

INSPECTION REPORT

THE WAVELL SCHOOL

Farnborough, Hampshire

LEA area: Hampshire

Unique reference number: 116448

Headteacher: Mr Malcolm Wheeler

Reporting inspector: Mr Tom Ferris
4344

Dates of inspection: 13 – 17 November 2000

Inspection number: 223805

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 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Lynchford Road
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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Nigel Baines

Date of previous inspection: November 1995

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Tom Ferris	4344	Registered Inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards – the school's results and pupils' achievements? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
Sally Hall	19693	Lay Inspector		How high are standards – pupils' attitudes, values and personal development? How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Dee Wheatley	3538	Team Inspector	English	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Paul Metcalf	27719	Team Inspector	Mathematics	
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John Adams	8530	Team Inspector	Design and technology	
Martin Graham	15089	Team Inspector	Information and communications technology (ICT)	
Mary Higgins	16765	Team Inspector	Modern foreign languages	
Marcia Headon	18740	Team Inspector	History	
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Stephen Bugg	15306	Team Inspector	Art	
John Forster	15866	Team Inspector	Music	
Caroline Runyard	23030	Team Inspector	Physical education	
Graham Langtree	16546	Team Inspector	Religious education	
Anthony Boyden	13048	Team Inspector	GNVQ	
Ken Stevenson	15297	Team Inspector	Special educational needs English as a second language Equal opportunities	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Wavell School is a comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11 to 16. There are 794 pupils on roll, 401 boys and 357 girls. The pupils are predominantly white, though three per cent are from ethnically different backgrounds, mainly Pakistani and Nepalese. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. However, this misrepresents the socio-economic circumstances of the pupils. Approximately one quarter of the pupil come from army families, none of whom are eligible. Although the area is one of high employment, much of it is not well paid. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs (40 per cent) is above the national average. The main needs catered for are difficulties with reading and writing, and emotional and behavioural difficulties. The attainment of the pupils when they enter the school has been below average. The number of pupils who enter or leave the school in each year is considerably greater than in most schools. As many as 40 to 50 per cent of each year group do not complete their secondary education at the school. Approximately the same percentage of the pupils who sit GCSE have not spent all their secondary education at the school. Eighteen of the pupils have English as an additional language. This is average for shire counties.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The Wavell School is a good school. It caters well for its pupils, both those who arrive in Year 7 and those who join later. By the age of 14, the pupils achieved well above average results in the national tests in 2000. By the age of 16, their results in GCSE have been above average in two of the last three years, including 2000. Good teaching and very good leadership and management by the headteacher and senior staff have been key factors in these good results. During the inspection the teaching seen was good in Years 10 and 11. It was very good in Year 9, satisfactory in Year 7 but unsatisfactory in Year 8. Temporary staffing difficulties are currently affecting the quality of the teaching to the younger pupils. The school's income and expenditure are slightly above average. Nevertheless, given the difference that it makes to the pupils' achievements by the time they leave the school, it provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The well above average results achieved by the pupils at the age of 14.
- The above average GCSE results.
- The good to very good rate of progress of boys and girls in mathematics and science and of the girls in English.
- The clear and energetic leadership of the headteacher.
- The provision for the pupils' social and moral development.
- The school's systems for reviewing the quality of its work.
- The quantity and quality of extra-curricular activities and the very good links with the community.

What could be improved

- The overall quality of the teaching in Year 8.
- The provision of sufficient challenging opportunities for the pupils to apply their skills in information and communications technology (ICT) in the other subjects they study.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1995. It has made good improvement since then. The Key Stage 3 results are now well above average. The quality of the teaching has improved. The number of pupils excluded from the school has decreased dramatically. The school's procedures for reviewing its performance are now very good. The school has a clear capacity for further improvement. Of the weaknesses identified by the last inspection, the school has not found a practical way of meeting the requirement for a daily act of worship and the quality of some of the non-specialist teaching remains a problem. However, very good progress has been made in the provision for pupils with special educational needs. The time for religious education has been increased. Although more opportunities need to be provided for ICT in subjects, the overall provision is much improved, in terms both of teaching time and of the number of computers and other resources now available.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with		
	all schools		
	1998	1999	2000
GCSE examinations	B	C	B

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

Note: The table above does not contain a comparison of the school's results with similar schools based on eligibility for free school meals. This would have compared the school to those with the most favoured intakes nationally. Given the extent of pupil mobility, which is much higher than in most schools, and the proportion of pupils with some special educational need, the inspectors consider that this measure is not a reliable or fair reflection of the school's intake. The school adds very good value to the pupils' achievements in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 9, and good added value overall between Year 9 and GCSE.

At the age of 14, the pupils' results in the 2000 National Curriculum tests were well above average overall and in English and mathematics. They were above average in science. These results represent considerable improvement on previous years. The upward trend is now faster than the national trend. Girls performed better than boys in English, in line with the national difference. Given the pupils' attainment on entry, their achievement in the tests was very good. Standards in the other subjects are broadly average except in art and music, in which they are below average.

Based on the performance of all the pupils, the GCSE results have been above average in two of the last three years, including in 2000. The school does well by all its pupils, but particularly by those of average to below average ability, including those with special educational needs. Compared with schools which had similar results at the end of Key Stage 3 two years earlier, the 2000 results were above average. This represents good achievement by the pupils. The subjects that performed best, achieving above average results, were English language and design and technology. In English, girls performed much better than boys. The weakest results were in history. From the evidence of the inspection the attainment of the oldest pupils in Key Stage 4 has improved in mathematics, science and in physical education, in all of which it is now above average. It is also improving in history.

The school met its appropriately challenging target for the performance of all the pupils in 2000 but not its too ambitious target for pupils achieving five or more passes at A*-C.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most are enthusiastic and keen to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The vast majority behave well in lessons and around the school. A significant number in Year 8, however, do not always behave well.
Personal development and relationships	Good. The pupils co-operate well with one another. Many enjoy taking responsibility, for example in raising money for charity and as prefects.
Attendance	Satisfactory. There is very little truancy.

The number of pupils excluded is very low compared to schools of similar size. The participation of many pupils in the school's wide range of extra-curricular activities contributes much to their personal development. Over a hundred participate each year in "The Rock Challenge", a dance/drama extravaganza.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Most of the teaching has a positive impact on the pupils' learning. In the vast majority of lessons, particularly in Years 9 to 11, the teachers have good knowledge of the subject they teach, they plan well, choose motivating activities and manage the pupils' behaviour well. This ensures that the pupils work at a good pace, concentrate well and show interest in their work. In the minority of unsatisfactory lessons, mainly in Year 8, the teachers do not set work at an appropriate level and have difficulties in managing the pupils' behaviour. Some of the unsatisfactory teaching was due to staffing difficulties that have resulted in several classes having a sequence of temporary teachers. A general strength in the teaching is the very good preparation of the pupils for the national tests at the age of 14 and for their GCSE examinations.

The teaching of both literacy and numeracy is good. The pupils with special educational needs are taught well at both key stages, both in normal lessons and in the small amount of teaching to individual or small groups of pupils.

Of the teaching seen during the inspection, 92 per cent of the lessons were judged to be satisfactory or better; 53 per cent to be good or better; and 20 per cent to be very good or better. Eight per cent were judged to be unsatisfactory. The teaching is very good in Year 9, good in Years 10 and 11, and satisfactory in Year 7. In Year 8, it is judged unsatisfactory as one in five of the lessons seen was judged to have some significant weaknesses.

The teaching of English is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. The teaching of both mathematics and science is good at both key stages. The teaching is also

good in geography and physical education, and in both the work-related course in Year 10 and the GNVQ Leisure and Tourism course.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. All requirements met except in Year 11 where not all the pupils study a design and technology subject.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Very well organised. Good identification of their needs. The teachers generally plan well to minimise these.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The small number of pupils make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Sound provision for spiritual and cultural development. Very good provision for moral and social development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Strong pastoral system that supports the pupils' academic and personal development well.

The school works well with parents. The quality of information that the school provides to parents is generally good. The range of extra-curricular activities is very good, particularly in sport and in involvement in local and national competitions. The school provides a very good range of visits to complement work done in class. There are very good opportunities for the discussion of moral issues in a range of subjects.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good leadership by the headteacher, ably supported by the other senior managers. Very clear direction, characterised by a strong focus on continuous improvement in teaching.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Sound. Governors have a clear view of their role and provide a good level of support.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Particularly strong systems for monitoring teaching and the performance of subjects.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Very good forward planning. Slightly above average income; good outcomes in the pupils' performance; good value for money.

Most of the teachers are very competent in the subjects they teach. However, at the time of the inspection, and despite the considerable efforts of the headteacher and governors, the school did not have quite enough subject specialists to cover the whole curriculum in all years. This is having most effect on the teaching in Years 7 and 8. Resources are adequate overall though there are some shortages in art and in design and technology. The accommodation is adequate with the exception of science, which does not have sufficient laboratories. The school has made good improvements to the accommodation for ICT, design and technology and for music.

The headteacher has had a significant impact on raising the expectations of both the teachers and the pupils. Provision for staff development is very good. The principles of getting “best value” in the school’s spending are well understood and well applied in the negotiation of contracts and in comparing costs with other schools.

PARENTS’ AND CARERS’ VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Their children are expected to work hard. ▪ They feel comfortable in contacting the school. ▪ Their children make good progress. ▪ Their children like school. ▪ The good leadership and management. ▪ The good teaching. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information about the curriculum. ▪ Information about their children’s progress. ▪ Homework provision. ▪ The behaviour of some pupils, especially in Year 8. ▪ The closeness of the working relationship between the school and parents.

The inspectors agree with the parents’ positive views. They also agree that the school could provide more information about the curriculum in advance, and that the behaviour of some pupils in Year 8 is unsatisfactory. They found the annual reports to parents on their children’s progress to be broadly satisfactory and that the school does provide good opportunities to discuss progress. They also found that the setting of homework was good in Years 9 to 11 and broadly satisfactory in Years 7 and 8. Overall, they do not agree with the views of some parents that the school does not work closely with them even though there are areas that could be improved.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The pupils' attainment when they arrive at the school in Year 7 has been below average. This is based on their results in the national tests at the age of eleven. The current Year 7 is the first year in which the attainment on entry has been slightly above average. The large number of pupils who leave or arrive at the school each year complicates the picture of the overall attainment on entry. Between Year 7 and Year 11 this ranges between 40 and 50 per cent. The school's own records show a net loss of average to above average pupils, further confirming the picture of prior attainment that is below average.

2. At the age of 14 [i.e. at the end of Year 9], the overall performance of the pupils was well above average in the national tests in 2000. The results in both English and mathematics were well above; in science they were above average. This represents a significant improvement over the results in previous years when they were broadly in line with the average. The trend in the school's results is now considerably faster than the national trend. In English, the girls perform better than the boys. The difference is, however, in line with the national difference. Both boys' and girls' results were well above the national averages for boys and girls respectively. In mathematics, boys and girls did equally well, mirroring the national picture. In science the boys performed marginally better than the girls. The fact that the overall attainment of the pupils when they joined the school was below average and that they achieved well above average standards in the tests represents very good achievement. The key factors that explain this success include: very good teaching in Year 9; the quality of leadership and management in the three subjects; very good preparation of the pupils for the tests; and the support and encouragement of senior managers.

3. The 2000 GCSE results, based on the results of each pupil [the best indicator of a school's performance] were above average. Judged on the proportion of pupils who achieved five or more passes at A*-C, they were in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more passes at A*-G was above average. The proportion achieving at least one pass was average. The girls performed better than the boys, broadly in line with the national difference. Compared with schools with similar results in the Year 9 tests two years earlier, the 2000 results at the Wavell School were well above average. Given this fact, plus the overall below average attainment on entry, the GCSE results represent good achievement on the part of the majority of the pupils. The key factors contributing to this include: the quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11; the good preparation of the pupils for their exams; the specific support for individual pupils at risk of under-performing; and, as at Key Stage 3, the level of support and encouragement from senior managers.

4. Whereas in previous years the trend in the school's GCSE results had been below the national trend, the improvement in 2000 almost certainly brings the school's trend back in line with the national trend. The school met its appropriately challenging target for the average point score in 2000 but not its too challenging target for 55 per cent achieving five or more passes at A*-C.

5. From the evidence of the inspection, the standards in English being attained by the oldest pupils at Key Stage 3 [i.e. those currently in Year 9] are above average and almost all are making good progress. However, the achievement of some pupils in Year 8, particularly those affected by several recent changes of teacher, is not as good as it should be. Non-specialist teaching and difficulties in setting sufficiently challenging work are the key factors

here. The standards of the oldest pupils in Key Stage 4 [i.e. those currently in Year 11] are slightly above average. The boys, particularly those in middle sets, are slightly below average and the girls are above average. In relation to their prior attainment, the boys are generally making sound progress, the girls are making good progress. The most able make very good progress at both key stages. These pupils develop a wide vocabulary and an increasingly sophisticated command of the language, are able to write confidently in a range of styles and have good skills in analysing the texts that they study. Boys of average ability in Years 10 and 11 tend to find arguing a case in writing difficult and their work is not always well presented. At both key stages the overall good achievement is the result of good teaching, particularly in Years 9 to 11.

6. In mathematics, the well above average standards being attained by the oldest pupils in Key Stage 3 are the direct result of good teaching and very good leadership of the department. Given their attainment on entry most pupils are achieving very well in mathematics by Year 9. Standards in basic numeracy are good. The attainment of the oldest pupils in Key Stage 4 is now above average, i.e. standards are improving and the achievement of most is good.

7. In science, the attainment of the oldest pupils is above average at the end of each key stage. By Year 9, they have a good knowledge of scientific facts and the more able have a good understanding of concepts such as the pH scale and the basic mechanisms of inheritance. In Key Stage 4, they add to their knowledge and understanding. They develop good investigative skills at each key stage. The achievement of most as they progress through the school is good.

8. Standards in art and music by the end of Key Stage 3 are below average though the pupils' achievement is broadly satisfactory in relation to their previous attainment. In history, geography and in physical education, standards are average and the pupils' achievement is good. In modern languages, information and communications technology (ICT), in religious education and in design and technology (D&T), standards are average and the pupils' achievement satisfactory. In respect of the oldest pupils in Key Stage 4, standards are broadly average and the pupils' achievement sound in modern languages, history, music, ICT and religious education. Standards are average and achievement good in business education and in geography. They are above average and the pupils' achievement good to very good in D&T and in physical education. Standards are below average, but the particular pupils' achievement nonetheless good in the General National Vocational Qualification course in Leisure and Tourism.

9. Specific strengths in subjects include: electronics in D&T in Key Stage 3 and both graphics and product design at Key Stage 4; the pupils' evaluative skills in physical education; the pupils' ability to relate beliefs to their own ideas and experience in religious education. Specific weaknesses include speaking in modern languages and the ability to interpret historical sources and events in history. Standards in ICT are sound but a general weakness is the lack of opportunities for the pupils to apply the skills they have learnt when they are working in a range of other subjects.

10. Standards in numeracy are generally good and most pupils make good progress in literacy. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make good progress, especially in English, mathematics, science, geography and physical education. Their progress in the GNVQ course in Leisure and Tourism at Key Stage 4 is also good. In all other subjects their progress is sound. The progress of those pupils who have the greatest difficulty in reading and spelling is sound. Those following a very structured programme make less progress than those who follow a less prescriptive programme or who are taught by the specialist SEN teacher. Given their prior attainment and their learning difficulties, the vast majority of pupils

with special educational needs achieve well, both in the Key Stage 3 national tests and at GCSE.

11. The school has a small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language. They are making good progress. They overcome their initial difficulties quickly through support provided both in school and at home. While language difficulties remain, good teaching ensures that these do not significantly hold back their overall progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Overall, the pupils' attitudes to school are good and this enthusiasm has a positive impact on the pupils' attainment and progress. They listen carefully to their teachers and are keen to answer questions. The pupils concentrate very well on the tasks they have been set and enjoy the challenge of taking responsibility for their own learning. For example, in a Year 7 science lesson, the pupils were expected to devise an experiment to calculate the energy stored in food. They were given clear instructions but no demonstration. They collected and set up their own equipment and thought hard about the process. They worked sensibly in pairs with a high regard to safety. By the end of the lesson the pupils had gained confidence in practical work and in recording results.

13. The behaviour of the pupils is generally good and sometimes very good. The school operates as an orderly community and this has a positive impact on the pupils' learning. Most pupils understand that their teachers have high expectations of good behaviour and respond well to the system of rewards and sanctions. Behaviour at lunchtime is very good and Year 11 prefects assist well with the supervision. Nevertheless, the behaviour of a significant minority of pupils is unsatisfactory in a considerable proportion of lessons involving one of the lower sets in Year 8. These pupils fidget, talk when the teacher is talking, call out and take a long time to settle down to work. Their behaviour distracts others, who then find it difficult to work. Overall, there are few incidents of bullying. Pupils and parents say that reported incidents are dealt with effectively. The rate of exclusion is very low compared with similar schools and has decreased dramatically over the past four years. This is mainly due to the success of the school's inclusion policy, which offers pupils extra support when they are at risk of being excluded.

14. The pupils' personal development and relationships are good. They co-operate with each other in lessons and group work is often very good. The vast majority of pupils show respect for adults working in school and are able to voice their opinions without fear of ridicule. This was seen in a personal and social education lesson when Year 9 pupils spoke with feeling about their different views of gender stereotyping, and were keenly listened to by other pupils in the class. The pupils enjoy taking responsibility and undertake duties such as librarians, house captains and hosts to visitors. The School Council brings about changes in the school environment and acts as a sounding board for issues such as the new behaviour policy. The pupils enjoy raising money for charity and take part with enthusiasm in a wide range of extra-curricular activities including the Rock Challenge, a dance/drama 'extravaganza' involving some 120 pupils.

15. The pupils have maintained the satisfactory levels of attendance found at the time of the last inspection. The attendance rate of 91.7 per cent for 1999/2000 was broadly in line with the national average and no year group had an attendance rate of less than 90 per cent. The unauthorised absence rate of 0.1 per cent is below the national average.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16. The teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. Of the lessons seen during the inspection, 92 per cent were judged to be at least satisfactory, 53 per cent to

be good or better, and 20 per cent to be very good or better. Four per cent of all lessons seen were judged to be outstanding. The overall quality of teaching in the school has improved since the time of the last inspection when 87 per cent was judged to be satisfactory or better, and 47 per cent to be good or better.

17. At Key Stage 3, the totals were as follows: 88 per cent satisfactory or better; 49 per cent good or better; and 20 per cent very good. These figures, however, conceal a considerable disparity between Year 9 on the one hand, in which the teaching is very good, and Year 8 on the other, in which the teaching overall is less than satisfactory. In Year 9, for example, no fewer than 72 per cent of all lessons were judged to be good or better and one third to be very good. In Year 8, almost one lesson in five had some significant weakness. The percentage of good lessons in this year was, however, similar to the total in the rest of the school. From the evidence of the good performance of the pupils currently in Year 9 and from that of the results achieved last year in the national tests, the school is clearly successful in making up any deficiencies from the earlier years. In Year 9 the learning accelerates because of very good teaching. Nevertheless, the overall quality of the teaching in Year 8 is a concern. At Key Stage 4, hardly any unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Ninety eight per cent of the teaching was judged to be at least satisfactory, 57 per cent to be good or better, and 19 per cent to be very good.

18. Most of the teaching has a positive impact on the pupils' learning. In the vast majority of lessons, the teachers demonstrate good knowledge of the subject they are teaching, they plan well, choose motivating activities and are skilful in managing the pupils. This ensures that the pupils work at a good pace, concentrate well and show a clear interest in their work. In the majority of lessons, their acquisition of new knowledge and skills is good. All of the above is more evident in Years 9 to 11. The pupils' learning is therefore judged to be good at Key Stage 4 and satisfactory at Key Stage 3. There is a significant difference between Year 9, in which the learning is very good, and both Year 7, in which it is satisfactory, and Year 8, in which it is unsatisfactory overall. This is clearly related to weaknesses in the teaching, particularly in Year 8, and especially in setting work at an appropriately challenging level, and in managing the pupils' behaviour in the lower sets.

19. A number of parents expressed some concern at the quantity of homework set. Inspectors found that the school has tightened up on the implementation of its homework policy. The setting of homework was found to be satisfactory in Years 7 and 8, and good in Years 9 to 11. There remain, however, two weaknesses. Firstly, a small number of teachers do not always set homework in line with the published timetable. Secondly, pupils in lower sets do not get as much homework as those in upper sets. The teachers' ongoing assessment of how well the pupils are doing in their lessons, plus the quality of marking, is satisfactory in Years 7 and 8; both are good in Years 9 to 11.

20. Subjects in which two thirds or more of the teaching is good include English, mathematics, science, geography and physical education [PE]. In English this is nevertheless counterbalanced by some less satisfactory teaching at Key Stage 3. This is largely, though not exclusively, due to the enforced use of a number of temporary supply teachers in the course of the autumn term. An additional full-time English specialist has now been appointed for January. The teaching is satisfactory at both key stages in history, music, modern languages, ICT and in religious education. It is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 and in D&T. In business education it is satisfactory and in the GNVQ Leisure and Tourism course it is good. Examples of specific strengths in the teaching include: good questioning in English; good starts to lessons and then good pace in mathematics; good questioning and attention to safety in science, pace and variety of activities in geography; good questioning and very good relationships in physical education. A specific weakness is the teaching of speaking in modern languages.

21. A key strength in the teaching is the very effective preparation of the pupils for both the national tests at the end of Year 9 and for the GCSE examinations. It is the view of the inspection team that this is a very significant factor in the good results being achieved.

22. Features of the best teaching [i.e. in approximately one lesson in five at both key stages] include:

- strong subject knowledge and expertise, plus an enthusiasm for the subject that communicates itself to the pupils;
- particularly skilful questioning;
- an expectation that pupils of all abilities will do well;
- very good relationships and discipline;
- skilful planning that ensures that the lesson proceeds at a brisk pace, with a good variety of tasks and resources.

23. For example, in a PE lesson (boys' football) in Year 8, very good questioning, excellent demonstrations by the teacher and pupils and excellent assessment and feedback to the pupils led to very good progress by all in ball control, communicating with each other and in accuracy of shooting. In a Year 9 English lesson taught to a lower set, the teacher explained very clearly to the pupils the purpose of the lesson, then set a demanding task and simultaneously showed the pupils how to approach this. As a result, the pupils made very good progress in understanding and explaining similes and metaphors. In another Year 9 lesson, this time in science but again to a class of less able pupils, the teacher's calm and patient approach, his enthusiasm and sense of humour all contributed to the pupils' very good understanding of the causes of indigestion and the neutralisation of acids by alkali. In a Year 10 lesson, taught to the group of pupils following the work-related course, the teacher's very good subject knowledge, searching questions and stimulating choice of both tasks and resources enabled the pupils to develop a very good understanding of bacteria and food hygiene and then to conduct their own research into E-coli on the Internet. In a Year 10 drama lesson, the teacher's high expectations of precision in the pupils' responses and his rigour in keeping them to only one-and-a-half minutes performance time helped them to understand very well the role of increasing and decreasing pace in a dramatic scene.

24. In the less satisfactory teaching seen, the main characteristics were difficulty in setting sufficiently challenging tasks for the pupils and also difficulty in managing the pupils' behaviour. About half of the unsatisfactory teaching seen was in Year 8, mainly, but not exclusively, to lower groups. In a history lesson in that year, for example, there was a lack of structure to the lesson and a lack of challenge in the questioning of the pupils. As a result few made discernible gains in understanding the causes of the English Civil War. In a D&T lesson in the same year, in which the teacher was outside his own D&T specialism, difficulties in controlling the class as the lesson progressed meant that a significant number of the pupils did not participate sufficiently. A lack of subject knowledge and confidence adversely affected the learning in a small number of lessons in English, geography, history and German.

25. The pupils with special educational needs (SEN) are taught well in both key stages, and consequently they learn well and make good progress. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills to these pupils is good in English and mathematics respectively; it is satisfactory across the other subjects. In the best teaching the teachers make effective use of individual education plans (IEPs) in their planning, set challenging tasks, use questioning skilfully, and give extensive and appropriate praise. For example, in a literacy lesson the teacher set the pupils a very demanding task of sequencing a set of sentences to form part of a story. This required a sophisticated range of reading skills and some pupils found the task extremely difficult. However, the teacher recognised this and, by asking direct and

answerable questions to those pupils who were struggling the most, helped them to maintain their effort, and ensured that they could complete the task successfully.

26. In the small number of lessons to individual pupils or small groups, the teaching was good. The teacher was well briefed, focused on the key objectives of pupils' individual education plans (IEPs), maintained high pace, and used her own enthusiasm to sustain the pupil's effort. This overcame the sometimes repetitive nature of the exercise provided and the pupil made good progress.

27. Individual education plans are effective in supporting teachers with their planning and teaching. They have clear targets and provide helpful advice to staff on approaches to adopt. In the best teaching, teachers used these carefully in their planning to focus the work for the class appropriately and to ensure a range of suitable materials were available to the pupils.

28. Learning support assistants provide effective in-class support for pupils with special educational needs. For example, in a science lesson the learning support assistant helped a small group of pupils to take and record the temperature of the water in an experiment. This was carried out sensitively and ensured that the pupils were able to complete the experiment successfully and to keep up with the rest of the class. In a small minority of lessons the assistants were less effective as they seemed unsure of their role in the class and did not always take the initiative in supporting pupils.

29. Support from learning support assistants in withdrawal classes is generally good, especially when the reading programme does not limit the opportunities for learning. In the best examples, the assistants showed their enthusiasm, found opportunities to build on the core programme with more interesting and relevant tasks and created a good working atmosphere.

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

30. The school has worked hard to develop its curriculum to ensure it meets the needs of all pupils. It makes a good contribution to the standards achieved and prepares pupils well for the next stage in their education and for adult life.

31. The curriculum provides appropriate breadth to the pupils' learning. At Key Stage 3, drama, ICT and literacy are taught to all pupils as well as the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. In Years 8 and 9, a second foreign language, German, is made available for approximately 35 per cent of pupils. At Key Stage 4, GCSE Business Studies and General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) in Leisure and Tourism and in ICT are offered as options, and three separate sciences, as well as double science, in addition to the other subjects taught at Key Stage 3. A good personal and social education (PSE) programme is provided throughout the school. The course is well co-ordinated and resourced and includes an imaginative school-based citizenship award. The balance of the curriculum was criticised in the last inspection. Specifically, the report indicated that the time for religious education and mathematics was insufficient at Key Stage 4. The overall balance in the curriculum is now good. The time for religious education has been substantially increased since, and is now just adequate to meet the demands of the local Agreed Syllabus for religious education. The school has recently increased (from 10 per cent to 11.5 per cent) the time given to mathematics at Key Stage 4. This is still below average in comparison with schools nationally, though this is not having a negative effect on standards. The provision of fieldwork in geography, which was also a weakness in the last inspection, has improved.

32. Good provision is made for a small number of pupils in Year 10 who lack motivation in a number of subjects or who are low attainers. It consists of a half-day link with Farnborough College in the Autumn Term working on a range of work-based options followed by work experience in the next two terms to explore individual vocational interests. In school the pupils work on basic certificates relating to such topics as health and safety and basic food hygiene.

33. The planning in subjects is generally good. The curriculum meets statutory requirements except in the provision of design and technology in Year 11. With the addition of a new workshop for the subject, this omission has been rectified and design and technology is now available for all in the current Year 10. There are some weaknesses in the timetabling of classes and teachers in some subjects. For example, in modern languages a number of classes have more than one teacher. Where the co-ordination between the teachers is not strong this affects the continuity in pupils' learning, and hence, their rate of progress. In mathematics, five classes have two lessons in a single day, which results in longer than normal periods without a mathematics lesson and affects the ability of some pupils to remember work done in the previous lesson.

34. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good overall. All the curricular requirements of statements of special educational need are met. These pupils receive effective support. Considerable attention is given to the development of literacy skills through the in-class support by learning support assistants and through some small group provision when pupils are withdrawn from lessons. Most of the work done in withdrawal sessions is effective in helping pupils make gains in reading and writing. The over-reliance on a commercial scheme constrains the teaching and limits the learning of some pupils. Pupils with special needs also receive attention to their difficulties in reading and writing through the literacy lessons to which all pupils at Key Stage 3 have access. The special needs pupils' individual education plans are clear, relevant and up to date. They are made available to all teachers, and are used particularly well in English in planning to meet the specific needs.

35. The school is beginning to extend the curriculum for more able pupils, including the talented and gifted. This is at an early stage of development and has yet to have a significant impact on standards.

36. The provision for the teaching of literacy is good in English and satisfactory across subjects; in some subjects, i.e. geography, art and religious education, it is good. The separate literacy lesson provided in Years 7, 8 and 9 is carefully planned to build on the work done in the National Literacy Strategy at Key Stage 2, using the idea of a quick whole-class starter activity, followed by group activities and plenary. This initiative is relatively new (since September 2000) and plans to link the programme more closely to the skills the pupils need in their various subjects are appropriate. Greater challenge in some of the activities is also required, particularly for able pupils who already have a good grasp of language.

37. The provision for numeracy is good in mathematics. Across the curriculum, number work, algebraic, spatial and data-handling skills are developed although opportunities to develop numeracy skills are at times missed. Appropriately, a detailed survey of how numeracy can be developed further across the curriculum is planned to be undertaken later this year.

38. Provision for information and communications technology (ICT) is much improved since the time of the last inspection. It is now taught as a separate subject in all years, with an accredited course at Key Stage 4, as well the option of GNVQ ICT. However, a significant weakness remains in the provision of opportunities for the pupils to apply their skills in the other subjects that they are studying. In many subjects, the provision for ICT is either

insufficiently developed, i.e. in English, science, history, geography and design and technology, or unsatisfactory, as in music and art, for instance. Provision is satisfactory in mathematics, physical education and modern languages and good in Business Studies.

39. The provision of extra-curricular and enrichment activities is very good. It includes a varied programme of inter-house and school sporting events and competitions, involvement in 'Superschools' with national athletes, visits to national events and to the USA in physical education, enhancement lessons and masterclasses in mathematics, book weeks and visits to the theatre in English, a science club and visits to the Natural History Museum, the Science Museum and the Royal Institute Science Lectures. A 'Get Real' after-school study skills course is also offered in Year 11. In addition, there is a scrabble club, design and technology competition, a British Aerospace model-making competition, trips to London shows for drama and involvement in the national Rock Challenge. The drama department also makes a biennial trip to Greece where pupils perform in the ancient Greek and Roman amphitheatres. Extra-curricular provision for music is satisfactory. There is a school choir and pupils play in a number of instrumental groups. However, more opportunities to participate in musical events could be provided.

40. The provision for careers education and guidance is satisfactory. Careers education forms part of the PSHE programme and there is a good structured approach to business links. For example, an Industry Day introduces pupils to a range of employers and Year 10 pupils are well prepared for the world of work through the work experience programme. Pupils are taught to make good use of resources in the careers library and are offered helpful guidance from the careers advice service.

41. The school's partnership with the community is very good. These links have a beneficial impact on the pupils' academic and personal development. The school provides pupils with a very good range of trips and residential visits which enrich the curriculum. The school benefits from the joint-use facilities on the campus and has developed good links with support agencies. The premises are let for both commercial and community use. For example, pupils are invited to participate in rehearsals for a military band which uses the hall. The grounds become a car park during the air show raising considerable funds for the school. The school has developed strong links with local employers. The pupils benefit from industrial 'coaches' and good quality work placements. They raise funds for charity and some are elected to the local Youth Council.

42. Overall, the school has developed sound links with its partner institutions. There are good links with local primary schools to ensure that the transition from one stage of education to the next is as smooth as possible. There are appropriate links with local colleges and representatives are invited into school to talk with Year 11 pupils. The pupils on the work related learning programme benefit from valuable placements at local colleges.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

43. Although the school has no overall policy for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, provision is good.

44. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. In religious education the pupils study important questions of meaning such as how life began, life after death and the existence of God. Collective worship involves the use of reflection time two mornings a week and is well received by pupils and staff. The observed acts of worship were skilfully led and make an important contribution to the pupils' moral development. In science, the pupils study endangered species and the mysteries of an expanding universe. In other subjects there are insufficient opportunities for reflection.

45. The provision for moral development is very good. In history, the pupils study issues of slavery, war and censorship and work on the Holocaust. In science, they debate issues related to genetically modified food, 'designer babies' and the creation of 'super-races'. In science club, the pupils develop awareness in looking after animals. In drama, an excellent lunchtime club effectively highlighted the work of Amnesty International. In religious education, the pupils explore human rights, environmental issues, medical ethics, making moral choices and issues of poverty and injustice. In physical education, they develop a strong sense of fair play and sportsmanship.

46. The provision for pupils' social development is also very good. The school supports a high number and wide range of charities, actively involving year and tutor groups. The School Council has considered a number of important social issues and provided valuable opportunities to exercise responsibility. The school's recent rewards and praises policy has had a positive impact on the pupils' attitudes and behaviour. In many subjects, such as English, drama, science, history and ICT, the pupils work effectively in pairs and groups. Their social development is enhanced by a rich variety of trips and extra-curricular projects such as Rock Challenge.

47. The provision for cultural development is satisfactory. In religious education the pupils explore cultural aspects of Buddhism, Christianity and Judaism but a lack of visits and visitors means some opportunities are missed. In history, they consider multi-cultural issues and in the dance element of physical education the pupils explore aspects of African and Maori dance. In art and music, however, there are missed opportunities, e.g. visits and exploring other cultures (including those represented by pupils in the school) to promote the pupils' cultural awareness.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

48. The school provides good educational and personal support for its pupils. It is effective in fulfilling its aim to be "a well-ordered community within a caring environment". The school's pastoral system is effective in providing a good support mechanism for pupils' welfare. Procedures for monitoring and supporting the pupils' personal development are good. The pupils are valued by staff and continuity of care is enhanced by form tutors remaining with their tutor groups during the pupils' five years in school. Heads of year and the assistant headteacher with pastoral responsibility work well with pupils to overcome academic or personal problems. The school arranges regular multi-agency meetings and values the support given by these professionals.

49. The school has an ethos of 'not giving up' on its pupils and it has been highly successful in its aim to reduce the number of pupils who are permanently and temporarily excluded from school. The pupils who have become disaffected or are underachieving are given very good support through structured programmes such as 'Coaching for success' and work-related learning. All Year 11 pupils are offered a mentor to help them reach their full potential in GCSE examinations.

50. The school has good procedures to ensure the pupils' welfare, health and safety. Arrangements for child protection are satisfactory. An assistant headteacher is the designated member of staff with responsibility for child protection and carries out his duties effectively. Although all staff receive a copy of the school's detailed policy on child protection, more could be done to raise their basic awareness. The arrangements for first aid are very good. Three members of staff are qualified in first aid and most staff have received basic training. The full-time nurse co-ordinates first aid and is based adjacent to the well-equipped medical room. Pupils who are ill or injured receive good care and attention. The school generally pays due attention to health and safety. The health and safety policy is very brief and is under review. The teachers ensure that the pupils understand and minimise risks,

particularly in subjects such as physical education and science. Some minor health and safety concerns were brought to the attention of the school during the inspection. These included the need to ensure that the testing of electrical appliances is kept up to date and the unsafe position of an extraction pipe in the timber preparation room.

51. The school's procedures for monitoring and improving behaviour are good and the school operates as an orderly community. The school has consulted with pupils and staff in drawing up a new behaviour policy which emphasises the rewarding of good behaviour. Rewards and sanctions are generally effective and the ethos of good behaviour is reinforced in assemblies and by the good example of adults working in the school. Most teachers have established clear classroom routines to encourage pupils to behave well. In some lessons, particularly those involving some lower sets in Year 8, some teachers struggle to maintain satisfactory discipline. The procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are good. The school has a clear anti-bullying policy and clear anti-bullying statements are published in the pupils' planners. Parents and pupils say that incidents of anti-social behaviour are dealt with on the same day as they are reported.

52. The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. The school follows up unexplained absences and there are good links with the Educational Welfare Officer. The school nurse carefully monitors pupils who are poor attenders and makes early contact with home if they are absent.

53. The school's procedures for assessing the pupils' progress are satisfactory in most subjects at Key Stage 3. The pupils are very aware of the National Curriculum levels they are working at in English, mathematics and science. The teachers' assessments against the levels are, however, too generous in history, ICT and in music. They are also too generous in religious education. At Key Stage 4, assessment in relation to the requirements of the GCSE and GNVQ courses is generally good. The school regularly monitors the pupils' performance through the termly reviews. This information is shared with parents. The school is now developing a comprehensive database of statistics about the attainment of each pupil through each year. This information is being used well in mathematics and science but as yet is not embedded in the procedures of the other subjects.

54. The school fully complies with the SEN Code of Practice. It has adopted a comprehensive system for the identification and assessment of pupils with SEN, involving both whole-school screening and an appropriate range of diagnostic tests. These have been used rigorously and consistently to identify which pupils, and to assess their needs. The results of the assessments have been used well to develop effective individual education plans (IEPs).

55. Statutory requirements for provision outlined in Statements of Special Educational Needs are met well. Statements are up to date and identified actions are fully implemented. Additional staffing is used appropriately and effectively. Pupils, other than those disapplied in Year 10, have access to the full curriculum. Annual reviews of progress are exceptionally thorough and comprehensive, using an extensive range of assessment feedback, including information from parents and the pupil.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

56. The parents' views of the school are generally positive. They feel that the teaching is good and that their children like school. Parents say that their children are expected to work hard and are making good progress. They are pleased with the leadership and management of the school and say that the staff are very approachable. A significant minority of parents would like the school to work more closely with parents. They say that they would like more

information about what their children are studying and how they are getting on. Some parents have concerns about homework and the behaviour of some pupils in Year 8.

57. The school's links with its parents and carers are good and reflect the findings of the previous report. Although 20 per cent of the parents who returned the questionnaire stated that the school did not work closely with parents, the inspection team does not share these views. The school invites parents to partnership meetings which focus on topics such as 'lads and dads' reading, mentoring and target setting. These sessions are informative and allow parents to discuss issues in an open debate.

58. The impact of the parents' involvement in the work of the school is satisfactory and the school wants to encourage more parents to contribute to its life. Parent governors are very supportive of the school and help to shape its future. For example, a parent governor had concerns about homework. She undertook an audit of the work set and this resulted in the school drawing up a homework policy. The Parent-Teacher Association works hard to raise considerable sums of money to enhance educational provision as well as organising social events.

59. The quality of the information which the school provides to parents is good. New parents receive good information through meetings and a prospectus, which is comprehensive and readable. The annual governors' report is also very informative. However, nearly a quarter of the parents who returned the questionnaires stated that they did not get enough information about their children's progress. The inspection team's judgement is that the pupils' annual reports are broadly satisfactory. Progress reviews and consultations with tutors and subject teachers provide parents with additional opportunities throughout the school year to discuss their children's progress. The parents receive good information about the topics their children will be studying in Year 7 and in mathematics. Some parents said that they would like to be better informed by the school, for example more frequent newsletters and notification every time their children move sets. The inspection team agrees that more could be done in these areas.

60. The parents' contribution to their children's learning is sound. Most parents view and sign the student planner and some use it as an effective means of contact between home and school. The involvement of parents whose children have special educational needs is very good. Most parents attend the annual reviews and their opinions are valued and used in the review.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

61. The overall quality of leadership and management in the school is very good. It makes a positive contribution to the standards being achieved and to the good rate of progress by most pupils in their time at the school. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. He has had a significant impact on raising expectations and in ensuring that the nature of the school's intake, the below average attainment on entry and the considerable movement in and out of pupils are not seen as insuperable barriers to the achievement of above average standards.

62. The headteacher, ably supported by the senior management team and by the very recently seconded acting deputy head, provides very strong leadership. This is characterised by very clear direction for the work of the school, with a very strong and appropriate emphasis on continuous improvement of the teaching. Both the headteacher and the senior management team have been notably successful in maintaining clear direction at a time of considerable discontinuity in the senior team. They have a very good awareness of the school's strengths, weaknesses and challenges. The ongoing long-term illness of the sole deputy head has meant that the headteacher has had to carry a

considerable burden in the course of the current term. In the previous school year his secondment to set up an Educational Action Zone in another part of the county added further to the discontinuity. The one adverse effect of this discontinuity has been the management of the change to more refined grouping of pupils by ability in Years 7 and 8. The result of this has been to concentrate a lot of the behavioural problems in Year 8 in one large class, which a number of teachers have then found difficult to cope with. Also, other teachers have not adapted sufficiently in setting sufficiently challenging work, especially for the more able in these years. The school has, however, recognised the problem and is planning to regroup some of the pupils and to add an additional teacher into Year 8 from January.

63. A major strength of the management procedures in the school is the well-embedded system for monitoring, evaluating and improving the teaching. This is focused on both individual teachers and the work of subjects as a whole. Heads of department and heads of year carry out and record informal classroom evaluations each week. Each term the senior managers undertake a systematic evaluation of two subjects. This involves an intensive programme of observation of lessons, the scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with the teachers. It has led to significant improvements in the teaching of geography and of design and technology. Currently, and appropriately, it is focusing on the two departments that have been seen as underperforming, history and modern languages. A third strand to improving teaching is the introduction of a programme of "peer coaching", in which individual teachers observe and feedback to one another. Already trialled in several subjects, it is to be extended further from January. Another significant feature of the school's focus on improving teaching is the appointment of one of the senior team with the specific role of "teaching coach".

64. The major challenge that the school faces is that of the recruitment and retention of teachers. The effect of high house prices has created difficulties in appointing and holding on to a sufficient quantity of specialist subject teachers to cover the full curriculum in all years. In addition, the school's very good procedures for the professional development of staff have enabled many to move on to promotion elsewhere. In response to this challenge the headteacher and governors are actively reviewing their pay policy to provide specific incentives to new teachers joining the school.

65. The school's forward planning is very good. Staff and governors have been fully involved in the formulation of the development plan. The key priorities are appropriate: inclusion, raising achievement, especially at GCSE, and making better use of data in setting targets for pupils. Forward planning is good in most subjects. The best subject plans, for example in English, mathematics, science, D&T and physical education, contain precise and challenging targets for improvement. There are good links in all the subject plans with the key priorities of the main school plan.

66. In addition to the impact on expectations, the management of the school has had a positive impact on the good improvement since the last inspection. There has been very good improvement in the Key Stage 3 results. Performance at GCSE has improved in geography, mathematics, physical education and in design and technology. The overall quality of the teaching has improved. The number of pupils excluded has decreased considerably. Also, the school's procedures for evaluating its own performance are now very good. The school has a clear capacity for further improvement.

67. In respect of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection, the school has made very good progress in its provision for pupils with special educational needs. The amount of time for religious education has increased. The overall provision for ICT has improved considerably but weaknesses remain in providing sufficient opportunities for the pupils to apply their skills in a range of subjects. The quality of teaching in lessons taught by non-specialists has remained a problem, despite good procedures to support these teachers.

The school has not found a practical means of complying fully with the requirements for a daily act of collective worship.

68. The overall quality of management and leadership in subjects is good. It is very good in mathematics and science. It is no coincidence that these are the two subjects which have managed best to overcome difficulties in supporting non-specialist (mathematics) or weaker teachers (science in the last two years). Leadership and management are good in physical education, geography, English and in special educational needs. In all these areas this has a direct impact on the overall good achievement of the pupils. Management is sound in all other subjects with the exception of history, in which satisfactory teaching compensates for weaknesses in planning.

69. The leadership and management in the area of support for pupils with special educational needs are good. The systems for assessing the pupils, for the annual reviews of their progress and for the deployment of the learning support assistants are all thorough and effective. Good communications ensure that the co-ordination of support through the school is effective. One relative weakness is that the work of the learning support assistants is not monitored systematically. Although they generally provide good support, on occasions they are not used as well as they could be.

70. Governors have worked well with the headteacher in shaping the direction of the school. They have a clear view of their role and a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the school. They have ensured that legal requirements are met with two exceptions: collective worship and the provision of design and technology for all in Year 11.

71. The school makes very good use of its financial resources. Its spending is closely related to its educational priorities, for example in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching, the appointment of an assistant headteacher as teaching coach, the provision of equipment for ICT, and the planned increase in learning support assistants given the increase in identified special educational needs. Effective use of new technologies is made in administration, in financial planning and, increasingly, in the analysis of data on the pupils' performance. Financial controls are good, which is particularly important given the constant changes in the number of pupils on role. The school had a deficit of £39,000 at end of the previous financial year. The planned halving of this in the current financial year, while maintaining average class sizes overall, is appropriate. The school has also been successful in gaining extra funding for the school, for example over £40,000 for providing carparking space to British Aerospace during the Farnborough Air Show. The principles of "best value" are well understood and applied, for example in the negotiation of contracts with suppliers and in comparisons of spending with other similar schools. Good use is made of specific grants such as those for pupils with special educational needs and for the training of staff.

72. The school's accommodation is adequate overall. There is now good accommodation for the teaching of design and technology, ICT and physical education. The accommodation for special educational needs is very good. A number of improvements have been made which have had a positive impact on the quality of the pupils' learning. Since the last inspection the school has created new ICT rooms, which have improved the pupils' access to computers. For music, the school has made good improvement to the main teaching room though some lessons are taught in less than adequate non-specialist rooms. The food room has been refurbished to ensure full compliance with health and hygiene requirements and further improvements in design and technology have enhanced the pupils' learning. There are, however, insufficient science laboratories, which continues to restrict opportunities for experimental work. Plans to refurbish the existing science accommodation and build at least one new laboratory during 2001 have been approved and work is due to start shortly.

73. The provision of resources is satisfactory in the majority of subjects. The quantity and quality have improved since the last inspection, especially in religious education, geography and ICT where recent expenditure has resulted in a very favourable ratio of computers to pupils. However, there are current shortages in design and technology (consumable materials plus specific shortages in textiles, resistant materials and graphics) and in art (books on artists and materials for three-dimensional work). The number of books in the library is low in comparison with national averages due to recent flooding, which destroyed one fifth of the book stock. The library has good links with a number of subjects, especially art, English, geography and science, but other curriculum links are less developed. The library is well used before school and at lunchtime although the present opening hours restrict after-school use to just one night in the week.

74. Most of the staff are very competent in the subjects that they teach. Nevertheless, and despite the efforts of the headteacher and governors, at the time of the inspection the school did not have sufficient subject specialists to ensure full coverage in all years. This is having most effect on the teaching in Years 7 and 8 where some lessons taught by non-specialists, for example in English, geography, history, modern languages and in D&T, was judged to be unsatisfactory. In contrast, the small amount of non-specialist teaching in mathematics is satisfactory and in science it is good. In English, disruptions caused by a combination of circumstances, including being unable to immediately replace teachers who have left and some temporary and non-specialist teaching, have had an adverse effect on the learning of pupils, particularly in Years 7 and 8. This situation has been addressed by the recent appointment of an additional specialist teacher to the department.

75. Procedures for staff development are very good. An appropriate balance between whole-school, subject and individual needs has been achieved. The procedures include innovative approaches, like the peer coaching and the regular opportunities for middle managers to take on senior management roles for a defined period of time. Overall, the school's procedures have been successful in preparing colleagues for promotion and in improving the teaching, for example in geography and D&T. The award of Investors in People status was well deserved. Systems for the review of teachers' performance are very good, as are procedures for the induction of new staff. The non-teaching staff are well qualified and make a major contribution to the work of the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

76. In order to improve further the standard of education provided, senior managers and governors should:

(1) Improve the overall quality of the teaching in Year 8, by:

- reviewing the overall balance in the experience and subject expertise of the teachers teaching in this year compared to the other years;
- helping the teachers generally to cope better with the new setting arrangements in the way in which they match the work to the pupils' different needs;
- provide further support in the management of the pupils' behaviour.

See paragraphs 5, 13, 17-19, 24, 62, 78 and 81.

(2) Improve the provision of ICT across subjects, by:

- ensuring that each subject plans effectively to give all pupils sufficient challenging experience to support their learning in the subject;
- monitoring that this is happening on a regular basis;
- improving assessment.

See paragraphs 9, 38, 97,106, 109, 117, 123-4 and 142.

Other weaknesses, which are less serious but which should be considered for inclusion in the school's action plan, include: achieving greater consistency in the setting of homework (paragraph 19); improving resources in art and in design and technology (paragraphs 73, 102 and 111); further improving the standards of boys in the middle sets in English (paragraphs 77 and 84); improving assessment procedures in history, music and religious education (paragraphs 53, 123, 135 and 152).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	192
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	44

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	18	33	40	7	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	794	
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	32	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs	3	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	318	

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	18

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	54
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	78

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	91.7
National comparative data	91.0*

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	1.1*

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year. * 1998/99

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	85	65	150

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	66	64	55
	Girls	61	49	39
	Total	127	113	94
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	85 (64)	76 (63)	67 (52)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	47 (24)	57 (41)	33 (18)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	54	68	67
	Girls	53	51	51
	Total	107	119	118
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	71 (65)	80 (80)	77 (69)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24 (35)	50 (40)	38 (32)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	81	91	172

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	33	74	78
	Girls	49	89	89
	Total	82	163	167
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	48 (47)	95 (96)	97 (99)
	National	49 (46)	91 (91)	95 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	40 (39)
	National	37 (38)

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	2
Black – other	1
Indian	
Pakistani	6
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	2
White	772
Any other minority ethnic group	11

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	13	1
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	43.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	379

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24.8
Key Stage 4	22.6

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	2,077,182
Total expenditure	2,132,664
Expenditure per pupil	2,592
Balance brought forward from previous year	18,881
Balance carried forward to next year	-36,601

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	794
Number of questionnaires returned	265

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	37	51	9	2	2
My child is making good progress in school.	36	53	7	2	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	22	58	10	2	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	56	15	7	3
The teaching is good.	21	65	6	1	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	21	49	19	4	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	44	45	6	2	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	52	41	3	2	3
The school works closely with parents.	23	51	18	2	6
The school is well led and managed.	37	50	4	2	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	32	53	6	2	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	51	8	1	14

Other issues raised by parents

Some parents indicated that they would like more frequent newsletters and more information about setting.

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

ENGLISH

77. By the time pupils leave the school, standards, which were below average on entry, are above the national average. This overall picture, however, masks considerable differences between the standards of boys and girls. In 2000, there was a significant increase in the A* - C grades in GCSE English language achieved by girls, taking them above the national average. Boys' results declined slightly on those of 1999, bringing the difference between boys and girls to 27 per cent. The national gap is 15 per cent. In English literature, the 2000 results improved on those of 1999, which were well below average. They remain below average, largely owing to the weaker performance of boys. Nonetheless, given that standards are below average on entry to the school, the inspection found that the majority of boys achieve well in relation to their prior attainment in language, whilst girls achieve very well. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection showed that the most able pupils (both boys and girls) have a wide vocabulary and a sophisticated command of language, which they use to write confidently in a range of styles. The very good marking of their work by teachers and the provision of targets for improvement make a real difference to the quality of the subsequent work of these and other pupils. It is the standards achieved by boys in middle (and some lower) sets which could be further improved. Weaknesses relate to sketchy note-taking, insufficient care with presentation and a less sure ability to argue a case in writing, a key requirement for GCSE.

78. At Key Stage 3, the results in the National Curriculum assessments in 2000 increased very significantly on those of the previous year, taking the results of both boys and girls to well above average. Girls also more than doubled the proportion of higher levels attained. The improvement was achieved through very good teaching and very focused work to address weaknesses and meet the test requirements. These included: the targeting of support to pupils with the potential to achieve a Level 5; the provision of a mock test to allow pupils to experience the reality of 'exam conditions'; detailed analysis of weaknesses identified through that process; and support for individual pupils. Work seen during the inspection showed the most able pupils in Year 9 (both boys and girls) to be making very good progress. They have a sure grasp of language and are producing high quality work, demonstrating the ability to analyse and to draw inferences and conclusions in relation to the texts studied. Their achievement at the key stage is good although that of some groups, in Year 8 particularly, has been adversely affected by disrupted staffing (i.e. lack of continuity caused by difficulties in replacing teachers who left during the school year).

79. The standards of reading and writing and of speaking and listening are good. ICT skills in relation to word processing are generally sound. However, the use of ICT could be planned more systematically than at present. The majority of pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.

80. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. The expertise, knowledge and overall teaching of the specialist English teachers is very good. At Key Stage 4, very good attention to the requirements of the GCSE examinations and thorough understanding of the texts being studied add an extra dimension of rigour in the teachers' expectations. The provision of the GCSE grade criteria and advice on how to meet them really concentrate the pupils' minds. For lower-attaining groups, 'templates' are used to help less skilled writers structure and shape their work to good effect. Pupils with special needs, as well as others, are thus enabled to develop and extend their writing. At Key Stage 3, the teaching in Year 9 is very good, providing a good balance across reading, writing and oral activities. In the best lessons, a good pace is maintained and the teachers' expectations

of the pupils' thinking and the quality of their work are high. In a very good lesson on George Eliot's 'The Mill on the Floss', the teacher used effective questioning, based on the pupils' research about the author, to develop their understanding of the attitudes, customs and values of the time, including why the author used a male pseudonym. Later, pupils assumed the parts of characters in the novel to answer questions from other pupils in the class; this was a very effective device deepening insight about feelings and motivation, thereby increasing the pupils' understanding and providing for lively classroom interaction. The teachers are well informed about the learning needs of pupils with special needs (SEN). The learning targets in the individual education plans of SEN pupils are very well incorporated into the planning and teaching of the best lessons.

81. There is, nevertheless, a significant proportion of unsatisfactory teaching and learning at Key Stage 3. This is mainly found in lessons in Years 7 and 8. For example, where the teacher who started with a particular class has left, the pupils' attitudes have declined. Temporary, and sometimes non-specialist, teachers have not established clear expectations and work habits. A separate weekly literacy lesson for each of Years 7, 8 and 9 is a new feature in the provision this academic year. Care has been taken to build on the work done on literacy in primary schools. Where these lessons are taught by specialist English teachers, who extend the quality of thinking required of pupils, they are good or very good. When taught by non-specialists this element is missing and the teaching is at times unsatisfactory, largely because it is not stretching the average and higher attainers. Plans to improve the quality of the literacy provision, by tying it more closely to the work in other subjects, are appropriate. At the same time, another look should be taken at the level of challenge provided in the programme for the more able pupils.

82. The teaching has a direct impact on the attitudes and behaviour of the pupils, which are good, and often very good. In most lessons, the pupils respect their teachers, have very good relationships with them and want to learn. Boys and girls work well on collaborative tasks and there is a good atmosphere throughout. Where attitudes are less positive, they arise from pupils who feel somewhat disenchanted by the lack of continuity in their teaching (as indicated above). A very small proportion of pupils, at both key stages, have poor learning habits and negative attitudes to school.

83. The leadership and management of the department is good and has a positive impact on the standards achieved. The monitoring and evaluation of the teaching and pupils' work is thorough. This process led to the swift identification of, and action to tackle, unsatisfactory teaching last term, as well as good efforts to minimise the negative effects of disrupted teaching. Good detail and guidance is provided in units of work at Key Stage 3, although they would benefit from further examples and resources (particularly for non-specialist teachers), to ensure that all pupils are clearly challenged. Pupils who enter the school out of the normal academic year are quickly settled. Setting targets to improve pupils' work is well-established and effective.

84. Although there is not a clear upward trend in the GCSE results since the last inspection, the department has maintained the overall good progress of pupils in relation to their attainment on entry. Girls' GCSE results have improved. There is a need, now, to support and target boys in middle, and some lower, sets more systematically, to ensure they reach their full potential. Clear improvements have been made in the monitoring and evaluation of the teaching and in the planning at Key Stage 3.

85. Drama makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' oral and performance skills. At both key stages, they are expected to demonstrate and evaluate critically their own and others' work, aiming for precision and accuracy. In an excellent lesson at Key Stage 4, the teacher used his very good specialist knowledge to provide rigorous parameters for pupils in tracking and identifying the impact of pace on a scene. He had established excellent

rapport with the group and they wholly enjoyed reaching for the quality he expected. Very good extra-curricular extension is also provided. For instance, the department participates annually in the national 'Rock Challenge' competition, a drama-dance extravaganza involving 120 pupils. It has won the local heats in the last four years and come second and third nationally. The department also undertakes a biennial visit to Greece where pupils perform in the ancient Greek amphitheatres of Epidaurus, Mycenae, and Corinth.

MATHEMATICS

86. The results in the 2000 Key Stage 3 tests were well above national averages. The results have risen over the past three years and there is no difference between the attainment of girls and boys. The pupils' attainment on entry to the school was below average, so that achievement in Key Stage 3 is very good. Results in the 2000 GCSE mathematics examination were in line with national averages. The results have also risen over the past three years, though the number of pupils achieving the higher A* and A grades is below average and girls perform slightly better than boys. On the basis of their Key Stage 3 test scores, pupils did better in the 2000 GCSE examinations than pupils in schools with similar Key Stage 3 results so that achievement in Key Stage 4 is good. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress at both key stages.

87. From work seen in lessons and work samples, the standards of the oldest pupils in Key Stage 3 (those currently in Year 9) are well above average. Standards of the oldest pupils in Key Stage 4 (those currently in Year 11) are above average. This is so in all key aspects of the subject. In Year 7, there is, however, some repetition of work already covered in the primary school, which initially holds back the pupils' progress. There are considerable strengths in the pupils' attainment. For example, in Key Stage 3, the pupils can identify different types of triangles and calculate the areas of composite shapes. They draw bar charts and, in a Year 9 lesson, identify fractions, percentages and degrees in a pie chart. In Key Stage 4, the pupils can solve simple equations and work out general terms of a linear sequence. They identify relationships between two variables using scatter graphs and make good use of tree diagrams to solve questions on probability. Higher-attaining pupils can work out the general terms of a quadratic sequence, use vectors to solve geometric problems and find the mean of a group frequency distribution.

88. The quality of teaching and its impact on the pupils' learning and their achievement is good at both key stages. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The majority of the teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and explain things well. As a result the pupils concentrate hard and show an interest in their work. All lessons get off to a prompt start with an interesting variety of lesson starters, such as in a Year 9 lesson where pupils were asked how many seconds there were in ten years. Lesson planning is very thorough. Lessons have very good pace, transitions between activities are handled well and the pupils are clear about how much time they have for each task. The teachers manage the pupils well; relationships are always warm and good humoured. In the majority of lessons, the pupils are encouraged to develop their thinking skills and to apply their knowledge in unfamiliar circumstances. A key factor in the very good results at Key Stage 3 and the good results at GCSE is the teachers' knowledge of the test and examination requirements. This leads to very thorough preparation of the pupils and explains, for example, how above average performance in class has been transferred into well above average results in the tests at Key Stage 3.

89. As a result of good teaching the pupils show interest and enthusiasm for their work. They respond well to challenges and apply intellectual effort to their work when encouraged. In a minority of lessons, the pupils' learning is sound rather than good or very good. This happens when, in some lessons, the teaching does not take account of the full spread of ability and, in other lessons, when there is an overemphasis on rules rather than

understanding. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, the pupils could find the square root of 324 using prime factors but could not explain how the method works. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in class and make good progress. Higher-attaining pupils are appropriately challenged. In a Year 11 lesson, they were invited to derive the formula for the 'sine rule'. They were able to do this with minimum support from the teacher.

90. A number of other factors contribute to the pupils' good achievement. The department's planning documents are very thorough and provide a useful reference document for non-specialist and supply teachers. Curriculum booklets, issued to all pupils, provide an effective link between home and school with useful information on equipment, homework, coursework, examination dates and curriculum content. The provision for literacy is satisfactory. Teachers make good use of technical vocabulary. The provision for ICT is satisfactory, particularly in the use of graphical calculators. In a Year 11 lesson, pupils made very good use of these to investigate graphs of quadratic equations and appreciate how the coefficients affected their shape and position.

91. The effectiveness of strategies for teaching numeracy skills across the curriculum are satisfactory even though there is no whole-school numeracy policy. The pupils' number skills are encouraged in religious education where Year 10 pupils undertook simple calculations to look at poverty in the developing world. Algebraic skills are used in ICT to produce spreadsheets. In science, the pupils use formulae to calculate current and voltage for electrical circuits. They develop their spatial skills in design and technology through accurate measuring of lengths, volumes and weights and they make use of spatial skills in orienteering work for physical education. In science, they use and interpret distance/time and velocity/time graphs to find speed and acceleration. The pupils' data-handling skills are well used in geography, science and in ICT. They make good use of graphs and pie charts in their GCSE physical education coursework and interpret data in testing fitness levels. In religious education, Year 8 pupils use bar graphs accurately in their surveys on religious beliefs. In a Year 11, GNVQ lesson, they were able to create tables of comparative data for comparing mobile phones and their different tariffs.

92. The leadership and management of the subject is very good and is having a significant impact on standards. The head of department provides very clear educational direction and has engendered a strong team spirit among his core team of dedicated and hard-working teachers. The department has introduced a number of successful initiatives, which are now beginning to have a positive impact on improving standards, especially at Key Stage 3. For example, the monitoring and evaluation of the department are well developed and the head of department provides very good support for non-specialist and supply teachers. The department copes admirably with problems surrounding the rapid turnover of staff and the difficulties which the school has in recruiting and retaining suitably qualified mathematics teachers. Much has been done in a short period of time and there is a clear capacity to improve further.

93. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards are now well above national averages in the Key Stage 3 tests. Schemes of work are fully in place and now being appropriately revised to take account of the latest curriculum initiatives.

SCIENCE

94. The pupils' results in the 2000 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were above the national average. This was a clear improvement on the previous three years' test results, when attainment was close to the national average. The current standard of work of the oldest pupils at Key Stage 3 is equally above average. Given their attainment on entry, their achievement, including progress over the key stage and gains in lessons, is good. Currently, however, a substantial part of this good achievement occurs during Year 9;

achievement in Years 7 and 8 is satisfactory. Factors contributing to the good achievement in Year 9 are some very good teaching, and a sharp focus on the requirements of end of Key Stage 3 tests. Factors relating to the slower rate of progress in Years 7 and 8 include discontinuity in the pupils' learning as a result of classes split between more than one teacher and weakness in some lessons in managing the pupils' behaviour.

95. The percentage of pupils attaining GCSE A* to C grades in double award science in 2000 was in line with the national average. There was a slight improvement compared to 1999, in line with the national trend; however, the boys' A* to C grades improved by 10 per cent. The current standard of attainment of the oldest pupils at Key Stage 4 is above the national average. Given the pupils' prior attainment at the end of Year 9, their achievement, including their progress over time, is good. Key factors in this good achievement are some good to very good teaching, particularly in the middle ability groups. The practice of appointing a lead teacher for each class to monitor the pupils' overall progress and the setting of personal targets for pupils have both been effective in assisting the pupils to do well.

96. Standards at Key Stage 3 have improved since the time of the last inspection, when they were in line with national expectations. At Key Stage 4, present standards overall are similar to those reported at the last inspection, but the achievement of boys has improved since then. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress at both key stages.

97. There are specific strengths in the pupils' attainment. At Key Stage 3, the majority of the pupils have a good knowledge of scientific facts. The higher attainers, particularly in Year 9, are developing a good understanding of concepts such as the basic mechanism of inheritance, the use of the pH scale, and factors affecting pressure in gases. At Key Stage 4, the pupils have added to their knowledge and understanding; higher attainers, for example, readily comprehend the concepts of electrolysis and electro-magnetic induction. Throughout Key Stage 3, pupils are learning thoroughly the skills of science investigation. Investigative work is carried out proficiently by the upper and middle ability groups at Key Stage 4; very good written reports are produced. Throughout the school, pupils of all abilities make good use of graphs and charts. The higher attainers are learning competently to apply mathematical principles to science, for example calculating speed in Year 8; and in Year 11, using velocity against time graphs to calculate acceleration. The majority of pupils produce good quality written work and are learning to use scientific vocabulary confidently. A few of the teachers make good use of ICT to support work in science. In the department overall, however, it is insufficiently used.

98. The teaching overall at Key Stage 3 is good. There is some very good teaching in Year 9; in Years 7 and 8 it is generally satisfactory. The teaching at Key Stage 4 is good. The teachers' subject knowledge is very good and they have a good knowledge of the requirements of external examinations at both key stages. They give clear expositions, and in most classes engage pupils' attention, enabling pupils quickly to gain in scientific knowledge and understanding. They skilfully question pupils to encourage them to think through ideas for themselves. In many lessons, particularly in Year 9 and at Key Stage 4, the teachers show enthusiasm, provide challenging tasks and work at a good pace; as a result the pupils' interest is stimulated, they work hard and quickly complete the tasks set. An example of a very good lesson was one on hydraulic braking systems, with middle ability pupils in Year 10. Using a simple demonstration, the teacher methodically questioned pupils about the relationships between force, pressure and surface area. The pupils were challenged by the questions and applied considerable intellectual effort in answering them; as a result, they gained a thorough understanding of hydraulic braking systems, and successfully completed written answers to questions on the topic. The teacher's enthusiasm, brisk pace and his references to everyday science stimulated the pupils' interests and held their full attention to the end of the lesson. Characteristics of the teaching

of the less able pupils includes: patience and perseverance; providing a good range of activities to maintain their concentration; and using a variety of strategies to reinforce factual learning. In a small minority of lessons taught to the youngest pupils, a lack of clarity in the objectives plus some difficulty in managing the pupils' behaviour are factors which hold back the pupils' progress. Homework is set regularly, but some teachers do not consistently follow up the pupils who have not given it in.

99. The leadership and management of the department are very good and make a significant impact on the overall quality of the teaching and the standards attained. There is a strong commitment to raising standards. The head of department analyses past performances thoroughly; monitors ongoing test data; and sets targets for the department's performance at the end of each key stage. A personal target in terms of a National Curriculum level or a GCSE grade is agreed with each pupil and recorded; the pupils, particularly at Key Stage 4, are fully aware of their targets. The head of department also systematically monitors teaching, teachers' planning and pupils' work; any shortcomings are identified and where possible strategies for improvement are implemented. Assessment and recording are good throughout the department. There is, however, insufficient specialist accommodation and what there is is in need of refurbishment. About one fifth of lessons are not taught in laboratories; practical work is thereby restricted, particularly at Key Stage 3. However, work is to begin shortly in constructing at least one additional laboratory. There are two further features that have an impact on the quality of the pupils' learning: there are insufficient specialist resources for use at Key Stage 4, which restricts practical activities at this key stage; and there is also insufficient equipment in the department for ICT.

ART

100. Standards at GCSE fluctuate from year to year. In 1999 a third of the pupils gained either Grade A or A* at GCSE. This represents a high standard. By contrast, in 2000 less than half gained Grade C or above and very few gained the highest grades. This represents a standard below the national average. These fluctuations look set to continue and are directly related to the varying previous attainment of those who choose to study art in Years 10 and 11. Most of the pupils in the current Year 11 are not able to plan and prepare a project without considerable help from their teacher. Their standards so far in completed coursework indicate they will again attain below pupils nationally. Pupils in Year 10 demonstrate higher abilities and many are already producing work that compares favourably with work completed by pupils in Year 11. They draw with confidence, see how they can use the work of artists and designers to inform their own work and demonstrate a willingness to experiment with a range of ideas. Despite these fluctuations in standards most pupils achieve well in Year 10 and satisfactorily in Year 11 given that they have not developed proficient skills by the end of Year 9.

101. Girls perform considerably better than the boys. This is because some boys do not undertake the various processes involved in preparing a project with the necessary care and, as a result, achieve lower standards than they might otherwise do. Whilst some three-dimensional work is of a very high quality, some boys fail to give this aspect of their work sufficient consideration. As a result, they choose to work in areas where they are weaker, for example, not being prepared to experiment beyond paint or pastels. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress.

102. The teaching overall in Years 10 and 11 is sound, with some that is good. The teachers plan carefully and take the pupils through each stage of a project providing them with appropriate support. They endeavour to develop the pupils' skills and understanding so that, by the time they take the final examination, they have sufficient confidence to work unaided. Although there are insufficient books and posters in the department to provide the wealth of information required, what is there is well used to support the pupils' learning.

Pupils are expected to stick to deadlines (a weakness at the time of the last inspection) and work is regularly and accurately marked. Pupils are also told what they need to do to improve. However, whilst projects set are relevant and challenging, there is an overemphasis on second-hand images to start a project rather than requiring pupils to work from direct observations. As a result, some pupils waste considerable time on non-productive decorative collages, which add little to the development of their projects.

103. By the end of Year 9 the pupils attain standards that are below the nationally expected level. The main weakness is in the quality of their drawing from direct observation. Many drawings executed by pupils in Year 9 are tentative and lack form. For example, when they draw bottles, ellipses are poorly executed and few demonstrate that they have an understanding of perspective or of how to use tone and line effectively to enhance their work. Their abilities to work three-dimensionally are also below expectations primarily because there are too few opportunities. Standards attained in other aspects of the subject are higher and broadly in line with expectations. The pupils are introduced to the work of a number of twentieth century artists and from their studies can use information to inform their own work. For example, from studying the work of Dali they produce interesting surrealist paintings from their still-life drawings.

104. There are a number of reasons why the pupils do not attain higher standards. Pupils entering the school in Year 7 have only a rudimentary knowledge of one or two artists, lack confidence when painting and demonstrate the same weaknesses when drawing as pupils in Year 9. They are not working at a standard expected of pupils of this age. Prior to this year the amount of time for the younger pupils was insufficient. In particular, the length of lessons made it difficult to undertake clay work or printmaking. As a result, their achievement over the key stage is judged to be sound. Overall, the teaching at Key Stage 3 is sound and in a number of lessons it is good. However, there are some weaknesses which effect the progress pupils make. For example, the lesson is not always sufficiently challenging, as for example in a Year 7 lesson where the main task was for the pupils to undertake a mundane tracing exercise. When discussing the pupils' work reference is not always made as to why some outcomes are successful and others are not. Consequently, the pupils do not always better understand what they need to do to improve. There are also inconsistencies in the marking of pupils' work. Whilst some marking is accurate, some is too lenient and praise is given to work where there has been little sustained effort. In some of the lessons, where a teacher has limited expertise in art, an inability to manage pupils' behaviour means that pupils make almost no progress.

105. There are several specific strengths in the teaching that have a positive impact on the pupils' learning. Homework is regularly set and is often challenging. It is used to good effect to support the pupils' learning. The materials made available to the pupils are of a high quality. For example, when painting, the pupils are given good quality brushes, paints and paper. The work displayed in the rooms is very well presented and teachers constantly refer to it to show pupils what is expected of them. Lessons are invariably well managed and organised with good support given to individual pupils. The introduction of a series of short unaided tasks at the beginning of each year means that the teachers are now more aware of the pupils' strengths and weaknesses.

106. Most pupils show an enthusiasm for art, both in lessons and when completing homework tasks. However, a minority of pupils, at both key stages, do not work with the necessary dedication and, as a result, make insufficient progress. The department has looked to incorporate opportunities to develop the pupils' literacy skills in art and this is helping to raise their standards when writing about their projects. However, no similar consideration has been given to the development of pupils' skills in using ICT and this is a significant weakness at both key stages.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

107. By the end of Key Stage 3, the pupils achieve standards that are average overall. The achievement of the pupils, including those with special educational needs, is sound over the key stage. They reach standards that are broadly similar to those reported at the time of the last inspection. Standards are highest in electronics and the pupils' knowledge and understanding of most aspects of the subject is good. The pupils make particularly good use of their knowledge and understanding when manufacturing their products and organising how they will do so. However, their designing and graphical skills are generally below average, as insufficient emphasis is placed on these throughout the course. Standards in textiles are low in Year 7 and the pupils have no opportunity to develop their expertise in other years.

108. Not all pupils in Year 11 are taught design and technology. In this respect, the school does not comply with statutory requirements. This shortcoming has been rectified for pupils in the current Year 10, who all study the subject.

109. By the end of Key Stage 4, the pupils who are taught design and technology achieve above average standards, both in class and in their examinations. The pupils' achievement is good over the key stage and during their time at the school. Standards have improved significantly over the past year. In summer 2000, 60 per cent gained A* - C grades in their GCSE examinations compared with 47 per cent in 1999 and 46 per cent in 1998. The standards achieved in 2000 were almost 10 per cent above the national average compared to just below average in the previous two years. Standards are clearly higher than at the time of the last inspection when they were described as "generally matching the national average, with a few achieving beyond this". Girls achieve higher standards than boys by a margin which is just above the national difference. Standards are well above average in graphic products and above average in product design. Pupils make good progress on both courses. Standards in engineering and home economics are below average, yet pupils are currently making sound progress in relation to their ability. There are good examples of computers being used to support the pupils' design work at both key stages. For example, in Year 10, the pupils use computers to design packaging for fast-food. In Year 9 they experiment to find the correct values of components for their electronic timers. However, these are exceptions and overall the pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use computers. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress at Key Stage 3 and good progress at Key Stage 4.

110. The quality of teaching and its impact on the pupils' learning is good at Key Stage 4 and is satisfactory overall at Key Stage 3. The teaching was unsatisfactory in one Year 8 lesson, where the teacher had insufficient control of the class. This resulted in many of the class underachieving as they had not paid sufficient attention to the teacher or concentrated enough on their work. The teachers have good levels of expertise and are committed to helping the pupils do well. In most lessons, they explain what pupils should achieve by the end of the session, thereby enhancing the pupils' motivation and progress. Good support materials provide guidance for the pupils in organising their work and well-managed lessons ensure efficient use of time. At Key Stage 4, good marking and feedback by the teacher ensure that the pupils know how to improve. Where the pupils' progress is particularly good, the pupils are also able to assess their work themselves and identify how to reach a higher grade. For example, in a good graphics lesson, the pupils assessed the work of past students to identify good practice that they could then use to raise the standards of their own work. At Key Stage 3, the pupils' progress is satisfactory. Some lessons at this key stage do not build sufficiently on the learning of previous units of work.

111. There is currently no overall subject leader for all aspects of design and technology. Separate strategic planning and varying classroom and organisational practices have a negative impact on the development of the subject and on the pupils' progress. This is

particularly so at Key Stage 3. Teaching is successfully monitored in food technology but not in the resistant materials courses. Staffing in the department is now satisfactory after a period of considerable change, although there is insufficient expertise in textiles. The accommodation for the subject is now good and has been improved since the last inspection. However, the quality and range of consumable materials is poor, which has a negative impact on the pupils' work. The subject has improved significantly at Key Stage 4 where GCSE courses are generally well taught.

GEOGRAPHY

112. Standards in geography are in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3 and are average at GCSE. Given their below average attainment on entry to the school, this represents good achievement by most pupils. Many less able pupils, including those with special educational needs, are achieving particularly well in relation to their ability by the end of Year 9 and at GCSE.

113. Pupils make good progress from Years 7 to 9. Nearly all pupils are working at appropriate levels for their age and ability. In Year 7 less able pupils can identify features of the weather and their effect on people's lives. Many pupils are beginning to describe simple geographical patterns. However, the most able pupils in Year 7 are limited in their progress by the nature of the tasks set and have yet to complete more extended written work. In one good Year 8 lesson, as a result of good teacher input, pupils were reaching a good standard in describing and explaining the pattern of population distribution in Italy. By the end of Year 9 most pupils have acquired good geographical skills and are able to understand geographical issues such as the impact of human development on the Brazilian rainforest. Their geographical knowledge of places has developed well from quite a low level on entry to the school. The less able pupils are developing a sound knowledge of places in Europe and the UK. More able pupils are beginning to understand the complex issues surrounding the use of land in the rainforest.

114. The pupils in Years 10 and 11 are now doing as well as they should be and standards are improving. At GCSE most pupils are developing the appropriate level of geographical skills, knowledge and understanding. The less able pupils are able to use basic mapwork and atlas skills and interpret simple graphs and diagrams. Most pupils make thorough and detailed notes. More able Years 10 and 11 pupils are able to explain, in detail, the advantages and disadvantages of tourism in a developing country such as Kenya.

115. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. Because of the focused, well-structured nature of the teaching, pupils with special educational needs are suitably challenged in lessons. In a very good Year 8 lesson, less able pupils were able to describe the lifestyle of a person in Brazil and the features of the environment which give the region its character.

116. Two specialist teachers ensure that almost all the teaching in geography is good and some very good teaching was seen. As a result, the response of pupils is invariably good. Pupils settle quickly, listen carefully, follow instructions and attempt to answer questions. Pupils stay on task and concentrate well. They are respectful to their teachers and have good relationships with each other. Pupils are willing to share information with a partner and the rest of the class. In one good lesson Year 9 pupils were very responsive to "role play" and there was a good level of discussion in groups, particularly by the girls. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was seen during the inspection. This was taught by a non-specialist and the level of challenge was too low for the most able pupils in Year 7. The teachers use a good range of activities and make good use of a range of resources. The best teaching is very stimulating, ensuring that all pupils are fully engaged. In one very good Year 7 lesson pupils with special educational needs made good progress due to the teacher's high

expectations and use of literacy strategies to support the pupils' learning. In one good Year 10 lesson, the teacher related the topic being studied to the demands of the GCSE coursework and effectively combined the two by using a local example.

117. The management of the subject is good. Virtually all of the issues from the previous inspection have been addressed and improved. There are effective procedures for monitoring the pupils' progress and the teaching. However, ICT is still not sufficiently integrated into the teaching and learning of geography.

HISTORY

118. Standards by the end of Key Stage 3 are above average. Girls, however, perform better than boys. By the end of the key stage most of the pupils, including those with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils, achieve well.

119. The GCSE results have been well below average in the past two years. For example, only 37 per cent of the pupils obtained grade C or above in 2000. Although girls achieved better than boys, both boys and girls did less well in history compared to their results in other subjects. A number of factors combine to explain why the GCSE results have not been good. These include the effect of some non-specialist teaching and the less than satisfactory preparation for a change of examination syllabus. Some pupils did, however, do well in relation to their prior attainment. From the evidence of the inspection most of the oldest pupils currently in Year 11, including those with special educational needs, are achieving satisfactorily. The focus on key words is making a sound contribution to the pupils' development in literacy. Higher ability pupils are achieving well.

120. All pupils can identify the key features of the period they are studying and have a good sense of chronology. They can explain cause and effect, similarity and difference. This was very clear in a Year 10 lesson on the rise of Hitler and in a Year 7 lesson on the reasons for the feudal system. Most pupils can empathise with the situation of people of the time, such as civilians in the First World War. They can extract information from a variety of sources. Higher-attaining pupils use this in producing pieces of extended writing. The pupils are weak in the interpretation and evaluation of sources and events. For example, in a Year 10 class work on who was responsible for the Reichstag Fire, the pupils could extract information from sources to explain how and what had happened but were less confident when asked to analyse and evaluate the use and reliability of the sources.

121. The teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and this leads to effective learning in most though not all lessons. Good teaching in Year 9 ensures that overall standards are above average by the end of the key stage. In most lessons, the teachers display good subject knowledge and use a wide variety of teaching strategies which interest the pupils. A Year 9 lower ability set was encouraged to use role-play to understand why censorship existed during the First World War. The teachers show enthusiasm for their subject and encourage pupils by the use of praise. Most lessons are taught at a good pace and high expectations are set. For example, Year 8 pupils engaged in a study of the causes of the Civil War were asked to prioritise the causes in order of their importance. Some teaching at Key Stage 3 is, however, unsatisfactory. Weaknesses in the subject knowledge of non-specialist teachers, expectations that are too low and difficulty in managing the pupils' behaviour are the key characteristics.

122. At Key Stage 4 the teaching is satisfactory. The teachers' excellent subject knowledge ensures good understanding of events. However, they do not place sufficient emphasis on the evaluation of sources. At times, their objectives for the lessons are not always stated or shared with the class. When they are, it leads to an increase in the learning: for example, when the pupils make links between confrontation in the Berlin Crisis

and the Korean War. At both key stages the pupils have targets linked to National Curriculum or GCSE levels set for them which they understand. However, more diagnostic marking would show them how to improve their work.

123. There are weaknesses in the leadership of the subject. The department has a development plan, which sets out a list of priorities but does not really focus on strategies for raising achievement at Key Stage 4. There is a lack of planning for the development of ICT. Satisfactory teaching compensates for weakness in leadership and ensures that most pupils make reasonable progress. Assessment is a weakness. It does not make the contribution to improving standards that it could.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

124. The standards of the oldest pupils in Key Stage 3 are in line with the national expectations. The pupils' achievements during the key stage are now satisfactory and there is, since September, an appropriate range of planned experiences in each year. The previously unsatisfactory provision in Years 8 and 9 has been improved through the introduction of a taught course in each year. As a result, opportunities to learn ICT skills have increased considerably and standards are improving. At the start of the Year 7 course most pupils confidently demonstrate that they can combine text and pictures, for example, to design illustrated book jackets. By Year 9, the pupils are using these skills to create posters for school sports clubs and for school productions. High attainers combine efficient use of the Internet with good word processing and desktop publishing skills to create professional examples of posters for Shakespeare productions. Pupils with special educational needs are able to make effective and appropriate use of spelling checkers to improve the quality of their written work. The teachers' expectations are rising. However, their assessment of skills at the end of the key stage remains too generous. The main weakness at the key stage is that there still remain only limited opportunities for the pupils to use ICT appropriately in a range of other subjects.

125. At Key Stage 4 there has been no GCSE IT or other award-bearing course until this term. There is now a taught course in each of Years 10 and 11. Additionally, since September, a GNVQ key skills course has been introduced. The pupils following this course are making good progress. In the ICT lessons for all, standards are broadly average and the achievement of most pupils is sound. ICT skills introduced in Years 10 and 11 now include the use of a multimedia presentation package to present the business plan for a leisure company. The pupils quickly learn new skills and successfully transfer previously learned skills from one software package to another. They learn rapidly from each other in a very well resourced learning environment.

126. Since the last inspection, and particularly in the last three months, there have been impressive developments in the provision of resources for ICT. There has been an increase in the number of computers and the ratio of pupils to computers is now considerably better than the national picture.

127. The teaching in the ICT lessons in Years 7 to 11 is sound. In the best teaching the teachers encourage pupils to extend their skills through well-structured lessons that are supported by exemplary display resources and support materials. In some lessons, however, the teachers' expectations are not as high as they could be. At Key Stage 4, the teaching of ICT skills has been introduced this term. Most teaching of ICT is by non-specialists, some of whom have insufficiently high expectations. In the small minority of lessons where it is less than satisfactory, more able pupils are held back in their learning by inappropriate whole-class teaching.

128. The programme of staff training has been implemented and teachers completing the

training express enthusiasm for the opportunities presented. Assessment of the levels at which the pupils are working has, however, been a weakness. Reports to parents meet the legal minimum requirement but often contain only limited detail of what students know, understand and can do.

129. The main challenge for the school in ICT is now to improve the overall co-ordination, ensuring that the pupils have sufficient opportunities to apply their improving skills in the other subjects they are studying.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

130. By the end of Year 9, most pupils reach a level broadly in line with the national expectation in French and German. Standards in speaking are often below the average. In writing and listening they are sometimes above. Overall, their current achievement, including that of pupils with special educational needs, is just satisfactory. Many, however, including those with a talent for languages, do not achieve as well as they should in speaking.

131. Results in GCSE French have fallen considerably since the last inspection. For the last three years they have been well below average. The teaching has not been sufficiently adapted to the changes in the examination since 1996. Results in German remain above average. This is consistent with the subject being studied by small numbers of more able pupils. As at Key Stage 3, the pupils' achievement in listening, writing and reading is sound; many, however, make insufficient progress in speaking. Continuous development of speaking is insufficient and, as a result, standards are below average. In writing the teaching is more focused so standards are better. Without regular speaking practice, most pupils find it hard to internalise the language they are taught. They lack confidence in their ability to produce language from memory. Pupils with special educational needs, particularly those who experience difficulties in spelling, achieve satisfactorily in French and German. Most pupils learn to copy accurately and use dictionaries and lists of phrases to support their writing. From the start in Year 7, the pupils become confident in understanding instructions and explanations in French. The more able pupils then transfer this skill to learning German in Year 8. Most pupils learn to get the gist and key details from quite long passages of text in French and German. Almost all pupils could improve their skills in speaking: they need to learn to speak without written prompts and to improve their pronunciation and fluency.

132. There has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection. Levels of resources have been improved and pupils now have more opportunities to use computers in language lessons. Some of the inconsistencies in teaching noted previously have been eradicated. Pupils and teachers are now working to clearer targets. The impact of these changes is beginning to be visible in the work of the younger pupils, but has failed to raise the pupils' performance in French at GCSE.

133. In most of the lessons seen, the teaching was just about satisfactory. The pupils make adequate gains in their learning, but have the potential to progress more quickly. For example: in one lesson in Year 10, the teacher told the pupils they would learn how to say what facilities were needed in a town. The lesson then focused on revising the names of buildings, which they already knew, but not how to say 'we need ...'. At the end of the lesson the pupils had difficulty in responding to the teacher's question 'What have you learnt today?' Generally, the teachers use French and German effectively to give pupils plenty of listening practice. However, in some lessons, the teachers' use of the foreign language is not sufficiently well planned and they do not check if the pupils are following. Consequently, the pupils get lost or confused. In one Year 10 and one Year 7 lesson this meant that some pupils gave up and did not complete the set work. Where the teaching is strongest, the teacher has a good rapport with the pupils and a very clear idea of what she wants them to learn. In a Year 9 lesson this meant that lower ability pupils were confident in presenting a

weather forecast in French to the rest of the class. In a minority of lessons in German, the teachers' lack of confidence in the language means that the pupils do not always have a correct model of how things are said. This is obviously unsatisfactory.

134. The day-to-day management of the subject is sound though there are several weaknesses in leadership that are holding back more rapid progress. Assessment of the pupils' progress is weak overall in Years 7 to 9 and for speaking in Years 10 to 11. Insufficient use is made of the data on the pupils' performance, and of the results of other monitoring, to improve the teaching and curriculum, particularly at GCSE.

MUSIC

135. By the end of Key Stage 3, the standards that pupils achieve vary widely. Whilst some reach or exceed the level expected nationally, the overall level is below this. The school's own assessments show higher results but these are not secure given weaknesses in the procedures for assessment. Strengths in the pupils' attainment include the ability to distinguish between musical features that they hear and to use musical vocabulary to describe them. They perform and improvise simple material confidently, although there is less evidence that they develop more extended compositions or discuss or write about their response to music in sufficient detail. Although pupils use electronic keyboards to perform, they do not use keyboards, computers or other technology as required to create or record their music. Nevertheless, given below average attainment on entry, the pupils' achievement, including that of pupils with special educational needs, is broadly satisfactory.

136. Standards at GCSE are in line with schools nationally. The school's own data shows that this year's candidates achieved grades in line with their other subjects. Work observed during the inspection indicates that these standards are being maintained in the current Year 11. This represents good achievement, given their below average performance at the end of Year 9. Whilst recent results show girls doing much better than boys, this was not consistently the case amongst the pupils observed. Work seen and heard included some good ensemble performances and several satisfactory compositions showing consistency of style although sometimes limited technical fluency.

137. Extra-curricular activities, some led by the teacher, others initiated by pupils, offer a satisfactory range of opportunities for pupils to extend the work done in class. Nearly 11 per cent of pupils receive instrumental lessons, above the national norm.

138. Pupils and staff show each other respect and relationships are constructive. Equipment is well cared for. Pupils approach music lessons with good attitudes and, when the teaching is engaging and challenging, their behaviour is good. This reflects the positive ethos that the new head of department has been able to establish.

139. The teaching in Key Stage 3 is usually at least satisfactory and sometimes good. The teachers are enthusiastic, explain and demonstrate things well and are good at helping individual pupils. In most lessons, pupils are managed well so that concentration and learning are not interrupted. Homework is set that complements the work done in class. In some lessons, however, there are weaknesses. For example, the tasks set for groups or the whole class offer only modest challenge. They employ mainly simple techniques and material and too long is given to carry them out. This means that too little is achieved in some lessons and those pupils who complete tasks quickly have time to spare. When the teacher is more demanding and includes a variety of activities, the pupils' progress is better.

140. Pupils work responsibly during practical tasks but, often, they are told only what they must do and not what they are being asked to learn or what standard they should reach. This lack of clarity arises from an unrefined planning and assessment system where intended

learning and expected standards are not sufficiently defined. Occasionally, when activities are inappropriate and when irresponsible behaviour is unchecked, both the teaching and the learning are unsatisfactory.

141. In Key Stage 4, the teaching is always satisfactory and sometimes good. The guidance and monitoring of individual pupils is more detailed than in Years 7-9. This enables pupils to make better progress than in Key Stage 3.

142. Since the last inspection, the accommodation has been significantly improved, although the further, planned increase in space is still necessary. Learning continues to be hampered when, for a few classes, music is taught in unsuitable, non-specialist rooms. Also, since that inspection, the leadership of the department has changed and a new sense of purpose has been established. The foundations for planning, for improvements in methodology and for incorporating ICT have been set but these now need to be accelerated to ensure that current pupils receive consistently good teaching.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

143. Standards reached by the majority of pupils in Year 9 are in line with the national expectation for pupils of this age. They have above average evaluative skills and use technical vocabulary with confidence. For example, Year 7 pupils know the correct names of the muscles used in their warm up routines. When the pupils arrive in Year 7 the boys' games skills are more advanced than the girls'. By the end of the key stage the boys have above average ball control and are able to use advanced tactics in football. The girls have good basketball skills. This represents good achievement through the key stage. The majority of pupils have satisfactory skills on the trampoline and are able to improve each other's performance by making accurate observations. Their gymnastic skills are imaginative but lack refinement and control. The few pupils working below the expectation have poor ball co-ordination and find it difficult to transfer new skills into a competitive game.

144. Standards reached by the majority of the pupils in Year 11 (those who take physical education as a core subject, but not to GCSE) are in line with expectations. A few are working below expectation and a minority are above. Their trampoline skills become more advanced and refined both in performance and in their observations of each other's routines. Basketball is a strength with many pupils consistently showing precision, control and accuracy in their performance. In badminton they have a satisfactory grasp of positional play and the complex rules for scoring in doubles. A minority of pupils, mostly girls, have poor technique and a limited variety of shots to outwit their opponents.

145. GCSE results fluctuate from year to year but are always above the national average. Many of the pupils achieve higher grades than in their other subjects. Standards reached by the majority currently studying GCSE are equally above average. This represents very good achievement over time. A particular strength is the pupils' depth of knowledge in both practical and theoretical aspects and their ability to link them. Their written work is fluent and well researched. They use ICT skills with confidence in their project work and oral presentations. For example, two pupils made good use of an overhead projector to illustrate their findings on how a number of factors, such as the quality of facilities, could affect standards in schools! Many of the pupils have advanced basketball skills, but a few are less confident and assertive within the game. Those pupils who are working below average have limited knowledge in theoretical modules and their notes are sometimes incomplete.

146. The quality of teaching and its impact on the pupils' learning are very good at GCSE and good for core Key Stage 3 and 4. The teachers always let the pupils know what they will be expected to do by the end of the lesson. Their expectations of high standards of work are nearly always consistent and they continually encourage the pupils to strive for better

performance appropriately related to their ability. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into lessons and achieve well. Those with behavioural difficulties were exceptionally well behaved and were well motivated to improve their skills. The teachers use a variety of methods that are successful in developing practical, evaluative and planning skills. A good example of this was seen in a Year 8 football lesson where the pupils had to organise themselves in a complex practice and comment on each other's performance. This immediately resulted in improved ball skills and greater understanding of attacking tactics. Question and answer sessions are used effectively to assess the pupils' knowledge and to provoke thought. At Key Stage 3 the pupils are encouraged to assess their own and each other's skills in relation to the newly introduced National Curriculum levels. Tasks always progress logically and with sufficient time to consolidate skills before transferring onto the next stage. The GCSE course is well planned and the teachers make good links between theoretical and practical aspects. Homework assignments are imaginative and give the pupils an opportunity to research independently. Marking is constructive resulting in improved work. However, notes are not checked sufficiently often to pick up on areas of incompleteness or weakness. Assessment procedures are particularly thorough and data is used very effectively to track how well pupils achieve relative to their ability from Key Stage 3 through to GCSE. Some lessons are late to finish leaving insufficient time to effectively recap and consolidate. The teachers extend a high level of independence to the pupils in lessons and they have an established code of conduct that is well respected. The mutual respect and shared enthusiasm between the teachers and the pupils make a considerable impact on the quality of work. This is especially evident in the popular extra-curricular programme where pupils enjoy team and individual success at local, county and regional levels in sports such as rugby, basketball and athletics.

147. Leadership of the department is good, with some very good features. The head of department has successfully promoted a team spirit that contributes strongly to the personal development and achievement of the pupils. Monitoring and the detailed development plan are clearly focused on making further improvements to the teaching. Valuable links with other sporting clubs have added depth to the extra-curricular programme and helped towards gaining the Sports Mark Award this year. The Junior Sports Leader Award is a popular addition to the curriculum at Key Stage 4. Criticisms from the last inspection report have been successfully addressed. ICT skills are now appropriately included in the newly revised schemes of work. Lessons do not lack pace and the most able pupils are fully stretched. The pupils' evaluative skills are now well developed. GCSE results have improved. This represents very good improvement since the last inspection. The boys' changing room near the gymnasium is cramped and the showers offer no level of privacy. The lack of a permanent base for theoretical lessons creates difficulties in establishing a subject-stimulating environment and also for the transportation of resources.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

148. By the end of Key Stage 3 the vast majority of pupils attain in line with the expectations of the Hampshire Agreed Syllabus. Their achievement is satisfactory. They are able to recall important events in the life of religious leaders and are aware of sacred texts within religious traditions. A minority of less able pupils find it difficult to explain religious symbols and have some gaps in their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and the other principal religions studied at Key Stage 3. In Year 9 the pupils are able to link Buddhist beliefs to modern day situations, e.g. considering how the five precepts of Buddhism could be linked to school rules. However, the more able pupils' skills in extended writing are not developed as much as they could be – largely because they are given insufficient opportunities to develop these skills. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress.

149. By the end of Key Stage 4 the majority of the pupils attain in line with the expectations

of the Agreed Syllabus and their achievement is satisfactory overall. The more able pupils show a good understanding of modern moral and social issues. For example, in a Year 11 lesson pupils quickly understood the idea of “compassion fatigue” when studying issues of wealth and poverty and could articulate their own personal responses. They have a good understanding of key issues in, for example, crime and punishment. They are, however, much less secure in applying key religious beliefs and teachings to the issues being studied.

150. In religious education the pupils are very good at linking their learning in the subject to their own beliefs, values and ideas; e.g. in Key Stage 3 they link their work on Abraham to their own ideas of promises and sacrifice. The majority of the pupils, however, could do better in developing their listening skills, particularly to one another. A potentially very interesting lesson on the aims of punishment in Year 11 was spoiled by some pupils simply calling out their own views without listening to those of others.

151. The teaching in religious education is satisfactory at both Key Stages 3 and 4. The most effective teaching occurs when the teachers use interesting and skilful learning activities which help pupils understand important religious beliefs and ideas. For example, in a Year 10 lesson good use of the Internet and an activity in which they were asked to imagine the world was a global village of one thousand people effectively helped the pupils understand issues of injustice and poverty. The teaching is less effective when there is a lack of challenge in the questioning. As a result, the pupils do not respond with sufficient depth and they do not then develop their ideas as much as they could.

152. The management of religious education is satisfactory. The subject is sensitively led and good use has been made of internal monitoring of the subject. Religious education makes a very good contribution to pupils’ moral development; e.g. in Key Stage 3 they consider use of human rights and environmental issues. At Key Stage 4 the pupils study medical ethics, issues of wealth and poverty, crime and punishment and making moral choices. Pupils’ work is marked regularly, often with encouraging comments. However, assessment is a weakness and the pupils do not receive enough guidance on how to improve their work. Targets for further learning are not included in reports to parents.

153. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Time allocation is now much better at Key Stage 4. However, it is still below average at both key stages. This lack of time does have a negative impact on pupils’ standards, particularly in the development of their evaluative skills. They are, however, now much more confident in asking questions and linking their learning in religious education to their own experiences.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business Studies

154. Business studies is taught as an option at Key Stage 4. The percentage of students achieving A* to C grades at GCSE over the past three years has declined from a figure well above the national average to one below the national average in 2000. Until last year the girls’ attainment at GCSE was significantly higher than that for boys but in 2000 the difference was reduced to a very small one. The course is a popular one in Year 11 and there is a wide range of pupil abilities, including a relatively high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. The current standard of the older pupils is higher than the last group to take GCSE. More than half the pupils are on target to achieve A* to C grades and a significant number of those to achieve A*/A and B grades. Nearly all the pupils have a sound grasp of topics such as the location of business, factors influencing business decision-making, forms of business enterprise and private and social costs. The most able pupils are good at selecting and evaluating evidence when considering business decisions, they can apply technical vocabulary with accuracy and they can use a range of computer applications to illustrate and

explain their answers. Almost all the pupils present their work effectively in word-processed format. The pupils' achievement over the past year has generally been good and most notably so for many of those in the lower ability range.

155. The teaching is sound. In all lessons seen nearly all the pupils made satisfactory progress and in half of those lessons, good progress. The pupils respond with interest and purpose to teaching which is positive, enthusiastic and encourages all pupils to achieve. The teachers show good subject knowledge, have high expectations of the pupils and set them clear and challenging tasks. They encourage high standards of presentation and a wide use of ICT and respond well to the needs of individual pupils. A successful lesson on business franchising quickly captured the pupils' interest through the teacher linking it to their own experience and his insistence that they draw on previous learning and use specific business terminology. However, some lessons seen on the topic of business location highlighted the difficulties of teaching a wide spectrum of pupil abilities. The teachers ensured that nearly all the pupils gained a sound grasp of the key factors but the initial written task did not effectively stretch the most able pupils. As a result, their progress in the lesson was less satisfactory than for the others in the class. There was evidence, however, from the pupils' previous work that other assignments have been more closely tailored to their individual needs and abilities. The teachers' assessment is accurate but sometimes the marking needs to give more specific advice on how the pupils could improve on their current work.

156. The Business Studies department has sound leadership. It welcomes pupils of all abilities and demonstrates a strong commitment to their achieving to the best of their abilities. There are specific development plans linked to teaching approaches and appropriate learning assignments. The department is beginning to make good use of assessment and other data available to analyse its performance and suggest strategies for improvement. Since the previous report made no reference to Business Studies it is impossible to judge improvement since then.

Leisure and Tourism GNVQ

157. Leisure and tourism GNVQ is an option at Key Stage 4. The current older pupils will be the first group to sit for a full GNVQ qualification. Nearly all the pupils in both Years 10 and 11 have some form of special educational need. The achievement of those pupils is good. Most of the older pupils are in line to attain a pass grade should their present rate of progress be maintained. In two lessons seen a significant majority of the older pupils made good progress in understanding the broad demands of a range of jobs in the leisure industry and made sound decisions as to how they might most effectively present their research in a magazine supplement. More than half took time and care over their presentation and used word processing to good effect. However, some pupils were far less careful in their presentation. Only a few were able to evaluate what they had achieved with any degree of precision or clarity.

158. The teaching is good. The teachers have clear expectations of what they want the pupils to achieve and set them appropriately challenging targets. The pupils generally remain on task in their lessons and there is a positive working relationship with their teachers. The teachers provide good support materials to help the pupils with planning and evaluating their work and are very patient and painstaking in the help they give to individual pupils. The latter approach enables most of the pupils to work at a good pace and to improve on their initial efforts. The teachers encourage the pupils to use ICT in their work. As a result there is considerable use of word processing to enhance the quality of presentation and relevant and focused use of the Internet to search out information. The teachers mark the work accurately in line with the course criteria. However, written feedback on the pupils' efforts is not sufficiently frequent to be fully effective; nor does it give adequate guidance on how they might improve quality.

159. There are good links with business in the GNVQ Leisure and Tourism programme. In addition to visits to several relevant venues, very effective use is made of British Airways staff in teaching the customer care module of the programme.

160. The programme provides a valuable learning experience for the pupils, many of whom have special educational needs but nevertheless achieve beyond what might reasonably be expected of them.