements are good.

65. The school has due regard for issues involving child protection and follows guidelines agreed locally. There is good contact with supporting agencies.

66. There are effective systems in place to monitor the attendance of pupils with good liaison between form tutors, heads of year and the educational welfare service. The school follows up unexplained absence and has good support from administrative staff. This results in good overall attendance rates.

67. Although procedures are in place for the monitoring and recording of poor behaviour, these are not consistently applied. Strategies for dealing with inappropriate behaviour vary. There is no analysis of behaviour patterns and the monitoring of instances of poor or aggressive behaviour is unsatisfactory. Although lunch time supervision meets requirements in terms of personnel, the problems associated with the school site result in a situation where supervision is not always adequate or appropriately directed. The school takes seriously any instances of bullying and acts quickly when these are reported, but some parents and pupils are concerned that opportunities for harassment still arise. The 'buddy' system whereby Year 7 pupils are helped and guided by Year 10 pupils is successful and appreciated by parents and pupils.

68. The monitoring of and support for pupils' academic progress is too inconsistent. For example, while pupils with special educational needs are identified and a view of their progress to date is gained before they enter the school, liaison between the special educational needs and other departments is inadequate and does not sufficiently focus on the definition and review of IEPs which will promote further pupil progress. The school's system of assessing pupils in Key Stage 3 according to its own criteria rather than by reference to National Curriculum levels is unhelpful, so much so that some departments have gone their own way in developing their own systems. While the monitoring of pupils' progress itself is generally good, especially in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, too little is done with the data generated to support pupil progress. In particular, too little use is made of existing data to set challenging targets for pupils, though good use is made of Key Stage 2 data in the mathematics department to ensure that Year 7 pupils are working at the right levels and the very good document which exists in that department on the use of data in target-setting points the way forward for the school. Some work of this kind is carried out by some form tutors but it is not part of the fabric of the pastoral system. Similarly, despite some good practice - for example, verbal feedback given to pupils in art lessons and the marking of sixth form essays in history - not enough is done to let pupils know where they need to improve and how they can do it. Too often, especially in lessons, high praise is given for effort which is not merited and this undermines more challenging attempts to raise standards. Marking, on the other hand, is often thorough and detailed.

69. The school should now:

- improve health and safety in the school and prepare more assessments;
- improve the monitoring and recording of poor behaviour;
- improve monitoring and support of pupils' academic progress;
- make better use of school assessment data.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

70. Although parents who expressed a view of the school are supportive in many areas, concern was expressed about the behaviour in school, the level of homework set, information provided about pupils' progress and how closely the school works with parents. Some parents who attended the meeting with the registered inspector feel that their children could do better and are not always stretched, although parents who responded to the questionnaire were largely supportive about expectations.

71. Parents have positive views on the quality of teaching and the approachability of staff. Most parents feel that their children like school.

72. Inspection evidence largely supports the views of parents although behaviour in lessons, as opposed to around school, is good. The level of homework set during inspection was satisfactory although there is evidence that this is inconsistent.

73. The level and quality of day-to-day information which is provided for parents is good. The school's prospectus is clear and detailed in most areas and is supplemented by additional information in Year 10 and sixth form handbooks. It fails to give national comparative data for examination results and gives misleading information on the provision of special educational needs. The governors' annual report to parents fails to provide comparative data, information on the admission of disabled pupils and progress on the school's action plan. As a result, these documents do not meet legal requirements.

74. There are adequate opportunities for parents to discuss their children's progress in a programme of consultation evenings. These are very well attended by parents. Pupils' planners are signed by parents and checked by form tutors. Only rarely are they used as a means of communication.

75. Annual written reports are unsatisfactory. There is an emphasis on attitudes and insufficient information on strengths, weaknesses and targets for improvement. No reports are provided for ICT. The current reporting arrangements do not fulfil legal requirements.

76. Parents feel that the school, when asked, provides sufficient information and is willing to explain issues. Form tutors and heads of year provide a valuable point of contact and liaise with both parents and subject teachers when problems arise. Any complacency which has existed in the communication with parents is being addressed by the school.

77. The school has good support from parents for productions and concerts. During inspection a concert performed by the school choir and the wind band was well attended by parents. This followed extensive fund raising which had enabled the pupils to take the concert on tour.

78. The school should now:

- improve behaviour around the school;
- improve the data given in the prospectus to include provision for special educational needs and comparative data for exam results;
- improve annual written reports to parents.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Senior management and governors

79. The headteacher provides good leadership and management and has taken effective steps since her appointment three months ago to tackle areas of weakness in the management of the school. The

school has experienced temporary arrangements over the last three years, which did not permit it to improve or develop. Consequently there has been some decline in improvement since the last inspection in many key aspects of the school. However, the present headteacher has started to put in place procedures where improvements need to be made. For example, she has already begun to restructure the management of the school to involve more people in decision making and has improved the pastoral management system to ensure that pupils' pastoral and academic needs are addressed. The staff, governors and parents are equally supportive of the headteacher and show strong commitment to working together to improve their school.

80. There are a number of weaknesses in leadership and management that need to be tackled. Planning for improvement is weak. Both at whole school and departmental levels the school lacks detailed plans which set out in a systematic way and according to clearly-set timescales what the school's intentions are. The school does not plan strategically to identify and tackle its major priorities. The school's improvement plan tends to be a long list of activities without any order of priority, clear procedures as to how to plan and manage the development of the activity, how much it is going to cost, the success criteria, how and when its going to be monitored and reviewed and how long it will take. There are areas in the school that need longer term planning in order to maintain, develop and to build on improvement - for example, information and communication technology, the curriculum, special educational needs, resources and accommodation.

81. The newly structured leadership group is beginning to address issues arising from a history of insufficient attention to school improvement by senior managers. Senior managers are now, however, much more actively engaged in the planning for school development. However, roles and responsibilities at senior management level are not sufficiently well defined to offer staff in the school clear lines of communication. Job descriptions at all levels are severely out of date or do not exist at all. Only recently appointed staff have up-to-date job descriptions. Until recently staff in the school have not been involved in determining the priorities of the school or prepared to handle and keep up with changing legislation and curriculum development. For example, staff have not been prepared, supported or given data to sufficiently help them analyse pupils' performance over time and at examination level. Few opportunities have been given to help departments with their monitoring and review of teaching.

82. Monitoring the work of the school at all levels is poor. There are very few procedures in place to consistently evaluate how well the school is doing.

83. The governing body are very committed to the school and work closely with the headteacher to offer support. They have been instrumental in pursuing the need to appoint a headteacher to develop the work of the school. They have a good understanding of the school – both its strengths and weaknesses. They monitor the budget well and have worked hard at ensuring the school works within its financial capacity. They have specific working groups to concentrate on key areas of the school. There are a number of areas where the governing body is not instrumental in fulfilling their statutory requirements for the school. The school does not fulfil the requirements of a daily act of collective worship, ensure religious education is taught to all pupils in Key Stage 4 and post 16, ensure health and safety risk assessments are in place across the school, fulfil the requirements of the special educational needs code of practice or report to parents on information and communication technology. The governors are not instrumental in working with the school on strategic development nor are procedures in place to monitor school improvement. Principles of best value are being considered and discussed but are not presently applied or form part of the management of the school.

Middle management

84. Leadership and management of special needs are poor. Procedures for identifying the special needs of pupils are insecure and inconsistent. There is insufficient knowledge at all levels in the school of the special needs requirements identified in the code of practice. There are no whole school procedures in place for support and monitoring of special needs pupils. IEPs do not set targets for pupils and are not monitored frequently enough to identify the progress being made by the pupils. Support teachers are not well deployed and do not work closely enough with departments to identify the support and help pupils need. Procedures for withdrawing pupils for individual support are not planned in a coherent way to ensure pupils receive a purposeful programme to help them tackle their specific needs.

85. Generally the leadership and management at departmental level are satisfactory except in geography and information and communication technology where leadership and management are poor. However, in ICT the manager has not been in the post long enough to make an impact. Leadership in science is unsatisfactory. The management and leadership in mathematics are good and in modern foreign languages leadership and management have significantly improved. However, longer-term departmental development and monitoring of the department are particular weaknesses across all subjects.

86. Management of the sixth form is good. The head of sixth form, supported by two heads of year, has a clear philosophy on the management of the sixth form and on the role of the individual tutor to develop and guide students, and in both respects practice is effective. Monitoring and evaluation of the tutorial system is also effective. An induction programme is provided for Year 12 students which serves as a good introduction to sixth form life and contributes to the strong identity valued by both students and staff. However, despite some support given in physical education by sixth form students to Key Stage 3 pupils and visits by Year 12 students to associate primary schools, the sixth form contributes very little to the life and ethos of the main school.

Staffing, accommodation and resources

87. The school has sufficient and appropriately qualified staff to teach subjects of the curriculum. Newly qualified teachers are well supported. In-service training procedures are in place and these are monitored. However, there are inconsistencies within and between departments in the linking of subject development and school development. Training for teachers in the use of ICT, for example, is underdeveloped and, together with the lack of access to ICT resources, has a negative impact on the development of pupils' ICT skills and their opportunities for enhancing their work by the application of ICT. Similarly many heads of department do not fully understand the requirements of managing change in today's educational climate. While they have had some training, their development has not been given sufficient priority on the pace of change and consistency of improvement within the school.

88. The administration staff carry out their work very diligently and are a major asset to the school. They are insufficient in number to cope with the administration requirements and demands, however.

89. The school has made improvements in accommodation in the library and in English. However, in other aspects accommodation in the school, including the sixth form, is very poor and has a negative impact on many aspects of pupils' learning and on the management of pupils around the school. Facilities for physical education are so poor that they are having a severe negative effect on the curriculum that can be taught. There are also a large number of health and safety problems in this area. Many rooms are too small to teach the numbers of pupils and these rooms are also poorly decorated and lack maintenance. There is no accommodation to teach drama and insufficient accommodation to provide meals for pupils in the time available. The poor state of the buildings and their age constitute a serious problem that is creating a number of health and safety hazards for pupils.

90. Resources are poor in most areas of the curriculum. Generally they are insufficient to meet the needs of the curriculum and pupils and are dated and worn. However, departments do deploy their limited resources well and use them efficiently. There are some good resources which are well looked after in music, the sixth form and in information and communication technology but these are in limited supply.

91. The school manages well on an extremely low budget. Income and spending on pupils are in the lowest 25 per cent in comparison to schools of a similar size. There are limited flexible finances to improve both accommodation and resources. However, resources and finances are well managed and monitored by teachers, governors and the administration staff in the school. Financial control is good. Considering the standards and the limited finances it receives, the school provides good value for money.

92. The school and the governors should now:

- plan strategically for school improvement;

- identify clear roles and responsibilities for senior managers and improve lines of communications;
- provide all staff with up-to-date job descriptions;
- monitor the work of the school at all levels;
- tackle those areas that are not fulfilling statutory requirements;
- implement principles of 'Best Value';
- improve the leadership and management of special educational needs;
- improve the leadership and management of geography and ICT and the leadership in science;
- improve teachers' skills in ICT;
- improve the accommodation and resources in the school as and when budgets allow;
- improve staffing to cope with administration demands.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

93. The school should now:

- (1) Raise standards in ICT, geography and science by:
 - monitoring and evaluating to identify the key areas of weaknesses and putting plans in place to tackle the problems (paragraphs 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 124, 125, 163, 164, 176, 175, 182).
- (2) Improve accommodation and resources when funds allow by:
 - carrying out an audit to identify priorities and prepare a strategic plan over 3-5 years to tackle the major issues;
 - ensuring risk assessments are carried out throughout the school;
 - ensuring that all health and safety issues are attended to (87, 89, 90, 92, 104, 132, 142, 155, 158, 185, 186, 188, 195, 206, 215, 238, 240).
- (3) Improve the behaviour of pupils in and around the school and in some lessons, and provide more consistent approaches to monitoring behaviour (14, 15, 25, 72).
- (4) Improve provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils by:
 - reviewing school policy;
 - putting in place planning to create better opportunities for pupils;
 - sharing and developing good practice (49-55).
- (5) Ensure wider curriculum provision to include PSHE, ICT and RE by ensuring that:
 - the sixth form curriculum meets the needs of all students (36, 37, 39)
 - all year groups receive the opportunity as part of their education to experience personal, social and health education and RE (36, 39, 47, 56-60, 229);
 - all pupils are given the opportunity to work with information and communication systems across the curriculum to support and enhance their achievement (36, 176-189);
 - pupils are given wider opportunities to engage in extra-curricular activities, particularly at lunch times (42, 52).
- (6) Improve provision for special educational needs by:
 - ensuring that the governing body takes an active interest in the development of special educational needs in the school and secures provision;
 - improving the management of special educational needs;
 - putting more secure practices in place to identify those pupils with special needs;
 - adopting a whole-school approach to support pupils with special educational needs by ensuring that their IEPs are planned into their subjects by the teachers and that support teachers are actively engaged in working with teachers to plan the work for special educational needs pupils;
 - ensuring that all staff are given in-service training on the Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs (12, 25, 28, 38, 68, 80, 83, 84).

- (7) Improve the management of the school, particularly at senior management level, by:
- focusing on strategic planning at all levels;
 - developing more effective management skills;
 - identifying key roles and responsibilities;
 - identifying the key priorities of the school and putting longer term plans in place to tackle the major issues;
 - providing in-service training for all staff on development planning (79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 85, 133, 142, 158, 184, 229, 237).
- (8) Monitor and evaluate the work of the school at all levels by:
- putting plans and procedures in place to monitor the work of school;
 - evaluating the impact of provision on pupils' learning;
 - engaging staff in monitoring and evaluating their work and the work of their departments;
 - tackling teaching and learning in the lower sets in Year 11 (68, 82, 102, 183, 216, 245, 229, 237).

Governors should ensure that the school fulfills all statutory requirements (83).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS (1999 Data)

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	201
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	103

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1.5%	15%	34%	43%	5.5%	1%	0%

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1,337	250
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	78	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	30	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	144	1

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	7.9	School data	1.3
National comparative data	7.9	National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	138	130	268

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	93	107	89
	Girls	109	98	82
	Total	202	205	171
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	75 (66)	76 (75)	64 (68)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	25 (33)	48 (47)	22 (30)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	63	105	83
	Girls	88	101	72
	Total	151	206	155
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	56 (58)	77 (76)	58 (58)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24 (23)	51 (43)	24 (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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	1999	138	122	260

GCSE/GNVQ 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	66	132	133
	Girls	66	116	122
	Total	132	248	255
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	51 (51)	95 (93)	98 (97)
	National	46.6 (44.6)	90.9 (89.8)	95.8 (94.1)

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

GCSE/GNVQ results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	38 (37)
	National	38 (37)

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

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	1999	50	55	105

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	19.3	20.7	20 (19.9)	n/a	n/a	n/a
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	1
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	1586
Any other minority ethnic group	

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	120	
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	91
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	277

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.5%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	26.5
Key Stage 4	21.8

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	3,494,540
Total expenditure	3,598,955
Expenditure per pupil	2,339
Balance brought forward from previous year	60,168
Balance carried forward to next year	-44,247

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1,200
Number of questionnaires returned	181

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	25	67	6	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	30	63	5	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	12	57	19	4	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	14	57	21	7	1
The teaching is good.	20	69	6	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	22	52	21	6	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	45	44	7	3	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	44	8	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	18	56	20	5	1
The school is well led and managed.	17	54	13	2	14
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	24	61	9	3	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	51	9	5	8

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

ENGLISH

94. The standards achieved in English across the school's age and ability range are good. Attainment in Key Stage 3 tests is satisfactory and broadly in line with national averages. This has been the case for the past three years. There has been an increase in the number of pupils achieving Level 5 or above each year during that time, culminating in 75 per cent of the year group performing at this level in 1999. This was above the national average for that year. The number of pupils gaining Level 6 or above has remained constant and in 1999 was close to the national average. Comparative data on similar schools using eligibility for free school meals as a benchmark show the school performed below the average for such schools in that year.

95. In the majority of lessons seen pupils at this key stage are achieving at levels appropriate for their age and ability, although in speaking and listening standards are high. Year 7 pupils are able to use persuasive language confidently, giving well-planned and clear presentations to the whole class. Year 8 pupils demonstrate the ability to share their reading experiences through exposition and discussion. They know how to listen to each other and how to frame questions to gain understanding. Higher-attaining pupils are able to engage in sustained discussion and use acceptable humour to enliven oral work. In a Year 8 lesson pupils engaged in lively discussion on the impact the colour and layout a book cover made and then shared with each other their responses to the reading of the first paragraph. In writing they are making appropriate progress in developing skills of formal, imaginative and analytical composition. Particularly good analytical work on a Shakespeare text by higher attaining pupils was seen in a Year 9 lesson. Satisfactory progress is being made in written accuracy. There is a balance in pupils' reading between books studied by the class as a whole and silent reading in lessons. Pupils read well and with understanding across a range of texts and when questioned show that they have the ability to reflect upon and discuss what they have read. Reading records are kept but had not been passed on to some teachers who were taking over classes from other colleagues at the start of the academic year.

96. At Key Stage 4 standards are good. They are above the national average for boys and well above the national average for girls in terms of the number of students gaining a grade in the range A*-C at GCSE. There has been a year on year improvement in the performance of boys at this level for the last three years but their attainment, although above the national average, is still below that of the girls. This imbalance in performance between boys and girls is marked. In terms of the number of boys and girls obtaining A* or A grades within the A*-C range the percentages for 1999 and 2000 show that the school performed below national expectations. Attainment in English across the A*-G range was above the national average and compared very well against other subjects in the school in 1999. There has been a marked improvement in attainment at this key stage since the last inspection when standards were judged to be at national expectations but with a significant minority underachieving.

97. Standards of speaking and listening continue to be high into Key Stage 4. Year 11 students had returned from work experience and in two lessons observed had to reflect upon their placements and explain to their peers what they had learnt about themselves and working with others. They did so confidently and articulately, speaking at length, listening to each other and then framing pertinent questions. A lower-attaining Year 10 class were able to analyse a Conan Doyle text and then explain accurately and clearly what it revealed of the nature of the relationship between Holmes and Watson.

98. Written standards at Key Stage 4 are satisfactory or better in most of the work seen. Examples were seen of very good written work with a higher attaining Year 10 class able to research and collate historical information and then present it in written form for a defined audience. The work was accurate, detailed and well structured. These pupils were confident and skilled in their use of computers to access and retrieve the information they needed. Pupils read well. They have access to a good range of challenging texts and can respond critically to what they have read. This makes for good progress

since the last inspection when, although sound in over half, learning was judged to be weak in a significant proportion of lessons.

99. Post-16 the attainment of Advanced level students is good. There has been a significant increase in the number of students gaining grades A and B in 1999 and 2000 compared to 1997 and 1998. There has also been a marked decline across those years in the number of students failing to obtain grades. Work of very high quality was seen in a Year 13 literature lesson on 'Othello' when students had to present an analysis of character as revealed through language and then explain the dramatic tensions between the principal characters. Students were also seen successfully undertaking detailed textual analysis of Chaucer. The standard of work seen in Year 12 A-level language lessons was sound to good as students came to terms with the requirements of the course at the beginning of their post-16 work. The noticeable progress students make in taking responsibility for their own learning is clear from comparing the input Year 13 students make to lessons with that of Year 12.

100. The quality of teaching and the attitudes displayed by pupils in lessons account for the standards achieved. The specialist English staff are knowledgeable and skilled and know the children well. Lessons are planned carefully and have clear learning objectives which demand thought and oral participation from the pupils. Previous work done in class and at home is revised and consolidated before the introduction of new material. There is an appropriate balance between teacher exposition and small group and individual work and understanding is tested in the lesson through effective questioning and scrutiny of written work. The pace of lessons is good but what is particularly striking are the positive working relationships which exist between the staff and pupils. On only one occasion in the week was there a discipline problem, and this happened in a Year 11 lesson, and one other occasion when the inattention of a small group of Year 8 boys was overlooked. Pupils respond readily at the beginning of lessons and sustain their interest and concentration. Staff are aware of the learning needs of pupils with learning difficulties and tailor their lesson plans accordingly. As a result these pupils make progress. On three occasions classroom assistants were present to support such pupils but it was not possible to identify the part the school's special educational needs co-ordinator had played in working with the department to prepare such assistant colleagues for their role in the classroom. Individual Education Plans were not always available when needed and some of those seen did little to identify strategies for improvement.

101. Some of the Year 7 and Year 8 classes are taught by non-specialists. They are committed teachers and their work is judged to be satisfactory, and in one instance excellent, but there is an obvious contrast between what they can achieve with pupils compared to the standards attained by the specialist staff. The contrast was highlighted by the progress made in a single Year 8 reading lesson with a specialist teacher compared with that achieved by a non-specialist with a group of similar age and ability.

102. The management of the department is sound with a strong ethos of collaboration and consultation. Effective working practices are in place and there is a sense of unity and common purpose to take the work of the department forward and see pupils succeed. Professional relationships are strong and founded on mutual respect. Staff are attentive to their own developmental needs and the records show they keep up to date through attendance at in-service training sessions. Staff consistently apply the aims, policies and schemes of work which are set out in the departmental handbook. The one area of weakness is the improvement plan which is a statement of intent rather than a detailed working document. Formative assessment records are kept to monitor progress and at Key Stage 3 progress is recorded using National Curriculum levels. The head of department carries out an analysis of pupil performance at the end of each key stage and tracks progress across the levels from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. Analysis of GCSE and A-level performance is done against previous years' results. The use of comparative national and similar school data is not yet embedded in school routines. Parents are kept informed of such progress through reports and consultation meetings which are well attended. There are no formal practices in place for the monitoring of teaching although the head of department is well aware of the strengths of her team and the areas of professional skill which need developing. There are examples of very good teaching in the department but monitoring needs to take place to disseminate such good practice.

103. The curriculum strikes an appropriate balance between speaking and listening and reading and writing and conforms with the requirements of the National Curriculum. Pupils study language and literature at Key Stage 4 and there is very good choice for the higher attainers post-16 with the availability of language and literature courses and a combined course. The uptake on such courses is good.

104. Drama is a key part of the core curriculum at Key Stage 3 but the unavailability of suitable accommodation during parts of the academic year is hindering pupils' progress. There is a drama club for the younger pupils. The school library is central to the work of the department and has a good range of fiction and specialist texts for post-16 students. The records show that it is well used but access is limited to one lunch hour per week for each year group and the computers are not linked to the Internet. Staff do have access to computer technology and departmental records show work done by Year 8 pupils on desk-top publishing. Those departmental records also show a range of theatre visits for pupils. The accommodation is relatively new and there are attractive displays of pupils' work in all classrooms. The rooms are well cared for but movement on the corridors is an issue. Pupils have to converge on one central point when they move to other lessons and congestion can occur. The layout of the building prevents a one-way system operating.

105. In order to take the work of the department forward the following issues should be addressed:

- the staffing establishment should be such that suitably qualified English teachers can be assigned to every class;
- the attainment of boys at GCSE needs to be brought into line with the very high standards of the girls;
- the number of boys and girls attaining grades A* and A at GCSE needs at least to be brought into line with national averages;
- a detailed departmental improvement plan needs to be put in place to guide the work of staff;
- the quality of teaching needs to be monitored on a systematic basis.

Literacy

106. A literacy working group has been in existence and will be re-convening early in this autumn term to ensure that all staff promote the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening through their teaching. It has undertaken a detailed audit across the curriculum and the key stages to determine the literacy strategies which are currently used by staff and helpful summary statements have been agreed with each department. The strategy now in place is for the school to focus attention on literacy during specified weeks in the year when it will be made a prominent feature of teaching.

107. Oracy was a key issue from the 1995 inspection when listening skills were deemed to be good but pupils were found to lack the ability to give "structured, logically argued answers" and were reluctant to use standard English where it would be appropriate. Listening skills continue to be good with evidence in music of focused listening linked to visual stimulus and in English of attentiveness to the spoken word. In English pupils are encouraged to discuss and explain their work and the result is that they do so with confidence. Examples were found in other areas of the curriculum, however, of pupils' inability to respond beyond a brief, one word answer and their inability to use technical vocabulary appropriate to the subject studied. In order to secure improvement pupils should be given every opportunity in lessons to explain and comment upon their work, to speak about their progress and to give formal presentations.

MATHEMATICS

108. At the end of Key Stage 3 attainment in mathematics is above average. The 1999 tests showed the percentage of pupils reaching Level 5 and above was well above the national average and the percentage of pupils reaching Level 6 and above was well above the national average. Results were below average when compared to similar schools. Since the last inspection the trend has remained above the national average. Analysis of Key Stage 2 data against Key Stage 3 data for the current Year 10 indicates an average gain of over two National Curriculum levels per pupil. This is well above national averages and indicates that the school adds value during Key Stage 3. At the start of Year 9 high-

attaining pupils were beginning to learn about Pythagoras' theorem. Low attaining pupils in Year 8 were working well with problems involving 12-hour and 24-hour clocks. Pupils in a Year 7 mixed ability lesson were doing differentiated work on reflections.

109. At the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is above average. In 1999 GCSE results were above average for grades A*-C and have been above average for the last three years. In comparison with similar schools the attainment is close to the national average. At the start of Year 10 high-attaining pupils were solving inequalities and difficult linear equations and showing a good grasp of difficult algebraic concepts. Low attaining pupils were calculating angles to draw pie charts and showing good mental arithmetic skills.

110. In both key stages pupils with special educational needs make progress in line with others. This is due to teachers having a good knowledge of pupils with special educational needs and good classroom support assistants, who are managed effectively in the classroom.

111. At the end of the sixth form attainment is above average. In 1999 the average points score was above the national average. This has been the case for the last three years with a large number of pupils gaining A or B grades. Further mathematics results have been excellent over the last three years with a large number of high grades. Progress of pupils within their A-level courses is very good. At the start of Year 12 students are learning about stem and leaf diagrams and box plots and can use mathematics learnt at GCSE to generate ideas and concepts.

112. Pupils' attitudes in class are mainly good. The majority of pupils have basic equipment and calculators and those who have textbooks issued bring them to lessons. Some classes work silently and pupils with problems wait calmly for help from members of staff. Some poor behaviour was seen and this was not always challenged early enough by teachers. To the credit of many pupils, this was ignored and they got on with their work in an independent and purposeful manner. On the whole pupils are keen to learn and work well at tasks set.

113. Teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4 is mainly satisfactory. Over half of lessons seen were judged satisfactory. Thirty-five per cent were good or very good. All teaching observed in the sixth form was very good or excellent.

114. Attainment in some lessons observed at Key Stages 3 and 4 was not in line with attainment in end of key stage examinations. Many lessons in Key Stage 3 and 4 were of a very similar pattern, consisting of exposition of the mathematical concepts, followed by one or two examples which pupils copied into their books. This was followed by an exercise from a textbook or worksheet. Teachers then worked individually with pupils having difficulty. Common misconceptions were not always picked up and dealt with. Follow-up discussion did not take place and answers were not always given for work done. Much work done was well within the ability of pupils. Consequently many lessons lacked challenge and did not promote effective learning. There were exceptions to this and some teachers promoted class discussions, kept a good pace through the lesson and maintained interest with examples chosen from daily life that were relevant to the pupils. For example, a lesson on time used the Olympic Games as an introductory activity. Limited teaching style was identified as an issue in the last inspection. There is no apparent mechanism for sharing methodology. The department should identify examples of good practice and use these as models to raise the quality of teaching, which is generally sound.

115. Sixth form lessons were always well planned. Pupil discussion was of a high order. Examples chosen were appropriate and challenged pupils. One lesson, judged excellent, had elements of problem solving, exposition, routine skill practice, discussion both between pupils and between teacher and pupils. The sum total was a very intensive and interactive lesson in which pupils made excellent progress.

116. Lesson planning at Key Stages 3 and 4 does not always take account of pupils' prior attainment and learning. For example, classes in Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 were all observed doing work on reflections where the skills and concepts taught were very similar in each case. Consequently some pupils lost concentration. The pace of lessons was not brisk, with up to 50 minutes of a lesson being

spent working on similar questions from a textbook. Discussions with pupils indicated that mathematics was not well liked by some pupils who felt there was a lot of 'copying-out'.

117. At Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to explain their work orally. Questions are often closed, requiring merely a single word or number answer. Teachers rarely asked pupils to explain how they had arrived at an answer, thus missing out on valuable opportunities to check and correct misunderstandings and for pupils to gain confidence in their skills and understanding. There were some exceptions to this and in one Year 10 lesson observed, questioning was used to build results from pupils' prior knowledge with misconceptions being used to promote further discussion. Finally a pupil was asked to present a solution to a complicated inequality to the class. The pupil showed confidence in both his ability to solve the problem and to articulate the solution.

118. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. ICT opportunities are identified in some schemes of work. However, difficulties in gaining access to computers cause some opportunities to use ICT to be lost.

119. The department has developed an excellent system for target setting, assessing and recording pupil achievement at the end of each year. This will enhance pupil tracking and will provide accurate information for monitoring pupils' actual achievement against their target. This is further enhanced by the use of Key Stage 2 information. All Year 7 teachers have pupils' Key Stage 2 results for their classes and use these to make sure pupils are working at the appropriate level.

120. The department is well led by an enthusiastic and committed head of department who provides a good role model. Departmental administration is very good. The department has adequate resources. There is an excellent resource base which is well used by staff. All pupils in higher-attaining sets are issued with textbooks and there are texts available for all other pupils. Stock records are well kept and there is almost no loss of book stock each year. The department has some computers which are being upgraded and is committed to spending a considerable amount of capital on computer resources over the next few years. Accommodation, which was identified as being poor in the last inspection has been considerably improved. Rooms are now well decorated and provide a pleasant working environment.

121. Numeracy skills displayed by pupils are good, particularly in Years 7 and 8. There is no whole-school numeracy procedures in place and the department has chosen not to participate in the National Numeracy Strategy for Year 7 pupils. Good practice to support numeracy in other subjects was observed in physical education where pupils approximated the answers to a long division problem by rounding values to 10 and in science where pupils were able to sketch pie charts.

122. The school should now:

- take action to introduce monitoring of staff and teaching to ensure that pupils are challenged and that staff expectations are appropriate to the ability of the pupils;
- take action to develop a wider range of teaching styles across the department;
- improve access to ICT facilities;
- introduce procedures to promote numeracy across the curriculum.

SCIENCE

123. Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 were above the national average for the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 or above and close to the national average for those achieving Level 6 or above. The proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 or above was below that for similar schools and well below for those achieving Level 6 or above. Comparison using average National Curriculum points places the school well below similar schools. The trend in test results was upward from 1996 to 1998 with a sharp decline in 1999. The latest test results for 2000 show a significant increase in the proportion of pupils achieving both Level 5 and above and Level 6 and above. In both 1999 and 2000 teacher assessments were lower than the test results. The performance of boys and girls shows no particular pattern over time and overall progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 3.

124. GCSE results (combining double and single awards) in 1999 were close to the national average for the higher grades (A*-C) but well below those for similar schools. There is a declining trend since 1998 although results in 2000 show an increase in the highest grades. Pupils attain less highly in science than they do in many of their other subjects and this was particularly true for girls in 1999. There is no clear pattern in the performance of boys and girls over the past three years. Comparison between GCSE grades and the pupils' Key Stage 3 results two years earlier indicates that overall pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4. However, within this overall picture boys' and girls' progress year on year varies markedly. The faculty also provides a land studies (Certificate of Achievement) course in which pupils achieve highly.

125. A-level results in biology, chemistry and physics overall are close to the national average across the complete range of grades, given the relatively small numbers. However, for the highest grades (A and B) all are below the national average and both physics and chemistry show a steady decline over the past four years.

126. On the evidence of the work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment overall towards the end of Key Stage 3 is above the national expectation and broadly in line with the national expectation towards the end of Key Stage 4. In the sixth form attainment is slightly below the national expectation. Some pupils are attaining very highly at both key stages and in the sixth form. At Key Stage 3 there are no great differences between pupils' attainment in the four attainment targets. Towards the end of Key Stage 3 many pupils can explain digestion and photosynthesis appropriately, some show a very good grasp of reflection and refraction, while others have a sound grasp of simple equations. In their investigation work most pupils are able to plan and carry out their studies effectively. At the highest level pupils made a very good link between heart action, oxygen delivery and exercise and correctly interpreted the effects of a recovery period. At Key Stage 4 pupils' attainment across the science areas show some differences where recall and application in materials and their properties appeared weaker than in the other attainment targets. Towards the end of Key Stage 4 many pupils are able to explain the circulatory system, provide good accounts of chemical bonding and simple organic chemistry, have a good grasp of electrical circuits and can carry out a variety of calculations involving speed, acceleration and movements. Most pupils at both key stages have well-organised and well-presented notes although the sheer volume in many cases limits their usefulness. Most pupils take pride in the presentation of their work and some is of very high quality. Most pupils handle number and graph work at least satisfactorily and some graphs were very well presented. Some developments in information and communication technology have taken place since the last inspection but use is still patchy. Some good examples of the use of information and communication technology were seen in the presentation of display work, in extracting information from reference sources and in the presentation of graphs. Most pupils carry out experimental and investigative work with appropriate care and with sufficient attention to health and safety issues. At Key Stage 4 some well-produced investigations were seen, albeit across a narrow range. For example, work on enzymes, reaction rates and resistance showed candidates who were equally strong across the four skills of planning, obtaining evidence, analysis and evaluation. In the sixth form most students have extensive and detailed notes. With appropriate teacher support students are able to explain the type of bonding present in transition metal complexes, understand the internal energy of gases and the distribution of particles' energy and provide appropriately detailed explanations of respiration and photosynthesis.

127. Generally pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress largely due to teaching and support staff knowing those areas where the pupils need help. However, in some cases pupils were left to get on with writing experimental accounts with no structured support.

128. Overall, pupils' attitudes to learning in almost all lessons seen at both key stages are good and very good in the sixth form. In nearly one-third of lessons at Key Stage 3 and in about one-fifth of lessons at Key Stage 4 attitudes are very good. Most pupils show interest in their work, though great enthusiasm was rarely seen, and the majority behave well. Year 7 pupils showed considerable enthusiasm for their work with microscopes. Overall, most pupils sustain their concentration on work satisfactorily. However, in some lessons pupils are less well focussed when the teacher is not directly engaged with them. Thus although most pupils get through most of the work set, they are not always fully engaged with the learning. Most pupils are courteous, trustworthy and respond well to their teachers and one another. Most show appropriate respect for equipment that they collect, use and

return appropriately. Most pupils work well together during experimental work and in small group discussion.

129. Overall, teaching is satisfactory at both key stages and in the sixth form. At Key Stage 3 about two-thirds of the teaching was satisfactory and one-third was good. At Key Stage 4 nearly two-thirds was satisfactory, nearly one-third good, while one lesson was unsatisfactory. In the sixth form one lesson was good and the rest satisfactory. Pupils' learning in both key stages and the sixth form matches this very closely. In a few lessons some very good features were seen. Teachers have a sound knowledge and understanding of their subject and many sustain a good level of interest and enthusiasm. Expectations of pupils are generally appropriate and sufficiently high. Most lesson planning is at least sound and some is good. Methods and organisational strategies are broadly appropriate although a relatively limited range was seen. The management of pupils and standards of discipline is usually good. Time and resources are generally well used.

130. Teaching was most effective where the lesson plan showed clear structure and learning outcomes coupled with teachers' high level of interest, enthusiasm, appropriate expectations and good questioning skills. For example, a higher attaining Year 11 group after a teacher led discussion on the respective roles of teachers and learners and the need to work together, were able to check out their understanding of enzyme actions, link this with reaction rates and discuss key points in small groups. Similarly in a Year 10 group, high teacher expectations coupled with an appropriately demanding pace and effective demonstration resulted in pupils gaining a clear grasp of electrical circuits prior to them undertaking experimental work. In another Year 10 lesson most pupils were able to indicate which of two different models was most appropriate to use to explain solid, liquid and gas behaviour. Many lessons were characterised by teachers' genuine interest in their pupils and the desire to want them to succeed. However, in the one unsatisfactory lesson and parts of one or two lessons where teaching was less effective, some pupils were off-task too often and were unable to explain clearly what they had done - for example, what affects reaction rates and how pressure varies with area. Pupils' work is regularly marked and includes positive comments (a response to the previous inspection) but rarely sets targets for pupils' learning or indicates how they might improve both in terms of knowledge and understanding as well as in investigative work. Reports to parents at the end of Key Stage 3 do not clearly identify strengths, weaknesses and areas for development.

131. The curriculum broadly meets statutory requirements at both key stages and the faculty is rightly considering possible changes for Key Stage 4 in 2001. The provision of a land studies course with accreditation by a Certificate of Educational Achievement benefits those who follow it. This work in agriculture and horticulture also benefits the school through, for example, floral displays. The faculty also recognises the need to ensure that the revised scheme of work incorporates the full programme of study for Key Stage 3.

132. The technicians are hard worked and hard working and have a positive effect on the quality of education and standards achieved by pupils. Although the new laboratories provide a good learning environment, the rest are poor and variously lack services, are graffiti ridden, have poor boards and, even where staff have made a considerable effort with display, provide a depressing learning environment. This has a negative impact on learning - for example, where it is difficult to read work on the board or services cannot be used. Some of the displays are attractive, enhance the learning environment and pupils are justifiably proud of their efforts. Displays now need to be developed to improve the context and relate more directly to teaching and learning. Resources for experimental and investigative work are adequate, but lack of some items means lost opportunities - for example, being able to display onion cells by projection from a microscope, not having a suitable model to demonstrate bonds breaking in solid-liquid transition. Library provision is limited; it contains a number of recently published and appropriate science books but these need to be increased in number and range.

133. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The faculty development plan is insufficiently specific as to precisely what action is to be taken and how success will be measured over the longer term. The management of health and safety in the department is insufficiently rigorous. The faculty documentation is helpful but now needs to be updated and improved. Some pupil tracking is in place and some aspects of monitoring and evaluation have been started. Teaching staff are committed and hard working, work well as teams and show a genuine interest in their pupils. They give of their time to help pupils with revision and coursework and are keen to help their pupils improve.

134. In order to raise standards further the faculty should:

- improve the strategic management of the faculty (with the support of the senior management team) to ensure that all staff are well informed and up to date, with a longer-term development plan which is clearly linked to future targets, in-service training and budget;
- improve assessment and marking procedures and the analysis of test and examination results to identify strengths, weaknesses and areas for development (targets);
- continue to develop the scheme of work at Key Stage 3, ensuring that the whole programme of study is covered and taking into account the findings and recommendations of the "Progress in Key Stage 3: Science" report (OFSTED);
- develop ICT further across the whole science curriculum;
- consider re-structuring the faculty to facilitate the delivery of the curriculum;
- develop monitoring and evaluation procedures for teaching and learning to facilitate spreading good practice;
- develop further the faculty handbook - for example, to promote the awe and wonder of science, to provide more detail on teaching and learning styles, to give advice on how to get pupils more involved and responsible for their own learning, to clarify the purpose of notes, and to ensure work is appropriate for pupils prior attainment;
- monitor health and safety procedures more rigorously.

ART

135. Since the last inspection, the school has generally maintained standards at Key Stage 3 and improved standards at GCSE in 1999. It has also maintained the high standards set at A-level.

136. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations overall. Pupils' objective drawing skills are generally good. The majority of pupils are able to draw accurately in terms of proportion and are also able to use a wide range of tonal effects, with higher-attaining pupils producing some convincing three-dimensional drawings. Pupils' printmaking skills are at least in line with expectations and often better, showing a bold use of tone and shape and a good grasp of technical printmaking skills. Both ceramic work and graphic design work are in line with expectations overall, with higher attaining pupils producing work which is above expectations. Pupils' creative and imaginative skills are underdeveloped. Pupils use sketchbooks for homework, but do not make sufficient use of them to initiate or develop personal responses to the work set.

137. At Key Stage 4, GCSE results for 1999 were in line with national expectations, which was an improvement on the trend of recent years. Provisional results for 2000 show a drop in examination performance in comparison to 1999. This is confirmed by inspection evidence, which shows that pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is close to, but below national expectations. There is a wide variation in standards seen, with some higher attaining pupils producing work which is well above expectations, but with lower attaining pupils producing work which is well below. Again, pupils' objective drawing skills are a relative strength, with all pupils building on the skills acquired at Key Stage 3 and higher attaining pupils producing powerful and effective drawings, utilising a full tonal range. The work of lower attaining pupils is characterised by a lack of individually initiated and developed work, but the best work by higher attaining pupils shows consistently powerful use of graphic media, particularly in sketchbook work. There are strong technical and creative examples of ceramic and textile work in evidence and an appropriate level of understanding of the work of relevant artists.

138. At A-level, examination results have been consistently well above national averages and, in all lessons seen, the standard of students' work was above national expectations overall. Drawing skills continue to be good and the painting skills of higher attaining pupils very good. A strong feature of A-level work was the strong personal element in both the sketchbook work and in the finished pieces of higher attaining students. Printmaking and ceramics skills were also well developed and pupils were knowledgeable about the work of a range of artists – and how this could impact on their own work.

139. The pupils' response in lessons is good overall when the work set is matched to their needs and provides an appropriate challenge. Most pupils maintain concentration well, and take an interest in their work. Some pupils at both key stages, usually but not exclusively boys, can however become easily

bored and distracted when the work fails to engage them sufficiently, and this can lead to unsatisfactory behaviour and poor progress. Most pupils listen attentively and follow instructions well. A small number of pupils are noisy, and their social conversation can interrupt the flow of the lesson, reducing their progress. Pupils show very good respect for the materials and equipment they use. They clear up well at the end of each lesson, and are willing to work together and support each other, when the opportunity is provided

140. At Key Stage 3, teaching was satisfactory or better in all lessons observed. At Key Stage 4, most teaching was satisfactory or better, with only one unsatisfactory lesson observed. At A-level, all teaching was good or very good. The most effective teaching showed some notable features. Teachers' subject knowledge was consistently very good and was used to good effect in lessons. For example, in a Year 11 lesson one boy was able to describe in great detail and with appropriate vocabulary, the complex slab-forming process he had used in producing a ceramic piece. In a Year 12 lesson, the teacher led two inexperienced students through the intaglio printing process, giving them lots of opportunity to experiment within a clearly defined 'correct' technical process. Both students produced technically competent work by the end of the session. In the best lessons, teachers used a variety of teaching styles to good effect. In a Year 9 lesson the teacher's initial demonstration was truly interactive, drawing on the pupils' prior knowledge, whilst providing high quality technical guidance. This was then used to good effect by the pupils. Where teaching was less effective, it was either too limited in the range of strategies employed, or was directly affected by a curriculum which did not meet the needs of some of the pupils. In some lessons there was an over-reliance on one-to-one teaching. Whilst this adequately addressed the needs of the individual being taught, it left others in the group frequently waiting for guidance and making inadequate progress.

141. The art curriculum provided by the school satisfies statutory requirements but has weaknesses in some areas. Opportunities for the pupils to acquire and develop their objective drawing skills through the use of a range of two-dimensional materials are good overall and pupils are provided with good opportunities to work in three dimensions, through their ceramics work. At both Key Stages 3 and 4 there are insufficient opportunities for the pupils to both generate their own imaginative ideas and to respond to those ideas, creatively and independently. Some good opportunities are provided at Key Stages 3 and 4 for pupils to learn about the work of other artists. The subject's contribution to pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory and is not planned for in the curriculum. Opportunities for social development are provided through discussion and criticism, but opportunities for creative collaborative work are limited. Pupils are given the opportunity to respond to many examples of art works from the Western European tradition and also to the art work of other cultures through the project on masks in Year 7, though more opportunities of this nature could be provided.

142. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory overall, with some areas of strength, but other areas in need of development. The head of department effectively manages both the day-to-day work of the department and the limited resources made available for the subject. The teachers in the department work hard to establish and maintain effective and friendly working relationships with the pupils, but teaching within the department is not monitored systematically, and areas for development in the teaching of the subject have not yet been addressed. The department's development plan does not take a sufficiently strategic view for the future. It does not identify ways in which the success of the pupils can be used to judge the success of the department, nor does it provide a coherent plan for the further development of resources for the subject. The accommodation is barely adequate, with some rooms being cramped, and this restricts the scale of work that can be undertaken, particularly with older pupils. Storage space for pupils' work is satisfactory for two-dimensional work, but inadequate for three-dimensional work. Resource levels are low overall, but both teachers and pupils use the resources available efficiently.

143. In order to further develop provision the school should now:

- develop the curriculum at both Key Stages 3 and 4, utilising the strategies employed in the teaching of A-level students, in order to provide more opportunities for pupils to develop creative and imaginative skills through independent work;
- develop the strategic management of the department in order to monitor and evaluate the work of the department, focusing on the quality and range of teaching strategies used and plan for the strategic development of the subject within whole school development planning priorities.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

144. At the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils' attainment in design and technology is in line with national expectations and often above. At post-16 it is in line. In the 1999 GCSE examinations the number of pupils achieving A*-C, 55 per cent, was well above the national average of 49.3 per cent. The number of pupils achieving grade A*-G, 98.8 per cent, was also above the national average compared with a national figure of 96.4 per cent. At A-level, the number of pupils taking the examination is small. This makes comparisons with national averages suspect; however, pupils' attainment generally is broadly in line with national averages. Throughout the department, pupils' performance at GCSE compares favourably with that of other subjects in the school although the performance in resistant material courses is lower than in other material areas. This is due, in part, to the fact that only boys seem to choose this subject and that they do not do as well as girls, but also to the fact that pupils' design work is limited to low level explanation and design detail, lacking fluency in describing how an idea develops and improves. The department overall is making good progress in reaching its targets for pupils' attainment, however, this is reflected in an improving trend in pupils' performance over time.

145. The recorded National Curriculum teacher assessments for design and technology at the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with national averages. However, the department's procedures for assessing pupils' attainment take insufficient account of programmes of study and National Curriculum levels, with the effect that these assessments are not wholly accurate.

146. Whilst attainment overall is in line with national expectations there are some examples of higher-level attainment in most material areas - for example, in Year 8 textiles and resistant materials lessons where pupils make educational and 'executive' toys demonstrating above average planning and making skills, scheduling work well and placing an appropriate emphasis on working accurately. In Year 9 textiles lessons pupils work with a range of textiles, for example denim, to produce bags from quite creative designs. Also in Year 9 pupils make storage containers accurately in wood and finish them well. In food technology they apply their understanding of nutrition and dietary goals well to produce some very imaginative 'fast food' - for example apple, pork and seasoned burgers. In both key stages and in the sixth form, however, most pupils do not illustrate their work well enough with good examples of critical analysis where they seek to explain, in some detail, how an idea has developed and improved. This lack of design detail is preventing pupils moving on to the higher levels of design and technology capability.

147. In all key stages making skills are in line with national expectations. For example, in Year 11 textiles, garments produced by pupils demonstrate good skills in pattern design, sewing and finishing. In graphics products many pupils are able to apply the technical skills learnt in Key Stage 3 to illustrate and model ideas well - for example, in a project on packaging. In food technology most pupils are able to apply appropriate health and hygiene procedures and dietary goals to make quality food - for example, food for the airline industry. In resistant materials, however, only a few pupils are able to demonstrate an ability to combine materials in an imaginative way to design and make.

148. For many pupils, working accurately and safely when using tools and equipment is important and reflected in the outcome of their work; for a minority this is not the norm, in particular in working accurately and presenting design work. Pupils with special education needs are able to demonstrate good making skills often in line with national expectations, in particular in food technology, textiles and resistant materials. In both key stages pupils are not able to apply their awareness and understanding of other cultures well to influence their design thinking. This is in part due to a lack of planned opportunity rather than a lack of awareness. In most projects in Years 10, 11 and in the sixth form pupils are able to research and develop a good specification and design brief, keeping the user in mind. However, the quality and relevance of some research is weak and a lack of design thinking and research against specific design problems prevents pupils from achieving higher grades. When designing and making most pupils are able to talk about their work confidently using appropriate technical vocabulary.

149. In relation to prior attainment most pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, are making satisfactory progress in developing their design and technology capability in handling materials, and developing skills in manufacturing processes. Gains in developing designing skills are less well

defined, however. This needs to be a focus of the department's strategy for improvement in the future. The department should introduce a more consistent approach to the process of critical evaluation - how a design develops - lower down in Key Stage 3 in order to prepare pupils better for this work in Key Stage 4.

150. Throughout the department pupils do not make full use of information and communication technology to design and illustrate their work or to improve the presentation of design portfolios or written assignments. Some individual pupils, however, have made some sterling efforts to access ICT resources to present outcomes of surveys in food technology or to illustrate design ideas in graphics. Overall this area of work is a weakness in terms of pupils' attainment and progress.

151. When activities are challenging and stimulating and suitable resources are available pupils respond with enthusiasm and commitment to their design and technology work. They are often busy learners who concentrate hard and persevere in order to produce a quality outcome. Most have a sensible, mature and safe approach to design-and-make tasks. They work particularly well together - for example in Year 11 textiles, food technology and design realisation lessons when discussing the implications of sustaining resources when designing and making products, considering the user when modelling ideas and when sharing equipment while making products.

152. Relationships are good and those pupils with a more secure command of the materials and processes are always prepared to share their skill and knowledge with others. Pupils are courteous, trustworthy, helpful and supportive; a majority have some pride in their work.

153. In the lessons observed in Key Stage 3 teaching was never less than satisfactory. In 38 per cent of those lessons teaching was very good. In Key Stage 4 teaching in 86 per cent of the lessons observed was satisfactory or better; only one lesson was unsatisfactory. In the best lessons teachers make effective use of their specialist knowledge; they plan and prepare their lessons well and present good demonstrations - for example, in a graphics food technology and textiles lesson in Year 10 and resistant material lessons in Year 9. Most lessons have clear objectives set out within the scheme of work but some activities do not, with the result that pupils are not fully aware of what it is they are required to do and teachers are not wholly clear about their expectations of pupils. Time is generally used effectively, in particular in food technology, but the pace of some lessons in resistant materials is slow and pupils make limited progress in gaining knowledge and understanding as a result.

154. Some activities are not stimulating or challenging enough, however, and pupils become a little bored as a result. Teachers are judicious in their use of advice, support and evaluative comment, giving pupils sufficient time to wrestle with the problems, but intervening appropriately and at the right time to avoid frustrations and to advance learning without inhibiting creativity. Support materials are generally of good quality. Practical aids and design stimuli prepared by teachers to illustrate a particular process or stir the imagination are few and far between, however, and as a result pupils do not have any motivating influences to help them with their design work. Tasks are rarely presented in a different way to help those pupils with special educational needs and to challenge those pupils who are attaining highly, apart from Year 10 food technology where more teacher directed work was given to some pupils as a direct result of good teacher assessment of pupils' knowledge. This has a positive impact on how these pupils make progress. Overall, teachers are aware of pupils' prior attainment but rarely use this knowledge well to help them with their short-term planning. The review of activities does not take place on a formal whole departmental basis and this has had a negative impact on the design of the scheme of work in Key Stage 3. There is always an appropriate emphasis given to the appropriate health, safety and food hygiene practices, however.

155. There are missed opportunities for teaching and developing pupils' ICT skills through design and technology, for example using more sophisticated ICT equipment - computer aided design and computer aided manufacture (CAD/CAM). Insufficient focus is given to ICT in design and technology work to help pupils improve the quality and standard of their project portfolios or to help them develop their research and investigative skills. In addition, there are too few opportunities for pupils to take apart and evaluate familiar products or to do work involving higher levels of systems and control. These areas need to be improved and incorporated into a formal review and restructuring of the Key Stage 3 scheme of work in order to give pupils the knowledge and skills to attain higher standards in Key Stage 4 and beyond.

156. The department makes satisfactory use of the design-and-make facilities and the time and resources available. Resources are at a premium, however, and are beginning to compromise the quality and range of activities available and equality of opportunity. For example, graphics products resources are limited with no evidence of pupils using higher-level graphicacy techniques such as spirit rendering, air brushing or CAD. Much of the tool and equipment stock is in need of upgrade and the environment is hardly conducive to the spirit of high quality designing and making. Storage throughout the department is a continuing concern.

157. Curriculum provision does fulfil statutory requirements. The assessment, recording and reporting arrangements are not secure at Key Stage 3 in that they do not focus on the programme of study or level descriptors; reports to parents are not clear as to what the pupil needs to do in order to improve, though targets and positive comments for improvement feature appropriately in teachers' marking.

158. The leadership of the department ensures that there is a clear commitment to improvement and providing appropriate opportunities for pupils to succeed at their level. In addition leadership maintains an appropriate provision through some teamwork within complex environmental and resourcing constraints. However, strategies for improvement and managing change so as to improve the department at a good pace are lacking. More needs to be done to turn the commitment into effective practice.

159. The management of the department is positive in making best use of the teachers' skills and in some aspects of delegation. Financial and resource management is good. However, the head of department needs support and guidance from more senior managers in the complex issue of managing change in a climate of constant improvement, in particular in the areas of strategic and development planning for improvement, monitoring and evaluating the performance of all aspects of the department's work and creating a corporate team dynamic.

160. Since the last inspection the department has made progress in

- maintaining standards and improving them,
 - improving opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking, listening, numeracy and literacy skills;
- but has made limited progress in
- developing pupils' designing skills;
 - developing strategies for data analysis and target setting using whole school generated data.

161. The school should continue its good work on raising standards by:

- working more closely together to develop and manage a more cohesive, accountable, corporate and strategic approach to the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of subject provision;
- developing further pupils' design communication and research and investigation skills, in particular in communicating how an idea has developed;
- developing further the schemes of work in both key stages to incorporate the requirements of the new programme of study and to ensure progression;
- emphasising the importance of learning objectives linked to short-term planning;
- challenging higher attainers more;
- including more opportunities for pupils to experience opportunities for evaluating familiar products and applications and higher levels of systems and control;
- planning more opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology in their work, including computer aided design and computer aided manufacture;
- improving the environment, capital equipment and consumable resource levels;
- improving the quality of assessments, recording, reporting and target setting for individual pupils;
- improving the provision for developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development within design and technology.

GEOGRAPHY

162. The standards achieved are broadly in line with the national expectation in all key stages. Pupils enter the school with a secure foundation in the subject. For many in Key Stage 3 their knowledge of

places and locations in Britain and the wider world is good. The majority of pupils questioned could position Penistone, the major cities, uplands and seas around the United Kingdom, together with the continents, oceans and major countries of the world on an appropriate blank map. Pupils arrive with and then further develop a good range of skills early in the key stage, associated with maps and atlases. These skills and background knowledge support their progress in the subject. Much of this progress is also related to the teaching which was at its best in the subject in Key Stage 3 during the inspection. At the end of the key stage pupils are attaining in line with and often above the levels expected nationally. They develop good understanding of the influences which affect different types of farming systems in the UK, or of different areas of climate in the world, and can use the appropriate subject language to explain their thinking. Teachers take special care, together with support staff in classrooms, to ensure that pupils with special educational needs also attain as well as they can. The department's own assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 show that pupils attain well above the nationally expected levels. However, these judgements are only just beginning to be agreed across the department. Further developments are needed to provide a consistently accurate picture of exactly how well children are doing, and then to inform further developments in matching the teaching to pupils' needs.

163. By the end of Key Stage 4, however, standards of attainment are slightly below the levels expected nationally. GCSE results for grades A*-C have not shown an improvement since the last inspection, but have been overtaken by the standards being achieved nationally. Since 1996 they have hovered around or below the national average in terms of higher grade passes. Fewer pupils than expected, especially girls, gain the very highest A* grades. The standards which pupils demonstrate on entry to the school and which are maintained in Key Stage 3 do not appear to carry through to the end of Key Stage 4 for all pupils. However, the most recent results do show significant improvement and this needs to be sustained to ensure that pupils generally make satisfactory progress in this key stage.

164. Standards in the sixth form are similar to those in Key Stage 4. A-level results are usually just below the national averages for overall A-E grade passes and for the higher grade A-B passes. As in Key Stage 4, however, this in part reflects the high numbers and wide ability range of the many pupils who choose to study the subject to examination levels. There is evidence that this popularity is declining in Key Stage 4, however, and this could further influence numbers in the sixth form in future years.

165. The attainment of students currently in the sixth form is very variable and differs between the teaching groups. The highest attainers have a very good grasp of the subject. By Year 13 they have a secure understanding of complex processes associated with earth movements and the resulting features in physical geography, and of patterns of population change linked to urban and economic development in human geography. This bodes well for an improvement in higher grade passes at A-level.

166. Overall the teaching in geography is good. Nine out of ten lessons were at least satisfactory, with the majority of these being either good or very good. The teaching seen in Key Stage 3 was particularly good in most cases and some good lessons were also seen with older pupils. Where teaching was good it was exceptionally well planned. In Year 8, for example, some teachers had carefully considered how to build on earlier learning of the influences upon farming, and had developed well-matched approaches and resources to help pupils to understand the difference between various types of farming systems. The clarity of teachers' explanations in some cases was of a very high order. Giving pupils a view of the overall direction and purpose of the lesson before taking pupils through a sequence of very well-organised ideas was seen to be especially effective in the sixth form when covering complex ideas related to population changes. Similarly, this approach to teaching was equally effective in taking pupils through the stages of drawing and understanding climate graphs in Key Stage 3. Where teaching was less effective, detailed planning was frequently missing, especially in terms of the depth and clarity of the main ideas and approaches to be used. Such lessons relied very heavily on simply talking pupils through subject content and this taxed their ability to concentrate. Where the flow of teacher's explanations was not made sufficiently clear, or where there were too many humorous asides, this also hindered progress. In some lessons too little attention is given to thinking how pupils can be involved with their learning in ways beyond being directly led by the teacher. Similarly, too often pupils are expected to simply respond to long sequences of short questions, with little opportunity to develop their

own thinking or to listen to the ideas of others. This aspect of teaching does not appear to have improved significantly since the last inspection.

167. Pupils generally behave well in lessons and their overall attitudes are positive towards the subject. The relationships between teachers and pupils is a strength. However, obvious enthusiasm for learning was less evident and this appeared to be related to the passive role pupils were expected to play in too many lessons. Where pupils were expected to argue their case for or against the removal of hedgerows from farmland or where they were expected to work together to match countries to varying stages in economic development, this was more effective. The department should consider ways of encouraging the development of oral skills and confidence towards achieving greater pupil involvement and independence in their learning. This applies to pupils in all key stages.

168. The effectiveness of subject leadership and management has declined since the last inspection. Overall the management of the department is unsatisfactory though there is some good work being done by those with delegated areas of responsibility. Leadership is poor. There is very little evidence of long-term thinking in terms of subject development or of systems which will ensure the improvement of current provision. The subject lacks direction beyond that developed by a team of willing teachers. However, good day-to-day working relationships will provide the necessary context for future changes.

169. In order to improve the department should:

- improve standards achieved, especially in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form;
- improve the accuracy and consistency of the assessment of pupils' performance against national curriculum levels;
- transfer the most effective teaching strategies from Key Stage 3 to all other key stages;
- significantly improve the leadership and management skills of the head of department.

HISTORY

170. Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 indicate that attainment is above national expectations and observation of pupils' work during the inspection confirms this. Pupils of all abilities show a sound grasp of facts and, while low-attainers tend not to see the relationships between them, higher-attainers are moving towards synthesis and explaining events in terms of cause, consequence and similar organising concepts. Similarly, while all pupils are able to derive information from sources, the more able are moving towards a critical response which evaluates the quality of sources as a basis for history. Thus, for example, almost all pupils in Year 9 showed a good understanding of the factory system in the 19th century, while the most able used information from a variety of sources to produce well-structured, well-written pieces of extended writing. Some showed a good understanding of the fact that the viewpoints of reformers and most factory owners would necessarily be different.

171. Pupils show an increasing aptitude in the acquisition and application of this knowledge as they move through the school. Thus by Year 11, while pupils in a bottom set could list ten basic facts about the great depression in 1930s America, those in the top set showed a good grasp of the concept of a 'cycle of recovery', could relate features of the New Deal to one another and demonstrated a degree of speculative thinking in analysing different attitudes towards Roosevelt's reforms. While lower-attaining pupils found difficulty in expressing themselves in writing, higher-attainers, especially among the girls, produced good accurate narrative. Pupils' ability to understand and account for different interpretations of the past is weak in both key stages. This is because the scheme of work gives insufficient attention to this aspect of the subject. In this respect the department has made little progress since the time of the last inspection. Standards in GCSE, on the other hand, are high and have been rising steadily over the past four years. The percentage gaining A*-C grades is well above the national average. There has been a particular improvement in boys' A*-C grades, though there is still a significant gap between boys' and girls' achievement, in line with national differences.

172. At A-level, too, standards are well above national averages especially at the 'top' A and B grades. This, too, is a rising trend. Students show a good understanding of the events they are studying, the best a strong sense of period also. In amongst some 'petitions' to the Russian Tsar, written by Year 12 students, for example, were a number which showed excellent 'feel' for the way in which subjects might

have addressed their ruler at the end of the 19th century. Students' ability to relate the particular to the general varies as does their ability to offer a synthesis of materials and views from a variety of sources. However, in Year 13 most students are well up to the demands of the A-level course. Almost all students show an awareness of the complexities of evidence and can recognise differing standpoints. Thus students in a Year 13 group, while identifying different interpretations of the Russian Revolution in different accounts, were appropriately assertive in insisting that historians' views cannot be simply categorised as one thing or another.

173. The quality of teaching was good in 40 per cent of lessons seen and satisfactory in most of the rest. This is an improvement since the school's last inspection. In only two lessons was teaching unsatisfactory and this was because of poor planning: despite the teacher's grasp of the subject, commitment to pupils and undoubted enthusiasm, not enough thought appeared to have been given to how to convert these strengths into effective learning for pupils. Otherwise, teaching was characterised by good subject knowledge and use of technical vocabulary; clear planning; appropriate methods; clear explanation by the teacher; brisk pace and effective use of time; good provision for pupils with special educational needs; good relationships between teachers and pupils and good pupil management; good use of appropriate homework; good marking of sixth form essays. Notable features of some, though not all, teaching included a strong focus on learning objectives - including in one Year 12 group an indication that these new A-level students should learn better to collaborate and the boys to value more highly the contribution of the girls; dealing well with unexpected and wrong answers; good formative feedback, indicating to pupils in one Year 10 class, for example, exactly what they must do to gain higher marks the next time they tackled an assignment of a particular type; and good use of key words to support pupils' literacy and 'to enliven their learning'. Conversely, even when teaching was at least satisfactory, teachers sometimes did too much for pupils and challenges for pupils of differing abilities were not defined sharply enough.

174. Learning was satisfactory in almost all lessons. Where it was not, it was related to unsatisfactory teaching. Otherwise, pupils of all abilities and in all key stages generally made appropriate gains in knowledge, understanding and skills. They showed that they understood facts and could recall them accurately and in appropriate detail, at least in the short term. While pupils in Year 8 could identify short- and long-term causes of Henry VIII's break with Rome, the higher attainers, certainly, in Year 10 could explain the failure of the Schlieffen Plan and the unfolding of events at the beginning of World War I in terms of cause and consequence. While in Key Stage 3 pupils could use historical sources to elicit information, about life in Tudor England or Victorian factories for example, by the end of Key Stage 4 they were moving towards critical evaluation of evidence as a basis for understanding events and the standpoints of those caught up in those events - for example, the great depression in the USA.

175. In addition to the areas identified above, progress has been made in the quality of assessment and its use in a way calculated to help pupils to achieve higher standards, especially in Key Stage 3. On the other hand, there has been little progress in the use of ICT as a learning tool, though the syllabus does include a unit on the use of databases in Year 7 as a contribution to the school's cross-curricular approach to teaching ICT. The department is well organised and well managed. It is staffed by well-qualified and, generally, experienced teachers though many have additional senior responsibilities. The challenge is now to harness that experience and share that expertise, in particular by:

- discussing and developing approaches to teaching and learning so that the highest standards apply throughout the department;
- focusing differentiation more sharply so that pupils of all levels of prior attainment understand clearly what is expected of them;
- developing the use of ICT so that all pupils are enabled to use it as a learning tool in history.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

176. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is well below national expectations. The recorded National Curriculum teacher assessments for ICT at the end of Key Stage 3 are declared to be in line with national averages. However, the department's procedures for assessing pupils' attainment take insufficient account of programmes of study and National Curriculum levels, with the effect that these

assessments are an over-estimation of actual attainment and are not wholly accurate. It is not possible to make comparisons with national averages at Key Stage 4 and post-16 because pupils do not take an external GCSE examination in ICT; all pupils follow a basic competency course but no comparative data was available for comparisons during the inspection. From the scrutiny of pupils' work, talking to pupils and other evidence from the inspection, however, attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 and post-16 is well below national expectations. These low standards, where performance is in fact increasingly adrift from age expectations from year group to year group, so that progress is much too slow, is unsatisfactory and is due in the main to:

- insufficient time being given to developing pupils' ICT skills in Key Stages 3 and 4;
- using inexperienced ICT teachers to teach the subject;
- many departments not contributing to the development of pupils' ICT skills within their own schemes of work;
- a clear lack of support since the last inspection from current 'theme managers' and other agencies in developing an effective whole school strategic plan for improving the ICT infra-structure within the school.

The school continues to not meet statutory requirements at Key Stage 3 as a result.

177. Many pupils have good access to computers at home and this has a very positive impact on pupils' attainment and learning. Throughout the inspection there were some excellent individual examples of pupils presenting project work in a creative and imaginative way using their own initiative and skills in using the computer - for example, in writing up case studies in design and technology in the sixth form and presenting the outcomes of surveys and sensory analysis in food technology.

178. Some planned opportunities in some departments enable pupils to demonstrate more acceptable attainment in ICT, however. In English in Year 8, for example, pupils use desktop publishing processes well to produce a board game on the theme of Halloween. In music pupils in Year 11 and in the sixth form record their compositions onto CD-Rom having had access to high quality recording facilities. Keyboards are also used quite effectively to develop pupils' musical and composing skills. In design and technology lessons in Year 9, pupils are able to write procedures to control a sequence of events; in science a programme called LOGIT is used occasionally to record effects of experiments, and in mathematics pupils use ICT at times to solve equations, but in all these experiences the quality of provision and level of competency is low due in part to the pupils having to use outdated software and hardware. In history in Year 7 pupils have presented historical data appropriately using ICT. In ICT lessons in Years 10 and 11 pupils have used the scanner to successfully capture images and to then manipulate the images into brochures. In English and mathematics, some pupils with special educational needs are able to use ICT successfully to improve their language skills using an integrated learning system called Successmaker but a lack of teaching expertise in the use of this software means that at present the systems are not being used to best effect. In art and design and technology ICT is used sometimes to help pupils research and investigate information appropriately. In physical education a video camera is used occasionally to help pupils review, modify and evaluate their work and reflect on quality. In business studies courses pupils have produced good quality reports, accounts, questionnaires, surveys, brochures and business guidance information to gain a greater awareness of business management and to develop key skills. Some departments, however, are still reluctant to take full responsibility for incorporating ICT into schemes of work and this hinders the school's progress in integrating ICT fully into the curriculum.

179. When pupils are able to use ICT and when tasks are challenging pupils respond with enthusiasm and commitment. They are often busy learners; they remain on task, persevere, show interest, work independently and are sometimes willing to take risks in investigating, testing and solving problems. Unfortunately these opportunities are few and far between and as a result most pupils are being disadvantaged.

180. The teachers who are experienced in teaching ICT - of which there are few - have an appropriate level of knowledge, skill and expertise to ensure that the quality of teaching in both key stages is good. In all ICT lessons observed teaching was at least satisfactory with 50 per cent of lessons being good or very good. There was only one lesson observed that was unsatisfactory. Good lessons are characterised by: very good planning, good classroom organisation, resource management, subject knowledge, an enthusiastic approach, good pace, high expectations, and focused guidance and help to

pupils in mid-task. In lessons that were satisfactory or less than satisfactory, teachers' expertise was found wanting and work was not well planned to meet the needs of all pupils, in particular the higher attainers. The fact that the school chooses to take volunteers at the end of the timetabling sequence to teach ICT who have little or no knowledge and experience in the teaching of ICT is unsatisfactory; this is having a negative impact on pupils' attainment and progress. Those teachers who have suffered from this unsatisfactory situation have, however, worked very hard to skill up to an appropriate standard. This has often been achieved through personal dedication rather than through a planned programme of professional development. The school is still to begin to make effective use of the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) National Grid for Learning (NGfL) initiative and resources. However, the school has only recently received funding for this initiative (July 2000). Some teachers use ICT effectively in preparing worksheets and guidance material. For example, teachers in modern foreign languages have produced some excellent guides for pupils when they travel abroad as part of organised trips and music teachers have produced some excellent guidance materials to help pupils compose music.

181. In recent years in-service training for ICT has been seriously neglected at whole school level, but the currently planned programme should help teachers fulfil the potential of ICT as a cross-curricular tool for learning at the school.

182. The school has an unsatisfactory strategic plan for improving the quality of provision and raising standards in ICT. The plan has too few clear criteria to help the school measure the impact of its planning and spending decisions - it is simply too task focused. The governors have released a considerable amount of money to purchase computers but with no clear criteria in place which would enable them to measure the impact of their spending decisions and consider value for money - this is also unsatisfactory.

183. The assessment, recording and reporting arrangements in ICT are unsatisfactory and do not meet statutory requirements. There is no structure in place to enable teachers to use assessment to help them with their lesson planning or to influence the development of the ICT curriculum. This is unsatisfactory. In addition the monitoring and evaluating of the department's work across the school is seriously underdeveloped.

184. A new head of department - only three weeks into the role - is beginning to provide good direction and vision. This bodes well for the future development of ICT in the school. In the past support from the 'theme manager' has been unsatisfactory and a new line management structure should be introduced with some urgency. The school is fortunate in that it has good technician support which provides an efficient service to the department and the school. The school will need to address the issue of continuing professional development of the technician and consider an increase in technician support as the head of department will not be able to manage the network system - if and when it is installed - and lead and manage the ICT provision.

185. Risk assessments do not currently meet statutory requirements and this shortfall needs to be addressed.

186. Some accommodation is cramped - for example, in a room called L2. Pupils are very tolerant over this. The school must consider all aspects of good design in the layout of information and communication technology rooms if they are to be totally effective in meeting the needs of all who use them.

187. The school uses computer systems satisfactorily to manage its finances, and general administration. Reprographic facilities have been introduced and are being used effectively.

188. The school has made some limited progress since the last inspection in that:

- the information technology resources have been increased and they continue to be of satisfactory quality;
- the school now complies with statutory requirements at Key Stage 4;
- the quality of some teaching is now good.

But in real terms, this report indicates that the school is disadvantaging many of its pupils in that it is not fulfilling its obligation of providing optimum conditions for pupils to use ICT as a curriculum tool and succeed at the highest levels of ICT capability.

189. In order to continue to improve the school should now:

- replace the current 'theme manager' with someone more experienced in the use and application of ICT in schools;
- increase the time allocated to the teaching of ICT core skills in both Key Stages 3 and 4;
- consider QCA thinking in the design and construction of the Key Stage 3 ICT scheme of work;
- ensure that statutory requirements are met fully;
- continue to revise and re-structure the scheme of work in Key Stage 3 in line with recent improvements in the Year 7 provision;
- improve the strategic plan for the development and implementation of ICT provision in the school, making clear reference to what pupils should know, do and understand, as part of that revision beginning to install and upgrade systems and software to meet future needs;
- plan and prioritise tasks to meet strategic objectives using clear success criteria which will enable the school to measure the impact of its planning and spending decisions;
- train key teachers to deliver high quality ICT experiences immediately;
- train the technician in network management;
- develop further the cross-curricular links between ICT and other departments by
 - ❑ reviewing and improving other subject schemes of work to ensure that there are sufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their ICT skills;
 - ❑ implementing the professional development programme for teachers to develop expertise in subject applications and in the use of ICT across the curriculum;
 - ❑ putting fully in place monitoring and evaluating procedures in respect of the department's work across the school and within the ICT department;
- address the issue of risk assessment so that procedures meet statutory requirements;
- build up a stimulating resource base to help pupils' design thinking in the application of ICT;
- provide more opportunities for pupils to research, investigate, problem solve and be creative;
- improve assessment, recording and reporting procedures;
- work to make links with support agencies more effective;
- improve the provision for developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development within ICT.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

190. At the end of Key Stage 3 attainment in French in 1999 was in line with national averages, with the performance of boys slightly above the national average. Attainment at the start of the current Year 9 is in line with national expectations. Pupils show particular strengths in listening comprehension and in writing accurately with a good range of vocabulary and tenses. For example, Year 9 pupils in an average to lower-attaining group were able to use appropriate tenses with 'l'année prochaine' and 'l'année dernière' when covering work on holidays. Speaking skills and, with a significant minority of pupils, pronunciation are a weakness. Far too many pupils give only one or two word answers and are unable to say more than a short phrase without referring to written prompts. At Key Stage 4 GCSE results in 1999, as in the previous two years, have been consistently above national averages for the higher grades A*-C and for the pass grades A*-G. In addition a higher than average proportion of pupils have gained the highest grades A*/A. Pupils perform more highly in French than they do in their other subjects. A strength is the attainment of boys, which is well above national averages for boys. At the start of the current Year 11 pupils' work shows similar high standards. Higher-attaining pupils produce extensive writing with idiomatic language, a good range of sentence structure and few errors. Their gist comprehension shows good understanding of the work topic. In speaking pupils can handle perfect and imperfect tenses when talking about daily routines. In a Year 11 lesson pupils were able to speak extensively about their impressions of their recent work experience. Yet, as at Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils lack the ability to speak more than short phrases without reading from prompts. The numbers of students studying a foreign language at A-level are too low to make valid comparisons with national averages. At the start of their final year, current A-level students can understand the language spoken at native speed. For example, they were able to understand details of the fuel crisis. Overall the

achievement of pupils is satisfactory at Key Stage 3, with boys beginning to show the good levels of achievement which emerge more visibly at Key Stage 4. Achievement at Key Stage 4 is good.

191. All pupils are taught Spanish as a second foreign language from Year 8 onwards. By the end of Key Stage 3 standards are appropriate for the short time they have been learning the language. Attainment at GCSE has been relatively poor and reflects again the short time available to pupils to learn the language. The school has taken steps to improve provision.

192. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory at both key stages. In A-level courses achievement is satisfactory.

193. The quality of teaching and learning in French was good or better in 60 per cent of lessons observed. It was very good in two lessons, good in seven lessons, satisfactory in four lessons, unsatisfactory in one lesson and poor in one lesson. At the time of the school's last inspection teaching at Key Stage 3 was a weakness. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Spanish. In lessons observed, the quality of teaching and learning was very good in one lesson, good in three lessons and satisfactory in one lesson.

194. The school has been successful in raising the quality of language teaching for pupils of this age to the extent that the quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is now good. The strengths of this good teaching and the good teaching observed with older pupils are the planning and organisation of lessons. For example, in a Year 8 Spanish lesson, the clear guidance on learning objectives had a positive impact on pupils' achievement. In both languages good teaching provides positive and firm encouragement, high expectations for all pupils and good relationships. The teaching of grammar is well judged to provide a structure for learning the language. The quality of marking is good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Aspects of teaching and learning were unsatisfactory on occasions when teachers accepted too readily pupils' first attempts to answer a question. The attitudes of A-level students to their learning are unsatisfactory: too many students are content to remain passive listeners in lessons; few demonstrate sufficient initiative and curiosity about language learning. Such attitudes have a negative impact on their attainment and notably on their ability to speak the foreign language.

195. The department has made good improvements since the last inspection. Planning, resources and departmental teamwork have improved. Policies have been well developed. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 has been improved. Curriculum provision for pupils to learn Spanish as well as French has also been improved. Successful visits to France are celebrated with colourful displays. The poor quality of language teaching accommodation, despite recent improvement, is a cause for concern. Pupils' learning at all levels is hampered by poor acoustics, insufficient space for practical activities, insufficient screen or board space and inadequate access to ICT facilities. In order to improve standards and quality further, the school should now:

- improve pupils' speaking skills by extending activities for pupils to use the foreign language independently, ensuring pupils use the foreign language without written prompts, and by encouraging pupils to use the foreign language as the normal means of communication in lessons;
- ensure all teaching and learning are at least satisfactory by monitoring and evaluating the quality of language learning in classrooms and by developing a clear policy for how pupils learn a foreign language;
- enhance the quality of the language learning environment by improving acoustics and board space in classrooms along with access to ICT facilities; and by providing appropriate reference, authentic magazine and video resources.

MUSIC

196. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with national expectations, although pupils' skills are not equally developed across the full range of musical activities in Key Stage 3. The department places emphasis on performance skills and on musical knowledge and understanding, and as a result of this emphasis, pupils' skills in composing are underdeveloped. Pupils refine their keyboard skills at a good rate, assisted by the school's own 'keyboard course', and by the end of Key

Stage 3 most are able to demonstrate a good working knowledge of the features on the keyboard, and are becoming fluent in their reading of traditional notation.

197. Pupils' singing skills are generally satisfactory at the end of Key Stage 3, and the school has recently identified singing as a key area for development in order to raise standards further.

198. Pupils of all abilities listen to music attentively and are able to comment to some degree on the music they hear. The department effectively promotes the use of an appropriate technical and musical vocabulary throughout Key Stage 3.

199. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to develop their skills in composing because the poor standard of the accommodation for music does not allow for whole classes to take part in an appropriate variety of composing activities. There are insufficient instrumental resources in the department for two classes to be taught at the same time. As a result of these constraints, staff tend to over-use worksheets and to set written exercises, and this narrows the range of musical experiences on offer at Key Stage 3. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are able to attain appropriate standards where lessons are practical, and when the work is closely matched to their specific needs; but in lessons where no instruments are available and which are therefore 'information-based', pupils' levels of attainment tend to decline. Statutory teacher assessment has been carried out in music, and indicates levels of attainment that are in line with the national expectation. The current assessment tasks, however, test too narrow a range of skills, concepts and understanding.

200. The 1999 results for GCSE music are above national averages, with 71 per cent of pupils achieving grades A*-C against a national figure of 66 per cent. This trend has been steadily rising over the last few years. During the inspection standards of attainment were judged to be above the national average, with pupils demonstrating very good performance skills. Pupils' composition folios and taped examples of their performances and compositions revealed higher than average levels of attainment. The curriculum in Key Stage 4 is skilfully crafted so as to take into account the abilities and interests of individuals, resulting in high levels of pupil motivation and achievement.

201. In 1999 the school's A-level results in music were well below average when compared with national data; such comparisons lack validity, however, since only three pupils were in the cohort entered. During the inspection standards of attainment in the sixth form were judged to be high, particularly in performance. Examples of work included live performances on the veena, an instrument from southern India, and vocal work demonstrating in a variety of styles and genres. Pupils' aural work, their facility for conducting independent research and their knowledge and understanding of the history of music were all judged to be at least satisfactory.

202. Teaching in all key stages is always at least satisfactory. The best teaching was observed in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form where there were examples of outstanding practice. In a sixth form harmony lesson, for example, the teacher's subject knowledge was used effectively to guide pupils through a complex piece of work exploring the diminished seventh chord and its related resolutions and modulations.

203. Teachers expect and promote high standards of behaviour whilst remaining approachable and friendly. In the best examples of teaching, the tasks were well planned and sufficiently challenging to keep pupils fruitfully occupied. Teachers used a range of questioning techniques and displayed a good knowledge of the needs of individual pupils, providing appropriate guidance, support and advice in order to help them improve their work. In Key Stage 3 the teaching, although satisfactory, was rather less successful. This was because lessons were often over-directed by the teacher and there were too few opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their own musicianship through a wide range of interesting practical activities.

204. Relationships between all teaching staff and pupils are very good indeed, and the department provides a very good atmosphere that promotes effective learning in music. Pupils are generally good at retaining and applying the information and skills that they have acquired in previous lessons, and they are keen to work, particularly when the task is practical. They take a pride in improving their efforts, and maintain good levels of concentration throughout. In some lessons pupils make faster progress in the areas of musical knowledge and understanding than in skills or concepts.

205. The planned curriculum for music at Key Stage 3 is currently unsatisfactory although statutory requirements are being met in practice. The content of the curriculum is described in outline but there are no clear indications as to how it is linked to the National Curriculum requirements. The department is aware that the curriculum as it stands is insufficiently broad, balanced and relevant, and is currently reviewing provision in order to take into account the new requirements. Extra-curricular opportunities in music are very good indeed. About 80 pupils benefit from a team of seven visiting instrumental staff who provide tuition on a wide range of instruments. These pupils play in the musical activities that are available in the department on a regular weekly basis, and many other pupils take advantage of the 'open-access' policy adopted in music. The annual music productions are very popular and provide opportunities for high quality performance. The school enterprisingly records these on CD as a fund-raising initiative.

206. The accommodation is poor and is generally unsuitable for providing an effective learning environment for music. The teaching rooms are bleak, poorly ventilated, poorly heated and uncarpeted. When two groups are taught simultaneously there are insufficient instrumental resources available to ensure that all pupils receive their entitlement to the music curriculum. Staff have worked hard to make the best of the available accommodation and resources, but the quality of pupils' musical experiences is constrained by unsuitable accommodation and by a restricted range of instrumental resources.

207. In order to raise standards, the department should now:

- review the Key Stage 3 curriculum, building in more opportunities for imaginative and inventive composing work and ensure that it reflects accurately the requirements of the National Curriculum;
- develop the social, moral, spiritual and cultural aspects of pupils' education by helping them to balance the essential technical requirements of the music curriculum with a sense of the aesthetic;
- widen the range of available instrumental resources to include more good quality acoustic sound sources for use in Key Stage 3;
- reassess the use of worksheets and information based materials – although extremely well-produced, they do not develop pupils' personal musicianship.

208. The school should:

- upgrade accommodation for music.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

209. Levels of attainment for the majority of pupils at the end of both key stages are in line with national expectations. This is a similar picture to the last inspection. For a small cohort taking GCSE dance in 1999 the number gaining A*-C grades was below the national average. In the sixth form attainment in GCE A-level sports studies is above the national average. Since 1996 the percentage of pupils gaining the higher grades has gradually improved with an average points score always above the national figure and above that achieved for most other subjects in the school.

210. By the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils are able to demonstrate high levels of individual skill in relation to ball control and accuracy in passing, catching and dribbling. They use these skills with precision and purpose when working with a partner, in small groups and sometimes in a full game situation. A group of boys in a full basketball game applied the skill they had previously rehearsed to successfully outwit an opponent by pivoting and driving forward to score. A younger group of girls were able to demonstrate that they fully understood the 'step rule' in netball and had little difficulty in using it when playing the game. However, too few opportunities are provided in games for pupils to take the initiative and make decisions for themselves and, as a consequence, verbal communication is generally underdeveloped. Body management skills in gymnastics and dance that involve travelling, weight supported on hands, rolling and balance are limited in both quality and range. In these aspects of the subject pupils are given the opportunity to compose sequences, develop motifs, perform dances and to analyse their own and others' work. Completed work contains many imaginative and thoughtful ideas but overall the quality of performance is variable. Less successful results can be attributed to poor development of individual performance skills rather than weak knowledge and understanding of

movement dynamics or compositional principles. Pupils have a good knowledge of health-related exercise and understand the importance of obeying safety rules.

211. By the end of Key Stage 4 skills and techniques have been consolidated and further refined. The standards achieved by pupils taking the newly introduced GCSE is a noticeable strength with pupils showing an increased understanding of tactics and strategies in the game. A Year 10 group know the names and positional responsibilities of players in rugby league and can effectively apply structured drills to further develop skills in relation to individual roles in set plays. This standard is well above the expectation for this age. The same quality is not reflected in non-GCSE groups where there is less opportunity to apply and adapt well-established skills or to use tactics in team games. All pupils know the rules governing the main games and apply them consistently. A small group taking GCSE dance, while not fully conversant with the technical vocabulary, have the necessary knowledge and understanding to identify the qualitative aspects of a dance routine recorded on video. However, limited ability in performance skills makes it difficult for the same group to choreograph their own routine showing fluency and expression. Pupils commencing the GCSE course in Year 10 have already established a sound understanding of the functions of the skeleton. A-level students have a thorough knowledge of theoretical principles and they demonstrate through individual projects a sound understanding of how to analyse and evaluate practical performance.

212. The progress made by pupils across both key stages is never less than satisfactory and in over half of lessons it is good. In the sixth form the quality of learning is good and often very good. This is reflected by the results achieved at A-level in sports studies, despite the students having no access to a GCSE course in physical education. Less progress is made in those strands of the programme that are linked to applying skills and compositional ideas and making judgements on what to do in order to improve performance. The areas of study mainly used to promote these aspects, gymnastics and dance, are given less curriculum time. Learning in relation to acquiring and developing skills for competitive games is very good, although it slows in some Year 11 groups where pupils are expected to show an ability to adapt and modify knowledge and understanding to unfamiliar and changing circumstances. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils.

213. The response of pupils to the high expectations of their teachers is very good. In both key stages pupils enjoy their lessons and take part enthusiastically. They are anxious to please and concentrate hard on the tasks given. Despite a strong wind and drizzle pupils in Year 8 and in Year 10 demonstrated their ability to listen attentively and sustain their effort and commitment to practise skills and techniques over a long period. Behaviour in lessons is excellent; pupils form constructive relationships with one another and with teachers. Pupils look after equipment well and take on additional responsibilities as they move through the school. Older pupils are involved in the Junior and Community Sports Leader Awards and organise activities for younger pupils in their own school and for visiting primary schools using the 'Top Link' initiative of the Youth Sport Trust. Many pupils show a high level of commitment to school teams and clubs.

214. Teaching across both key stages varies from satisfactory to very good. Two-thirds of all lessons seen were good or very good. Specialist teachers who have a very secure knowledge of games teach almost all lessons, including theory for the examination syllabus. Subject knowledge in gymnastics and dance is slightly less secure. Control, management and organisation are strong characteristics of all teaching. The didactic approach to teaching, which is typical of many lessons, ensures very effective whole class learning of practical skills. Demonstrations are used effectively to point out strengths and weaknesses in individual performance and the ways groups interact in games. Lessons are well structured with a good balance between exposition and purposeful activity. In the few lessons where teaching is satisfactory but could be further improved insufficient guidance is given to make it clear to pupils what they need to do in order to perform better. For example, in a gymnastics lesson, pupils were aware of the need for quality in their sequences but detailed teaching points were not provided to help them move towards the standard expected. Lesson planning contains no detail of assessment that would guide and inform provision for the different levels of ability of the pupils in each class. Examination groups receive homework. Written and oral feedback provides suitable guidance on what pupils should do to improve.

215. The head of department has a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the subject. Staff are highly motivated, very committed and work hard as a dedicated team to improve standards and introduce new initiatives. Lessons that provide a minimum of one hour of activity together with blocked units lasting ten weeks make a significant impact on the continuity and progress in learning. The introduction of a GCSE course this year is a welcome step forward. The fact that 74 students have enrolled for the course is testimony to the popularity of the subject in school. However, there are other factors which make a negative impact on standards. Although the Key Stage 3 curriculum meets the statutory requirement it is broad but not balanced. Boys have fewer creative experiences than girls do in Key Stage 3 with less than 17 per cent of curriculum time being given to two of the four areas of study. There is no progressive scheme of work that provides for the systematic teaching of health related fitness. This is a similar picture to that described at the time of the last inspection. There is insufficient suitable indoor accommodation for a school of this size and a significant amount of time is lost from lessons when this accommodation is used for other purposes. Most of the outside facilities have fallen into a state of disrepair that has put them beyond safe use. This applies to the 'all-weather redgra' pitches, hard surface tennis courts and the jumping area. At present the school cannot meet the statutory requirement for athletics.

216. Although staff regularly attend in-service training courses there is no structured provision for feedback or for monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning within the department.

217. Statutory risk assessments have not been completed. A number of issues relating to health and safety have been brought to the attention of the head of the department.

218. The department should now:

- ensure that all pupils have equal access to a broad and balanced curriculum in Key Stage 3;
- raise the standard of attainment in GCSE dance through closer monitoring to establish weaknesses, and then by setting specific targets for improvement;
- take action to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning across the whole department that will lead to the production of a corporate subject development plan listing priorities for action;
- ensure that staff development training is linked to this plan;
- provide a scheme of work to cover progression in knowledge and understanding of fitness and health;
- further raise standards by providing more opportunities for pupils to improve their own learning and performance through planning, problem solving and communication skills;
- take immediate action to address safety issues and introduce statutory risk assessment;
- improve the accommodation for PE when funds allow.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

219. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above national expectations in attainment target 1 - learning about religion; and in line with national expectations in attainment target 2 - learning from religion. This is an improvement since the last report which judged that standards were only satisfactory. Pupils of all levels of attainment demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of religious studies, and of what is distinctive to each using appropriate terminology. They are able to give clear explanations of religious beliefs, and to explain in some depth what it means to be a Christian, a Jew or a Muslim. They show good understanding of the range of beliefs within faith groups - for example, the range of beliefs about the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, and differing approaches to the role of women in Islam. Pupils of all levels of attainment demonstrate good understanding of how religious beliefs influence people's lives and attitudes - for example, towards alcohol and the elderly. The highest attainers are able to reflect on their own experiences and extend this to their understanding of religious issues. This was demonstrated in pupils' work on the nature of betrayal and its role in Christian belief. Middle and lower attainers, however, are less able to reflect on what they have learnt in developing their own beliefs and values.

220. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below national expectations because insufficient time is provided within the curriculum to meet the requirements of the agreed syllabus, and the extent of pupil knowledge and experience of religious education is therefore limited. Progress is inhibited by the

timetabling system, which gives pupils RE lessons in isolated blocks in the year rather than on a regular weekly basis. Within this limited framework of the Key Stage 4 curriculum, however, pupils attain in line with national expectations.

221. There has been no GCSE group in the last two years. Although attainment in GCSE was well above national expectations in 1997 and 1998, the number of pupils entered for the examination is too small to make this a reliable judgement. There is now a small Year 10 group of eight pupils following the GCSE syllabus for religious education and, although very early in the course, evidence from the inspection suggests that attainment is at least in line with national expectations across the ability range.

222. Since the last inspection there have been very small numbers of students - one in 2000, two in 1999, three in 1998 and one in 1997 - following an A-level course in religious education, using the Rapid Results College material and supported by the department. A reliable judgement on attainment at A-level cannot therefore be made. There is now a group of three students in Year 12 following the AS-level course. Attainment for this group is in line with national expectations at this very early stage, although less curriculum time is allocated to religious education than to other subjects.

223. Teaching of religious education is at least satisfactory, and in Key Stage 4 all teaching observed was good. Very good teacher-pupil relations were observed in all lessons and contributed to effective pupil learning. In Key Stage 3 the most effective teaching was characterised by good planning and sound subject knowledge. For example, a Year 7 class working on a unit considering the nature of religion and its significance as a subject to study was carefully led through the recall of previous work; a good story well told by the teacher; carefully structured closed and open questioning, and a written task on the sources of personal beliefs. Similarly, in a Year 8 class considering the birth of Jesus from a contemporary context, good use was made of pupils' own experiences, analogies and diagrams to lead them to a written task. In all lessons observed, teachers had clear and appropriate learning objectives towards which teaching was carefully directed. Teachers use a good variety of resources and written tasks to enable pupils to build on their knowledge and understanding of religion and different faiths. Good use is made of limited ICT resources to enhance pupils' learning - in Year 8 'Risen!' is used to develop pupils' understanding of Christianity. Pupils' understanding of religious beliefs and practices is developed by carefully and sensitively planned celebration of festivals, such as Hanukkah.

224. Where teaching in Key Stage 3 is less effective, insufficient time is given to allow pupils to work together to discuss and reflect on their own views of religious issues through an exploration of questions about life's meaning and purpose. They are moved too quickly onto written tasks which they complete alone. Most written tasks are relevant to attainment target 1. These two factors are limiting pupils' progress and attainment in learning from religion.

225. Pupils' work is carefully and consistently marked with positive comments. However, teachers' comments are not sufficiently targeted at ways in which individual pupils can improve. The good practice of providing pupils with the content summaries of each unit of work, and completion dates, should be extended to include records of assessments and targets for improvement.

226. Effective teaching in Key Stage 4 was characterised by good development of pupils' reflection on moral issues and, building on work from Key Stage 3, their relationship to the beliefs and practices of different faith groups. In a Year 11 lesson on abortion, for example, teaching effectively summarised the key points from a video on abortion, so that pupils of all levels of attainment were able to discuss in groups the question 'when does life begin'. The question challenged pupils' thinking and their discussions were well supported by the teacher moving around the groups, moving on the lower attainers and further challenging higher attainers by careful questioning. Similarly, in a Year 10 lesson as part of a unit on crime and punishment, pupils role-playing a magistrates' bench were presented with case studies by local magistrates, and their discussions carefully supported and challenged by the teacher.

227. In the sixth form very good teacher subject knowledge was demonstrated by the ability to answer student questions with wide-ranging references to the scriptures and moral philosophers. Effective teaching here built carefully on prior learning, shared learning objectives with the students, and set high expectations for student responses to the nature of moral commands.

228. Pupils make good progress in their learning about religion in Key Stage 3. Pupils of all levels of attainment acquire and consolidate new knowledge well. All Year 9 pupils, for example, had very good knowledge of the historical context of Islam, the five pillars of Islam and the role of the mosque and practices of worship. Written work is consistently well presented and complete, and middle and higher attainers are able to produce well structured, extended written work which demonstrates their knowledge and understanding of religion. The highest attainers are able to write reflectively - for example, in a task on 'My special place' - but this skill is less developed in middle and lower attainers because they are given insufficient opportunity to discuss and explore their ideas before embarking on a written task. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, although IEPs do not include subject specific targets. In Key Stage 4 progress and learning are limited by the structure of the course which makes building on prior learning slower.

229. Management of the religious education department is good. The Key Stage 3 scheme of work has recently been revised to meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. There is careful planning for well-graded steps in learning together with tasks for pupils of different abilities across the key stage. Resources are shared and limited departmental funding used well to provide a good variety of texts, video material and software. Teaching rooms in the department are carefully maintained, despite problems with leaks, and display of pupils' work is of a high quality, reflecting the expectations and activities of the department. Leadership is less well developed because of the constraints put upon the subject. There has been no improvement since the last inspection in terms of time available for non-examination religious education in Key Stage 4. In terms of provision at GCSE and A-level, there has been a decline, although there are now small examination groups in Year 10 and Year 12. There is no provision for non-examination RE in the sixth form. Departmental development planning is in line with school requirements, but is task focused, and success criteria which indicate planned improvement in pupils' learning and attainment are not included. Departmental vision for the potential of religious education across the school to raise standards is not realised.

230. In order to improve further, the school should:

- introduce measures to meet the statutory requirements for religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form;
- provide equal curricular time for A-level religious education as for other subjects;
- introduce formal systems for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning across the subject;
- refer to QCA non-statutory guidance to improve short-term and overall assessment in Key Stage 3.

BUSINESS STUDIES

231. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 has been in line with national expectations. This is an improvement since the last report, when attainment in business studies at Key Stage 4 was below national and school averages. The trend now is one of improvement, with 56 per cent of pupils attaining A*-C grades in 2000, compared to 50 per cent in 1999 and 47 per cent in 1998. However, in 2000, while 100 per cent of pupils entered for the higher paper achieved an A*-C grade, only 43 per cent of the lower attainers achieved a C grade. In both 1999 and 2000 girls attained less well than boys in business studies and girls' attainment in the subject was below that in other subjects in the school. By the end of Key Stage 4 higher and middle attaining pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of key concepts, and are able to define and use a variety of appropriate techniques to carry out market research. They are able to produce structured and extended writing to describe, for example, the business functions of marketing and to review the strengths and weaknesses of market research they have carried out.

232. At A-level attainment has been well above national expectations, with 46 per cent of students achieving an A or a B grade in 1999, compared to 30 per cent nationally, and an average point score of 4.5 compared to 3.5 nationally. Attainment in 2000 has declined, with an average point score of 4.0, although inspection evidence suggests that, given the prior attainment of students, the overall trend of attainment is upwards. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

233. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was variable. Of five lessons observed only one was unsatisfactory. The rest were satisfactory or better. All teaching observed in the sixth form was good.

234. In Key Stage 4 where teaching was unsatisfactory, expectations of pupils were too low and the lack of variety in tone, pace and pupils' learning activities limited their progress. Good teaching was characterised by learning objectives being made clear to pupils - for example, in a Year 11 class building up coursework on a snack company developing a new product for a particular market segment. The planning and production of the coursework, carefully guided by the teacher, enabled students to build on and use prior learning and engaged them in a variety of activities - for example, to draw up a research plan, to draw up a survey sheet, or to design a questionnaire. Good progress is made by pupils in Key Stage 4 when teachers use questioning to consolidate and reinforce prior learning, and make provision for pupils of differing levels of attainment within the group. Pupils with special educational needs do not make good progress because no adapted resources tailored to their needs are provided, IEPs do not include subject specific targets, and support teachers are not involved in planning the learning of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs.

235. A significant minority of lower attaining pupils in Key Stage 4 have a negative attitude to the subject, due to low teacher expectations, such as copying from handouts, inappropriate teacher expectations of ICT skills, and pupils' lack of understanding of the purpose of some learning activities.

236. In the sixth form good teaching allowed students to take responsibility for their own learning - for example, in a Year 13 lesson where students were devising examination questions and mark schemes to use with other groups of students. Characteristics of effective teaching were very good subject knowledge and almost palpable enthusiasm for the subject which was communicated to students and enabled a Year 12 group very new to the course to become involved in lively discussion.

237. Leadership and management of development are unsatisfactory overall. A scheme of work is in place for Key Stage 4 which is good in that it includes suggested teaching strategies and intended learning outcomes. The A-level scheme of work, however, although detailed, is largely content based. There is no monitoring or evaluation of teaching and learning across the department, nor is there provision for the exchange of the good practice which exists in some areas.

238. Although resources have improved since the last inspection, there are insufficient computers for the size of group in a subject where each pupil is expected to use ICT consistently in lessons. Analysis of attainment and pupils' attitude in Key Stage 4 indicates the need for alternative accreditation.

239. The department has strong links with the local business community, and a member of the department manages a Young Enterprise scheme open to all pupils. This has proved consistently successful in local competitions,

240. Development planning is in place, but is task orientated and does not make a link between activities and improvement in terms of pupils' progress and attainment. There is no planning for professional development of staff in terms of teaching and learning in the subject. Accommodation has not improved since the last inspection and some classrooms are overcrowded, limiting the use of a wider variety of methods to ensure effective teaching and learning. However, the best is not made of the accommodation. In some rooms displays of pupils' work are clearly several years old, and a storeroom is cluttered with broken chairs and equipment, further limiting effective use of space.

241. In order to improve further, the school should now:

- plan for and implement alternative accreditation in the subject for lower attainers at Key Stage 4;
- implement strategies to raise the attainment of girls at Key Stage 4;
- set up systems for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and the exchange of good practice in Key Stage 4;
- improve accommodation and resources to meet the needs of the subject and group sizes.

GENERAL STUDIES IN THE SIXTH FORM

242. Attainment in general studies at A-level has been in line with national expectations and this has been a consistent trend over the last three years. Evidence from the inspection suggests that this will continue with current Year 13 students.

243. Teaching observed in the general studies programme was satisfactory. Teachers' planning was good, and resources well prepared, although some, in both an economics and sociology lesson, were out of date. Teaching was less effective when teachers spent too long in explanation or reading of sources, and insufficient opportunity was given to students to work in pairs or groups and take responsibility for their own learning. While this didactic approach was effective for the very highest attainers, middle and lower attainers found it difficult to sustain concentration and made little contribution to the lesson. Teaching was most effective when students actively participated in their own learning - in pair discussions on social class, for example. In all lessons observed, teacher-student relationships were good, and the relaxed but purposeful atmosphere in the classroom contributed to effective student learning.

244. Management of the general studies provision is good. Schemes of work are in place for all units of work, which are taught in set blocks of time, and students are carefully guided to an appropriate choice of course in Year 13. Good provision is made for the lowest attainers in Year 13 with one teacher teaching the AS course. Although the school is committed to the provision of general studies for all sixth form students, there is no formal commitment to ensure that the same staff teach this subject year on year or at least that those called upon to do a stint are actually interested in doing so. This makes long-term curriculum and staff development planning difficult, which is unsatisfactory. This weakness is made more acute by the introduction in September 2000 of the new AS/A2 syllabus which is much more specific in terms of content and skills to be taught.

245. Systems for monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are not in place, and this constitutes a weakness, although informal feedback is sought from staff and students which has informed curricular provision.

246. In order to improve further, the school should:

- ensure consistency of staffing to allow for effective curriculum planning and appropriate professional development for staff teaching general studies and key skills;
- liaise with other curriculum areas to avoid repetition of content and to allow teaching to build more effectively on students' prior learning.