

# INSPECTION REPORT

**HAYESFIELD SCHOOL – TECHNOLOGY  
COLLEGE**

Upper Oldfield Park, Bath, BA2 3LA

LEA area: Bath and North East Somerset

Unique reference number: 109292

Headteacher: John Bartholomew

Reporting inspector: Faysal Mikdadi  
2447

Dates of inspection: 18<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2000

Inspection number: 223813

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive  
School category: Community  
Age range of pupils: 11 to 18  
Gender of pupils: Girls (Mixed Sixth Form)

School address: Upper Oldfield Park  
Bath

Postcode: BA2 3LA

Telephone number: 01225 426151

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Nicholas Stubbs

Date of previous inspection: 5<sup>th</sup> December 1994

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Faysal Mikdadi	Registered inspector	English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? What should the school do to improve further? The school's results and achievements; How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
Glynis Tyrell	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Phil Waite	Team Inspector	Mathematics	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Graham Powell	Team Inspector	English	
David Berrisford	Team Inspector	Science	
Neil Gillespie	Team Inspector	Information Technology	
Peter Kendall	Team Inspector	Art	
Ian Hodgkinson	Team Inspector	Design and Technology	
David Potter	Team Inspector	Geography; Sixth Form	
Dave Martin	Team Inspector	History	
Ann King	Team Inspector	Modern Foreign Languages	
Lis Fletcher	Team Inspector	Music	
Ann Braithwaite	Team Inspector	Physical Education	
Pamela Draycott	Team Inspector	Religious Education	
Brian Bartlett	Team Inspector	Special Educational Needs	
Hazel Saunders	Team Inspector	Equal Opportunities	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This is a girls' 11-19 secondary school with technology college status. There are 1015 pupils with 15 boys in the Sixth Form. The school is on a split site in Bath. The Sixth Form house is across the road from the upper school and the playing fields are two miles from the school. The distance between the upper and the lower school is half a mile. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is 13.2% which is broadly in line with the national average. Hayesfield has 27 pupils (2.7%) who are from the minority ethnic groups and amongst whom there are speakers of languages other than English including Bengali, Urdu, Cantonese, Malaysian and Thai. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is 17.2% which is broadly in line with the national average. The attainment of pupils joining Year 7 is close to the national average according to the end of Key Stage 2 test results and the Cognitive Ability Test (CAT) scores. There are pupils from the full ability range.

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

The school is effective in enhancing its pupils' learning. The 1999 Key Stage 3 tests, GCSE and GCE advanced level results are mostly above the national averages and occasionally in line with them. All three phase results in 2000 showed an improvement on the previous year. Teaching was good overall with 97% of lessons seen during the inspection being sound or better. Leadership is very good. The school's strengths far outweigh its weaknesses. The school provides very good value for money.

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

- The pupils achieve above average results at Key Stage 3 tests, GCSE, GNVQ and GCE advanced level.
- Good teaching enables pupils and students to learn effectively.
- Pupils' and students' progress is enhanced by the way that the school sets each pupil individual targets and helps students to achieve those targets.
- Pupils and students have very positive attitudes to their work.
- Behaviour and relationships are very good.
- Pupils with special educational needs benefit from effective support.
- The school cares very well for its pupils and students by offering a high standard of pastoral support.
- The school provides good opportunities for extra-curricular activities.
- The school works well in partnership with parents.
- There are good strategies for monitoring and evaluating the school's work.
- The headteacher, senior managers, key staff and governors provide very good leadership and management.
- Financial administration and management are very good.

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

- There are serious shortcomings in the accommodation that relate to the split site and to unsatisfactory classrooms in science, art, geography, music and physical education.
- The management of the physical education department is ineffective.
- There is little provision for information technology teaching in Years 8 and 9.
- Despite being a key issue in the previous inspection report, there is still no provision for religious education for all in the Sixth Form and no provision for a daily act of worship for all.

*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 December 1994. It has made good improvement since then with the exception of lack of provision of religious education for all in the sixth form and lack of a daily act of worship for all. These improvements include: better GCE advanced level results particularly in the

number of students achieving the higher grades; improved GCSE results particularly in the percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSE grades A\* to G; more effective teaching in more lessons than seen in 1994; improvement in individualising annual reports as preferred by parents; stronger and more visionary leadership which has contributed to the high standards and to the increase of pupil numbers on roll; improved procedures for drafting and redrafting written work; improved resource provision especially in mathematics and information technology; improved accommodation for food technology. The school has also made satisfactory progress in its assessment strategies across all areas, in its target setting which is still constantly improving and becoming more sophisticated. The high teaching load criticised in the last report has been reduced. The school now has sufficient computers which are beginning to be used more effectively. Medium and long term targets are now effectively set in the school development plan.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in National Tests, GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
Key Stage 3	B	B	B	A
GCSE examinations	C	C	B	A
A-levels/AS-levels	C	D	C	

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

Results at the GCE advanced level in 1999 were in line with the national averages. The average point score was close to the national average. In 2000 the results improved significantly, with a third of students achieving the higher grades of A and B. The school's improvement over the period since the last inspection reflects the national trend. GNVQ results were good, although the small number entered makes a comparison with the national average point score inappropriate. Particularly good results were achieved in biology, chemistry, English literature, geography, history and psychology.

At GCSE, the school's results have risen steadily since the last inspection. Compared to similar schools GCSE results were well above the national average in 1999. The trend upwards has been in line with the national trend. Results in 2000 were a further improvement on 1999, especially in the percentage of those gaining five or more GCSE grades A\* to G. Over the last three the average GCSE point score has been marginally above the national average.

In the 1999 national tests for 14 year olds the school achieved well above average results in English and above average results in mathematics and science. Compared with similar schools, the results for 1999 were well above average in the three core subjects. In 2000 there were further improvements and, over the last three years the pupils' performance has been above the national average. The school has set challenging targets for all. Standards of the work seen reflect the pupils' good response to high expectations.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The pupils and students have very positive attitudes to their work and they are very enthusiastic about the school generally.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Standards of behaviour are very high. Pupils are trustworthy and they show consideration for one another and for their teachers.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good. Pupils show initiative and the overwhelming majority take on responsibility well.
Attendance	Attendance is good. Pupils arrive punctually to school and to lessons.

The pupils' very positive attitudes contribute effectively to an atmosphere which promotes a general feeling of confidence and a sense of positive achievement.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The teaching is good overall with 97% of lessons seen being at least sound, 72% being good or better and 32% being very good or better. Only 3% of lessons seen were satisfactory. Teaching is strongest in the Sixth Form. Good subject knowledge, enthusiasm for the subject, effective targeting of individual improvements, clear identification of the key learning issues, high expectations and good and exciting pace are contributory factors to the good teaching. Literacy skills are very well taught. Numeracy skills are well taught. The teaching meets the needs of all the pupils. In the very small number of unsatisfactory lessons seen the weaknesses included ineffective behaviour control, lack of matching the work set with the pupils' differing abilities and a lack of awareness of the needs of pupils with special educational needs.

The quality of learning is good with pupils and students having a positive attitude to their learning. In almost all subjects, pupils and students are interested and they work productively and organise themselves well. Pupils prepare well for tests and examinations.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum provides a good range, breadth and depth of learning at Key Stages 3 and 4. Information technology is insufficiently taught in Key Stage 3 especially in Years 8 and 9. In the Sixth Form, there is no religious education for all. The range and quality of the extra curricular provision are very good although parental concerns about the lack of sufficient sporting activities are justified.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with special educational needs is at least good and often very good. A weakness is the ineffective use of individual education plans in some subjects and in the lack of effective use of the learning support workers in classrooms.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Support for pupils with English as an additional language is good. The school needs to encourage pupils who have a home language other than English to study their language up to examination level where possible.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' moral and social development is good. Provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development is sound. The school needs to ensure that British cultural diversity is further celebrated across all subjects. The school still does not comply with the statutory requirement for a daily collective act of worship.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes good care of its pupils. It has very good liaison with outside agencies. The pastoral care programme is very good. Since the last inspection the school has made significant progress in its target setting and assessment procedures.

The school works well with its parents. Pupils are offered a wide range of opportunities for extra-curricular activities. Opportunities for sporting activities are improving after they had suffered from shortcomings in the management of the physical education department. The curriculum offered is broad and balanced. At Key Stage 3 there is a lack of information technology provision in Years 8 and 9 although this is in the process of being rectified through the school's new flexible tutorial timetable. In the Sixth Form students are not offered their entitlement to religious education. The school cares well for its pupils.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership is very good. Leadership by the headteacher is strong and effective. Senior managers and governors ensure clear direction for the school's work and further development. Middle managers, including heads of faculty, are at least good and often very good with the exception of the physical education department where leadership is ineffective.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors provide good support for the school. They have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They fulfil their statutory duties except for the lack of provision for religious education for all in the sixth form and the inefficiency of information technology teaching at Key Stage 3.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good in all key stages. Strategies are in place for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing in each area. Lessons are observed regularly by senior managers. Lesson observations are being devolved to heads of faculty, some of whom have already established a system of peer observation in their subjects.
The strategic use of resources	Financial management and administration are real strengths of the school. Educational priorities are clearly related to the allocation of resources. Resources are effectively used. Accommodation is effectively used, despite some serious shortcomings relating to the split site and to the unsuitability of classrooms to some subjects.

Staffing and resources are adequate. Accommodation is largely adequate although there are serious shortcomings because of the split site and where some rooms do not suit the subject being taught in them. Leadership and management are a strength of the school. The school applies best value principles well.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children achieve well.</li> <li>• The quality of provision.</li> <li>• The quality of individual targets set.</li> <li>• The quality of the care for their children.</li> <li>• The good behaviour.</li> <li>• The effective communication strategies.</li> <li>• The improvements made in recent years.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The insufficiency of extra curricular sporting activities.</li> <li>• The amount of homework set.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree fully with the parents' positive views of the school. Inspectors partly support the concern expressed by parents over the insufficiency of extra-curricular sporting activities. This deficiency has been largely rectified despite the weakness in the management of the physical education department and the long-term absence of an experienced member of staff.

Inspectors do not share parents' concerns over homework. Homework set is appropriate and it extends learning. Teachers are consistent in their high expectations of homework completion by all pupils and students.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is broadly average. National assessment test results, immediately before entry show that the pupils entering Year 7 generally match the national expectations for this age group. Cognitive Ability Test (CAT) results in Year 7 show the majority of pupils' prior attainment as being slightly skewed towards the lower end of the ability range.

2. The school's Sixth Form has a comprehensive intake with courses open to a wide range of interests and abilities. The GCE advanced level results in 1999 were close to the national average. Over the last three years the GCE advanced level results have been in line with the national averages. In 2000 GCE advanced level results improved further with a third of all candidates attaining grades A or B. This result is a significant improvement since the last inspection in 1994 when the school was criticised for its students not attaining the higher grades. The 1999 average score of 15.7 was close to the national average of 17.9 and is a significant improvement on the last inspection when the average score was 12.5. The school's improvement over this period reflects the national trend. Particularly good results were achieved in biology, chemistry, English literature, geography, history and psychology where A and B grades passes were well above the national average.

3. In 2000 five Sixth Form students attained one distinction, three merits and one pass in the health and social care advanced GNVQ.

4. Attainment in the current Sixth Form is at least sound and often better across nearly all subjects. It exceeds that in the other key stages of the curriculum, although the difference is small. Good examples of general attainment and progress made by pupils were seen across several subject areas. In one very good Year 12 geography lesson, the teacher set clear aims for the lesson after a quick recap of previously covered work. Students were encouraged to take appropriate notes in a way that promoted their learning. Each case study was reviewed and good practice was effectively modelled, with the teacher supporting good learning by helping students to organise their work and by making regular checks on their understanding. In another Year 13 business studies lesson, on ration analysis, the teacher offered students good guidance on the meaning of difficult concepts and illustrated every stage with relevant up to date examples. This allowed students to participate within an atmosphere where the teacher maintained their interest. The homework set was appropriate and it extended the students' learning.

5. At GCSE, the school's results have remained above the national average since the last inspection. In 1999 the proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSE grades A\* to C was 55% which was 8.4 percentage points above the national average of 46.6%. The trend over the previous three years was also above the national average. In 2000 the proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSE grades A\* to C was 55% which is a slight increase on the previous year. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSE grades A\* to G in 1999 was 88.6% which is slightly below the national average of 89.8%. Over the last three years the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more GCSE grades A\* to C was close to the national average. It fell below for those gaining five or more GCSE grades A\* to G. In 2000 the proportion of those achieving five or more GCSE grades A\*-G rose to 96%. The average point score for the last three years was 37.1 which is marginally above the national average of 36.9. Based on the average total GCSE point score per pupil the school's performance was well above the national average for similar schools in 1999. The average point score for

2000 was 42.4. GCSE results in 1999 were above the national average in all subjects, except in mathematics, where they were in line with the national averages and below in French. The improvement in the GCSE results is less marked in mathematics and science than it is in other subjects. Nonetheless, the percentage of pupils achieving GCSE grades A\*-C in mathematics was increased by ten percentage points between 1996 and 1999. The three core subject departments use the Local Education Authority's chances tables to set their pupils relevant targets. Each subject takes the modal grade and adds one grade for the high challenge target. The chances table indicates that the relationship between the average Key Stage 3 level and the percentage of pupils achieving related grades at the GCSE level differs by one level in mathematics compared to English and science where the percentages achieving grades A\*-C is higher by an average of eight percentage points. The school is beginning to use other relevant – and more sophisticated – data to set relevant, high challenge targets.

6. In 1999 above average GCSE results were achieved in English, science, art, design and technology, drama, geography, German, history, information technology, music, physical education, religious education, Spanish. In other subjects GCSE examination results in 1999 were in line with the national averages, with the exception of French where they were below.

7. In the national Key Stage 3 tests for 1999, pupils' results for those attaining Level 5 or above were well above the national average in English, and above the average in mathematics and science. Taking all three core subjects together, the performance of pupils was above the national average in 1999. Over the past three years, pupils' performance has been above the national average in all core subjects taken together. In the same period the trend in the school's average point score, for all core subjects, was broadly in line with the national trend. There is a steep rate of improvement between Year 7 on entry and Year 9 at the end of Key Stage 3. This rate of improvement levels off during Years 10 and 11 in Key Stage 4. There may be several reasons for this: pupils receive a great deal of special educational needs support in Years 7 and 8. This support is highly effective and it contributes to the very good progress at Key Stage 3. In science pupils in Year 9 are given clear revision study guides and they are set sophisticated targets that relate closely to their prior attainment. A high number of pupils attain a grade D where they could be helped to attain a grade C by the end of Key Stage 4. In mathematics, design and technology and modern languages some average pupils do not attain the average grade of C. More needs to be done to raise the attainment of middle ability pupils. In information technology pupils' skills at Key Stage 4 are of a high order despite the lack of appropriate provision in Years 8 and 9.

8. In other subjects, attainment is at least average at Key Stage 3. It is particularly good in art, history, music and religious education. During the inspection week, high standards of work were seen in many lessons. In Year 9 pupils are well prepared for the end of Key Stage 3 tests. This work is a major contributory factor to the high level of progress made by younger pupils. For example in a Year 9 science lesson the teacher made good links to the requirements of the tests during a good lesson, using PowerPoint, to explain the differences between elements, mixtures and compounds. In another Year 9 design and technology lesson the teacher maintained the pupils' interest throughout by using discussion about industrial design development. This was further enhanced by the use of good quality and attractive flow charts which clearly showed the design process.

9. Work of a good standard was also evident in a large number of lessons in other years. For example, in an English lesson, Year 12 students responded well to the teacher's high expectations. Students were supported in using good self-evaluative skills and guided individual target setting. The students responded well to the teacher's confident, passionate and scrupulously prepared lesson. In a GCE advanced level geography lesson, Year 13 students' progress to a high level of attainment was due to the teacher's excellent

organisation, high expectations, effective questioning strategies and productive use of the examination syllabus to promote learning.

10. Concerted action in response to the National Literacy Strategy, has begun to have an impact across the curriculum. A Literacy Policy has been adopted and is available on the school's website. An effective Year 7 literacy intervention programme has been established. The Literacy Working Group, which is made up of teachers from a variety of subjects, has set school targets for action in all subject areas: the display of key words in classrooms, the selection of focus spellings for correction and the encouragement of pupil response in sentences. A newsletter - Update - is used to maintain the profile of literacy with the teaching staff. Apart from English and Special Educational Needs, action is noticeable in: design and technology where pupils write in a variety of styles to communicate the development of their work, annotate drawings well and refine their descriptive writing and research skills progressively through the two key stages; geography where writing, speaking and listening are very good as a result of the encouragement which is given to pupils to speak at length in response to the intelligent use of open questions and art where care is taken with technical and specialist terminology. There is potential to build on the good work already established. By the age of 16, the overwhelming majority of pupils have improved their levels of basic numeracy skills. National Numeracy Strategy links are on the way to becoming well developed and to supporting improved curriculum continuity from the partner primary schools. The use of numeracy across the curriculum is effective especially in design and technology and geography.

11. The school undertakes test and examination result analyses in depth. Targets are set for each pupil. Key Stage 3 targets are set, using the average Cognitive Ability Test (CAT) score. The GCSE and GCE advanced level targets are set using prior attainment indicators, such as test and examination results, against national benchmarks. The school sets high challenge targets by adding one level or grade to each pupil's predicted level or grade. In the summer of 2000 the National Test and GCSE results exceeded the school's high challenge targets. The strength of the school is its ability to look at such results and analyse the reasons for the increase before setting the next cohort of high challenge targets. These targets are set in conjunction with the governing body and the Local Education Authority (LEA). Both pupils and parents are involved in the target setting process.

12. Throughout the school pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements, make at least satisfactory progress and many make good progress particularly in reading and writing during Key Stage 3. The intervention of the special educational needs department results in approximately one-third of pupils, who enter the school with reading ages below their chronological ages, raising the former so that it matches the latter within two years. Most pupils with the lowest reading ages on entry improve their standards by at least one year during Year 7. The pattern of progress in relation to National Curriculum attainment is similar. Most pupils who enter the school with levels of attainment below national expectations in English raise that attainment during Key Stage 3 by at least one level and a significant proportion improve by two levels. Whilst progress is satisfactory at Key Stage 4 many subjects fail to target the improvement rate of pupils with the same rigour with which they challenge the higher-attaining pupils.

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

13. Almost all pupils come to school eager to learn and to participate in lessons and other activities provided. They show interest in their lessons, concentrate well and demonstrate enthusiasm for learning. The positive judgements made in the previous report are still applicable now.

14. Behaviour in the classroom is usually very good and sometimes excellent. Most teachers in the school deal with any potentially disruptive behaviour quickly and efficiently so that the atmosphere for learning is not affected. However, a few teachers find it difficult to manage the very small number of pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour and, in these few lessons, the concentration of others can be affected. However, it must be stressed that this was the case in only a very small minority of lessons observed during the inspection.

15. There have been no permanent exclusions during the past twelve months, although the number of fixed term exclusions, particularly in the Lower School, has been higher than usual.

16. Most pupils are articulate and polite to visitors. They are co-operative and show respect for teachers and each other. There is no evidence of any serious bullying or harassment. The school sites are free of litter and graffiti.

17. Pupils respond well to opportunities to take responsibility and show initiative. Year 7 pupils appreciate the support that they receive from those Year 10 pupils who have volunteered to act as mentors, assisting them with work and being available for discussions about personal issues. Pupils are eager to offer their services as representatives on the School Council. They were observed during the inspection week discussing various matters in a mature and articulate manner. When given the opportunity in personal, social and health education lessons to reflect upon and discuss the impact of their behaviour on others they offer sensible and considered opinions from Year 7 upwards.

18. The majority of parents who attended the parents' meeting or completed questionnaires feel that pupils are motivated and mutually supportive, and that behaviour at the school is very good.

19. The whole-school attendance figure is above the national average, although the level of attendance in some classes is lower than this average. Punctuality is recognised as an on-going problem, although most pupils who arrive late are in school by the actual start of the first lesson. Many pupils travel in from outlying areas with restricted public transport.

20. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils within the special educational needs department are good. They show interest in and engage fully with the tasks set. They listen when other pupils are reading or answering questions and collaborate well when working in pairs as happens, for example, during spelling activities and when operating computer programs. Relationships between pupils and with their teachers are very good. Within the special educational needs department pupils behave very well although they can sometimes become restless towards the end of the day.

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

21. Overall, the quality of teaching is good overall. It is a strength of the school and a key factor in improving pupils' attainment. Of the lessons seen during the inspection week, 97% were sound or better; 72% were good and 32% were very good. Although teaching is uniformly at least sound across the school, it was strongest in the Sixth Form where all lessons seen were sound and 87% were at least good. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection although it was already sound or better in 91% of the lessons seen in 1994. The school does a particularly good job of preparing the pupils for the end of Key Stage 3 tests and this is reflected in the improving results.

22. In the Sixth Form, the continuing rise in the standards of attainment is largely due to the good quality of teaching. Since the last inspection, many Sixth Form students have

achieved the higher grades of A and B in their GCE advanced level examinations. The overall standards of teaching seen in the Sixth Form was very good and in well over a third it was very good. Teachers have a very good command of their subjects. They convey knowledge and understanding effectively to their students. They have high expectations and work well with pupils to help them to make progress. Students respond positively in lessons and clearly enjoy their work. In a Year 13 science lesson the teacher's high expectations offered a strong challenge to students who responded well. The teacher used subject knowledge confidently to illustrate examination requirements and to keep the lesson going at a good pace. Students felt confident in seeking clarification and in using their own prior knowledge. The teacher was able to ascertain their progress through informal questioning strategies.

23. Teaching in English is at least good and often better in all three key stages, with only one lesson seen in Key Stage 3 being less than satisfactory. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and high expectations of their pupils. They know how to get the best out of their pupils and how to keep lessons going at a good pace. The position is similar in mathematics where twelve out of fourteen lessons seen were at least good – the two unsatisfactory lessons being in Key Stage 3. The majority of lessons are presented with considerable enthusiasm with well prepared resources and effective use of information technology. In science teaching is good overall and often better in both Key Stage 3 and the Sixth Form. At Key Stage 4 the teaching in seven out of nine lessons seen was at least sound. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and use questioning strategies effectively as part of regular and effective assessment. Teachers at Key Stage 3 are particularly good at targeting improvements for individual pupils in science.

24. Teaching is at least sound and often good or better in all subjects. It is particularly good in design and technology, drama, history and very good in geography and information technology. The key features of the best teaching (seen in two lessons in three at Key Stage 3 and 4 and four lessons in five in the Sixth Form) include:

- good subject knowledge and genuine enthusiasm for the subject;
- effective targeting of individual improvements;
- clear identification of the key learning issues in planning each lesson;
- high expectations with challenging tasks set;
- good, exciting and urgent pace;
- effective strategies used for involving pupils in their own learning and keeping them motivated.

25. These and other good features were seen in many lessons during the inspections week. Subject expertise was evident in an excellent Year 9 drama lesson during which the teacher engaged all pupils at a good pace and with consistently high expectations. A Year 9 design and technology lesson used explicit reference to high quality charts, showing flow charts for the design process, which were pinned up around the room. The teacher kept the pupils' interest at a continuously keen level throughout the lesson. As a result the work produced showed very good development of design features and high standards of presentation. One Year 12 personal and social education lesson included a good structure as the teacher carried out a good functional recap of the previous lesson and set clear targets to be achieved by the end of the lesson.

26. A very small number of unsatisfactory lessons were also seen (three per cent). These lessons were in Key Stage 3 (four lessons) and Key Stage 4 (two lessons). There was one English lesson (Year 8), two mathematics lessons (Years 8 and 9), two science lessons (both Year 10) and one French lesson (Year 9). The key features of the unsatisfactory teaching include:

- ineffective behaviour control with pupils losing interest and with the pace of the lessons degenerating;
- teacher's board work is untidy and uninspiring;
- the work set is beyond the pupils' capabilities which, in itself, leads to a loss of interest and lack of motivation;
- some pupils are left out of the lesson and not sufficiently targeted to ensure that they remain on-task;
- little or no awareness of the needs of pupils with special educational needs.

27. In the special educational needs department the quality of teaching, most of which is undertaken by the team of learning support workers (LSWs), is good with some very good aspects. The planning and structure of the sessions are of very high quality. This means that the teaching is very well focused upon the needs of the pupils, the pace of learning is very good and the explicit learning objectives enable pupils to improve their knowledge and understanding. Assessment information is used very well to construct activities and provide resources, including reading books, which are matched very well to the pupils' needs, abilities and ages. This feature also means that the pupils are able to experience success in their work, but not without making the appropriate effort. The special educational needs co-ordinator and LSWs are very experienced and well-qualified. As a result, their knowledge and use of methods and strategies to enable the pupils to access the teaching and demonstrate progress, are very good. Tasks and expectations of acceptable behaviour are clearly explained so that the pupils have a thorough understanding of the requirements of the activities. During reading sessions there is good emphasis upon developing the pupils' comprehension skills. Teachers pose questions that require the pupils to infer and deduce rather than simply recall the main facts. Because of this the pupils improve their ability to describe orally the personality, attitude and motivation of fictional characters. However, within the reading sessions some opportunities are missed to develop the pupils' vocabulary by discussing and revising 'troublesome' or unfamiliar words. The pupils would also benefit from a more structured approach, for example, the use of writing frames, to improve the quality of their written accounts and reports.

28. Due to the quality of teaching in the special educational needs department the pupils' acquisition of knowledge and skills in both comprehension and spelling is good. They make good efforts to use their prior knowledge of phonics to read polysyllabic words accurately. The carefully planned sessions mean that pupils use the knowledge gained in practice activities to demonstrate their learning. For example, after using worksheets to develop their understanding of initial triple letter blends, Year 8 pupils were able to spell accurately words involving those constructions on a computer program.

29. Outside the special educational needs department, whilst the teachers know which pupils are on the special educational needs register, the quality of teaching to match the work to the needs and abilities of the pupils ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. The same is true of the way in which teachers make use of the targets and strategies contained within the pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) and pastoral support plans (PSPs). However, the pupils who receive intensive, short-term support from the special educational needs department do not actually have IEPs. The special educational needs department should consider generating a group IEP for such pupils to inform subject teachers of the type of support that such pupils require. Pupils with English as an Additional Language receive effective teaching support in the classroom, especially in Key Stage 3.

30. There is also considerable variation in the deployment of the well-qualified LSWs by subject teachers. In some lessons the LSWs are able to make a very valuable contribution but, in others, their involvement is negligible.

31. Teachers use resources effectively. Information technology use is expanding and, since the last inspection, the use of computers has increased and become more effective. The lack of discrete information technology in Years 8 and 9 has meant that pupils do not use computers in those two years as much as they need to. The school is trying to improve the situation by producing a flexible timetable allowing pupils to use information technology for two tutorial sessions a week.

32. Teacher assessment is overall sound except in physical education where it is not applied consistently and where the existing policy needs further development. Homework set is appropriate and extends pupils and students learning. Teachers use homework well.

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

33. The curriculum provided for pupils in Key Stage 3 and 4 is good. The school meets the statutory requirement to provide National Curriculum subjects, although the cross-curricular delivery of information technology in Years 8 and 9 is insufficiently monitored with little provision being made in Years 8 and 9 where there is no discrete information technology lessons. Religious education now receives sufficient time to meet the demands of the Agreed Syllabus. The balance of the curriculum is a satisfactory compromise between the requirements of Technology College status and more aesthetic opportunities, provided both within the Key Stage 4 option system and as special events or extra-curriculum activities.

34. The school makes active efforts to design its curriculum to the needs of its pupils and to make it as accessible as possible to all. Careful liaison with local partner primary schools promotes continuity in the core subjects and for pupils with special educational needs. The needs of pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements, are met in full by judicious deployment of learning support workers. Occasionally links into mainstream class-work could be improved through the more effective use of LSWs and of IEPs. These pupils are able to gain access to the full range of the National Curriculum. The school operates a wide compulsory curriculum in Key Stage 4 with extra option courses to enhance the work prospects of the less academic pupils. Although nearly all pupils achieve at least one graded result at GCSE, representing good achievement for those of lower ability, the school should further develop its work related curriculum. Not only would this maximise the qualifications achieved by pupils, but it would also promote progression into post-16 education for still more pupils. Able pupil provision, through both Key Stages 3 and 4, is strong.

35. The suitability of the Sixth Form curriculum is good. The school offers a reasonable selection of courses, covering a wide range of GCE advanced/supplementary and advanced levels and some GNVQs. Again there is good able-student provision, although some group sizes are small. Extra off-site courses are available to Sixth Form students through co-operation with another local school and the city's FE College. The statutory requirement to teach religious education in the Sixth Form, is still not fully met since not all Sixth Form students receive it.

36. Provision for the teaching of literacy and numeracy is developing through the school. Literacy is effectively spreading across the lower school curriculum and numeracy skills are becoming more prominent within mathematics and some other departments. Presently key skills qualifications in the Sixth Form are restricted to GNVQ courses.

37. Since the last inspection the school has been accorded technology college status which resulted in an increase in the number of computers around the school. These computers are beginning to be used across subjects although the use of information

technology is variable.

38. The provision of personal, social and health education, including sex and drug education, is good. There is a structured programme right through the school which is well planned to meet the changing needs of pupils. The school has good links with local agencies and individual members of the community who contribute significantly. The quality of teaching in personal, social and health education lessons is generally satisfactory and sometimes exceptional. Planning is good.

39. The provision for work related education, including careers education and guidance, is good. From Year 9 pupils receive a comprehensive programme of teaching and more individual support. The contract for careers guidance from Learning Partnership West is delivered efficiently and works well. There is a full work experience programme within Key Stage 4, with appropriate attention to debriefings and follow up. Career guidance in the Sixth Form is similarly thorough and supportive of individuals.

40. The school's extra curricular provision is extensive and varied. It encompasses opportunities for further study of academic subjects, chances to broaden experiences, extra technology content, sporting activities and minority interest groups. Around forty "clubs" function at different times of the day and year. Parents expressed some concern over the relative lack of extra-curricular sporting activities which has resulted from physical education staffing difficulties. However, the school has acted positively to this criticism and is now rapidly rebuilding opportunities throughout the school.

41. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory but unexceptional. There are good contributions made in art, music, drama and religious education and it is possible to find some moving pieces of creative writing from highly able pupils. However, the school still does not comply with the requirements for a daily act of worship, although all pupils do now attend three assemblies a week.

42. The provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good and a strength of the school. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and foster relationships throughout the school that are based on mutual respect. Pupils learn about right and wrong and to consider the consequences of their actions. There are valuable opportunities for pupils to experience responsibility. All pupils are offered residential experience in Year 7. Many participate in Duke of Edinburgh Awards and the upper school enters a TenTors team. Sixth Formers, selected by interview, can become prefects and, as such, contribute to the development of younger pupils. Older pupils are active in helping with after school clubs and some fit in some teacher-support in a crowded timetable.

43. The provision for cultural development is generally sound. Foreign trips are a regular feature of the curriculum, as are local trips to theatre and opera performances. The school choir has won itself a national reputation and the school has mounted many music and drama productions of high quality. Multicultural education is positively tackled by a strong anti racist module within the school's personal, social and health education programme. However, the school is a mixed community and it is missing opportunities to work more systematically on ethnic and cultural diversity in British society.

44. Overall, the provision within the special educational needs department is good and in Year 7 it is very good. It is satisfactory in Key Stage 4 where more needs to be done to develop a curriculum appropriate to the needs and abilities of the pupils. The special educational needs department has identified this as a priority for improvement. At Key Stage 3 the intensive six week 'booster' course for pupils whose literacy standards are below the national expectations is very good. Both the content of the course and the quality of the

teaching enable pupils to make good progress. The other withdrawal sessions provide learning experiences which are well matched to the needs of the pupils. The special educational needs department is alert to the potential that the withdrawal system has for reducing the pupils' access to the curriculum and the organisation of this provision is successful in minimising such effects. In addition in-class support is provided in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages and the school implements the provision required for pupils with statements of special educational needs. Provision for pupils in need of support as learners of English as an additional language is sound although further specialist support is needed in Key Stage 4.

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

45. The school provides a good standard of pastoral care through the integrated use of tutors, heads of year and liaison with outside specialists. Each pupil is well known to staff and pupils are happy that they know whom to approach with any problems. The majority of parents feel that their children are happy at school and that there is a strong commitment to care. Pupils with special educational needs receive good levels of support.

46. The school has established efficient procedures to address matters of general health and safety. There are regular fire drills, emergency equipment is tested regularly and there are several members of staff trained in first aid procedures. A large proportion of the pupils have also received some first aid training. There are regular risk assessments carried out by the science and design and technology faculties but this is not the case for physical education.

47. The headteacher is the designated person for child protection issues. Several members of staff have received training and all members of staff, including newly qualified teachers and supply staff, are kept informed by means of discussion and written guidance in staff handbooks.

48. Although the whole-school attendance rate is above the national average the school is very aware of particular groups where attendance is lower than desirable and works very hard to promote the importance of regular attendance. There is close and frequent liaison with the educational welfare officer and the school has recently appointed a member of staff for the specific task of daily monitoring of individual pupils with low attendance rates. The school also actively discourages parents from taking their children away on holiday during term-time although staff feel that this occurs too frequently. There is an efficient system of signing in for late arrivals and the school recognises that too many pupils do arrive too late for registration, mainly due to the introduction of an earlier start to the school day.

49. The school has been reviewing its behaviour policy and, although standards are already high it is constantly seeking the most successful methods by which behaviour can be improved. There is a recognition that strategies can be inconsistent across the school and that this is an area for improvement. Parents have been sent a copy of the behaviour policy and pupils are being consulted about their views on behaviour strategies through the school council.

50. The school has been working hard to improve its procedures for the assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic work. A programme of high challenge targets for each pupil is now in place, well understood by staff and pupils. Parents are also kept informed about these targets, both when they are set and as their child progresses through the school, by way of regular snap-shot reviews, meetings and annual written reports. Systems are in place which should ensure efficient tracking of progress towards targets but it is recognised that use of these is still at an early stage in some subjects. Lesson-planning, within the

various faculties, should be developed that includes strategies to assist individual pupils to achieve their targets.

51. The monitoring and supporting of pupils' personal development takes place through the personal, social and health education curriculum and tutor groups. It is recognised that at present, the value of tutor time is affected by the split site arrangement which can mean that regular tutors are not always available, and the school is considering ways to improve the quality of these sessions.

52. The academic performance and welfare of pupils with special educational needs are very well monitored and supported. The school's procedures comply fully with the special educational needs Code of Practice and the requirements which apply to pupils with statements of special educational needs. The special educational needs department's procedures for assessing, recording and reviewing the progress of pupils are very good. Pupils' needs are clearly identified and that information is well used to create programmes of work which are well matched to the pupils' abilities. Detailed records ensure that lessons are well planned and targets in individual education plans and pastoral support plans are of very high quality although they are not always effectively used by all subject teachers. The involvement of the pupils in agreeing their own targets is also very good.

53. However, the contribution of subject teachers to the formal review process varies considerably. Whilst some teachers provide detailed, considered assessments which carefully identify the progress made by pupils towards achieving their targets there are those at the other extreme who provide a meagre amount of information which is of poor quality.

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

54. Most parents support the school well. Almost all those who attended the parents' meeting or completed questionnaires are pleased with the standards of teaching. They are happy with their children's development as they pass through the school and feel that the school expects pupils to work hard and achieve their best. A high number feel that the school works closely with parents, that they are kept well informed about their children's progress and the majority are happy with the quality and levels of homework.

55. The school works extremely hard to keep parents well informed. The prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are informative and attractively presented. There are generally high levels of information for parents on all aspects of school life, and parents receive a summary of the school development plan. An annual mail shot, of several important documents, instead of these being sent home with pupils, ensures that they are indeed received by parents.

56. At the time of the last inspection it was observed that parents did not like the computer-generated reports being used. The school has taken notice of this and annual reports are now mostly hand-written and very personal to each pupil. Reports contain pupils' academic targets and an explanation of what each grade represents. Within most subject areas individual teachers comment on pupils' achievements and personal qualities, usually adding useful guidance for future improvement. However, this is less successful for English, physical education, music and drama. There are suitable meetings, as additional measures to keep parents informed about their children's progress.

57. There is an appropriate number of committed parent governors who play a full part in the management of the school. A hard-working Friends' Association contributes valuable funds and encourages parents to be involved in the life of the school.

58. The links with parents are a major strength of the special educational needs department. Parents are fully involved in all aspects including contributing to the review and target setting processes. Where appropriate, the special educational needs department offers parents strategies that they can use to support the learning of their children, for example a list of the types of questions to ask after they have heard their child read. The detailed assessment and recording systems ensure that the special educational needs co-ordinator is very well informed about the strengths, weaknesses and needs of each pupil. This, in turn, means that review meetings are extremely well focused and result in positive actions to improve the attainment of pupils.

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

59. The headteacher and senior managers lead and manage the school very effectively indeed. Leadership is clear and provides high standards consistently. Over the last few years there has been a highly successful drive to provide the most effective teaching and learning possible within the constraints of the school's multiple sites.

60. The headteacher's leadership is very good. He has communicated a clear vision to the school. He has also successfully involved the whole school community in implementing this vision. All those interviewed spoke very highly of his leadership describing him as a quiet innovator who has an infinite capacity for knowing staff and children well and for paying them individual attention at all times. His leadership has been a significant factor in the improvement in the school since the last inspection. The number of pupils on the roll has increased considerably. This increase is partly due to the school's effective promotion of its vision in its wider community. The headteacher and his senior staff have increased the opportunities for pupils to achieve higher test and examination results.

61. The headteacher, senior team and governors are providing the school with very clear educational direction through a large number of strategies including: good relationships; praise; high expectations; effective communications; clear guidelines for all and a lively and happy atmosphere around the school. Other key leaders within the school are equally effective. The head of the Sixth Form is effective and gives enthusiastic and well informed direction which has helped to create the good learning environment in the Sixth Form. The current acting head of Sixth Form is equally enthusiastic and well respected by staff and students. Spending in the Sixth Form is efficient and cost effective. Other staff with overall management responsibility, provide invariably good leadership with one major exception in physical education. The deputy headteacher provides subject leaders with effective support and strong management. Subject heads are becoming increasingly involved in monitoring and evaluating their own work and the school has plans to involve them in lesson observation as part of its self-evaluation. Some departments already have peer observation and this is highly successful in promoting good practice.

62. The management of the physical education department is less than adequate. The key reasons for this inadequacy are:

- the intermittent absence of the current head of the department;
- the long-term absence of an experienced member of the department;
- the department lacks explicit guidance on its development and on the improvement of standards;
- documents relating to departmental planning are not readily available to departments members;
- a common system of keeping and using records of pupils' progress is currently being developed (this was the case in the last inspection);
- departmental support for newly qualified and temporary teachers has been inadequate.

63. The leadership and management of the special educational needs department are very good. The experienced and well-qualified special educational needs co-ordinator provides clear direction for a team of committed and talented LSWs, most of whom are qualified teachers. The organisation of the school's special educational needs department's provision is very good. Most of its resources, human and material, are focused upon supporting pupils early in Key Stage 3 and the good progress made by many of those pupils illustrates the effectiveness of this approach. The special educational needs department's improvement plan identifies appropriate priorities but does not always link the actions to success criteria which will result in measurable improvement in pupils' attainment.

64. Whilst the special educational needs department makes very good use of assessment data to match teaching to the needs of the pupils it has yet to extend that analysis to evaluate its own strengths and areas for development. The department is currently unable to provide hard data to illustrate with which pupils, for example in terms of entry level attainment and categories of special needs, it is more or less successful.

65. The special educational needs department is not involved in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs in subject areas. As a result the school does not know, other than anecdotally, where its strengths and weaknesses lie nor how to target professional development for subject teachers and thus improve the overall quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs.

66. There are 175 pupils on the school's register of special educational needs. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs is below the national average. The majority of pupils are placed on the special educational needs register because on entry to the school their level of attainment in literacy is below the standard expected for their age.

67. Since the last inspection the special educational needs department has made good progress in improving the aspects directly related to its own work including its reviewing and recording procedures, the quality of its worksheets and its use of ICT. It has had less impact upon the quality of teaching by subject teachers.

68. To improve further the progress made by, and the teaching of, pupils with special educational needs:

- the school should monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream classes;
- the special educational needs department should use its assessment data to evaluate its own strengths and weaknesses and set targets for improvement;
- the school should improve the consistency with which the targets and strategies contained within individual education plans and pastoral support plans are used by subject teachers;
- the school should ensure that LSWs are effectively deployed by all subject teachers;
- the special educational needs department should produce group IEPs for those pupils who receive intensive, short-term support to inform subject teachers of the type of support that those pupils require.

69. Governors give good and effective support to the school. They know their school well. They are fully involved in the school's strategic planning as well as in the monitoring of its work. The chair of governors shares the headteacher's vision and offers appropriate challenge in keeping the school moving forward. The governors have worked hard to improve

the weaknesses in the accommodation with a rolling programme being effectively implemented by an effective bursar. The governing body has a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The statutory requirements for a daily collective act of worship and for the teaching of religious education in the Sixth Form are not fulfilled. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 do not have the same opportunities as pupils in Year 7 to receive information technology lessons. Consequently, provision in Key Stage 3 information technology does not comply with the statutory curriculum requirements.

70. The monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement of teaching and learning are a high priority in the school. Over the last year almost every teacher has been observed by senior managers. A report was compiled listing clearly the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching. Clear targets for improvements were agreed and implemented. Individual departments have their own peer observation systems which enhance the spread of good practice. The school is currently planning to devolve lesson observation and the monitoring of teaching to individual subject areas and faculties. There are some departments that are doing an excellent job of evaluating their work imaginatively. The geographers in the humanities faculty, for example, noticed that there were a few pupils persistently failing to complete their homework. The head of faculty researched their post code and found that they all came from the same social deprived area. She and her colleagues immediately set up a homework club to help these pupils. There are other examples of monitoring leading to imaginative solutions to apparently intractable problems. The school's monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement strategies are successful as is evidenced by:

- the high challenge targets set for pupils over the last two years;
- the effective work done to enhance the teaching of most borderline pupils;
- the targeted teaching of Key Stage 3 pupils which has resulted in a consistent improvement in test results;
- the targeted teaching of GCE advanced level students which has resulted in an increase in the number of students achieving the higher grades of A and B;
- the teachers' high level of awareness of the constant potential for improvement which has created an ethos of a self-improving school.

71. School development planning is very good. The current school development plan has many strengths. All appropriate managers are involved in the development planning process. The plan itself includes clear success criteria and clear costing. Pupils' targets set are reflected in the overall plan and its implementation. Feedback from the school's effective monitoring and evaluation is used to feed into the development planning in a way that has a positive impact on improving practice. The modern languages faculty surveys pupils annually and uses the results to feed into its priorities for development. A recent survey, for example, showed that pupils felt that they did not receive sufficient praise. The faculty ensured that its practice incorporated consistent deserved praise, which in turn improved pupils' attitudes.

72. The school has sufficient staff to cover National Curriculum and other curricular needs. The match of qualifications to subjects taught is very good. Staff morale is very high and the school has a positive ethos. This is a strength and ensures that both staff and pupils feel that they can achieve their very best in whatever they undertake. The high challenge targets set for pupils are much appreciated by the parents. The weaknesses outlined in the previous report have been addressed except for the lack of a daily collective act of worship, for the lack of provision of religious education in the Sixth Form and the insufficiency of information technology provision at Key Stage 3.

73. The provision made for staff development is good. Each faculty area is responsible for spending its own staff development in-service training fund. The induction of newly qualified staff and of new staff is good except in the physical education department where it

has been less than satisfactory. Appraisal strategies are effective and feed into the school's staff development programme. Staff are well supported in the school's recent introduction of computers as part of its technology status award. Public recognition has been made of the school's efforts to develop its community (both of staff and of pupils). Amongst such gestures of recognition are:

- the school was awarded the Centre for the Study of Comprehensive Schools 2000-2001 for "securing high quality State Education" for all its pupils;
- the school received the 1998 Charter Mark for "excellence in the provision of public services";
- in 2000, the school was redesignated as an 'Investor in People' for the way that it invests effort and resources to develop its working force.

74. Subject learning resources are adequate and effectively used. The library in the lower school is too small and has inadequate stock. The accommodation is well looked after with the bursar who is effective in applying a long term rolling programme of improvements. However, there are serious shortcomings in the accommodation which need to be addressed by the school and by its Local Education Authority:

- the split site causes considerable stress to staff who work very hard to minimise any negative impact the travelling necessary may have on the pupils' progress and learning and on their own lesson planning;
- accommodation is unsatisfactory and has a negative impact on the pupils' learning in the following areas: science, art, geography, music and physical education;
- the school has four sites: lower school, upper school (just over half a mile away from each other), Sixth Form and playing fields. The playing fields are a distance of some two miles from the school. Pupils need to be bussed to the fields which eats into their valuable curriculum time;
- the lack of a teacher/subject base militates against some rooms having displays of appropriate and attractive work by pupils and with prompts to aid learning, despite some valiant efforts by many teachers to maintain attractive learning environments.

75. Financial administration and management are real strengths of the school. The bursar does excellent work in maintaining the school's finances on an even keel and in earning further funds through lettings. He has also been highly successful in refurbishing various parts of the school as part of a long term rolling programme. He has done the impossible to improve a difficult learning environment short of raising the funds necessary to build the school on one site which is the only apparent resolution to an intractable problem. Specific grants are used for their designated purposes. Office administration is efficient and much appreciated by the staff. Best value principles of comparison, consultations, challenge and competition have been used effectively in managing the school and in its use of resources. The school provides very good value for money.

76. The school gives a strong emphasis to equality of access and opportunity. This approach is reflected in its key documents including the statement of ethos and values and in the practice observed throughout the school. Early indications are that the recent strategies to promote social inclusion have considerably enhanced equality of access and opportunity. Provision aimed at valuing cultural diversity through the curriculum requires further development.

77. There is satisfactory provision for pupils with English as an additional language with the support teachers enabling pupils to make appropriate progress. However, pupils, particularly at Key Stage 4, would benefit from extra specialist support. A further way forward is for the school to encourage pupils who have a home language other than English to study

their language up to examination level where possible. Apart from the obvious benefit to the pupils concerned, there would be the added bonus of the school being seen to celebrate British cultural diversity.

78. The school's technology status has had a positive impact on information technology provision. In the 1994 inspection report, standards in information technology were criticised as being poor. Since then, with the help of the school's technology status, the ratio of pupils to computer has gone from 30:1 to 6:1. This has resulted in considerably enhanced achievement by the end of each key stage with a dramatic improvement in the use of computers and in the pupils' information technology skills. The current unsatisfactory situation in Years 8 and 9 is being rectified through introducing a flexible tutorial timetable that gives pupils two opportunities per week to use computers.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

78. The school should now:

1. Improve the effectiveness of the accommodation by:
  - continuing and enhancing the current rolling programme of improvement with specific focus on the following areas: science, art, geography, music and physical education;
  - work closely with the Local Education Authority in order to resolve the worst excesses of the split site especially as regards the distant playing fields;
  - ensure, as far as is feasible, that subject rooms are grouped together to allow teachers to display pupils' work and subject related learning prompts.  
(See paragraphs 74, 88, 91, 99, 105, 111, 116, 128, 157, 160, 165.)
2. Resolve the issues relating to the ineffective management of the physical education department by:
  - ensuring that the department enjoys consistent leadership;
  - develop appropriate assessment systems and ensure that they are consistently used.  
(See paragraphs 62, 161-165.)
3. To improve the provision of information and communications technology in Key Stage 3 by:
  - offering discrete information and communications technology lessons in Years 8 and 9 as currently happens in Year 7;
  - encouraging staff to plan for pupils' use of computers as part of their routine work across all subjects.  
(See paragraphs 7, 31, 37, 69, 78, 136-148.)

The following issues should also be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- ensure that pupils receive their statutory entitlement to a daily act of corporate worship;
- ensure that Sixth Form students receive their statutory entitlement to religious education;
- ensure that all subjects in Key Stage 4 target the improvement rate of all pupils with the same rigour with which the higher attainers are challenged;
- ensure that the special educational needs department produces group individual education plans to help subject teachers to offer appropriate support and to use learning support workers more effectively;
- ensure increased opportunities in the Key Stage 4 work related curriculum in order further to maximise qualifications achieved by pupils;
- ensure that teachers make the best use of curricular opportunities available to celebrate British cultural diversity;
- encourage pupils with home languages other than English to take external examinations in the languages where possible.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	181
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	46

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	28	40	25	3	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	881	134
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	13.2	18.1

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	12	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	17.2	

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	27

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	25
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	41

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7
National comparative data	7.9

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
National comparative data	1.1

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	N/a	148	148

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Girls	115	104	87
	Total	115	104	87
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	78 (69)	70 (65)	59 (65)
	National	63 (73)	62 (60)	53 (54)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	30 (42)	42 (43)	30 (34)
	National	28 (42)	38 (35)	23 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Girls	112	102	84
	Total	112	102	84
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	76 (69)	69 (68)	57 (71)
	National	64 (70)	64 (65)	60 (63)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	41 (35)	38 (42)	22 (30)
	National	31 (38)	37 (38)	28 (31)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	N/a	143	143

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	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Girls	79	126	134
	Total	79	126	134
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	55 (44)	88 (91)	94 (95)
	National	46.6 (44.6)	90.9 (89.8)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	40.3 (36.5)
	National	38 (37)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	21	86
	National		N/a

### Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	5	67	72

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	8.8	16.2	15.6 (15.4)	N/a	4.8	4.8 (3.3)
National	N/a	N/a	17.9 (17.6)	N/a	N/a	2.8 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	13	100
	National		73

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	4
Black – other	3
Indian	3
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	4
White	979
Any other minority ethnic group	3

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	30	
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	64
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.5

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	57.5

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13**

Key Stage 3	28
Key Stage 4	26
Sixth Form	15.5

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	2896048
Total expenditure	2891771
Expenditure per pupil	2875
Balance brought forward from previous year	-5033
Balance carried forward to next year	-756

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1015
Number of questionnaires returned	268

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	38	52	8	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	44	50	3	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	25	62	8	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	57	12	4	5
The teaching is good.	29	64	3	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	33	55	8	1	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	43	1	0	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	37	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	33	53	9	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	53	41	2	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	46	4	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28	54	9	1	7

### Summary of parents' and carers' responses

The overwhelming majority of parents responding to the questionnaire and attending the meeting for parents have positive views of the school. They feel that the school is welcoming and supportive and that their children enjoy their learning and have a positive attitude to the school. They feel that their children achieve well and that they receive a good quality of education. Parents spoke of their children behaving well and enjoying the many improvements that the school has made in recent years. Parents expressed concerns about the insufficiency of extra curricular sporting activities and about the amount of homework set. The inspection found that their concerns about homework are not justified since the homework set is appropriate. Inspectors partly agree the parents' concerns over the insufficiency of extra-curricular sporting activities. This deficiency has been largely rectified in recent months.

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

### **ENGLISH**

79. This is a good department that has sustained high quality work since the last inspection.

80. Based on their attainment on entry to the school, pupils make good progress in English across the two key stages and in the Sixth Form. The department's commitment to high levels of challenge allied to supportive structures for pupils' work provides a good framework for the development of skills, knowledge and understanding, which was already apparent at the time of the last inspection.

81. Pupils' attainment in the English tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 was well above the national average. Over the last three years it has been close to the national average for girls and well above the performance of similar schools; teacher assessments are in line with results in National Curriculum tests. Across the ability range, GCSE grades A\*-C in English are above the national average; the department has taken effective action in response to the 1999 results that revealed relative performance in English below that of other departments in the school. The results of pupils entered for English literature are well above the national average. Attainment in English in the Sixth Form maintains the high standards reported in the past with over fifty per cent of candidates achieving grades A or B in 1999. In all lessons seen, attainment was consistent with the age and stage of the pupils.

82. Speaking and listening skills are good. In the majority of lessons, pupils speak confidently in a range of contexts, show interest and respect for the ideas and opinions of others and use Standard English to a high level of competence. Most pupils contribute to discussion, are able to explain themselves well and respond thoughtfully to their teachers' questions. From Key Stage 3 onwards, pupils work effectively in role and can sustain characters and points of view impressively. Lower ability pupils require clearer guidance to support their talk in groups; they respond well when this is given. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils have developed fluent and mature skills and are able to explore ideas and engage with others with maturity and perception. Sixth Form lessons are characterised by open and mature exchanges between teachers and their students who express points of view and pose questions skilfully.

83. Reading levels are high. The majority of pupils have secure reading skills on entry to the school; effective support and guidance is provided for those who do not. Pupils read accurately and fluently with increasing discrimination and insight. They are encouraged to appreciate the nuances of language and acquire inferential comprehension skills well. Able Year 9 pupils explored characterisation in *Macbeth* in ways that demonstrated close textual study which they applied well in oral work. Similarly, a Year 11 class was guided to a mature critical reading of *To kill a Mockingbird*. Use of the library is adequate but reference and research skills should be developed – particularly at Key Stage 3.

84. High expectations and clear structures to support individual work enable pupils to acquire writing skills that reflect their age and ability. Appropriate support is given to pupils who have poor mastery of the conventions of spelling and grammar; they make good progress as a result. By the end of Year 11, pupils attain secure standards of writing that communicate meaning clearly and accurately. Many pupils rise to the challenge of work set and take the opportunity to extend the length of their work. Pupils use a range of styles of writing across all years and are given opportunities to write for a variety of purposes. For example, one Year 9 pupil produced an exceptional extended creative piece based on

incidents from the Russian Revolution. GCSE coursework folders show care, commitment and pride in original finished assignments. The department has developed procedures for drafting and improving work since the last inspection. More opportunities could be taken to write for audiences other than the teacher.

85. Pupils acquire skills in literacy, which enable them to perform at increasingly higher levels – notably through the use of good approaches to study, note-taking and information retrieval. Good progress is made with each of the Attainment Targets for English. Pupils on the Register of Special Educational Needs are generally well supported in English lessons although work is not adequately adapted to properly respond to their needs. Although gifted and talented pupils are identified, further strategies should be developed to cater for them.

86. Pupils have positive attitudes to English. They follow instructions attentively, co-operate with each other well and sustain high levels of concentration. Relationships between teachers and pupils are consistently good and are aided by rewarding, well-organised and consistent expectations by teachers. Pupils demonstrate interest in their work and are prepared to strive for their best. Constructive relationships exist between pupils in lessons and there are no undercurrents that inhibit effective learning. Pupils are willing to engage with maturity and sensitivity with activities that are concerned with challenging attitudes and values.

87. The teaching of English is good across all key stages. Teachers are well qualified and have good knowledge of their subject. All lessons have clear and well-expressed objectives within well-planned units of work that provide good structures for learning. Teachers know how to get the best out of pupils and amplify key aspects of learning in order to inspire trust and confidence. Where teaching is good, the pace is urgent and the variety of tasks for pupils well modulated. In some lessons, teachers rely too much on themselves as the central resource for learning and do not require pupils to work as individually and collaboratively as they might. Further collaboration with the school's drama teachers would enhance the teaching of English. Many teachers are skilful in their use of open and exploratory questions that encourage pupils to express ideas and opinions. All teachers reward pupils' efforts and exhibit excellent listening skills. In most cases, teacher guidance of pupils in lessons and through the marking of work enables them to improve. In line with current departmental priorities, more opportunities should be taken to set specific and achievable targets for individual pupil improvement. Homework is set and marked regularly as an extension of work in lessons. Teachers use the department's book resources well, however, departmentally produced material is not always well presented and its storage and use by all teachers is under-developed.

88. The subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. However, the place of information and communication technology in the English curriculum is not clearly defined; pupil entitlement should be assured especially at Key Stage 3. Assessment procedures, including the storage of work, are secure. The department is well led by a subject leader who sets high standards, reviews and assesses work effectively and identifies appropriate priorities for improvement which are well supported and achieved. Pupil progress is tracked and some work has been undertaken to evaluate the impact of individual teachers on pupil attainment. To improve self-evaluation in the department, rigorous classroom observation, complemented by team discussion of the characteristics of good practice, should be developed, in line with the school's performance management policy. Documentation to support teaching and learning is sound and the improvement planning process is good. The department has responded well to the National Literacy Strategy and the Framework for the Teaching of English. Accommodation across three sites continues to limit the work of the English department. Although display of pupils' work in some rooms in the lower school is sound, all rooms that are designated for English should present an overt sense of the values

and expectations of the department. Office and storage space in the upper school should be rationalised better to encourage a team identity.

89. Drama is taught separately from English by a team of two specialist teachers and a part-time teacher of English. At Key Stage 3, all pupils experience drama for part of each year. Standards of attainment are high and pupils acquire skills, knowledge and understanding at an impressive rate. Challenging conventions and concepts are well assimilated by pupils who are eager to apply their capabilities in practical and creative ways. Pupils demonstrate excellent control over language and movement, collaborate well in groups and take pride in performance. The subject contributes a great deal to pupils' self-esteem, confidence and learning skills in other subjects; it is a worthy contributor to the core of the curriculum. Results in drama at GCSE and theatre studies at GCE advanced level are good and attainment in lessons is of a very high standard.

90. The number of students opting for the subject at examination level is increasing as a result of the very good and often excellent teaching of drama. The specialist teachers are well respected and teach in complementary ways. The departmental schemes of work are well thought out, secure a rigorous entitlement for all pupils and provide good support for non-specialist teachers. An excellent Year 9 class on dramatic tension and a Year 13 theatre studies workshop on Brecht were examples of the pace and challenge which typify the work of drama in the school.

91. The school's drama studio is a good, though small resource, however, the teaching of drama in the lower school hall is not satisfactory and subject to interruptions which experienced teachers counteract very skilfully. Drama contributes to the extended curricular life of the school with past productions in conjunction with the music department and visits to local theatres.

92. Attainment in media studies is satisfactory and in line with national expectations in the Sixth Form and at Key Stage 4. Pupils show enjoyment and enthusiasm for the subject; they listen well, engage constructively in discussion and understand key issues and vocabulary learned in previous lessons. Teaching is satisfactory; the teacher has good subject knowledge and the confident ability to link concepts to practical examples. Pupils acquire good knowledge and understanding of subject terminology and make sound progress in lessons.

## **MATHEMATICS**

93. Standards by the end of Key Stage 3 are high. They are significantly above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. This high standard has been maintained in 2000. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' progress has slowed a little and standards are around the national average. A more detailed analysis shows that able pupils continue to perform strongly, but those of middle ability do not maintain their earlier progress. In this respect the mathematics department performs less well than other subject areas. At the GCE advanced level, recent years have produced a wide spread of results. However, groups now in the Sixth Form are much larger and standards of course-work are high. The department also runs a very successful GCSE retake group where standards for middle ability pupils are impressive.

94. The standards of work seen in the department are sound. In lessons attainment through Key Stage 3 is above the national average with just a little low-set work in Year 8 being rather undemanding. Able pupils are reaching high standards through Key Stage 4 and attainment on Sixth Form courses is universally good. Work sampling showed some exceptional mathematics from the school's most-able pupils by the ends of Key Stages 3

and 4 and on GCE advanced level courses. Standards for middle ability pupils in Key Stage 4 can be good but not enough pupils are reaching this level. Special needs pupils generally progress well and reach appropriate standards.

95. Within mathematics, pupils' numeracy skills and abilities to work mentally are developing strongly. Numeracy is also applied increasingly across the curriculum, particularly effectively in design and technology and geography. The algebraic understanding of able pupils is good. Standards in shape and space are more variable, with quality graphical understanding by able pupils in Year 11 being contrasted with low level circle and angle work in Year 9. Pupils' abilities to tackle project and investigative work are good and some of the outcomes are exceptional. In relation to skills across the curriculum, pupils use computers very competently both to enhance their mathematical understanding and also to improve speed and display. Skills with graphical calculators are also good. Reading and writing standards are appropriate but talking and listening habits, between pupils, are underdeveloped.

96. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Around half the lessons seen were of excellent or very good quality. This unusual reservoir of talent will be invaluable in improving the occasional lessons that are not effective. The best lessons tended to be presented with plenty of enthusiasm and placed mathematical ideas in contexts that were familiar to the learners. They used well prepared resources and often involved some element of small group work to involve more pupils in action or debate. There was sometimes a nice explicit contrast made between the "ease" of some parts of the lesson and the "higher challenge" ideas that followed. Information technology was well used to enhance mathematical learning experiences. In less effective lessons there was a tendency for an unimaginative approach to be taken to a topic, so failing to engage sufficient pupils' interest. This was compounded by the teacher asking too many closed questions and generally trying to "talk" the pupils towards understanding.

97. It is to the school's credit that the learning responses of its pupils are impressive enough to be able to include elements of risk taking in lesson planning generally. The very rare exception to this good behaviour was with low ability Year 8 sets towards the end of the morning or afternoon sessions. At this stage of the term these classes were difficult to control and the poor behaviour of a minority was affecting the progress of other pupils.

98. The mathematics curriculum continues to fully meet statutory requirements. Able-pupil provision has been prioritised and is very strong. National Numeracy Strategy links are becoming well developed and supporting improved curriculum continuity from primary schools. Schemes of work exist for all courses, but those affecting middle-ability pupils need expanding to identify trickier topics and offer practical guidance on smart teaching approaches. Pupils with special educational needs are generally well supported by lower set approaches, but some Individual Educational Plans require additional action.

99. The department is well led and managed. Despite accommodation difficulties, and significant whole school responsibilities carried by staff, it works well as a team and has clear priority objectives, which it has a good record of achieving. Since the last inspection there has been good progress towards improving Key Stage 3 standards, enhancing Sixth Form provision and performance, and providing challenge for the most able pupils. This is alongside improving the use of ICT and developing primary links. There is now a newly emerging priority of the relatively slow progress of average Key Stage 4 pupils. This problem requires priority analysis and action.

100. Staffing is strong in both subject knowledge and experience. Timetabling is adequate but the department is coping with too many split classes and some large bottom ability sets.

Staff development has been very effective in spreading information technology skills. The same process should now be applied to sharing classroom teaching and learning skills. Resources for learning have been improved since the last inspection and are now good and effectively used.

## **SCIENCE**

101. Standards in science have continued to rise since the last inspection, and are overall good. At Key Stage 3, results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 1999 are high in comparison with those of similar schools. Whilst the number of pupils achieving Level 5 in their Key Stage 3 tests is broadly in line with the national average, the number of pupils achieving Level 6 is above the national average. In the 2000 Key Stage 3 tests the faculty managed to raise the numbers reaching Level 6 still further, at the same time reducing the number of pupils at Level 4. Standards remain above average at the end of Key Stage 4. Almost all pupils are entered for GCSE examinations in science, and all are successful in achieving grades A\* to G. The number of girls gaining A\* to C grades is also well above the national average for girls in maintained schools. The faculty has managed successfully, year on year, to raise the attainment of more able pupils, but the number of pupils achieving grades C or D remains high. Appropriate strategies should, therefore, now be developed in order to raise the level of achievement of the middle attaining pupils. Standards achieved by Sixth Form students in each of the sciences at GCE advanced level are excellent. A significant number of students gained either grades A or B in the most recent examinations

102. Achievement in lessons at Key Stage 3 is at least satisfactory and is frequently above average. Written work is organised and well presented. Practical skills are developing and pupils use apparatus both sensibly and safely. Investigational skills are embryonic in Year 7, but by Year 9 pupils are beginning to evaluate their findings and to decide what makes a fair test. The use of information technology is developed throughout the key stage, and by the end of the key stage, Year 9 pupils are using information technology to undertake revision as well as their own independent study. Achievement of Key Stage 4 pupils in lessons is more varied, ranging from very high to below expectations. In some cases, work is insufficiently differentiated to match the abilities of the pupils, resulting in a lack of understanding, and sometimes, slow progress. Schemes of work have been developed which indicate clearly what pupils of differing abilities are expected to achieve, but, as yet, this is not reflected in some lesson plans. Science investigations are undertaken very well, and some girls have managed to achieve maximum marks for their assessed investigations, demonstrating a very firm grasp of the methodology required for a scientific enquiry. Students in Years 12 and 13 have a very good understanding of the knowledge and skills required for success in their GCE advanced levels. They demonstrate appropriate study skills and are very capable of undertaking independent study, making good use of information technology.

103. The majority of pupils enjoy their science lessons, particularly practical work. Pupils are prepared to ask and answer questions, although there are a few pupils, particularly at Key Stage 4, who are prepared to sit passively contributing very little to the lessons. These pupils are, however, the exception and the majority of pupils are determined to succeed. There are no significant differences in attitude between pupils in upper or lower ability sets. In activities requiring pupils to discuss ideas, they are very confident and are able to draw upon prior knowledge and their own experiences. This was particularly evident for biological topics and for the lessons on light.

104. Pupils benefit from mainly good or very good teaching throughout the school. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject: they use an effective range of questions to test pupil understanding, and generally their expectations of their pupils are high. Practical investigations are well planned: pupils are encouraged to undertake risk

assessments before starting their practical work and a strong emphasis is put on the development of skills necessary for Science Attainment Target 1 (Investigations). Pupils' work is regularly assessed and good use is made of formative comments for improvement. Teachers have a range of strategies for targeting improvement for individual pupils, particularly at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, such strategies are more embryonic but are developing. In those few instances where teaching is less strong, insufficient use is made of targeted questioning of individual pupils to challenge and to ensure that they are all involved. These lessons tend to be insufficiently differentiated to match the varying abilities of the pupils. Pupils respond very well to good teaching, readily engaging with their tasks. For example, pupils in Key Stage 3 are beginning to formulate simple hypotheses, work together well, and spend a high time on task. At Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form, pupils are beginning to use their prior knowledge to seek solutions; they have good organisational and study skills and are using their information technology skills to help them with their studies. The majority of pupils adopt a very purposeful approach to their studies.

105. The Head of Faculty provides clear leadership and vision for the faculty. This is complemented by a team of teachers who have responsibility allowances within the faculty, and who ably share in the administrative duties. Good strategies for target setting have been developed at Key Stage 3 which go beyond the numerical scores and address teaching, identifying those areas in the schemes of work where pupils have gained appropriate understanding and those in which further teaching is required. The faculty has very successfully addressed the issues raised in the last inspection report and has ensured an appropriate balance between the need to acquire knowledge, skills, and understanding, with the need to develop individual investigational skills. A sound monitoring policy has been developed, involving peer observation, senior staff observation and moderation of course work and marking. However, in order to ensure that standards continue to rise, there is a need to further refine these monitoring procedures to include: a more formalised system for checking teacher lesson plans, with particular attention to proposed strategies for differentiation; focussed lesson observations (perhaps looking at differentiation), and an evaluation of the target setting strategies adopted, particularly at Key Stage 4 in order to ensure that they have the maximum impact for all pupils. Opportunities for teachers to undertake benchmarking exercises of other teachers and of other departments would be helpful if they can be arranged. The availability of resources throughout the faculty is sufficient. The faculty makes good use of old but sufficient laboratory facilities. Some laboratories are, however, almost overcrowded by some of the larger teaching sets and the requirement to teach practical science in a classroom is unsatisfactory. The faculty has tried very hard to overcome these accommodation problems, but the solution cannot be their responsibility.

## **ART**

106. GCSE art results are on a rising trend and have been consistently above the national average for girls. For example, 88.6% of students who sat the GCSE art examination in 1999 gained \*A to C grades compared with 61% nationally. The number of students taking GCE advanced level art has been too small for meaningful national comparisons. The grades achieved have been mainly modest, but with noticeable improvement in the most recent set of results.

107. In Key Stage 3, the attainment of about a third of students matches expectations for their ages, while the attainment of about two thirds of students is above expectations. Attainment in Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form is mainly above expectations for the GCSE and GCE advanced level courses respectively.

108. In all key stages there are strengths in practical skills. Painting and colour handling develop consistently in all years. Mixing and matching colour sensitively, tonal control and good exploitation of the qualities of painting materials are particular features of Key Stage 4 work. Most of the work in all year groups is based on pupils' own ideas and feelings, generating plenty of individually expressive imagery. There are many examples of drawing, both from secondary sources and from first hand observation, although this latter skill is not so well developed. Progress has been made with three-dimensional work since the last inspection, with work seen in a variety of materials, some large-scale, in free standing and relief forms. There is good evidence of visual reference to other artists, designers, styles and cultures, but apart from the Sixth Form, pupils' historical and contextual knowledge is weak, and they lack experience of critical discussion.

109. There are few opportunities to develop skills with print making, or to use computers in art apart from historical research.

110. Teaching in all key stages was almost all good, with nothing less than satisfactory teaching seen. A major strength of art teaching is the large amount of individual attention, ensuring that every pupil receives individually tailored support. This enables pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, to make purposeful progress and engage their own individual ideas and choices to make art lessons truly expressive experiences. Almost all pupils in all key stages respond well to the positive ethos generated by the teachers. They work hard, improve their skills, and value the expert subject guidance they receive.

111. The last inspection drew attention to unsatisfactory accommodation for art, and this continues to be the case. If anything, the situation is worse due to the loss of one of the art studios. Poor studio conditions now prevent full development of three-dimensional work and make large-scale projects difficult.

112. The current placing of art within technology has done little to advance strategic development of the subject. The further development of art would benefit from a more cohesive whole school approach to the management and provision of the creative arts area of the curriculum.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

113. In 1999 GCSE pass rates were above average, and passes at grades A\*-C, as well as average GCSE points per pupil, were well above average. Contrary to the national picture, girls generally did better in design and technology than in other subjects in the school. GCSE results have fluctuated in recent years but have remained above average, and the 1999 results represented a strong improvement since the last inspection. Food technology results continue to be the weakest among the courses offered, though in 1999 they rose to the national average standard. GCSE grades in resistant materials and especially graphics are consistently very high. At the GCE advanced level, results in the wide range of courses have varied widely over time, reflecting relatively small numbers entered. Concerns over low grades at advanced level expressed in the last inspection report have now been overcome. Students now achieve the higher grades of A and B, though the proportions doing so have varied above and below national figures. Recent results in textiles at advanced level have been strong, and have represented a very significant improvement since the last inspection.

114. By the end of Year 9, standards of work are above those expected nationally, and this observation corresponds with teacher assessments of end-of-Key Stage 3 performance. Pupils have strong designing skills, which they carry with them into all aspects of their work.

High standards of design are underpinned by good knowledge and understanding about their subject matter. Work is presented to high standards: pupils have confident drawing skills and work is well annotated to show how their ideas develop. Finished products are made well in all areas because pupils show accuracy in measuring, cutting and joining materials, and care in the finish that is applied. In Years 10 and 11 strong foundations in Key Stage 3 are built upon to keep standards above average, and design work is enhanced by the effective use of computers for processing information and presenting ideas. In resistant materials, storage items made in wood are produced to a very high quality of accuracy and finish. In the Sixth Form, standards also exceed expectations as students draw on a wide range of sources and experiences to stimulate a creative flair in the design of products, such as the work of the Art Nouveau movement in textiles, and current business marketing techniques in graphics. At all stages, pupils achieve well, and they mostly meet or exceed challenging targets that are set for them. Standards in food technology and textiles, previously identified areas of underachievement, have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory.

115. Teaching and learning are good in all key stages. The teachers are confident in their very good subject knowledge and expertise, and this enables pupils to develop the very strong knowledge, understanding and skills, which permeate their work at every stage. Teachers continually re-enforce the principles of good design. In the best cases, this is done with references to design in the world of business and industry, which brings the subject alive to pupils and creates a sense of excitement in the subject. Teachers work hard to create and use industrial links and other resources which enable this to happen. As a consequence, pupils mostly engage in extensive research and development of their design ideas. They generally make good use of their research findings and survey information to generate very good specifications for their designs, although in textiles at Key Stage 3 specifications need more precision. In graphics at Key Stage 4 pupils seek information from a particularly wide range of local, national and international sources, though in food technology sources are more narrowly centred on text books and resources in school, and the scope of resulting ideas is more limited. Teachers give pupils very clear information on the progress they are making and on the standards of their work. Pupils' work is assessed to criteria which are specifically related to National Curriculum Attainment Levels or examination board mark schemes, and these are well understood by pupils: they can see clearly what they need to do to improve. In GCSE graphics and resistant materials, the systems which teachers have in place for monitoring pupils' progress through their coursework are strong and keep pupils working at a fast pace: this is not the case in food and textiles and consequently less progress is made by pupils. Teachers have appropriately high expectations of their pupils: high challenge targets are well used by teachers to keep pupils of all levels of attainment working to appropriate standards. Pupils at all stages enjoy their work, behave very well, and apply themselves fully to their tasks. There are very good relationships in lessons: pupils feel able to discuss work freely with teachers and other pupils. Pupils are also highly independent of thought: creative ideas are derived very much from personal interests and experiences. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language learn as well as their peers. Lessons are mostly well managed by teachers to provide appropriate challenge for gifted and talented pupils.

116. The subject as a whole is very well led and managed, and there is a strong commitment across the department to improving standards. Weaknesses identified at the last inspection have been addressed, and improvement has been good. There has been an emphasis on developing common approaches and sharing good practice across the teaching of all the design and technology subjects, which has served to raise standards, especially in food and textiles. Accommodation for food technology, a key issue at the last inspection, is now very good, as it is for the subject at large. Appropriate plans are in place to address deficiencies in the provision of opportunities for pupils at Key Stage 3 to use computers and to study more about the structures of materials and products.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

117. This is a very good department in which excellent management has led to consistent, high-quality teaching and to results which are good and improving. Some aspects of the department's work, such as the use of assessment and the teaching of skills, are excellent. At the time of the last inspection, the department was achieving sound to good standards. Results, teaching quality and schemes of work have all improved considerably since then, and the department has the capacity for significant further improvement.

118. Standards in tests and examinations are above the national average and are improving. In the teacher assessments at age 14, the proportion of pupils achieving both the nationally-expected level and the higher levels is above the national average and has risen in recent years. At GCSE, in the 1999 examination, all candidates bar one passed, and two-thirds achieved a grade C or better. In 2000, all pupils passed, 70 per cent achieved the higher grades and 30 per cent achieved grades A\* and A. All of these figures are well above the national average. At advanced level, the department consistently achieves a 100 per cent pass rate, and a high and rising percentage of the highest grades – 38% were awarded grades A and B in 1999, and 62% in 2000. Again, these figures are well above national averages.

119. The standards of work seen in the inspection were above average throughout the school. The youngest pupils in Key Stage 3 can identify the factors which affected early settlers' choice of site for their settlements, and can apply these principles intelligently to a case study, producing accurate, detailed written accounts. By the end of the key stage, pupils can describe and compare climates, and understand how climate affects vegetation and human activity. Pupils speak with confidence, giving full, articulate answers to questions; they listen to each other and to the teacher well. Presentation of work is of a high standard.

120. Standards in Key Stage 4 are also above average. By the end of the key stage, all pupils can carry out investigations well. In their study of micro-climate within the school grounds, pupils carried out fair tests, measured and recorded accurately, described variations well and drew intelligent conclusions about possible causes. Their knowledge of geographical vocabulary is very good, and they use technical language accurately, helped by the very useful subject vocabulary books. The high proportion of more-able pupils write full, detailed and well-ordered essays, while pupils of lower ability, given prompts and "scaffolding", complete accurate, revisable sets of notes.

121. At advanced level, standards of work are well above average. Students are diligent and thoughtful, and their skills are of a very high standard: they analyse, research and make presentations unusually well, the work of earlier years bearing fruit. They see connections between work in different modules and between human and physical factors. Their knowledge of environmental and development studies is up-to-date and their understanding sophisticated. On entering the Sixth Form, their knowledge of physical geography is patchy, weakening some of their work on landforms. However, their skills are strong, enabling them to adjust rapidly to the demands of the higher level of study.

122. Pupils' attitudes to their work are very good; behaviour in most classes is excellent, and they enjoy their geography. Time on task in lessons is very high, helped by prompt lesson starts and quick settling to work. Pupils work well together, and can be trusted to work unsupervised. Misbehaviour which slows the lesson down and inhibits learning is very rare. Pupils are helped to develop strong sets of values; they have a genuine interest in environmental issues, particularly in sustainable development. The department's work empowers pupils to manage their own learning, enhancing their personal development. The

subject is well regarded by pupils.

123. Teaching across the department is of a very good standard; it is never less than satisfactory, and is most often good, very good or excellent. Half of the teaching seen was very good or excellent. Teachers choose methods carefully to motivate all pupils, providing a lot of practical and fieldwork. Teaching invariably promotes pupils' learning, often very effectively indeed. All the teachers have very good subject knowledge with an obvious love of their subject. Lessons are very well planned; pupils are given clear aims in each lesson, and the recap at the end always checks whether these have been met. This gives a clear focus to each lesson and helps pupils understand their progress. Expectations are very high: pupils are expected to answer demanding questions and to work independently of the teacher. Their work output is generally good, although on occasions they could work still more quickly. Teachers consistently refer pupils to what to they will have to do to achieve the highest examination grades - level 7 for younger pupils, grades A at GCSE and GCE advanced level for older pupils and students - keeping all pupils' sights high.

124. The teaching of methods - study skills, how to carry out investigations, setting and testing hypotheses, and how to make a presentation - is excellent and pays dividends in examinations. Work is matched to the needs of pupils of differing abilities; extension work is always made available to more able and quicker pupils, while pupils with significant additional needs receive help from talented support teachers; thus all pupils remain on task. Still more could be done to address the precise needs of pupils at the extreme ends of the ability range.

125. Teachers provide excellent role models for pupils in their board work and handouts; as a result, neatness and clarity of presentation are strengths of pupils' work at all levels. The department's assessment procedures are exemplary. All pupils have ambitious target grades; each piece of work is assessed and recorded on the pupil's target sheet, giving them and their teachers a continuous record of progress. Pupils frequently refer both to their target sheets and to the descriptions of the requirements of each grade in the examination towards which they are working, to check what they should do to improve.

126. At the time of the last inspection, the curriculum complied with the requirements of the National Curriculum. This is still the case, except that information technology is now a more significant requirement and the department is not able to provide the necessary access. The lack of information technology resources within the department is a serious shortcoming. The teachers are aware of the potential of the Internet to provide, for example, on-line weather satellite images both to help motivate pupils and to provide research opportunities for the most able - but are not able to fulfil this potential with current resources. In every other way, the department's schemes of work are good.

127. Leadership and management in the department are excellent. The impact of leadership can be seen particularly in the consistently high teaching quality, in the excellent resources and schemes of work produced by the department, and in the quality of analysis of departmental strengths and weaknesses, leading to excellent improvement planning and staff development targeted at improving the weaker areas.

128. With around one third of all geography lessons taught in non-specialist rooms, accommodation is a serious issue. The two specialist rooms are good, with displays and resources which celebrate geography and promote learning the subject. The teachers make the best of a bad job, but work in non-specialist rooms limits what they can do; a lot of their energy is consumed in moving materials from place to place. Most significantly, when a Key Stage 3 class has one lesson of geography per week, and that lesson is in a science laboratory, what will the subject mean to these pupils?

## HISTORY

129. By the end of Key Stage 3 the majority of the oldest pupils are on target to achieve standards just above those expected nationally. Given the pupils' overall attainment on entry these standards are sound. Pupils demonstrate good historical knowledge and understanding. Their skills in using historical sources are less well developed.

130. Standards at GCSE are good. In the examinations in 2000 half of the sixty candidates achieved an A\* or A grade which was outstanding. The trend since the introduction of the new syllabus is one of improvement. Lesson observations and scrutiny of pupil work indicate that standards for the consistently healthy number of pupils choosing history in the current Years 10 and 11 are above the national average. This is the result of good teaching, which is well focussed on the examination requirements, and the abilities of the pupils. What pupils do well is to communicate their historical ideas orally and in writing. They show good factual knowledge and understanding.

131. Standards at GCE advanced level in both 1999 and 2000 were good. This is part of a steady improvement since the last inspection and this improvement is maintained in the attainment of the pupils in the current Years 12 and 13. They demonstrate the ability to explore complex problems such as the weaknesses of the Ancien Regime and show the ability to use evidence to effectively support their arguments.

132. At Key Stage 3 pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress. In all years the pupils show good factual knowledge of events and understanding of why those events are significant. They are less confident in their handling of historical sources. Many pupils in all groups are keen to respond to teacher questioning and to offer comments. At Key Stage 4 pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress. In one lesson all pupils made good gains in their understanding of the situation in Germany at the end of the First World War. At GCE advanced/supplementary and advanced levels students are making good progress and building up their understanding of the underlying themes in the periods studied. In one lesson students used a range of sources to make very good gains in their understanding of the benefits and losses of the Industrial Revolution for Britain.

133. The department has made very good progress since the last inspection. Standards at GCE advanced level and GCSE have risen and the numbers opting for the subject are very healthy. The accommodation problems have been effectively resolved. Excellent preparations have been made for teaching the new GCE advanced/supplementary level course.

134. The quality of teaching in history is good at Key Stage 3 and at GCSE and GCE advanced level. There are a number of strong features of this good teaching. One is careful planning both long term and of individual lessons. In an advanced level lesson students' understanding of the complexity of the weaknesses of the Ancien Regime before the French Revolution was helped by careful teacher planning. Students had covered and grasped the basic factual information, such as the intricacies of the taxation system in a series of active note making tasks. They were then able to participate successfully in an informed and clear discussion, which helped them to see the patterns such as how much potential income was lost. This left them well prepared for the final task, which was to write the introduction to an essay explaining all this. Another strong feature is the relationships teachers have built up with their classes. There was a very good supportive and challenging atmosphere in all lessons. As a result more than three quarters of the pupils were keen to participate in teacher led discussions. The attitudes of pupils of all abilities to learning are good at Key Stage 3 and very good in all examination groups. GCSE and GCE advanced/supplementary

and advanced level pupils and students are developing very good note sets. Once tasks are explained pupils settle to work with interest and commitment. Pupils enjoy history. One group of seventeen pupils is studying history as an extra GCSE in their lunch break.

135. The management of history is good with all efforts being focussed on raising standards. The department makes good use of the resources at their disposal. These are just adequate at Key Stage 3 but at GCSE pupils are unable to take home a copy of the textbook. The department have a very clear awareness of the need to exploit the potential of information technology and also to strengthen pupils' knowledge at Key Stage 3 by studying fewer areas in greater depth.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

136. In the 1994 inspection, standards in information technology were often poor, in part because of the lack of adequate opportunities to develop skills. The computing facilities were old and inadequate with a ratio of 30:1 in the lower school. There was a lack of a centralised system to record all pupils' experiences and achievements. There was also little evidence that pupils at Key Stage 3 were receiving their statutory entitlement. Apart from word processing, there was insufficient use of the range of information technology activities.

137. Since then, there has been a great improvement, reflecting the school's technology status, particularly in the network of computers both within information and communication technology (ICT) lessons and by other departments. The ratio of pupils to computers is now better than 6:1.

138. Achievement at the end of each key stage is good, indicating that pupils do have the opportunity to build up their ICT skills within other subjects. However, the cross-curricular approach is very patchy with some departments such as design and technology, mathematics and science using ICT fairly often, while other departments do not seem to encourage the pupils to use ICT when it should have been appropriate - particularly physical education and modern languages. Information technology work should be built into every subject schemes of work in order to ensure that the positive impact of the school's technology college status is further enhanced.

139. Pupils were seen to use a wide variety of software including the advanced features of word processing, desktop publishing, remote sensing equipment and spreadsheets. CD ROMs are available on the network for pupils and many use the Internet with good effect. Pupils have Hotmail accounts for e-mail.

140. Standards reached in lessons observed in ICT show that by the end of Key stage 3, three quarters of all pupils are achieving Level 5 and above, which is better than the national average. All pupils are able to log onto the network and retrieve saved files with confidence, use information given to them and manipulate data to suit the task.

141. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils have shown that they are able to use the ICT facilities with confidence, particularly where they have well defined assignments to follow. The results in 1999 for information technology short course GCSE were above the national average with 57% passing at grades A\*-C.

142. Sixth Form classes show very good standards at GCE advanced level. Students are able to write programs in Visual Basic for Applications and run macros in Access. Examination results have been consistently good.

143. Attitudes of pupils towards using computers are positive within the ICT lessons

observed. Pupils are keen to use computers and get on with their projects. Behaviour is generally very good and where there is a background of quiet chatter, this is normally tolerated in order to allow pupils to help each other in practical lessons. There is undoubtedly a positive ethos within the department to encourage all pupils to use their computers. Clubs and an open access policy enable pupils to use computers frequently. Pupils can gain free access to resources such as the Internet and CD-ROMs.

144. Pupils with special educational needs gain particular benefit from using ICT with some observed using spell checking as a matter of course.

145. Generally, teaching is very good. As a result, learning within the department is also generally good. Pupils are always keen to use the computers and they respond well to the worksheets and textbooks which integrate well with the software. In many of the lessons observed, there were opportunities for the most able pupils to progress further with extended work.

146. Recognised links between schemes of work and National Curriculum Programmes of Study exist but need to be updated. The school maps National Curriculum levels being achieved by pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 and all pupils take the short course GCSE at the end of Key Stage 4. As a result, the department is able to plan and respond to the needs of the pupils.

147. Very good leadership from the head of department gives the ICT department a good forward-looking direction. The head of department chairs an ICT working party. The group realise that there is still much work to do to achieve satisfactory implementation of a cross-curricular approach to ICT, especially at Key Stage 3. The school is about to start offering two weekly half hour sessions in Years 8 and 9 through its flexitime tutorial timetable.

148. This is a good department which has made very good improvements since the last inspection; the full implementation of the national curriculum remains a weakness at Key Stage 3 with no information technology provision in Years 8 and 9.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

150. Teacher assessment data show that the pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 was above average in 1999. Results were similar in 2000. At the end of Key Stage 4, the 1999 GCSE results in Spanish are well above the national average in terms of the proportion of girls gaining at least grade C; in German they are above average; in French the results are below average, with the pupils tending to achieve lower grades than in the other subjects they took. GCSE results in Spanish and German are broadly similar to those seen at the time of the last inspection; those in French, however, have shown a downward trend. GCSE results in 2000 reflect rising examination standards, with the proportion of pupils achieving A\*-C grades likely to be well above average in German and Spanish, and average in French, once national comparators are published. At the end of the Sixth Form, the 1999 advanced level results are in line with the national average in all three languages, although the numbers of candidates are too small to allow reliable comparison. The faculty's analysis of 1999 advanced level results using ALIS data shows that candidates made good progress in the Sixth Form.

151. In work seen during the inspection, attainment overall is broadly in line with the expected levels for the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. Standards of listening comprehension are above the expectation at both key stages, which is the result of teachers giving pupils sustained exposure to the foreign language in the classroom. The pupils' ability to speak the foreign language is broadly average, although where the teacher gives them maximum

opportunities to practise before independent use, such as through repetition or pair work, their speaking skills are above average, and they can initiate and take part in prepared dialogues with confidence. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils can write extended sentences, and join them together into a short paragraph; higher attainers do so with accuracy and grammatical control. Lower attainers and those with special educational needs can write simply, sometimes from memory, and although they make errors, the meaning is clear.

152. Standards of written work are broadly average at Key Stage 4. By the end of the key stage, most pupils write relatively confidently, and occasionally in extended sentences and paragraphs – although they understandably tend to lose some grammatical control when they do more open-ended writing. Writing is usually better in German and Spanish than in French, where many pupils pay insufficient attention to spelling. Lower attainers at Key Stage 4, and those with special educational needs, use simple descriptive written language with a satisfactory level of accuracy; many need some support from their teacher or from their text book to do this. Attainment in reading is not as well developed as in the other three skills; most of the reading seen at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 was of short texts in the course-book and on work sheets, with little opportunity for extended reading or reading for pleasure. Attainment is above expected levels at the end of the Sixth Form. The present Year 12 students are building on very secure foundations of basic linguistic competence. Their listening comprehension is very good: they understand passages of French, German or Spanish spoken at normal native speed. Some speak fluently and with confidence; this is especially marked in German where students are able to argue a case. They write at length and are beginning to use more sophisticated and complex language. In German in Year 13 (there are no Year 13 groups currently studying French or Spanish) the students understand the foreign language spoken fluently; they respond well and participate actively and effectively in discussions on a range of issues; they write confidently, communicating well in writing, although some students continue to make some errors.

153. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is good; in the Sixth Form it is very good. Teaching is marginally better in Spanish than in German and French. Of the lessons seen during the inspection, nearly all were satisfactory or better; and a significant majority was good or very good. All of the Sixth Form teaching observed was good or very good. Teachers speak their languages competently and use them effectively in their teaching. Most have high expectations, both of behaviour, and of what pupils can achieve in and through the target language, so that good progress is made, particularly in the lessons where pace is brisk and pupils are challenged to think and work hard. Teachers are aware of the needs of especially talented pupils, and these make very good progress. Able pupils are made to think hard through the use of effective questioning designed to elicit their understanding. The small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language learn, as the others do, through the foreign language, and make good progress. Lower attainers usually progress well in lessons, although the long-term achievement of some of them is modest because their recall of previous learning tends to be insecure. The teachers manage the learning of those with special educational needs with sensitivity, and use learning assistants well to support them. However, individual educational plans are not yet used sufficiently well in lesson planning, and opportunities are sometimes missed to match work to the needs of different groups of pupils within a class. Apart from this, lesson activities are well planned, build well on previous learning, make good use of a range of resources, and of a variety of groupings and activities to ensure that all pupils are fully involved. New work is presented in a clear and lively manner, often with infectious enthusiasm, and teachers make effective use of gesture, flashcards, transparencies and lively drawings to aid understanding. Some effective grammar teaching was observed which contributes significantly to both foreign language learning and aspects of literacy. Pupils are given insufficient opportunities to use computers to communicate and access information in the foreign language; this is a

weakness highlighted at the time of the last inspection which has still to be fully addressed. All teachers manage pupils well, although in a very small minority of lessons control is less secure and pupils make insufficient progress. Homework is well used as an integral part of the learning process. Sixth Form students make very good progress because the work they are set contains plenty of intellectual challenge and a full range of opportunities to learn, practise and gain confidence in using more sophisticated spoken and written language. They are able to build on good, sometimes excellent, existing knowledge of language and culture, and use this effectively to cope with the new demands of advanced work. At all key stages, very good relationships between pupils and teachers make a significant contribution to effective teaching and learning; in the Sixth Form relationships are particularly positive and productive. Marking is not a strength of the faculty overall: often it is cursory, ignoring basic errors, and lacks comment which would help pupils improve the standard of their work.

154. Pupils are in nearly all cases focused and attentive, and are able to sustain interest throughout the lesson. They respond well where they are equipped and encouraged to work independently and in pairs. Attitudes to foreign language learning are almost without exception good, although a minority of pupils at Key Stage 3 exhibit poor attitudes and are uncooperative. Pupils develop personally as they acquire confidence in using their foreign languages to express real experience. High levels of motivation and interest contribute significantly to good progress and enjoyable lessons in the Sixth Form.

155. Since the previous inspection there has been a radical reappraisal of the curriculum in modern languages under very good new leadership. German and Spanish are now equal first foreign languages, with French as second foreign language from Year 8. This is beginning to bear fruit in terms of gradually rising standards. There is a shared commitment in the faculty to continuous improvement, and to this end there is a well established system of paired classroom observation which enables standards to be monitored and good practice to be shared. Despite the real strengths of this system, it does not ensure that monitoring of teaching and learning is sufficiently rigorous. Pupils' performance is monitored carefully, and challenging targets are set for them. The faculty makes sound use of assessment information to guide its curriculum planning, although this could be improved if links to National Curriculum levels were made explicit. The curriculum meets requirements, and two foreign languages for the majority at Key Stage 3 provide good breadth. There are good opportunities for enrichment and for social, cultural and linguistic development through a programme of extra-curricular activities and study visits abroad. The faculty has made good progress since the last inspection, and all issues raised have been fully addressed, or are currently in hand.

## **MUSIC**

156. Standards throughout the school are above national averages. GCSE results for 1999 are well above national averages for A\*-C grades and above average when compared with similar schools. Numbers at GCE advanced level are too small to be compared with national averages, but in lessons attainment is better than the national average. Year 13 students are making good progress in their development of aural skills despite a recent change of examination syllabus. Singing skills throughout Key Stage 3 are well above national averages and pupils sing with good tone, intonation and control of harmonies when singing in parts. Year 7 pupils are developing their pitch and rhythm reading skills as they compose pentatonic tunes on keyboards. Year 8 pupils are able to create bass lines for their own raps, and perform them accurately in time to a backing rhythm, with some also able to perform the rap over these accompaniments successfully. By Year 9, many pupils have developed a good sense of performance and are able to make use of their musical knowledge to incorporate introductions, fades and other musical conventions to give their compositions individuality. In both scrutiny of work and lessons Key Stage 4 pupils exceed

national standards particularly in their good use of musical language, and their use of knowledge to recognise instruments and characteristics of music from other cultures.

157. Teaching across the key stage is consistently good or very good, and on occasion, excellent. A variety of strategies is used within lessons, integrating musical activities that are both practical and intellectual to aid pupils in their learning. Individual lessons are planned well to challenge and match pupils' needs. At Key Stage 4, where pupils are given the opportunity to listen to and demonstrate the sound of multicultural instruments within a learning environment that enables confidence to share ideas, teaching is very good. There is heavy reliance on keyboards due to the poor quantity and quality of percussion instruments. However, the keyboards do not have the ability to record or multi-track. Potentially this hinders the development of pupils' learning and the opportunity to provide slower learners with recorded support materials. The poor accommodation, particularly the narrow, corridor shape of the main teaching room in lower school, hinders the organisation and teaching methods in many lessons. Due to the shape and acoustics of the room there is also the potential to place pupils with sight or hearing impairment at a disadvantage.

158. Pupils' attitudes to learning are, overall, excellent, which has a positive impact on their commitment and enthusiasm to learning. They volunteer to perform, listen carefully to each other with respect, and often give encouragement.

159. The new head of department understands the need for the development of schemes of work, assessment systems and other documentation to build upon the already excellent musical tradition in the school. He has already established good relationships in the classroom, and is well supported by existing experienced members of staff. The curriculum is broad and balanced and the addition of music technology advanced level has added breadth to the department. Although information technology provision has improved since the last inspection, lack of development in this area in lower school has a negative impact on the progression of musical skills across the key stages. Despite the continuing problems of the split-site in organisation of musical activities, pupils have had access to a very good range of extra and extended curricular activities, which are planned to continue under the new leadership. A large number of pupils have instrumental lessons, and have the opportunity to perform in a variety of instrumental groups and ensembles. There are regular musical events for these musicians to become involved, including the annual carol service in Bath Abbey, a performance in The Dome as part of 'Our Town' and participation in the Mid-Somerset competitive festival, where this year the Senior Choir won first place.

160. The school should now concentrate on the following ways forward: develop schemes of work, which include identification of expectations in terms of pupils achievement working at, below and above the expected National Curriculum levels; analyse data to support teaching and learning and to ensure the continuing high standards and examination successes; produce a clear development plan detailing and prioritising the academic and resource needs for the next three years; accommodation – organise the best way to utilise the shape of the room in lower school; minimise movement of pupils and resources around the split-site; resources – update keyboards; build up listening resources and collection of tuned and untuned percussion; extend information technology to lower school.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

161. The 1999 teacher assessments for pupils aged 14 were above the national average. GCSE results were significantly above the national average with 77% of pupils attaining A\* to C grades and 100% A\* to G grades. In 1999 pupils performed better in physical education than many other subjects in the school despite some staff absence. These pupils developed good skills of independent learning that supported their work in theory lessons; practical

examination work was supported by general physical education lessons and playing in school teams and for outside clubs. The numbers entered for GCE advanced level are too small to make meaningful national comparisons but results in 1999 were below average.

162. Standards of work seen by the end of Key Stage 3 were average. Pupils have satisfactory levels of skill in a number of activities. In gymnastics they demonstrate a sound range of movements and perform these effectively. Pupils' skills of observation and evaluation of activities are a relative weakness because they are not always given opportunities through teaching methods that develop these aspects. In comparison with last year's teacher assessments standards in lesson are not as high because of weak observation and evaluation skills. This was also a weakness at the last inspection. Some hockey in Year 9 was below the expected standard when pupils did not have high enough levels of skill to play a game. A good deal of teaching time is lost in hockey as pupils travel between sites to use the hockey pitch. Adequate standards are achieved at Key Stage 4 in the lessons taken by all pupils. Pupils play games with enthusiasm showing a satisfactory level of skill in netball. In basketball they play the game to a satisfactory standard at this stage in a relatively new game. Skills of observation and evaluation remain a weakness. Pupils throughout the school understand the need for preparation before activity and generally do this conscientiously. They work well with others in preparing work in dance and gymnastics and when practising together as they learn new skills. Pupils enter the school with average levels of performance, by the end of Key Stage 3 they have made sufficient progress to maintain these average performance standards. This rate of progress continues to the end of Key Stage 4. Progress in the skills of observation and evaluation is slower because these elements are not identified in schemes of work or consistently through the teaching. Standards could be higher with schemes of work that identify the required elements for teaching physical education together with a consistent system of assessment of pupils' progress.

163. Teaching is always satisfactory and occasionally it is good or very good. There is little difference in the quality of teaching between the key stages. A strength of the teaching is the good subject knowledge of teachers so that in lessons they plan tasks that carefully develop pupils' skills. They explain things clearly so that pupils know what to do and how to do it. They use questioning well to ensure pupils understand. In a very good Year 12 lesson the teacher used a wide range of methods to introduce difficult concepts on the acquisition of skill to advanced level students. These students made a good contribution to the lesson from previous work and their own experience and as a result very good progress was made. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and manage classes effectively. They make clear their expectations for involvement and good behaviour. Pupils respond quickly to instructions and their behaviour is good. Pupils with identified behavioural problems are well managed and make effective progress. Teachers give good support to pupils of all abilities to help them make effective progress. Teachers give helpful feedback to the class at the end of lessons. However, this feedback is often too general and does not help individuals know their strengths and weaknesses and what they should do to improve. There is insufficient involvement of pupils in their learning because teaching methods do not provide consistent opportunities to evaluate their own progress. This was a weakness at the last inspection.

164. There are inadequacies in the management of the department. One of the reasons is the intermittent absence of the head of department. The unavoidable long-term absence of an experienced member of the department has further exacerbated matters. Explicit guidance for the development physical education and the improvement of standards are lacking, for example, developing the curriculum through up to date and complete schemes of work and agreeing policies to guide the long-term development of the subject. There is a plan for the work in the department for the next year, together with some indication of how it is to be financed. However, the document is not readily available to all physical education teachers so

the priorities for improvement are not shared. This limits the capacity for improvement in the subject and there has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection. There has been no assessment of risk of the work in physical education. A common system of keeping and using the records of pupils' progress is still being developed. This was the case at the last inspection. Members of the senior management team see teaching but there is little checking within the department of teaching. This, together with the lack of guidance on day to day procedures, means teachers develop their own systems and procedures. The acting head of department and individual teachers are committed and work hard to sustain standards in physical education lessons. The school has worked to mitigate the effect of the absence in the department with support from senior managers and by currently employing two experienced specialist temporary teachers. Because of the lack of explicit policies and day to day systems for physical education the support for newly qualified teachers and temporary teachers in the department has been unsatisfactory. Colleagues give these teachers good informal support.

165. Accommodation for physical education is unsatisfactory overall. Time for teaching is reduced in some activities because of travelling between the two sites and to distant playing fields. Other indoor facilities are adequate but changing rooms need refurbishment.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

166. This is a department that is sustaining good standards overall but recognises the need to make further improvement with regard to its assessment procedures. Since the previous inspection the school has increased the time available for the subject in Key Stage 4 and now meets legal requirements. A very limited amount of time for religious studies has been planned into the Sixth Form curriculum but this still does not meet legal requirements.

167. The standards being achieved towards the end of Key Stage 3 are at or above the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education. Pupils' make good progress and achieve well. Standards achieved by current Year 11 pupils following the non-examination course are at Syllabus expectations, and pupils make satisfactory progress. Changes in curriculum organisation now mean that pupils in the current Year 10 will follow the GCSE Short Course, and at the very beginning of this course, it is not possible to comment on standards expected by the end of the key stage. The results for the small numbers following the GCSE full course are variable but generally above the course average and pupils make good progress and achieve well. The small numbers following the GCE advanced/supplementary and advanced level courses also attain above average and they too make good progress and achieve well. Standards attained by those involved in the religious studies component of the additional studies course in the Sixth Form are at expectations in the Agreed Syllabus but severely limited by the lack of time to develop issues and responses further and at deeper levels.

168. Across the age ranges, progress and achievement are satisfactory or good. Pupil knowledge and understanding are developed and used increasingly effectively in providing descriptions and explanations, comparing and contrasting beliefs and practices, and in making links between faith and lifestyle. For example, in Year 7 pupils explore the role of religious artefacts in expressing beliefs and are able to make links between and across different religions studied. In Year 10 pupils address issues of morality and are able to relate responses to moral issues with some religious teaching. Year 12 and 13 examination students make connections between Buddhist beliefs about the 'Four Noble Truths' with their own experience. Students develop discussion and presentation skills as well as increasingly being able to analyse, relate and empathise with the role of religion in the world today. For example, Year 8 pupils responded well to an extended piece of writing on religious festivals or practices where they wrote a report from the point of view of an "alien" visiting the earth for

the first time. Pupils use religious terminology accurately and with increasing confidence.

169. Higher attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Their needs are known but planning, teaching, materials and activities are sometimes not adapted to meet their specific learning requirements. As a consequence some of these pupils are not always sufficiently challenged or supported in their learning.

170. Pupils respond well to the range of activities provided for them engaging closely with their work. For example a Year 8 group were engrossed in their work on the Hindu god, Ganesh, watching video material with interest, completing written tasks quickly but with care and participating in the oral parts of the lesson with enthusiasm. There is very little unfinished work in books, homework is completed well, presentation is good and stilling and reflection opportunities appreciated. All this shows that pupils have positive attitudes towards the subject. Good relationships and behaviour contribute strongly to the positive learning ethos in lessons.

171. Teaching is of a good quality. The teaching team are well established, hard working and have a real commitment to the subject and to their pupils. Pupils' positive response is promoted well by the teachers' generally good subject knowledge and by their good management of pupils which ensures good behaviour and discipline. Teachers usually have appropriately high expectations, resulting in the majority applying good intellectual effort in their work: although on occasion some higher attaining pupils finish tasks quickly and do not always have appropriate extension work or activities to further their learning.

172. Teacher questioning is used effectively to check knowledge, extend understanding and encourage participation in lessons. Simplistic oral responses to issues raised are always challenged and further learning encouraged through clear teacher explanation. Small group and paired work is used to enable pupils to learn from each other. Stilling and reflection techniques and the use of music during lessons are appropriate to encourage learning. A range of suitable resources are used during lessons and effective use is made of display material. The newly introduced GCSE short course in Key Stage 4 is less well resourced than other years and courses.

173. The department's scheme of work is detailed and provides a firm foundation for lesson planning. Unit and individual lesson plans do not overtly focus sufficiently and clearly on assessment opportunities and standards to be achieved. Further work on this area is identified within the subject development plan and some limited progress has been made since the introduction of the new Agreed Syllabus. Teachers identify well the skills and attitudes to be developed through lessons and units of work. Tasks are well sequenced and logical.

174. The development of literacy is well supported by the written and oral work engaged in and by the correct and detailed use of religious terminology, which is used with increasing confidence. The use of information communication technology is underdeveloped as there are no planned opportunities included within the religious studies curriculum.

175. Pupils' involvement and interest are supported by homework being used effectively to extend work in lessons and to prepare for the next stages of learning. Pupils are very keen to do well. Few however have a clear understanding of how well they are achieving. The department's assessment policy has developed but is still not clearly focused enough on the standards to be achieved and how to assess them.

176. Religious studies make a very strong contribution to the school's provision of opportunities for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils. It does this

through the curriculum content which focuses on matters of religious, spiritual and moral concern and also through the way in which lessons are taught. Pupils are encouraged to think for themselves, share ideas, learn from the teachings and practices of religious traditions by considering their symbolism and significance and respect the beliefs and feelings of other people. They regularly engage in stilling exercises and reflections to support this.

177. The department is well managed. The head of department and her team are committed to encouraging a high profile for religious studies within the school. The work of the department is beginning to be monitored systematically using school systems. There is a clear development plan, appropriately prioritised. Resources are satisfactorily matched to the needs of the curriculum. Accommodation is well used.

178. In order to support the further improvement of standards achieved by the pupils, the head of department has correctly identified the need to continue to develop the assessment of religious studies so that: the levels of attainment outlined in the Agreed Syllabus are sufficiently incorporated into the planning of units of work and individual lessons; and, a range of strategies for assessing pupil attainment and achievement is thoroughly in place.

## **THE SIXTH FORM**

179. The attainment of students at advanced level, in terms both of pass rate and the quality of grades achieved, has been close to the national average in recent years. In both 1999 and 2000, the school achieved a pass rate of 90%, with between 35 and 40 per cent of results graded A and B. The 1999 results were close to the national figures. Results in some subjects have been consistently good in recent years: English, chemistry, history and geography have achieved both high pass rates and a high percentage of top grades. Results in computer studies and modern languages have also been good, but the number of students taking the examinations has been very small. Results in business studies have been more mixed, with a good proportion of high grades, but also several failures. Some very good results have been achieved by students in psychology.

180. The attainment of the students taking GNVQ health and social care has been generally sound, but the small number of candidates makes comparison unhelpful. Completion rates are high and many of the students achieve merit grades.

181. Inspectors judged the current work of students in the Sixth Form to be good. In almost all lessons, they are working at the required level; in several subjects Year 12 students only two weeks into an advanced level course had adjusted very quickly and well to the higher intellectual demands of their new courses. Students newly commenced on GNVQ courses have a sound understanding of the style of the course and of the way they will be required to work. Students' portfolios, both for advanced level and GNVQ, are well organised for revision and the contents of those portfolios is of a good standard.

182. The progress students make from GCSE is sound overall and for many students and subjects it is good: most students exceed the grades predicted for them by ALIS (Advanced Level Information System), demonstrating that the school adds value in the Sixth Form.

183. Teaching in the Sixth Form is of a high standard: it is never less than satisfactory, nearly 90% of it is good or better and 42% is very good or excellent. These are very good figures which account for the high quality of current Sixth Form work, the value added and the good prospects for results. Not only does the teaching meet the basic requirements of good planning, excellent subject knowledge on the part of teachers, good choice of method and rigour, much of it also very demanding, setting high expectations of students' ability to

analyse, interpret and evaluate different theories and sources. Students are expected to work collaboratively, to prepare and deliver presentations, to co-teach and assess each other's work. As a result, most have a mature attitude to their work, questioning and challenging each other and the teacher in a lively, intelligent way. They use research in their own, the city and university libraries to inform their essays and presentations, and take a high degree of responsibility for their own work and progress. The school attracts a number of students of modest ability and prior attainment into advanced/supplementary and advanced level courses; without loss of rigour, many subjects such as sociology and psychology provide these students with "scaffolding" to support their understanding and to help them organise their work. This is good practice, and is effective in helping these students gain grades at advanced level which represent a significant achievement for them.

184. The high quality of assessment, and the excellent relationships between students and teachers, mean that there is good, open discussion of students' progress and the level at which they are working; students are very aware of the progress they are making and what they need to do to improve.

185. The Sixth Form curriculum provides an appropriate range of advanced/supplementary and advanced level courses, several of them in "new" subjects not taught in the main school, such as sociology, psychology and philosophy. These courses are popular and generally successful. The school provides a small range of vocational courses, some at GNVQ and business studies at advanced level, and a small enrichment programme focused on healthy living and improving students' skills in information technology. The school has responded well to the recent national changes to the pattern of advanced/supplementary and advanced level study, and has produced a curriculum which is flexible and meets the needs of the students well. The school also has a successful curriculum partnership with the local Beechen Cliff Boys' School which extends the choice for students in both institutions by offering GCE advanced level in economics, photography and politics.