

INSPECTION REPORT

THE CLERE SCHOOL

Earlstone Common, Burghclere, Newbury

LEA area: Hampshire

Unique reference number: 116430

Headteacher: Mrs S Marshall

Reporting inspector: B Gunnell
223814

Dates of inspection: 13 – 16 November 2000

Inspection number: 223814

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Earlstone Common Burchclere Newbury Berkshire
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr David Allen
Date of previous inspection:	11/03/1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Boyd Gunnell	Registered inspector		The school's results and achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
Anthony Comer	Lay inspector		How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Robin Grist	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Gerry Swain		English	
David Berrisford		Science	
Neil Gillespie	Team inspector	Information Technology	
Peter Kendall		Art	
John Richards		Design & Technology	
David Potter		Geography	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
John Hale		History	
Michael Clarke		Modern Languages	
Brian Ley		Music	
Di Valentine		Physical Education	
Joyce Mackley		Religious Education	
Brian Bartlett		Equal Opportunities Special Education Needs	How well does the school care for its pupils?

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Inspection Quality Division
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Clere School is a small, 11-16 rural comprehensive school that competes for pupils with local 11-18 schools in nearby Newbury. There are 527 pupils on roll of whom a below average proportion are eligible for free school meals, and their overall attainment on entry is a little above the national average. There is an average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and very few pupils from minority ethnic groups. A high proportion of pupils attend the school from a large number of dispersed communities who rely on buses to get to and from school. The school holds the Sportsmark and Investor in People Awards. The previous inspection in 1996 was very critical of the school. Since then, and particularly in September 2000, there has been a high staff turnover caused in the main by the school's effective improvement strategies.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The Clere School is a rapidly improving and effective school. Excellent leadership by the Head Teacher, well supported by Governors and staff in management positions, has led to major improvements in the quality of teaching that is beginning to bear fruit in the form of improved learning and standards. Overall the school has made very good progress since the previous very critical inspection. It currently provides satisfactory value for money and has a secure base upon which to build further and faster improvement.

What the school does well

- The leadership and management of the school is very good and complemented by Governors, teaching and non-teaching staff who are very committed to raising standards.
- Staff have a good understanding of what needs to be done to raise standards, which has led to the school making very good improvement since the previous inspection, especially in the quality of teaching.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is very good: so are the relationships between pupils, and between pupils and adults who work with them.
- The range of extra-curricular activity and the arrangements for careers education are very good.
- The school has very good relationships with primary schools and providers of post 16 education.
- The arrangements for moral education are very good and good for social development, in part because pupils are encouraged to take an active part in decision making in lessons and about how the school should work.
- The school is very good at looking after the wellbeing and personal development of its pupils.
- There are good and improved procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic performance and for promoting better attendance.
- The school has good relationships and effective links with parents.

What could be improved

- Standards in mathematics.
- The quality of teaching and learning, especially at Key Stage 3.
- A co-ordinated whole school approach to teaching literacy, numeracy and information communication technology.
- The rate of attendance and unauthorised absence.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good progress since the previous inspection, especially in recent months, because the Head Teacher's long term strategy for school improvement has begun to have a noticeable effect. There have been major improvements to the way the school is organised and managed, complemented by the appointment of the right people to the right positions. There is a shared commitment among almost all staff to raise standards and achievement. The quality of teaching has markedly improved and is likely to continue improving. The proportion of good teaching has increased by a half and the amount of unsatisfactory teaching has been reduced from a quarter to well less than a

tenth. There has been good and in some aspects very good improvement to the school's assessment procedures since the last inspection. Much more effective use is made of assessment information to help raise standards, which is evident in improved achievement in previously weak subjects such as modern languages and design and technology. Information Communication Technology (ICT) now meets national curriculum requirements and standards in ICT are notably high at Key Stage 3. There is now better provision for collective worship although the school still does not fulfil statutory requirements. In contrast, the mathematics department has not improved and standards are not as high as they should be.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

Results in GCSE examinations and Key Stage 3 national tests over the last two years show that standards have begun to rise. The inspection confirmed this upward trend and also identified a surge in improvement this school term. The recent improvement results from the impact of new teachers, managers and management systems, and an ongoing and strong improvement in the quality of teaching. Overall pupils' achievement during Key Stages 3 and 4 is now satisfactory. Similarly, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall.

Overall the school achieved standards at GCSE in 2000 above the national average for all schools and in line with those for similar schools. English results at GCSE in 2000 are excellent when compared to those of similar schools. Results in mathematics, while similar to the national average for all schools, are well below those of similar schools. Science results have almost reached the national average but are below those of similar schools, in part because a very high proportion of pupils compared to most schools studied separate courses in biology, physics and chemistry. GCSE results are significantly above national averages in drama, geography, history, art and in full course religious education, and results are satisfactory in most other subjects. In French, design and technology and physical education, where GCSE results are low, the inspection found that pupils are now making satisfactory progress.

Pupils' performance in national tests in 2000 at the end of Key Stage 3 is above the national average for all schools in English, and in line with this average in mathematics and science. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in English and science although test results in 2000 were below those of similar schools. However, achievement in mathematics remains unsatisfactory and test results in 2000 are well below those of similar schools. Pupils' make very good progress in ICT, good progress in geography, history and art at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory progress in other subjects.

The inspection found that there is a variety of different groups of pupils who do not make the progress they should. These groups vary from subject to subject and consist of boys or girls, those capable of high attainment, or those who are just outside the group selected for special educational needs support. The standards of literacy, numeracy and ICT across the curriculum are satisfactory overall, but the co-ordination of these skills is not as strong as it should be.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to school are satisfactory overall. Most pupils have good attitudes to their work. They are keen to take part in lessons and the many extra-curricular activities provided. However, younger pupils often take too long to settle to their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in class is good, it is very good around the site at break and lunchtimes. Younger pupils sometimes chatter too much in lessons and a few, mainly older boys, can be rude.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development and relationships are good: the school is a supportive community with very good relationships between pupils and staff, and among the pupils themselves.
Attendance	Attendance is unsatisfactory .

Recent attendance is below average and some year groups achieve less than ninety per cent. The unauthorised attendance rate has risen to well above the national average. While the number of exclusions increased as a result of a tightening up of standards of behaviour, they are well managed and are now declining.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4, despite the inevitable disturbance caused by the appointment of new staff to almost half of the school's teaching posts during the last eighteen months. The quality of teaching was excellent in two per cent of the lessons observed, very good in nineteen per cent and good in forty per cent. Thirty one per cent of lessons were satisfactorily taught, while teaching was unsatisfactory in six per cent and poor in one per cent.

The strongest teaching and best learning was seen in Years 7, 10 and 11. Most unsatisfactory learning occurred in Years 8 and 9, the main reason being that teachers were unsuccessful in motivating pupils who do not have a natural inclination to learn. The overall quality of teaching in geography, history, art, design and technology and modern languages is good; in information technology and music it is very good, and in most other subjects teaching is satisfactory. However, in mathematics teaching is unsatisfactory overall. The school has effective strategies to secure improvement in those areas where teaching is weak.

Much of the teaching is stimulating, some inspirational, leading to the achievement of high standards as pupils share the teacher's view that excellence is possible. This teaching provides a clear vision of what high quality is and guides pupils towards high achievement through asking hard questions and encouraging them to think deeply. Teachers normally assess pupils' understanding and use what they have found to set learning objectives that move pupils on. When this happens pupils' needs are well met, including those who find learning difficult and those capable of high attainment. Sometimes teachers do not choose the right things for pupils to learn, or the best methods to help them learn, because they do not know enough about what pupils understand. Many teachers successfully encourage good behaviour by modifying the way they teach in order to re-interest pupils when their concentration wanes. In contrast, other teachers do not expect pupils to think and work hard enough, and fail to stimulate their interest, as a result pupils lose concentration, chatter and do not learn.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a broad, balanced curriculum that complies fully with the requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education. The poor quality of the timetable reduces the effectiveness of the curriculum because pupils do not have continuity in their learning with one teacher.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	While satisfactory overall, it includes good procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils to ensure their individual needs are met.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good; their moral and social development is particularly strong because they are actively involved in making decisions, in lessons and through the school council.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has very good procedures for looking after the well-being of pupils in its care, including monitoring and promoting good attendance. Procedures for monitoring and supporting academic achievement are good and there are appropriate plans for their further development.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school benefits from excellent leadership by the Head Teacher, complemented by very good support from a new school management team. Almost all subjects and year groups benefit from effective leadership and management.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are effective in meeting their responsibilities. They have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and provide strong support for the head teacher in securing school improvement.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is good at evaluating its own performance and acts upon what it finds. The school management team knows what it needs to do to improve the effectiveness with which the school is managed and so raise standards.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of its adequate resources and good accommodation.

The principles of best value are embedded in most of what the school does. There is a satisfactory match between school staff and the demands of the curriculum, and good arrangements for their professional development.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils are expected to work hard and they make good progress. • The school is easy to approach if parents have questions or problems. • Teaching is good. • The very good extra-curricular activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about their children's progress. • The closeness with which the school works with them. • Homework, especially the management of GCSE coursework.

The inspection team agrees that pupils are expected to work hard in most lessons, that much of the teaching is good and that there is a very good range of extra-curricular activity in which many pupils

participate. Overall teachers set a reasonable amount of the right type of homework, which confirms the view of most parents. The inspection found that there are weaknesses in the way coursework has been managed and that the school is already working successfully to resolve them. The school is easy to approach, works closely with parents, and provides them with a good range of information. However, annual written reports to parents do not provide enough detail about what their children can and cannot do. A minority of parents was concerned about the recent high staff turnover, and were therefore concerned about the school's leadership and management. The inspection found the school's leadership and management to be very good, and that the staff turnover was the outcome of the school's efforts to raise standards and the promotion of staff, both of which reflect well on the way the school works.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The school's performance in GCSE examinations and Key Stage 3 national tests over the last two years indicate that standards are starting to rise. The standard of work seen in lessons and work samples during the inspection week confirms this trend, it also revealed a surge in improvement during the autumn term. This term's fast improvement is the result of effective support and intervention by a new school management team. This intervention has helped new staff and new heads of department in key subjects, such as science and modern languages, to build on and accelerate improvements in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. As a result the standard of work pupils produce in lessons has been raised. The inspection has found that pupils in both key stages now achieve satisfactorily in English, science, modern languages, physical education, religious education and design and technology. In history and art their achievement is good in both key stages. In information communication technology (ICT) pupils' achievement is satisfactory at Key Stage 4 and very good at Key Stage 3, while in geography and music achievement is good at Key Stage 4 and satisfactory at Key Stage 3. There has been good improvement in subjects that were identified as weak by the previous inspection, such as modern languages, ICT and design and technology. However, pupils' achievement in mathematics is unsatisfactory at both key stages and has not improved since the previous inspection.

2. The school achieved standards at GCSE in 2000 above the national average for all schools and in line with those of similar schools. While the long term trend in GCSE results has been below the national trend, standards have recently begun to improve. In 2000 there was a significant overall improvement in GCSE performance compared to 1999, even though the attainment of the 2000 cohort at the end of Key Stage 3 was weaker than the 1999 cohort. All pupils gained one or more A* to G grades, which is well above the performance of similar schools. Pupils' average points score also improved by 4.2 points, from 38.7 to 42.9, and rose above the school's target. It is now in line with that of similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining five A* - C grades, is below the school's realistic target and the performance of similar schools.

3. Results in GCSE English and English Literature are significantly higher than the national average. In comparison with similar schools these results are excellent. Results in mathematics, while similar to the national average, are well below those of similar schools because the department does not set sufficiently high expectations of pupils and the overall quality of mathematics teaching is unsatisfactory. In science, results are close to the national average for all schools but below those of similar schools. In part this is because a very high proportion of pupils, compared to most schools, follow a more challenging route of studying three separate courses in biology, physics and chemistry. Results in GCSE are significantly above the national average in drama, geography, history, German, art and the full course in religious education. Results are satisfactory in other subjects, apart from design and technology, physical education and French in which they are below the national average. Pupils' performance in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 is above the national average for all schools in English, although below that of similar schools. In mathematics and science, results are in line with the national average for all schools and well below those of similar schools. The results for English, in national tests at Key Stage 3, have improved from 1999 to 2000, while there has been little change in science and mathematics.

4. The school has analysed how well pupils, who sat GCSEs and national Key Stage 3 tests in Year 2000, progressed during their time in Key Stages 3 and 4 using national value added data for 2000. This analysis shows that most pupils made satisfactory progress in English and science while a minority made less progress than they should. This analysis also shows that a high proportion of pupils made insufficient progress during both key stages in mathematics. The school is continuing to improve its use of assessment data so that it can set more meaningful and challenging attainment targets for the whole school, for subjects and for individual pupils. It already identifies pupils not achieving their best in Years 10 and 11 and offers them additional support which has contributed to the recent improvement in GCSE performance.

5. Pupils with special educational needs overall make satisfactory progress during Key Stages 3 and 4; sometimes their progress is good. There is no significant difference in the progress they make in lessons provided by special needs staff and subject departments. Pupils who enter school with a reading age two to three years below their chronological age make good progress and those with very low reading ages on entry make satisfactory progress. These pupils make satisfactory progress in spelling. In both key stages pupils with special educational needs lack independent strategies for improving their own work and are very dependent upon the teacher for providing such advice.

6. In most subjects gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress and in some, such as history and art, they make good or very good progress. However, the inspection has found that there is a variety of different groups of pupils who do not make the progress they should. These groups, most of which are known to the school management team, vary from subject to subject. The groups comprise boys or girls, those capable of high attainment, or those who are just outside the group who receive special educational needs support. Examples include potentially high attaining pupils in religious education, and a group of pupils whose attainment on entry to the school is just below national expectations and for whom progress in the basic skills of literacy is unsatisfactory. Few of these groups are in subjects that benefit from strong teaching, such as geography, history, art and music, because in these subjects the needs of high and low attainers as well as average attainers are usually well met.

7. The standard of literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory overall and provides a secure foundation for further development. Literacy is strong in a few areas to which the school has given priority, such as history, music and design and technology. The application of numeracy skills across the curriculum is satisfactory and particularly effective in some subjects such as geography. The standard of ICT across the curriculum is improving and further development is scheduled. Pupils make effective use of ICT in a range of subjects including design and technology, art, modern languages, geography and history. The whole school co-ordination of the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT is not yet sufficiently strong. However, the school has plans in place for its improvement, such as the appointment of a literacy co-ordinator who will join the school in January 2001.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. At the time of the last inspection most pupils had positive attitudes to learning and, for example, they applied themselves well even when teaching was unchallenging. At that time pupils did not take initiative willingly because they were not helped to evaluate and influence their own learning and progress. Four years later pupils' attitudes to the school remain satisfactory. Most are keen to attend school and to take part in lessons, such as volunteering answers and questions and making contributions willingly. Attendance at the many extra-curricular activities, both at lunchtime and after school is good, even though this is made difficult by the considerable distance many pupils live from the school. The great majority of

pupils are keen to explain to visitors what they are doing in their work, and clearly take a pride in it. However, several pupils do not attend school well and some younger pupils are talkative and take too long to settle to their work.

9. Pupils behave well. This is an orderly, purposeful school in which pupils' behaviour around the site at breaks and lunchtimes is very good. In the dining room, queuing is orderly and pupils clear away tables and chairs without prompting. Pupils move around the site in a calm and civilised way, including at the beginning and end of the day, and are very well behaved and respectful during assembly and on their way to it. Pupils respect each other's work and property, and look after the building, which is well kept and free of graffiti. Pupils and most parents agree that there is little bullying and, such as there is, is dealt with well. Behaviour in classrooms is generally good, and is very good when high-quality teaching motivates and challenges pupils appropriately, but there are weaknesses. The immature behaviour of some younger pupils who chatter and work slowly, and the rudeness of a few, mainly male, older pupils, hinder the opportunity other pupils have to contribute to lessons and to get on with their work. Most pupils show respect for the feelings and beliefs of others. As a result of tightening up standards of behaviour during the 1999/2000 academic year the number of exclusions mostly boys, significantly increased. However, exclusions are well managed, are on the decline, and pupils returning to school work to behaviour contracts that have been drawn up with them.

10. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils with special educational needs in lessons are normally satisfactory and quite often good. They form constructive relationships with adults and other pupils and have positive attitudes to their work and remain on task. As they get older pupils with special educational needs improve their concentration, confidence and ability to follow instructions. Pupils with various degrees of autism gradually develop techniques for reducing stress and improving their interaction with peers and adults.

11. Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils, staff and parents see the school as a supportive community with very good relationships, which are generally professional, courteous and friendly, between pupils and staff and among the pupils themselves. In contrast to the situation described in 1996, pupils are now beginning to take responsibility and show initiative. In addition to the supervisory and management roles, such as prefects and sports captains, older pupils act as "buddies" and bullying counsellors to younger pupils, and also help those who find reading difficult. Many of these positions have to be applied and interviewed for, which gives pupils a sense of responsibility. Pupils are responsible for organising teams and groups, and for some coaching, in both physical education and music. In several subjects the teaching encourages pupils to understand and take responsibility for their own progress. The School Council is an important body consisting of year group representatives who have to report back to their year, which enables pupils to share in the decision-making in some significant areas, such as school uniform and the food available at breaks and lunchtime.

12. Attendance is unsatisfactory. From the time of the last inspection the school's attendance rate has hovered around the national average, never rising above it and some year groups have achieved less than ninety per cent attendance each year. Recent attendance is below average, and the unauthorised absence rate, which has traditionally been around or better than the national average, has risen to well above it.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

13. The quality of teaching has improved greatly since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. Teaching in one in five of the lessons

observed was very good or better, with a few lessons being excellently taught. Two in five lessons benefited from good teaching whilst the vast majority of the remaining lessons were taught satisfactorily. The teaching of just over one in twenty lessons was less than satisfactory, of which a small number were poor. Compared to the previous inspection this represents a major reduction in the proportion of the less than satisfactory teaching from about a twenty five per cent to seven per cent, and there are strong indications that this improvement will continue. At the same time, the proportion of good or better teaching has significantly improved, from around forty per cent to sixty per cent. This has been achieved despite the inevitable turbulence caused during the last eighteen months by the appointment of new teachers to almost half of the posts within the school.

14. The quality of teaching varies between subjects and year groups. During the inspection teaching was strongest in Years 7, 10 and 11. Most unsatisfactory teaching occurred in Key Stage 3, especially in Years 8 and 9, the main reason being that teachers were unsuccessful in motivating pupils who do not have a natural inclination to learn and therefore need help to do so. Each day pupils have twenty minute tutor group sessions, or attend year group meetings, during which they are taught personal and social education. Overall, these sessions are satisfactorily taught. In geography, history, art, design and technology and modern languages the overall quality of teaching is good, and in information technology and music teaching is very good. With the exception of mathematics, the teaching of other subjects is satisfactory. Over a quarter of the mathematics lessons observed were taught unsatisfactorily, resulting in standards much lower than they should be. In subjects where unsatisfactory teaching occurs the school has effective short and long-term strategies in place to secure improvement.

15. A significant amount of the teaching is stimulating, some inspirational, and in these lessons pupils are engrossed in learning, and achieve very high standards because they share their teacher's aim that excellence is possible. Teachers enable this good learning by providing pupils with a clear vision of what high quality is and guide them towards its achievement. They set high expectations, ask hard questions and encourage pupils to think deeply about their own ideas and help refine them through discussion and debate. In these lessons pupils' needs are well met, including those who find learning difficult and those capable of high attainment. For example, pupils enjoyed a geography lesson during which the teacher used photographs and key vocabulary, such as 'isostatic rebound' and 'storm surges', to elicit the response of Year 10 pupils and promote lively discussion and good learning about coastal management. In many lessons creativity, divergent thinking and imagination are fostered by teachers. Pupils are sometimes helped to become independent learners because teachers reveal how they have learned so that pupils have the confidence to use these skills for themselves. This happened when Year 10 pupils enthusiastically investigated the expressive potential of different materials and techniques in an art lesson. Because the teacher had a good rapport and knew them well, he was able to share his enthusiasm for art and help them achieve high standards. Similarly in a Year 8 music lesson pupils were inspired to create their own vocal and instrumental pieces in response to African music that the teacher had shared with them during a dynamic and pacy introduction.

16. Sometimes, pupils do not learn well enough because teachers use a narrow range of learning methodologies, such as an over-reliance on questioning. As a result pupils do not learn how to become self-reliant and there is not enough support to help slow starters learn how to begin learning, or to stimulate the intellectual development of higher attainers. When question are used, they are often not probing enough to check how well pupils have learned. On occasions, teachers successfully structure learning for lower attainers but do not plan to extend those who are capable of high attainment. These weaknesses are sometimes caused by a lack of teacher subject knowledge, in part the result of poor timetabling that requires lessons to be taught by non specialist teachers. Pupils did not learn well in a Year 9

mathematics lesson about scatter graphs, because the teacher intervened too often with questions, did not respond when it became clear much of the lesson content was already familiar to pupils and, as a result, pupils were not challenged enough, especially those capable of high attainment.

17. Lessons are usually well planned and organised and based on well defined learning objectives. Pupils are told what they will learn and how they will do so as the lesson begins. Teachers normally use their assessment of what pupils know, understand and can do to set new learning objectives that extend their learning and move them on. By recapping what they have learned before lessons end, teachers help pupils understand what they need to do to improve. Often good quality resources are used effectively to help pupils learn. This occurred in a Year 7 ICT lesson in which selected pupils used a computer projector to demonstrate how they would carry out a task, following which pupils enthusiastically and successfully employed a variety of graphic techniques to create card designs. Sometimes pupils do not learn well because teachers do not know enough about what pupils already understand. As a result teachers plan lesson objectives that are not well matched to help pupils move on in their learning, and the learning methods chosen are not matched well enough to the way pupils learn best. Having stated that 'I don't know what you know' and then questioned pupils to find out what they did know, a mathematics teacher set work on co-ordinates that pupils had already covered, and as a result their work lacked challenge and interest.

18. A high work rate is often achieved because teachers establish a brisk pace through their own enthusiasm for learning and by setting realistic but challenging targets for task completion during lessons. Teachers often provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on how well they have achieved to help reinforce their learning and, when the time is right, they move them on to new learning. These features were evident in a Year 7 history lesson when pupils spontaneously referred to and explained the meaning of villeins and the teacher captured their enthusiasm and interest by building on their replies. He very cleverly used resources to prompt debate, encouraged them to use their own knowledge to explore the relationships in feudal society and justify their observations, and so helped them learn a lot about history in a short time. In less successful lessons boys and girls, especially in Years 8 and 9, lose concentration and resort to idle chatter because the way teachers encourage them to learn lacks interest and motivation and sets low expectations of academic achievement and work rate. Many teachers encourage good pupil behaviour by using a varied range of teaching approaches and modifying the way they help pupils learn, to re-interest them if their concentration wanes. However, a minority do not make lessons interesting enough and set low expectations in terms of concentration and behaviour, and resort to chastisement in order to control rather than eliminate weak attitudes and learning. For example, pupils did not learn well in a science lesson because too much time was devoted to copying notes, the anticipated practical work was cancelled, and pupils were instead expected to work with specimen results rather than their own. Unsurprisingly most pupils lost interest and some misbehaved.

19. Pupils with special educational needs are satisfactorily taught overall in both subject lessons and lessons taught by special educational needs staff, although the quality of teaching ranges from good to unsatisfactory. In the best lessons pupils with special educational needs are given clear explanations of both the task and the required behaviour, and set specific time limits within which to complete their work. In these lessons teachers also make effective use of assessment to carefully match work to their needs. However, there is considerable variation in the quality of, and regularity with which pupils with special educational needs are provided with advice and strategies to enable them to improve their work. Some teachers explain to pupils how to redraft and/or proof-read their work, and encourage the use of phonic knowledge when reading. However, there are inconsistencies

in the ways that teachers throughout the school employ techniques to help pupils improve their reading, writing and spelling. The teaching of spelling requires particular attention. The approach currently in use, merely requires pupils to learn words and they are not given strategies or advice to help them do so. Similarly in reading and writing not enough attention is given to analysing errors with pupils and then showing them how to produce work for themselves.

20. Although there are inconsistencies, overall teachers set a reasonable amount of the right type of homework which confirms the views of most parents who responded to the questionnaire and attended the meeting for parents. Parents who attended the meeting expressed concern about the way course work is managed by teachers. The inspection found that the school has recognised this problem and is working successfully on it. For example, while some Year 11 pupils felt the same as parents, they also described clearly the coursework expectations in subjects that the school has been working to improve.

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

21. When the school was last inspected in 1996, the curriculum was a mixture of strengths and some significant weaknesses. Substantial improvement has taken place in recent years, and the school now provides a sound range of opportunities for learning, many of which are of good quality. The strengths of 1996, such as the breadth of the curriculum and the strong personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, have been retained, while many of the weaknesses have been successfully addressed:

- the school now complies in full with both the National Curriculum and the locally-agreed syllabus for religious education;
- the shortage of teaching time for some subjects has been amended;
- homework is now set more fully and regularly;
- good schemes of work have been written in most subjects, and so curriculum planning has improved.
- as a result, the curriculum remains broad, but is better balanced and more relevant, and offers wider choice, than in 1996.

22. Equal access is provided to the curriculum for all pupils, and the school makes good efforts to be inclusive. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, with more strengths than weaknesses. At both key stages the curricular opportunities offered for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory and the provision in the pupils' statements of special educational needs are met in full. These pupils have access to the full range of the curriculum at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4 the work-related learning course is appropriate for those involved and there are no disapplications from the National Curriculum. Withdrawal sessions are sensitively arranged, to minimise the impact upon the pupils' entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum. Many subjects make good attempts to include all pupils with special educational needs by modifying the tasks or the ways in which the pupils can demonstrate their knowledge. In-class support, provided by learning support assistants, is usually good and enables the pupils to gain access to the curriculum as well as demonstrate what they know and can do. In contrast, the school offers almost no intervention for pupils whose attainment is just below that expected of pupils on entry. The school acknowledges this and has plans to remedy the situation.

23. There is good management of the behaviour of pupils with special educational needs in general, and, in particular for those with more extreme difficulties, which helps them to remain on task and enables them to gain access to the activities provided. Several good opportunities are provided for pupils with special educational needs to work collaboratively. The Learning Support Club offers good additional provision for pupils with special educational

needs. Pupils with significant special educational needs are provided with the support that enables them to remain within the mainstream school and access its full curriculum. The broad curriculum and sensible options pattern keeps the pupils' options open, and a high proportion of pupils proceed after the age of sixteen to full-time education or employment with training.

24. Other improvements have been made to the curriculum since the previous inspection:

- The programme of extra-curricular activities is now very good. The range of clubs, rehearsals and practices every lunchtime and after school is very wide, and these activities are well attended. This is a strong feature of the school, especially considering the distances pupils have to travel home. Good study support is also provided, through a daily lunchtime learning support club, and through weekly opportunities to catch up and improve in a number of subjects.
- The curriculum has been broadened at Key Stage 4 by the addition of GCSE courses in religious education, ceramics and physical education, and a work-related learning programme for a small group of pupils in Key Stage 4 whose needs are not met by the conventional curriculum. This programme, by providing link courses at a local further education college, helps motivate these pupils and enhances their chances of progressing into post-16 education or into employment.
- The PSHE programme has been further developed, bringing it into line with the new requirements for PSHE and citizenship. The whole programme is well planned, makes appropriate provision for drugs and sex education and is carefully reviewed.
- Careers education is now very good. The programme, which starts in Year 9, is comprehensive and very well supported by the local careers service and by the well-organised programme of work experience undertaken by almost every pupil in Year 10. The very good accounts written by pupils show how much they value the experience. The particular support, given by the careers service to pupils with special educational needs, including at their transition reviews, and to those on the work-related learning programme, represents very good practice.
- Links with partner schools and colleges are very good. Primary schools value the opportunities to enhance their own curriculum by the use of the specialist facilities of the secondary school, and by the visits paid by members of its staff to work alongside them. Visits to primary schools also keep the secondary school informed as to developments at the primary stage and ease the transition of all pupils, especially those who are vulnerable. Pupils from The Clere School proceed to a variety of colleges and sixth forms. Staff from these institutions attend the Year 11 careers forum and parents' evenings. For pupils with particular needs, the local further education college helps ensure progression by providing learning support to them at school in Year 11, and also through the link courses provided for the work-related learning group.

25. Some weaknesses in the curriculum remain. Although they have been improved in frequency and quality, the school's assemblies still do not comply with the requirement for a daily act of collective worship. The provision for ICT has been improved and now complies with the requirements of the National Curriculum. However, the amount of teaching time ICT receives in Key Stage 4 is inadequate to successfully build on the very good achievement at Key Stage 3 and so raise standards at Key Stage 4. The quality of the current timetable is poor. By deploying teachers to teach subjects in which they are non-specialists and by distributing lessons badly across the two-week cycle, the timetable slows progress in some groups and subjects. The timetabling arrangements mean that some of the lowest sets have

a variety of teachers, for example, a bottom Year 10 English set has three different teachers who each address a different aspect of the scheme of work. Despite the best endeavours of the teachers involved, the continuity of learning from lesson to lesson is unsatisfactory. The school does not provide any vocational education, except for the small work-related learning group, but this decision is to be reviewed as part of the school's upcoming curriculum review. The school has recognised all of these weaknesses and included them in its plans for curriculum and timetable review.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CULTIVATE PUPILS PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT?

26. Provision for pupils' personal development is good overall, and their moral and social development is particularly strong.

27. At the time of the last inspection, opportunities for pupils to discuss and to reflect were missed, and spiritual development was a weakness. Now, four years on, the provision is satisfactory. Assemblies are well-planned and provide opportunities for reflection on events and themes of major importance, and the themes are followed up by further reflection and discussion by tutors in their groups. Opportunities for pupils to appreciate the wonders of human achievement are provided in art, music and a range of other subjects. For example, in science, pupils explore the natural world, such as the size and intricacy of the solar system, while in geography pupils reflect on differences in wealth and well-being in different parts of the world. Pupils' written accounts of visits to the World War I graveyards and remembrance fields of Europe show how moving these experiences were. Religious education provides pupils with knowledge and insights into the values and beliefs of a variety of faiths and encourages pupils to consider fundamental questions about good and evil. The number and range of opportunities for pupils to experience spiritual development have therefore improved but are not yet consistently planned across the curriculum.

28. The arrangements for pupils' moral development are very good while those for social development are good. These aspects of school life are particularly strong because pupils are actively involved in making decisions, both in lessons and in areas such as the School Council, and because they are encouraged to work and live together harmoniously. Pupils look after property, for example, vulnerable pieces of equipment and easily damaged displays are well looked after. Through values education, which is a strength in geography, history and religious education, pupils are helped to understand and respect each other's views. Decision-making tasks, which involve moral and ethical dilemmas, feature in the work of a range of subjects. In geography, for example, the implications of different environmental choices are examined, while the consideration of moral issues forms part of Year 10 work in religious education. In a Year 11 English lesson, drama techniques were used to explore and present perspectives on racism and bullying. Pupils learn how to handle competition and the rules of games well in physical education.

29. To promote pupils' social development, the school deliberately and successfully engenders a sense of community. Pupils are successfully encouraged to care for each other, such as by older pupils acting as buddies for pupils new to the school. Pupils value each other's work, such as in lessons when they listen to each other's ideas with courtesy, and in assemblies when they applaud and celebrate the achievements of others. Through the very good extra-curricular activities in music, and the class and group ensemble work in lessons, pupils of all ages share their music making and develop a sense of social cohesion which enriches their lives and that of the school. The school promotes teamwork through fieldwork and residential visits in a number of subjects, and through foreign visits to support subjects such as physical education and modern languages.

30. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. The very good range of extra-curricular activities, such as bands, choirs, sports, drama and visits abroad both for work and leisure, all enrich pupils' experience. There is a good range of visits to art exhibitions and to theatres, opera and other musical performances. Some good opportunities to prepare pupils for a multi-cultural society are provided, notably the Japanese intern who, in addition to her support for the Japanese topic in geography, provides an introduction to Japanese language and culture through well-attended lunchtime sessions. Both art and music draw inspiration from non-European sources, such as the visit of an African drumming ensemble. Overall, however, the multi-cultural dimension of the school's work is under-stated and does not constitute a coherent programme.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

31. The school takes very seriously its responsibilities for the care and welfare of its pupils and this aspect is a strength of its provision. During the past two years the school has reviewed its practice and implemented a number of initiatives that have led to very good improvement since the previous inspection. The pastoral support system has been re-organised so that tutors now work in year teams under the direction of a head of year. The entire system is co-ordinated by a very capable and enthusiastic member of the senior management team.

32. The school has developed very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. A 'Chain of Action' has been devised that very clearly identifies the responsibilities of subject teachers, class tutors, middle and senior managers. This system ensures that incidents are not only dealt with promptly but that the most appropriate members of staff are involved. Regular, close liaison between the heads of year, the special educational needs co-ordinator, and the recently appointed inclusions support co-ordinator, means that information is shared about issues that leads to effective action being implemented. There is also a very comprehensive but manageable system for documenting incidents and managing exclusions. This allows the school to track the progress of pupils and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions taken. It has already proved to be beneficial in improving the behaviour of individual pupils.

33. Child protection procedures comply with locally agreed arrangements and are effective. However, both the child protection liaison officer and all the staff of the school would benefit from further professional development in this aspect. Incidents of bullying are few and the procedures for dealing with those involved have improved considerably. Pupils acknowledge this and, in particular, they welcome the appointment of fellow pupils as bullying counsellors. Similarly, Year 7 pupils regard the provision of a Year 11 'buddy' as being very valuable in providing them with another source of support and advice.

34. Since the previous inspection the school has made good improvements in its procedures for monitoring and improving attendance. The school has begun to monitor attendance well, and has developed a good set of rewards for good attendance and equally good systems for addressing unsatisfactory attendance. However, these developments are comparatively recent and have yet to make an impact. Because of the school's rural location, and the area from which it draws pupils, a very high proportion of them have to travel by bus, which this means the school will have to remain vigilant about attendance. In addition to the implementation of systems and procedures, the school needs to develop a culture of good attendance by raising its profile and importance amongst pupils and parents. Although school praises good individual attendance through the presentation of certificates in assembly, the profile of attendance around the school is low. The school does not display publicly attendance figures and trends, or praise tutor groups that achieve good attendance, nor does it publicise the link between good attendance and higher standards.

35. The school has also made a good start in its use of assessment data to improve pupil performance. Very ably led by a member of the senior management team, systems have been established to record and analyse assessment data. Each subject has been required to set targets for the end of Key Stage 4 by predicting the attainment of each individual pupil. Most subjects have a positive attitude towards this and practice is particularly good in history, art, geography and music. The school is very aware of the further developments that are required and of the necessity for best practice to be replicated in all subjects. Many of the current predictions are based upon past performance and while this is a useful starting point, departments should give more emphasis to setting targets that will raise the standards achieved by pupils as they move through the school. In some cases, even where such targets are being set, departments have merely projected a percentage increase in pupil attainment without having identified the actions required to ensure the stated improvement will be achieved. Subject leaders do not give enough attention to analysing assessment information by, for example, cohort, gender, teacher and aspects of the subject. As a result, not all departments have identified the aspects of their subject upon which they need to focus to raise standards.

36. The assessment procedures at pupil level are good. Most departments have effective procedures for marking pupils' work and many use a system of self-assessment to involve pupils. During Key Stage 4, each pupil compiles a record of achievement. Currently this results in a useful summary document, but the process could be more formally extended throughout the school to enable pupils to track their academic progress and play an increasingly active part in setting their own targets. At its best the assessment of pupils' work is both regular and thorough. Achievements are listed and suggestions for how, as well as what, to improve are provided. Whilst the marking policy recommends such an approach, and outlines the monitoring responsibilities of subject leaders, the minimum requirements, based upon current best practice, could be stated more firmly to improve the consistency and quality of this aspect of the school's work.

37. A crucial element contributing to the success of the revised assessment procedures is the responsibility placed upon tutors and heads of year to monitor the academic as well as the personal progress of pupils. Good developments have occurred, including the provision of at least an annual academic review for each pupil. In Years 10 and 11, for example, these individual tutorials are well timed to review early progress in GCSE courses, or the results of mock examinations and the choice of post-16 destinations. As with the procedures for improving behaviour, a clear flow chart for the academic monitoring programme has been established. A similarly explicit set of actions, to guide departments through target-setting at subject level, would improve further the consistency with which that part of the process is undertaken, and enable the school to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its procedures. Tutors and heads of year also require a programme of professional development to enhance their skills in this aspect of their work.

38. For pupils with special educational needs, their statements, annual reviews and transition plans comply with statutory requirements. However, the contribution made by individual subject departments regarding the progress made by pupils is unsatisfactory. The school complies with the SEN Code of Practice. The initial assessment procedures and involvement in the Local Education Authority's special educational needs audit are good. Whilst the quality of the targets and strategies contained within the pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) is good there is very little use of these documents by subject teachers. The support and monitoring for pupils with special educational needs, including those who are on the autistic spectrum, are good. Inclusion support has been recently introduced and is successful in assisting pupils experiencing difficulties, particularly in respect of behaviour and attendance. The quality of marking of the work of pupils with special educational needs is

variable. In some subjects it is very good, but, at the other extreme, fails to provide sufficient guidance to enable the pupil to improve.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

39. Overall, the school's partnership with parents remains good and parents are happy with what the school provides and achieves. The inspection has confirmed parents' beliefs that the school encourages pupils to work hard, achieve their best and become mature and responsible. Parents are also right to believe that the school welcomes questions, wants to know about problems, and deals with them effectively. A significant minority of parents feel that the school does not work closely enough with them, but inspection evidence does not support this view. Parents' contribution to and involvement with pupils' learning at school and at home is satisfactory. The inspection found that there is a very good range of extra-curricular activities which confirms the views of most parents.

40. The communication between the school and parents is satisfactory overall. There is a good range of information provided through regular newsletters, parents' meetings and an annual report from governors. The attachments to the home-school agreement, such as policies and procedures, are helpful although the agreement itself is regarded as informal. Documents providing guidance about working with able pupils and the range of courses in Years 10 and 11 are particularly useful. For most pupils the annual reports give parents a clear indication of what pupils know, understand and can do, and offer specific targets and strategies for improvement. However, the level of detail provided in annual reports, and in annual reviews for pupils with special educational needs, about what pupils have achieved in each subject is inconsistent across the school.

41. A minority of parents was concerned at the high staff turnover in recent years and, as a result, they were unhappy with the school's leadership and management. The inspection found the school's leadership and management to be very good, and that the staff turnover was the outcome of the school's efforts to raise standards and the promotion of staff, both of which reflect well on the way the school works.

42. The school seeks to involve the parents of pupils on the special educational needs register as fully as possible. If their child has a statement of special educational needs, parents are invited to attend the annual review meeting and their views are recorded in full. The SENCO attends all parents' meetings at the school and, in addition, parents are encouraged to become involved in their child's learning, for example, through regular homework focused on improving reading and spelling.

43. The school makes every effort to encourage parental involvement in the life of the school. Despite the fact that the school community is dispersed over a wide area, the Community Programme and The Clere Association are supported well and are valued elements of school life.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

44. The school has benefited enormously from excellent leadership by the Head Teacher who has sensitively and tenaciously pursued a well considered long-term strategy to revitalise the management and ethos of the school. She has been successful because she has taken difficult and potentially unpopular actions, strongly supported by the Governing Body. With the energetic support of a new school management team, formed in September this year, and the commitment of the vast majority of teaching and non-teaching staff, many of whom are new to the school, this plan has now begun to bear fruit. There has been a surge in school improvement in recent months that, when combined with a steady rate of

change since the Head Teacher joined the school in 1997, has enabled the school to make very good progress in dealing with the challenging issues raised by the very critical previous inspection.

45. The Head Teacher has appointed the right people to the right management positions to form a new management team that has real drive and enthusiasm. This team is already securing school improvement by fulfilling its well defined responsibilities, within a framework established by the Head Teacher, that are achievable with their current skill level. Their skills as senior managers are being carefully developed and deployed by the Head Teacher.

46. As a result of the effective and prioritised intervention by the school management team, many subject and year group managers, including those new to the school, are providing clear and effective leadership for their areas. Similarly, special educational needs has benefited from the advice and support of the school management team complemented by meetings with the governor with responsibility for this aspect of the school's work. As a result, the management of all but one year group and most subjects, including areas such as personal and social education, benefit from effective management and a growing capacity for self-sustained improvement. In most of these areas there has been good or very good improvement since the previous inspection. A notable exception is the lack of improvement in mathematics caused by unsatisfactory management and teaching within the department. Improvement in mathematics is now being structured through Head Teacher intervention, supported by the Local Education Authority. Despite recent improvements, the management team is well aware that the management of pupils' pastoral and academic development is not yet well enough integrated to ensure pupils achieve the standards they might, but is working well towards this goal. Because the school has a very good management team that is ably supported by an increasingly well skilled team of heads of subject and year, it is very well placed to continue improving at an increasingly faster rate.

47. The Head Teacher has good relationships with staff who, like her, are committed to fulfilling the school's aims, but recognise there is still some way to go before these aims are achieved in full. While standards are starting to improve, because the quality of teaching and management has got better, and the school does 'celebrate success and achievement in a wide range of activities', it does not yet consistently provide 'academic challenges tailored to the needs of the individual'.

48. The school's managers know what they need to do to secure further improvement and have identified the right priorities in the school development plan. The school's priorities are followed through at different levels within the school. For example, the whole school priorities are clearly identified and acted upon in subject development plans. While the school and department development plans include success criteria and actions to achieve them, the criteria chosen are often wide ranging and do not focus strongly enough on the key aspects of subjects in which standards need to be improved. The school has effective systems for monitoring and evaluating its performance, and is using the outcomes to guide improvement, which is one reason why school improvement has been so successful. For example, there has been a high staff turnover during the past two years, but each change has either contributed to school improvement or been the result of a teacher securing promotion. The management team recognises that further rigorous monitoring is required to check and ensure that school policy is consistently implemented across the school. For example, a school marking policy evolved from a scrutiny of pupils' work and has been monitored within subject areas by heads of department in line with the Head Teacher's schedule for subject monitoring. However, while the senior managers have checked that monitoring has taken place they know they have yet to evaluate the consistency with which the policy is implemented across the school.

49. The Governing Body has a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and is effective in supporting the Head Teacher in securing school improvement. Governors fulfil statutory requirements and have a good idea of how the school should move forward. Many governors have regular contact with the school which contributes to their monitoring of the school, such as through visits by the governor with responsibility for special educational needs. The Governing Body is not yet sufficiently proactive and rigorous in evaluating the work of the school but is working on improving this aspect of the way it operates. As a result it should become less reliant on the Head Teacher for information about, for example, the school's success in implementing its development plan.

50. The school's finances are well managed and well targeted to the school's priorities. Financial planning recognises the need for long term provision, such as for the maintenance and further development of ICT equipment. The principles of best value are embedded within the decision making process of the school, apart from the quality of the timetable which is poor and does not deploy staff expertise to best effect. A good strategy for performance management has been drafted which is complemented by good induction arrangements for staff new to the school and those new to teaching. Effective arrangements are in place to monitor teaching and to support teachers who need help. Overall the match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is satisfactory. Resources are adequate and well used, for example, new computer equipment has been used effectively to raise standards in ICT, and in subjects such as design and technology. Accommodation is good, well used and cared for. In addition to good sports facilities, some ordinary classrooms have been turned into stimulating learning areas through the thoughtful display of stimulus materials and pupils' work.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

To raise standards further the Governing Body, Head Teacher and staff should:

1. Raise standards in mathematics (Paragraphs 73 – 79) by:
 - improving the management of the subject;
 - improving the quality of teaching in the subject.

2. Improve learning, especially at Key Stage 3, by:
 - further improving the quality of teaching through:
 - ❖ planning lesson objectives and learning methodologies to build on and extend what pupils already know and can do; (Paragraphs 6, 15, 16, 17, 18, 53, 57, 75)
 - ❖ offering a more varied range of stimulating learning experiences, in particular to complement the school's drive for improvements in pupils' behaviour; (Paragraphs 17, 18, 19, 58, 76, 86)
 - ❖ implementing the intended curriculum review (Paragraph 25) and therefore, for example, removing weaknesses in the time table; (Paragraphs 25, 75, 88, 108)
 - ❖ helping teachers improve their subject knowledge. (Paragraphs 15, 25)

 - establishing a co-ordinated whole school approach to the teaching of:
 - ❖ literacy skills; (Paragraphs 7, 19, 70, 71)
 - ❖ numeracy skills; (Paragraphs 7, 81, 82)
 - ❖ ICT. (Paragraphs 7, 121, 124)

 - sharing the good practice in teaching that exists within the school.(Paragraphs 15, 90, 108, 117, 133)

3. Improve attendance and reduce unauthorised absence (Paragraphs 12, 34) by:
 - continuing to respond to the outcomes of the analysis of attendance data;
 - ensuring greater consistency in the way tutors follow up absence;
 - raising the profile of 'good attendance' around the school.

Governors may also wish to consider the following areas though these are less urgent:

- Improve curriculum provision by:
 - ❖ providing a daily act of collective worship; (Paragraph 25)
 - ❖ improving provision for ICT at KS4; (Paragraphs 25, 120)
 - ❖ improving the consistency with which spiritual (Paragraph 27) and cultural (Paragraph 29) education are planned.

- Further develop support for pupils by:
 - ❖ giving more emphasis to helping those pupils who are just below the expected attainment level on entry; (Paragraphs 6, 22)
 - ❖ improving the consistency of marking; (Paragraphs 19, 38)
 - ❖ improving the use of IEP within subjects; (Paragraph 38)
 - ❖ providing staff training about child-protection; (Paragraph 33)
 - ❖ making more and consistent use of assessment information to identify subject and individual pupil improvement targets. (Paragraphs 6, 35, 36, 37, 48)

- Keep parents better informed of their children's progress by providing more detail of what pupils can and cannot do in each subject in annual reports to parents and annual reviews for pupils with special educational needs. (Paragraph 40)
- Further develop school leadership and management, as intended, by:
 - ❖ ensuring effective management of all year groups; (Paragraph 46)
 - ❖ rigorously evaluating the implementation of school policies; (Paragraph 48)
 - ❖ improving academic monitoring by further integrating the work of year and subjects leaders; (Paragraph 46)
 - ❖ governors developing further strategies for rigorously monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. (Paragraph 49)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	154
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	86

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2%	19%	40%	31%	6%	1%	0%

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	527
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	32

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	9
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	144

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	17
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	90.9
National comparative data	91.0

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.3
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
	2000	51	47	98

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	28	31	29
	Girls	30	33	29
	Total	58	64	58
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	59% (54%)	65% (73%)	59% (63%)
	National	63% (63%)	65% (62%)	59% (65%)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	29% (16%)	39% (42%)	25% (21%)
	National	28% (28%)	42% (38%)	30% (23%)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	30	35	31
	Girls	31	34	32
	Total	61	69	63
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	62% (78%)	70% (79%)	64% (74%)
	National	64% (64%)	66% (64%)	62% (60%)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	26% (32%)	42% (46%)	29% (24%)
	National	31% (31%)	39% (37%)	29% (28%)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	56	53	109

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	26	55	56
	Girls	31	49	53
	Total	60	104	109
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	51% (56%)	95% (91%)	100% (94%)
	National	49.0% (46.6%)	88.8% (90.9%)	94.4% (95.8%)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	School	42.9 (38.7)
Per pupil	National	38.7 (38.0)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	526
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	33.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	13.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	315

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.5
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23.8
Key Stage 4	20.4

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	54	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1424187
Total expenditure	1415290
Expenditure per pupil	2651
Balance brought forward from previous year	12193
Balance carried forward to next year	21090

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	527
Number of questionnaires returned	166

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	40	47	8	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	30	57	7	1	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	21	57	12	3	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	60	14	4	5
The teaching is good.	20	65	7	1	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	22	48	19	5	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	43	5	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51	41	5	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	23	51	17	5	4
The school is well led and managed.	30	44	10	3	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	48	10	1	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	56	4	2	10

Other issues raised by parents

Most parents at the meeting endorsed the views expressed in the questionnaire responses. A few additional points were raised at the meeting and in written comments. Some parents described the range of extra-curricular activity as excellent. Some were concerned that not enough detail of pupils academic progress was provided in reports. While parents valued the homework set, some were concerned about inconsistencies in the way teachers managed homework deadlines, especially GCSE coursework. Parents at the meeting considered pupils behaviour to be mostly good and their children liked school. Some parents expressed concern about the quality of the school's leadership and management because there had been a recent and high staff turnover, but this did not reflect the views of most parents at the meeting who stated the school benefited from strong leadership.

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

ENGLISH

51. English is a good and improving department that, despite a complete change of staff in September 2000, has sustained satisfactory standards and provided secure continuity of learning in English and Drama.

52. The 2000 GCSE results for English and English Literature at grades A* - C are significantly higher than the national average, with improvements on the 1999 results. In comparison with similar schools, these results are excellent. Girls did particularly well, with many performing beyond expected levels. The majority of boys also performed according to expectations though in some cases they did not reach the grades expected of them. English results in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 are an improvement on the previous year's results. They are well above the national average for all schools although below those of similar schools.

53. The overall level of achievement seen in lessons and in work samples at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. While also satisfactory overall at Key Stage 4, pupils' achievement is often good, including the achievement of pupils with special educational needs and those capable of high attainment. In the majority of lessons observed pupils attain standards consistent with their age and prior attainment. In a small proportion of lessons, where standards are lower than the expected levels, this is associated with unclear learning objectives and teaching which lacks clarity.

54. Speaking and listening skills are good, in both key stages, and pupils make good progress in developing them, although speaking is stronger for some pupils than listening, especially boys. Pupils participate confidently in class and group discussions. They explain ideas confidently and clearly, and amplify or give examples when asked. In group discussions they are able to listen and respond to each others' ideas. For example, in a lesson on Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, pupils were able to explore a variety of possible ideas, reach agreement and refine the way they wanted to present them together. In whole class discussion pupils explain their ideas in detail and most are usually keen to contribute. In some lessons talk is dominated by a few individuals who have not learned to take turns or listen to other people's ideas. This is usually caused by less effective teaching in which classroom conventions and expectations of behaviour have not been consistently established.

55. Pupils' reading skills are generally good. The majority of pupils read confidently and have good levels of understanding and response. They are able to use library and ICT skills effectively to locate and select information from a range of books and internet sites. For example, pupils in a Year 7 class working in the library retrieved relevant information when researching the life and works of Shakespeare. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the books they read and many pupils read widely, use the school and local libraries, and discuss what they are reading with one another. Reading habits and attitudes are being usefully supported by a 'reading challenge' scheme, which encourages the reading of a wide range of authors and types of book. Opportunities are given regularly for pupils to read in school, but the provision of whole lessons for reading, as is the case in some sets, has not promoted pupils' enthusiasm or sustained interest.

56. In lessons, throughout both key stages, pupils show an increasing ability to read closely and pay attention to detail in their study of a good range of literary and non-fiction texts. They apply these skills to challenging work. For instance, a Year 10 class studying the

use of word play in *Twelfth Night*, learned how to use notes and glossaries independently to work out double meanings and why the characters in the play use them. Year 11 pupils have developed reliable ways of identifying and describing a writer's intentions, and understand how these ways are specifically designed and communicated for particular audiences. Weaker readers, in some classes, pay less attention to detail and are more prepared to guess at answers rather than study the text closely. Their understanding is limited to straightforward, obvious information and they do not use all of the available information. In some cases, weaker readers read too slowly and unexpressively, and lose the thread before reaching the end. Their comprehension is much better when they listen to passages read aloud for them, but this adversely affects their progress as independent readers.

57. There are good examples of well structured, accurate and lively writing but writing is underdeveloped, and weaker for eleven to fourteen year olds than for older pupils. Many pupils settle for lower standards than they should achieve. This is partly because they have not learned how to improve the quality and effectiveness of their written expression for themselves and they rely too much on teachers' corrections. There is an inadequate range of writing in pupils' work and in particular, too little extended writing. Few opportunities are taken to write for audiences other than the teacher.

58. Pupils approach their work positively, and in the majority of lessons in both key stages, attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory and often good. Pupils work co-operatively with each other and with their teachers. Relationships are generally comfortable and productive, pupils are attentive and sustain interest in their work. Occasionally teachers set a slow pace and offer unclear explanations which affects pupil motivation and their concentration and behaviour suffers as a result. In a few lessons, individuals or small groups of pupils lack concentration and interrupt or distract others. Homework is not yet used well enough to support pupils' learning.

59. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory at both key stages, and at both key stages is frequently good, especially for older pupils. In a small proportion of lessons, teaching is unsatisfactory or occasionally poor. In good teaching, clear and precise learning objectives are communicated to pupils and reviewed at intervals and at the end of lessons. Pupils are given clear directions on how to approach tasks, for example, what to look for and improve during proof reading, or how to scan and select from information texts when researching a specific topic. Skilful questioning in many lessons helps pupils reflect on what they have said or written so far, and encourages them to extend or improve the quality of their work. This technique is used very effectively when pupils discuss what they are reading. In the best lessons, teachers make strong links between their own explanations and their demonstration of close reading techniques, and the opportunities they provide for pupils to try these out in groups through discussion.

60. Clear routines and expectations have been established in most lessons, giving pupils the confidence to be adventurous and imaginative in their discussions. Teachers encourage pupils to take risks and try out ideas. They consistently value pupils' contributions and respond to them rather than accepting them and moving on. Further strengths include the predominantly prompt and brisk start to many sessions, the efficient adherence to planned timescales for work, and the reliable coverage and review of all the learning that has been planned for. In the minority of lessons where learning is unsatisfactory, teachers do not make sufficiently clear to pupils what they are learning and how best to set about it.

61. In a significant proportion of the written work seen, the marking policy was being inconsistently applied. In the best examples of marking, teachers make clear links between pupils' targets for improvement, or the lesson objectives, and what pupils have written. In this way teachers give clear and manageable advice on what pupils should do next to improve.

Where correction is provided, for example to spelling or punctuation, pupils are not always using it to improve, and occasionally they repeat errors without taking account of their teacher's marking.

62. The recently appointed head of department provides very strong leadership and direction for the work of the department. A good spirit of teamwork has been quickly established and members of the department give strong support for one another. Each has contributed energetically to the pace and high levels of challenge resulting from considerable recent staff turnover. This is recognised and valued by the head of department.

63. The Head of English and other members of the department have worked hard to ensure that the recent complete change of staff has not disrupted pupils learning. In particular they have ensured effective examination preparation and coursework for pupils following GCSE in English and Drama. A thorough analysis of pupils' current level of attainment and coursework coverage has been undertaken. This has resulted in a clear action plan for each teacher to ensure pupils who have fallen behind catch up, and those who are not working to the full extent of their potential are helped and encouraged. A combination of extra lessons, individual attention and the setting of development targets for individual pupils is contributing significantly to the securing and raising of standards.

64. The head of department has a well developed view of how the department needs to develop further. She has established a clear focus on raising standards by placing emphasis on how pupils learn, and this is already having a positive impact on the quality of teaching. Schemes of work are being reviewed and good progress is being made in adapting them to fit the framework of learning objectives being piloted by the National Literacy Strategy. Schemes are being strengthened, particularly in teaching the process of writing and attending to pupils' control of the language at sentence and word level. Activities within some of the literature based schemes are being properly evaluated to see whether they are well matched to the experience and interests of the pupils, and whether they enable pupils to make progress and demonstrate the outcomes of their learning.

65. The department's suite of rooms and stock room are well used by English teachers to promote positive attitudes to the subject. Useful displays guide pupils on how to make progress and what is needed to achieve particular levels and grades. There is an adequate range of books and duplicated resources to meet the requirements of the schemes of work. However, there is still too few examples of writing from other cultures and traditions, and only a limited range of drama texts. The use of computers and other ICT equipment within English is underdeveloped although pupils do use internet facilities in the library as part of English lessons. The department has plans to locate opportunities for computer use within its scheme of work but this work is as yet in the early stages. Overall English has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection.

DRAMA

66. Standards in GCSE have been consistently above the national averages. Eighty-six per cent of pupils entered achieved grades A*-C in 2000. These pupils attained higher grades, on average, in drama than they did in other subjects.

67. A high level of recent staff change has adversely affected drama and affected the motivation, relationships and commitment for some pupils. Teachers are working hard, with some success, to ensure continuity and progress in pupils' learning despite these changes. At GCSE level, pupils in Year 11 have been clearly prepared for the demands and assessment styles of the course, after a change of syllabus, and most are working hard and with commitment. Pupils are making good progress in securing drama techniques such as

improvisation, research to inform the design of their presentations, and group work skills. They use these techniques thoughtfully and collaboratively, such as when one group prepared a dance – drama with a scripted performance that explored racism. At the same time another group deepened their understanding of the characters in a script they were preparing by using improvisation in role to explore their feelings and relationships.

68. Thorough schemes of work support teachers' planning and pupils respond positively in most classes to the activities provided. In some classes a minority of pupils do not understand the levels of interpersonal skill and concentration needed to learn well. Teachers work with these pupils and encourage them to make choices and reflect on their consequences, for example, about where they sit, with whom they work, and whether they listen to and respond to one another.

69. A well-designed and equipped drama studio allows pupils to engage in a variety of learning styles using drama techniques. It also enables teachers to give pupils opportunities to work and rehearse independently, and take responsibility for their learning in a suitable amount of space.

LITERACY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM.

70. The school has appointed a teacher to co-ordinate the development of whole school approaches to literacy from January 2001. A member of the senior management team is taking overall responsibility for this initiative, which forms part of the school development plan.

71. Whilst whole school approaches to literacy are satisfactory, and in the early stages of development, there are examples of the very effective development of reading, writing and language skills in a number of subject areas. These examples of good practice provide a fertile foundation for future staff discussion and training as a whole school policy is evolved. For example, the organisation of writing is well taught in history and pupils are supported through the explanation of writing frames for different types of work. Discussion and pupils' confidence in asking questions are also well developed in history. In modern languages the use of the target language by pupils for everyday conversation and instruction is supported by the useful display of key words and phrases in classrooms. In design and technology the display of key questions, technical vocabulary and useful phrases and sentence starters, helps pupils structure their evaluation work and make their observations more precise and focussed. The use of speaking and listening, and particularly group discussion, as a means of helping pupils plan or review their work is well developed in many subjects, notably in history, music, English and religious education.

MATHEMATICS

72. The school's performance in national mathematics tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 was in line with the national average for all schools, but well below the performance of similar schools. Overall there has been no improvement at Key Stage 3 since the last inspection. At Level 6 and above, girls perform less well than boys and results show that higher attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently. The standard of work seen in lessons and samples of work reflects the test results and shows that insufficient attention is given to matching work to pupils' prior attainment. This was evident in a top set Year 7 lesson on co-ordinates, in which pupils were asked to plot points in the four quadrants, an activity they were already competent in and which did not offer any challenge or new learning. The overall standard reached by pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory with the exception of pupils with special educational needs who make satisfactory progress.

73. The school's performance in GCSE mathematics in 2000 was in line with the national

average for all schools, but well below that of similar schools. Although marks awarded for coursework assignments showed a significant improvement on the previous year, two thirds of pupils failed to achieve the target grades set by the school. No pupils were awarded an A* grade and a very small number of boys were the only pupils to gain an A grade.

74. The standard of work seen in lessons at Key Stage 4 and samples of work also reveal unsatisfactory attainment, with the exception of pupils with special educational needs who make satisfactory progress. Low standards and weak achievement was evident in a Year 11 lesson in which pupils' insecure mental skills severely restricted their ability to tackle most questions. This highlights the lack of emphasis given by the mathematics department to developing pupils' mental mathematics skills. Pupils often fail to make sufficient progress in lessons because learning has not been made interesting enough to engage them. This happened in a high set in Year 11, when a significant number of pupils disrupted the lesson by unruly behaviour that resulted in minimal work being done throughout the session. Often pupils' work is poorly presented which makes it difficult to check. Pupils' work also reveals a lack of challenge, for example, pages of traditional sums show that too much emphasis is given to activities that pupils can clearly cope with. Not enough attention is given to the use of investigative approaches at both key stages. As a result, pupils' problem solving techniques are underdeveloped and seldom used. However, when these techniques are employed, as happened in a low set Year 11 revision lesson, pupils' progress noticeably improves.

75. The overall quality of teaching of mathematics is unsatisfactory and over a quarter of the lessons observed were unsatisfactorily or poorly taught. Teaching is very variable in quality. It is satisfactory overall at Key Stage 4 and unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3, and while much is less than satisfactory, some is excellent. Most, but not all teachers, demonstrate a good subject knowledge and are familiar with the requirements of the examinations taken by the pupils. At both key stages teachers select appropriate lesson content but do not plan a sufficient variety of teaching methods and strategies to take account of pupils' varied learning styles. There is insufficient attention to planning tasks that are suitably challenging for different groups of pupils. Too much reliance is placed on setting pupils by prior attainment in each year group and varying the speed of work in lessons rather than setting high, but appropriate academic challenge. Teachers mainly use exposition, question and answer, and practice to help pupils learn. Mental warm up activities now feature in most lessons. Where these activities are planned and introduced creatively, pupils' numeracy skills are showing a noticeable improvement. In some lessons mental activities are introduced as formal question and answer sessions, with the result that pupils' involvement is restricted and valuable learning opportunities are missed. There is no use of ICT in mathematics and practical activities are limited. However, when teachers engage pupils in practical activity this impacts positively on their mathematical understanding. When set, homework is appropriate and supports lesson work. However, the arrangements by which more than one teacher teaches a single group are not working effectively and are lowering the pace of learning.

76. The quality with which teachers manage pupils and lessons is very variable, and when it is weak pupils behave badly and fail to learn. Unsatisfactory learning occurred in a top set in Year 8 in which pupils were studying angle properties. The warm up activities required pupils to calculate pairs of numbers totalling 180° while considering the three angles of a triangle. The worksheet employed was unclear, the lesson pace was very slow, and as a result some pupils' behaved unacceptably and their attainment was at a level normally seen in Year 6. In contrast, excellent teaching led to pupils making very good progress in a Year 7 lesson about co-ordinates. In this lesson the teacher's work was planned in detail, and excellent use was made of pupils' incorrect answers during warm up activities. The use of co-ordinates in everyday life was explored to the full, and was followed by the successful development of pupils' basic abstract algebraic techniques using first hand experiences and practical activities. As a result, pupils were well challenged and achieved a high level of

attainment. The pace of this lesson was brisk and pupils' behaviour and their contribution to discussions were very good.

77. In most lessons pupils behave satisfactorily and they co-operate and collaborate well when opportunities arise, which is rare. Relationships between pupils and their peers and with teachers are generally satisfactory and often good, but there is significant minority of lessons in which pupils show a lack of respect and willingness to learn. This misbehaviour occurs across all years and abilities and is a direct response to weaknesses in the quality of the teaching. Pupils' progress in mathematics is monitored by regular and consistent marking and the use of timetabled tests. However, the assessment information gathered is not used to inform curriculum planning.

78. The management of the mathematics department is unsatisfactory. As a result the school management team has put in place an intervention strategy to overcome the lack of leadership and management for mathematics. A department development plan written in May contributes little to raising pupils' attainment. A further plan, prepared in October with the headteacher, clearly identifies the actions needed to improve the quality of teaching and raise standards in mathematics, and its implementation is being guided and monitored by her. The main issues raised by the previous OFSTED inspection have not been improved upon, but are dealt with by the October department development plan. Recent support for the department, from the Local Education Authority, is having a positive impact, for example, by helping ensure pupils receive a richer mathematical experience, an issue raised by the last inspection. The departments' contribution to the development of literacy throughout the school is minimal. While the department intends to develop pupils' literacy skills by using mathematical key word charts for different topics, only one out of date list was evident in the main rooms used for teaching mathematics. The department's policies on marking and homework are being consistently used in almost all cases, and their implementation is being partially monitored by the head of department. The new development plan identifies an appropriate programme to increase the range of teaching strategies, in regular use, complemented by the regular evaluation of the quality of teaching.

79. Two of the four mathematics teaching rooms are small which limits the variety of teaching and organisational strategies that can be used with larger groups. The resources for teaching mathematics are unsatisfactory because a very limited range is available in the department and the library. The school has appropriate procedures for departments to submit bids for additional funding, but the mathematics department has not made a convincing case for such money.

80. The mathematics department has made unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection. Standards have shown no improvement and the effectiveness with which the subject is managed has declined since the previous inspection.

NUMERACY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

81. The school has not yet developed a policy for numeracy across the curriculum, nor has an audit of numeracy skills taken place across all departments. The mathematics department has a outline department numeracy policy and, for example, the geography department has developed its own numeracy policy which is being implemented and monitored by the head of department.

82. On entry to the school, pupils' numeracy skills are satisfactory. Within the school's mathematics department, recent initiatives are ensuring that strategies are developed to improve pupils' number work, through planned activities at the start of each lesson. Pupils make satisfactory use of numeracy in a range of subjects. For example, in geography pupils

work competently with scales, co-ordinates and distance, and they can read information from tables, draw bar and line graphs and apply statistical methods to data collected. In design and technology, pupils display good skills in drawing and measurement and have a satisfactory understanding of spatial awareness. They can construct three dimensional shapes and also use simple graphical work. In science, pupils make satisfactory use of mental arithmetic skills and can cope with algebraic work using graphs and formulae. In ICT pupils use spreadsheets, show an understanding of pie charts, and can use formulae to solve simple problems. Other subjects make little or no contribution to the development of numeracy.

SCIENCE

83. Following recent changes in staff, the science department is in a process of rebuilding and is now making good progress in many areas. Policies and strategies are being put into place that should secure a further raising of standards for all pupils.

84. The school's performance in science national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000, was in line with the national average for all schools, but are well below those obtained by pupils in similar schools. However, when pupils' attainment on joining the school in Year 7 is compared, using national data, with their performance in Key Stage 3 tests in 1999 and 2000, it indicates that pupils are making satisfactory progress overall. The performance of boys and girls in the 2000 GCSE examinations in Double Science and Triple Science, i.e. biology, physics and chemistry, is close to but below the national average and below that of similar schools. However, when each pupil's performance is compared with their prior attainment at the end of Key Stage 3, using national reference data, this reveals that the large majority make satisfactory or better progress, while a few make less progress than they should.

85. The achievement of pupils in lessons, is in line with expectations at Key Stage 3, although there are elements of underachievement exhibited by a minority of pupils. Year 7 pupils are starting to use appropriate terminology and are developing their manipulative skills, whilst Year 8 pupils can demonstrate a good understanding of heat transference and are able to name organs within the systems of the body. Year 9 pupils are starting to interpret for themselves data obtained through investigations. For a minority of pupils within Year 9, progress is less certain. In these cases, unsatisfactory motivation and attention, result in little being achieved in a lesson. Achievement in lessons at Key Stage 4 is at least in line with expectations, with a number of pupils making good progress, particularly in Year 10. Year 10 pupils demonstrate understanding of properties of acids and alkalis and are starting to write chemical equations. Pupils are able to plot graphs accurately and plan and undertake investigations, such as those for examining the properties of a stretched spring. Year 11 pupils are starting to consolidate their learning in preparation for their examinations. Again, within this key stage, a minority of pupils are underachieving. This is mainly due to frequent absence, but is sometimes a result of poor motivation and a lack of attention during some lessons. Across all year groups pupils' written work shows that pupils are progressing satisfactorily, although for some pupils, work is sometimes incomplete and corrections have not been addressed. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily overall. However, some with learning difficulties achieve less well, and at times struggle with work because it is insufficiently differentiated to meet their needs.

86. The majority of pupils in all year groups enjoy their work in science lessons, particularly practical work. Pupils are prepared to ask and answer questions and they adopt a very sensible and safe approach when using apparatus. Pupils are prepared to work collaboratively in order to undertake investigations and solve problems. There is, however, a significant minority of pupils, particularly in Year 9 and Year 11, who demonstrate poor listening skills. These pupils are insufficiently motivated, spend too much time in idle chatter

and take up a disproportionate amount of the teacher's time. Such pupils are the exception and the majority of pupils are determined to succeed. In activities requiring pupils to discuss ideas, most pupils are confident and are able to draw upon prior knowledge and experiences.

87. The quality of teaching in science, while variable, is good overall. While generally satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4, pupils benefit from frequently good or very good teaching throughout the department and very few of the lessons seen were less than satisfactory. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject; they use a range of questions to test pupils' understanding, and, generally, their expectation of their pupils is high. Practical investigations are well planned and pupils are encouraged to consider the safety aspects. Pupils' work is regularly assessed and effective use is made of formative comments in pupils' workbooks to suggest areas for improvement. Teachers generally relate very well to their pupils and they use a mixture of humour and praise to encourage them. In those lessons where teaching is less strong, insufficient use is made of targeting questions to individual pupils to challenge their understanding of the objectives of the lesson, and to ensure that they remain actively involved in their work. Lessons, in these cases, tend to be insufficiently well planned to match the varying abilities of the pupils. In some teaching groups pupils are taught by three or four science teachers. The continuity of learning for these pupils is difficult and these arrangements are unsatisfactory. Teachers use ICT where appropriate in their teaching, but its use is governed by access to and by the availability of appropriate software. Helpful web-site addresses are made known to the pupils and are also downloaded onto the school network. The use of homework is appropriate.

88. The department is undergoing a period of transition, following the appointment of a new head of department, who is already providing good leadership and a clear vision for the department. Much of the current documentation is under review or is in the process of development. A considerable amount of work has been already undertaken, but it is, as yet, too early to assess the impact of these changes. The department has yet to develop systems for monitoring lesson plans in order to ensure that planning takes into account the needs of individual pupils and groups, and is informed by the assessment of pupils' understanding and progress in each lesson. Whilst numerical targets are set for the department for the achievement of pupils in external tests and examinations, the department needs to further refine the process in order to get beneath the numerical data. For example, the department has yet to set targets for individual pupils and include strategies that they might use for themselves to improve their own work. Curricular arrangements are currently under review including the entry policy for 'Triple Science' at Key Stage 4, which is inappropriate because the rate and depth of work required is too great for too many of the pupils who opt for this course. The department has yet to use value added assessment data to check whether the current setting arrangements are effective in optimising the progress of all pupils. The department will benefit from a recently announced refurbishment programme for all laboratories. While resources are adequate overall, there are short falls, especially the need to replace top pan balances and purchase additional ICT software. The extensive use of photocopied material is inappropriate in view of the need to maximise the use of its budget and in the light of the recent purchase of new textbooks. Overall the science department has made good improvement since the previous inspection.

ART

89. In the 1999 GCSE art examination sixty-six per cent of pupils gained A* to C grades, compared with sixty-one per cent in similar schools nationally. This confirms a steadily rising trend in the school's GCSE art results over recent years which was continued in the 2000 examination, when the percentage of A* to C grades gained exceeded the national percentage by an even greater margin.

90. Almost all attainment in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is above expectations for the ages of the pupils and of the GCSE courses followed. The overall quality of art teaching is good. In Key Stage 3 teaching is mainly good, and very good teaching was seen in Key Stage 4. As a result, pupils' learning in art generally ranges from good to very good. Pupils of all levels of ability do well, including those with special educational needs. Purposeful progress is made through well planned, paced and presented art teaching. Teachers know their pupils well and plenty of detailed and individual teaching attention enables them to respond as individuals, to develop their own ideas in productive art lessons, and to create many examples of expressive imagery in a good range of materials and techniques. In almost all lessons pupils are involved and enthused. They enjoy the confidence to explore and develop their own ideas, make their own choices and produce creative work stimulated by expert art leadership from their teacher. A key feature of art teaching is the very effective question and answer sessions that help to generate these very good levels of pupil involvement.

91. In both key stages, pupils' painting skills develop well and their good understanding of colour mixing and matching often creates beautiful passages of colour. Pupils' drawing skills are good, and they understand tonal and textural qualities, as Year 7 pupils revealed in portrait studies. Pupils' observational drawing skills are less strong in Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4 because older pupils have gained from structured practice in Year 10. Sketchbooks are successfully used for information gathering, research and experiment. Ceramics is a strong feature of art and the work within Key Stage 3 technology forms a good basis for the development of quality work in a new Key Stage 4 GCSE ceramics course.

92. Teachers pay particular attention to the critical and historical aspects of art, developing these through writing and discussion exercises, as well as using other artists' work to inspire and inform expressive work. As a result, pupils' understanding of the work of other artists and designers is good, especially by Key Stage 4, with some pupils able to write about or discuss ideas knowledgeably, using good specialist vocabulary. Pupils often use ICT to word process their writing in art or to research art historical topics. There are examples of pupils' work and ideas being inspired by art and design in other cultures, for example, some Key Stage 4 work is based on African art. However, the range of art references does not include enough work from other cultures and traditions, especially in Key Stage 3. There are examples of good quality printmaking in both key stages, but not enough opportunities are provided to develop pupils' printing skills.

93. Much has been done since the last inspection. Attainment in, and attitudes to, art have improved as a direct consequence of improved teaching and very good subject leadership. New schemes of work, marking, assessment, performance tracking and analysis strategies have all played their part in raising attainment. Overall the art department has made very good progress since the previous inspection.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

94. Substantial improvements have been made in the provision and teaching of design and technology, especially this school year, and standards are beginning to rise.

95. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations. The work of Year 10 shows that pupils are building well on the skills learnt in Key Stage 3. These pupils are making good progress and are on schedule to achieve above average GCSE results by the end of the two year GCSE course. In contrast, many of the Year 11 pupils have not acquired sufficient knowledge, understanding and skills in the subject, and are not working to their full potential. It is unlikely that the combined results in the three subject areas of graphic products, food technology and resistant materials will meet the national average

for similar schools in 2001.

96. Standards in GCSE have fluctuated considerably since the last inspection. Results in food technology were the strongest in 2000, with sixty-four per cent of pupils gaining A* to C grades, which is well above the national average. While, in the same year, results in graphic products and resistant materials were poor, bringing the overall percentage of A* to C grades to below the national average. This variation in success is a result of the many changes in staff in recent years.

97. The department's fresh approach to the subject is reflected in the achievements of Key Stage 3 pupils. They are good at exploring the properties and uses of a wide range of compliant and resistant materials, developing ideas, using tools and assembling products. Year 7 pupils, for example, take great pride in using a range of tools and materials to design and make wind chimes. Their designs show interest and imagination, and they measure, cut and shape both wood and metal safely and accurately. They also understand how the properties of materials are used to best effect in making different parts of their product. In Year 8 pupils worked methodically, safely and hygienically while preparing and cooking vegetables to make a nutritious vegetable soup. These pupils followed instructions well, kept to their design brief, and worked successfully to a tight time schedule. In Year 9 pupils design and make well formed clay pots and apply their understanding of the properties of clay in order to make the pots tall and strong. These pupils know about clay slip trailing and other types of surface treatment, and use them successfully to decorate their work. Pupils are less successful in applying graphic design to design sheets and presentation generally. Their understanding of design principles, such as the use of visual balance, symmetrical and asymmetrical shapes, colour theory, and harmony in proportion, is less secure and not used often enough, even at a basic level.

98. There is a wide range of attainment in Key Stage 4. Some Year 11 pupils have not made satisfactory progress in previous years and, as a result, they are not familiar with the processes of designing and many find the demands of the GCSE course daunting. A minority, mainly boys, is poorly motivated, and their work in both designing and making is below expectations. For example, their design sheets reveal weak drawing skills and poor presentation generally. In contrast Year 10 pupils, who started the new GCSE courses this year, show enthusiasm for the subject. They are developing good learning patterns and, for example, they work with a critical eye when evaluating commercial models to develop their own ideas for a point of sale display. These pupils took apart a commercial model to study its construction and made accurate observational drawings to show the slotting and folding techniques used. Year 10 pupils develop design ideas of their own, successfully applying these methods and their numeracy, literacy, and information communication technology skills.

99. Almost all of pupils are eager to learn; they enjoy design and technology and the interesting tasks that are set for them. In almost all lessons behaviour is good. There is a purposeful working atmosphere, pupils listen to instructions, watch demonstrations carefully, and use tools and materials safely. Very good working relationships are being established with teachers; boys and girls co-operate well and, both of these have a positive impact on learning. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, they enjoy the practical and visual nature of the tasks set and try hard.

100. The overall quality of teaching although variable is good at both key stages. Teaching is predominantly good while there is also some very good and satisfactory teaching. There has been considerable improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. Lessons are now more focused on National Curriculum requirements and cover a more appropriate range of activities. Lessons and projects are well planned to cover all

aspects of the National Curriculum and GCSE examination requirements. Clear lesson aims and objectives are stated and supported by interesting and challenging work that is matched by pupils' age and prior attainment. Pupils benefit from the expertise and enthusiasm of their teachers who work well in their chosen area of the subject, such as design graphics, resistant materials, food technology and ceramics. The very good pupil management in almost all lessons, complemented by sensitive individual guidance across the full ability range, enables pupils to learn at a good pace. Informative written comments in folders and homework books, that include target levels and grades, give pupils a very good indication of how they might improve their work and learning. However, teaching does not yet give sufficient attention to promoting the application of design awareness, presentation skills, and the further integration of ICT, literacy, numeracy and art theory, into design work, especially when pupils work on the design sheets common to all areas.

101. Design and technology is now very well led and efficiently managed with good attention to detail. There is a strong and shared commitment among staff to raise standards across the full age and ability range and good team work has enabled rapid improvement to be made. Plans for subject development are exciting and innovative, and include the further development of the monitoring of teaching to ensure consistency in the presentation of the subject across all areas. Schemes of work have improved since the last inspection. Curriculum planning is up to date and includes appropriate provision for food technology and computer aided design, systems and control in all years.

GEOGRAPHY

102. At the time of the last inspection GCSE results were average; they declined to below average in the following few years, and the popularity of the subject declined with them. By 1998, only a handful of pupils were choosing to study the subject, and performance at GCSE was generally below that of other subjects.

103. With the arrival of a new head of subject in 1999, these trends were reversed and pupils are making better progress. GCSE results have improved and the subject is growing rapidly in popularity, with take-up in the current Year 10 matching the national average level. At GCSE, in the 1999 examination, the proportions of pupils achieving higher grades (A* - C) and graded (A* - G) results in geography were slightly above the national average. In 2000, all of the small number of candidates passed, and seventy-eight per cent achieved the higher grades. These figures are well above the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades (A* and A) remains low. Whereas far more boys than girls have chosen geography in recent years, recruitment is now more equal. In teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 the proportion of pupils achieving both the nationally-expected level and the higher levels are around the national average. Standards are rising in Key Stage 3, for example the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels has risen in recent years

104. The standard of work seen is in line with national expectations at the beginning of Key Stage 3, a little above it by the end, and significantly above in Key Stage 4. Pupils, including those with special educational needs make good progress.

105. At Key Stage 3 pupils are making good progress in the skills of geographical thinking and argument, ready for work in Key Stage 4. Their Ordnance Survey (OS) mapwork skills are progressing more slowly. The youngest pupils in Key Stage 3 understand what studying geography means, and can use basic map techniques such as symbols and directions. Higher attaining pupils can use co-ordinates quickly to locate places, and use scales to estimate distance; these pupils are beginning to learn to compare places and to explain differences. By the end of the key stage pupils understand that geography concerns complex sets of relationships, and most have made good progress in their ability to explain and

compare. Lower attaining pupils can describe the features of more- and less-economically-developed countries and can account for the differences. Higher attaining pupils can analyse the factors affecting the environment, and can offer sophisticated arguments for and against different types of economic development. Pupils of all abilities can plan and carry out enquiries. High attainers can define their own questions for research and present their findings in original and graphic ways. Pupils' presentation of work is of a high standard.

106. The standard of work seen in Key Stage 4 is above the national average. Some pupils will achieve the highest grades, while the least able, with good coursework, should achieve grade E. Higher attaining pupils in Year 10 can classify energy sources into renewable and non-renewable, and list the advantages and disadvantages of each. Whereas higher attainers have made sound progress in OS mapwork, drawing and using cross-sections and interpreting contours, those of average to low attainment have not moved on much from Key Stage 3 - some still find grid references difficult. By Year 11, higher attainers can put forward a range of arguments concerning environmental issues and can recognise bias, whilst lower attainers can link climate, vegetation, farming and social issues in their explanations of differences between areas. Some work on population is impressive. Pupils of average attainment understand distribution, density, composition, and the pushes and pulls associated with migration. Higher attainers have a firm grasp of the demographic transition model. Mapwork skills are still patchily developed.

107. Good provision is made for pupils with statements of special educational need and one such pupil is working towards a grade D at GCSE. Talented pupils in both key stages now produce high-quality work, and should achieve the top grades at GCSE, which the subject has lacked. Although these pupils achieve well, and the research homework's provide opportunity for extension, some of the work is not challenging enough. A greater range of ICT resources in the department would help provide challenge for these pupils.

108. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and a high proportion is very good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. This is a great improvement on the last inspection, when teaching in the subject was heavily criticised. The three teachers in the department know their subject very well and have a real passion for it. Their best teaching has briskness and a sense of urgency. They plan lessons very well and share the objectives with pupils so that they have a clear understanding of what they are learning and the progress they are making. Assessment is very good indeed. Day-to-day marking is accurate, thorough and encouraging, and the best explains the strengths of pupils' work and sets out areas for improvement in the form of targets. Longer-term assessment is used to set challenging yet realistic examination targets. Pupils are motivated and achieve well because teachers produce high quality resources themselves and choose methods which are lively and interesting. For example, a challenging role-play decision-making exercise interested a Year 11 group, some of whom displayed difficult behaviour, and helped them achieve good results and make significant progress in their motivation and understanding. Homework is regularly set, a good proportion of which involves research that pupils find interesting. The subject receives a satisfactory share of teaching time, but the poor quality of the school timetable produces split classes which slows pupils' progress in Year 10.

109. Pupils learn well and occasionally very well in geography. They show interest, contribute willingly and work together well. Most pupils' have a very clear view of their own development, and they take increasing responsibility for their own work. However, some pupils in Key Stage 3 are immature learners who settle to work slowly, take too long to produce work, and chatter too much. Learning is better in Key Stage 4, but the loud behaviour of a small number of boys sometimes inhibits the opportunity of other pupils, particularly girls, to learn.

110. A new scheme of work, drafted by the new head of department in twelve months, is a great improvement on the inadequate scheme reported by the previous inspection. This scheme helps teachers focus on the key concepts in each unit, provides a framework for assessment and meets National Curriculum requirements. It also builds in a good programme of fieldwork and identifies where and how the subject will support the development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Geography makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' numeracy. For example, the study of population includes work on line, bar and scatter graphs, percentages and correlation and best-fit lines. Because of insufficient computers, the department lacks ready access to the rich images from, for example, weather satellites and earthquake sites and is currently unable to contribute much to pupils' ICT skills.

111. The geography curriculum is enriched by the presence of the Japanese intern. The department makes a good contribution to pupils' moral and social development because pupils constantly discuss inequality across the world and are encouraged to think about social and political matters often through team work on decision-making exercises.

112. This is a rapidly improving department because it has excellent leadership and very good management. A major renewal programme has taken place in the last year and a half, which has focused on the main factors which lead to the most improvement in the shortest time. The impact of excellent leadership can be seen in improved and consistently good quality teaching and planning for improvement that is based on the analysis of departmental strengths and weaknesses. Resources, while much improved and now satisfactory, lack materials such as fieldwork and meteorological equipment. A splendid display in the geography area attracts pupils and sends out a very strong message that geography is fun, interesting and important.

HISTORY

113. Results in GCSE indicate that standards in history are well above the national average and have been so consistently over the last three years. In 1999 and 2000, seventy-one per cent of pupils gained GCSE grade A*- C, as against a national average for 1999 of fifty-six per cent. The percentage of the school's pupils gaining grade A* was well above average, for both boys and girls, and results in the short course were equally strong. In 2000, the department exceeded its GCSE improvement target and gained a higher average points score than was the case for the school as a whole. Similarly in 2000, teachers assessed seventy-two per cent of pupils as gaining the national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3 with thirty-four per cent exceeding it. Across the school, therefore, public examination results and statutory assessments both indicate that the department is consistently achieving standards that are well above expectations, both nationally and within the school.

114. Standards observed in lessons during the inspection reinforce this picture of high achievement. Key Stage 3 pupils' written work, displayed in corridors, on walls and contained in exercise books, is always well organised, well presented, and demonstrate, that pupils have well-established levels of factual knowledge. In lessons, pupils readily ask questions to improve their understanding and look to apply their knowledge not merely recall it. They learn, therefore, to think conceptually. Written work is of a high standard. Copying directly from text books, for example, becomes markedly less frequent as pupils move up the school after Year 7, reflecting the department's efforts to support pupils as independent writers. Work on American Plains Indians in Year 8, and the Industrial Revolution in Year 9 both show evidence of the impact of the department's high expectations and that these expectations have been adopted by pupils as their own. It is typical of these pupils that they look to raise hypotheses and explore ideas rather than offer guesses. "Was Elizabeth I trying

to build a bridge between religion and Parliament?” asked one pupil. “I think that Elizabeth meant to use her charm and intelligence to win Parliament round” suggested another.

115. By the end of Key Stage 4, a majority of older pupils have developed further this ability to offer balanced and justified opinions, and can link causes and effects and draw connections with increasing confidence. Work samples consistently indicate excellent standards of written work in Year 11. These pupils make pertinent comments, offer perceptive questions such as “Was it because Vietnam and USA had Japan as a common enemy?” and are able to draw links between new topics and previous work for themselves. Their understanding of difficult or complex issues is often very good, with some of the work on ‘The Irish Question’ in particular, being outstanding. The department’s use of literacy, spelling strategies, self-assessment opportunities and writing frames has had a significant and positive impact on standards. There are frequent examples of very well organised written work, very good understanding and excellent communication skills. Many of the introductions in pupils’ GCSE coursework, and the general ability of these pupils to sustain the organisation of their ideas throughout their essay work, are very good indeed. They blend technical vocabulary, factual information and source material into essay themes with confidence, handling and applying difficult concepts well. It is common place for pupils to use ICT, and in particular word processing to refine their work. Standards of presentation in history throughout the school are excellent.

116. Pupils behave very well, which is something both they and their teachers take for granted. Equally impressive are their attitudes to learning. In almost every class, pupils concentrate, take notes without being prompted and look to improve at all times. They do not settle for ‘simple’ or ‘safe’ solutions. The standard of all their work is consequently very impressive. These pupils expect, and are expected to make every effort and, because they do, they succeed. They look to understand, not merely to ‘finish’. Because they are confident that they will be properly listened to by other pupils, they are ready to explore ideas aloud; discussions in history are the norm. Relationships between pupils and between staff and pupils are excellent. Invariably the latter listen respectfully to teachers and other pupils, and in particular they offer thoughtful and relevant suggestions of their own. They want to do well and take lessons seriously, and recognise the importance of good behaviour and of ‘doing one’s best’. There was not a single instance of unacceptable behaviour of any kind during the inspection and pupils’ behaviour and maturity, particularly in Key Stage 4, does them, and the school, great credit.

117. Teaching in the overwhelming majority of lessons at both Key Stages 3 and 4 is good; at times it is outstanding. Such teaching enables pupils to make good progress, including those with special educational needs, and especially those capable of high attainment who achieve very well. There was no unsatisfactory teaching seen during the inspection and the department has clearly addressed the improvement points made in the last inspection very well indeed. At times the discussion phase of lessons can be a little too lengthy, particularly following group work but, in general, planning is good. Lesson objectives are consistently clear and used well, and teachers’ subject knowledge allows them to take advantage of pupils’ comments to raise learning to higher levels. For example, pupils’ understanding is consistently extended by the clever use of questions intended to link different elements of the history syllabus together. Chronology, for example, is taught as a by-product of more important skills rather than, mechanistically, for its own sake. Lessons begin promptly and finish well. Invariably they proceed at a pace that is brisk enough for pupils to work with purpose, but which still ensures that there is time for them to reflect on, and respond to the significance of the events they are studying. Consequently, history supports pupils’ spiritual, moral and social education well. Its support for cultural development is satisfactory. Marking is precise and matches school and department policies. Good use is made of writing frames and word-processing to develop and refine written work. Equally good use is made of

educational visits, ICT programmes, group work and pupil targets for the same reason. High attaining pupils, as well as those with special educational needs, are properly challenged and supported. Homework is regularly set and marked and assessment is used to excellent effect to inform planning and to motivate pupils. Teachers have very high expectations, both of pupils' behaviour and of their standards, and these pervade everything the department does.

118. This is a very effective department. Leadership in history is energetic, perceptive and passionate in its commitment to pupils' needs. In short, it is outstanding. There is, consequently, an excellent sense of partnership underpinning everything the department attempts, and it is this, together with the vision that the head of department brings to history, which explains its success. The breadth and balance of the history curriculum meets requirements but, more importantly, the department pursues depth of understanding at every opportunity. There is a well-drafted scheme of work covering both key stages, and consistent use is made of pupil self-assessment profiles to motivate pupils. There is similar consistency taken by all staff to the implementation of other departmental policies such as homework, marking and behaviour management. The quality of teaching and any patterns in pupils' results are both monitored appropriately, and routine administration is undertaken efficiently. The department ignores no opportunity to refine and improve its work. Staff are well-motivated, professionally well-informed and well-qualified. Accommodation is sufficient and well-maintained, and enhanced through the use of high quality displays of pupils' work. Resource levels are satisfactory. Overall the department has made very good progress since the previous inspection.

INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

119. Standards in ICT are well above national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3. The standard of work seen in most lessons is high because pupils are taught very well. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress in ICT lessons. The introduction of discrete ICT lessons in Key Stage 3 has been a major factor in raising standards since the previous inspection. All pupils are able to 'log on' and confidently retrieve saved files and manipulate data. Pupils successfully use a wide variety of software ranging from word-processing, with advanced features such as text boxes, AutoShapes and word art, to desktop publishing and spreadsheets. CD ROMs are available on the network and many pupils use these and the Internet, to good effect. Pupils have their own e-mail accounts and use the school intranet as a valuable source of information.

120. While standards and achievement at Key Stage 4 in the core ICT course are satisfactory overall the achievement of some pupils is not as good as it should be. A significant number of pupils do not complete their key skills portfolio and others are not challenged sufficiently because not enough opportunities are provided for them to extend their skills beyond these gained in Year 9.

121. The use of ICT across the curriculum is patchy. In some subjects, such as design and technology, art and history, ICT is used well to improve the range of quality of pupils' work. However, in other subjects like English, geography and music, insufficient use is made of computers. ICT is a popular subject with pupils and now has a firm foundation that can be used to promote its development in a wider range of subjects.

122. The quality of ICT teaching is very good at Key Stage 3 and so is pupils' learning. The single lesson observed at Key Stage 4 benefited from good teaching. As a result pupils have positive attitudes to learning about ICT and are keen to use the school's computer facilities. Clubs, and an open access policy, encourage and enable pupils to use computers frequently. Lessons are very well planned to enable pupils to learn a range of ICT skills and this is

complemented by well targeted one to one support from the teachers. In a Year 7 lesson the teacher used his good rapport with pupils and good sense of humour to engage them in talking about ICT and then expected them to work independently. Pupils responded well and as a result the teacher was able to move about the class and give help and set additional, or more challenging tasks, to maintain high standards and a good work rate for pupils of different ability. In another Year 7 lesson, the teacher's very good subject knowledge enabled a computer projector to be used to good effect and pupils' problems to be fixed quickly, which stimulated good learning as pupils prepared a 'fire exit route' poster. Teachers are good at asking the right types of questions and listening carefully to pupils' answers. Year 8 pupils made very good progress in learning about desk top publishing because the teacher led a very effective question and answer session. Homework is used very effectively to enhance learning and opportunities are provided for this work to be completed at lunch times.

123. ICT is a very strong department that has made very good progress since the previous inspection. The department benefits from excellent leadership and management and has a clear view of what needs to be done to further raise standards.

124. There has been a very good improvement in the quality of teaching, which was too variable at the time of the previous inspection. The National Curriculum is implemented in full and the head of department is keen to improve the use of ICT in a wide range of subjects. While unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection, the assessment of pupils' work is now very good. Pupils' achievement is tracked by reference to National Curriculum levels at Key Stage 3 and measured against GNVQ key skill levels at Key Stage 4. As a result, teachers are able to respond to the strengths and weaknesses in pupils work. There is a good level of ICT equipment that is used to good effect and in and out of lessons such as at lunchtime.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

125. Results in GCSE French in 2000 show that the proportion of pupils achieving grades A* - C is well below the national average. Thirty-two per cent of pupils gained these grades against a national average of fifty-three per cent. The performance of boys, which is well below that of girls, is of particular concern. In German, eleven high attaining pupils were entered for GCSE of whom seventy-three per cent gained an A*-C in 2000, which is well above the national average. Teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 shows an encouraging seventy per cent of pupils at Level 4 and above, which compares favourably with national targets. Lesson observations and work seen during the inspection revealed standards in line with national expectations at both key stages because of an improvement in the quality of teaching. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall at both key stages and stronger at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4.

126. Listening is the best developed of four language skills. In lessons seen the level of attainment observed was highest in the groups in which the teacher spoke French or German most in the classroom. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils are well able to understand the foreign language spoken at a reasonable speed and this skill is further developed through Key Stage 4. At both key stages the standard of speaking can be good when pupils make a real effort. It is usual for Key Stage 3 pupils to use the foreign language with enthusiasm. In contrast, Year 11 pupils are far less enthusiastic to talk in a foreign language, and even high attaining pupils often speak with reluctance and, when they do so, their pronunciation is very poor.

127. Pupils of all ages are competent readers, they understand the gist of a text and can elicit detail. They deal well with authentic material but do not engage in independent reading.

Writing develops well and by the end of Key Stage 3 pupils are able to write letters using a range of tenses and can express personal opinions on a variety of topics. At Key Stage 4 the best writing is accurate and well structured. Pupils can re-structure writing, for example, so as to give an account from another persons view point, or so that it asks for rather than gives information. Pupils neatly present their written work and the overall standard of writing at both key stages is satisfactory. However, while high and low attainers as well as average attaining pupils respond well to challenging tasks some writing is strewn with errors and reveals a lack of understanding of sentence structure.

128. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall. Most pupils are interested in their work, display positive attitudes to the language studied and have good relationships with their teacher. However, there are classes in which a significant minority, usually girls, constantly chat among themselves and who are dismissive of the teacher almost to the point of insolence. This reduces the standard of their work and that of others whose good efforts are disrupted.

129. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is stronger at Key Stage 3, where it is good, than at Key Stage 4, where it is mostly satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed, which is a significant improvement on the previous inspection. All of the modern language teachers are good linguists who are capable of using foreign languages effectively which enables them to encourage pupils in its use and so help them gain confidence and learn. Lessons are planned carefully and generally led at an appropriate pace. In the best lessons high expectations and a challenging work rate are set to which pupils respond by working hard and achieving high standards. In these lessons the foreign language is used to the full and the teacher has a firm control of pupils' learning. However, occasionally within otherwise satisfactory lessons, English is used unnecessarily, behaviour management is only just strong enough to secure effective learning, and higher attainers are not sufficiently challenged. Marking is very good and the frequent use of constructive comments helps pupils know what they need to do to improve. Modern languages has a firm place in the school curriculum and there is opportunity to study two languages. However, there are no foreign language assistants to support modern language teaching. The department recognises it does not make enough use of ICT.

130. All of the modern language staff have been appointed since the last inspection. The new head of department is working hard to raise standards and has received effective support from the school management team. As a result there has been good improvement in modern languages since the previous highly-critical inspection. For example, there has been good progress in improving the leadership and management of the department and the quality of teaching and learning. Pupils' attitude to modern languages are improving, so is their writing at Key Stage 3. Standards and expectations have begun to improve and there are better opportunities for pupils to speak the languages. The department is working towards further improvements in these areas in order to raise standards in French.

MUSIC

131. At Key Stage 4 standards overall are in line with national expectations. However, a significant number of pupils in Year 10 achieve higher standards. In 2000 sixty-two per cent of pupils achieved A*-C GCSE grades. Although below the national average, this result is a significant improvement on that achieved in 1999. By the end of Key Stage 3, the attainment of pupils is in line with national expectations, which substantiates teacher assessment in 2000 that shows the majority of pupils are working at the correct standard. In instrumental less ons standards are in line with those expected of pupils of a similar age and length of

time learning. Standards achieved in extra-curricular activities are high.

132. At Key Stage 3 pupils listen and apply their knowledge and understanding through practical, interrelated activities. They demonstrate appropriate or good knowledge of musical terms, features and styles. They sing and play well, and develop an appropriate technique. They improvise freely, such as in a 'blues style' in Year 9. Composing skills are also developing effectively. At Key Stage 4, pupils continue to apply their knowledge and understanding well through activities that integrate the skills of performing, composing and appraising. Performing skills are particularly well developed in Year 10, where a number of pupils perform to high levels. At both key stages too few pupils are able to consolidate their musical learning through the use of ICT.

133. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good at Key Stages 3 and 4; some teaching is excellent. This high quality of teaching has a positive impact upon pupils' interest and learning in music. The strengths in the teaching include the quality of planning, the use of varied strategies to support pupils' learning, the management of lessons and the use of assessment to inform teaching. These qualities within the teaching enable pupils to consolidate and develop their skills well, especially at Key Stage 4, where they regularly employ their creative and intellectual skills. At both key stages pupils work purposefully and at a good pace, and demonstrate a clear understanding of what they are doing and how they can improve their work. The very good teaching fully involves pupils and, as a result, they enjoy learning music and their behaviour and relationships with the teacher are good. Such teaching also engages high attaining pupils and enables them to make good progress. However, not enough focussed support is provided for some lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs in Key Stage 3.

134. The director of music has been in post for one year and her leadership and management of the department are very good. A change of staff immediately after the last inspection led to a drop in standards. This situation has been rectified to the extent that improvement since the last inspection is now very good. The quality and range of learning opportunities and the overall planning and assessment procedures are strengths of the department. Good instrumental provision allows a high proportion of pupils to learn to play a musical instrument, and a significant number take part in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities, such as the school choir, all of which makes heavy time demands on the director of music. While adequate, there is room for improvement in the provision of music technology resources, especially computers.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

135. In 2000, the first year in which pupils were entered for GCSE examinations in physical education, the percentage of pupils who gained levels A*-C was below the national average. Boy's performed better than girls. The target set for 2001 indicates a commitment to raise standards and coursework indicates pupils are making satisfactory progress towards this target, although some folder work is incomplete. Pupils have an appropriate understanding of the effect of exercise on the human body and are able to plan training programmes for different sports effectively. A significant minority of pupils have weak literacy skills and do not have sufficient understanding of the technical terms associated with physical education.

136. Netball and basketball were the activities timetabled for Key Stage 4 during the inspection. In these games the majority of pupils reach the expected standards in acquiring and developing the techniques of passing, creating and holding space, and demonstrate a satisfactory knowledge of the rules. Higher attaining boys understand the principles of zone play and demonstrate pace and accuracy in passing as they build up strategies for set play from the end line. In netball, pupils show a sound knowledge of the rules as they develop the

role of the umpire. There is good provision for extra-curricular activities such as Gaelic football, which is valued by pupils and parents, and the school has gained national recognition through the award of Sportsmark. Pupils achieve success at district and county levels.

137. At Key Stage 3, pupils attain satisfactory standards in gymnastics. The majority are able to demonstrate basic skills with control. Their ability to link actions and to show clear shapes with good tension, although satisfactory overall, is more variable. Their knowledge of the principles of invasion games is satisfactory.

138. At both key stages pupils show a good awareness of safety matters and they know the basic principles of health related exercise. They are able to demonstrate safe stretches for the main muscle groups and understand the purpose of warm up and cool down. Pupils are not able to analyse specific skills as well as they should because their observation is not always sufficiently focused, and they are not always given sufficient time to practise and improve their work after observing others. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory and often good progress in developing their skills and knowledge.

139. The overall quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. Much of the teaching is good and a very small proportion unsatisfactory. Teachers have a sound knowledge of gymnastics and a good, and often very good, knowledge of games. This allows a progressive series of tasks to be taught in most lessons that challenge most pupils intellectually and physically. In some lessons the specific learning objectives lack clarity. This results in pupils making insufficient progress because some do not understand the principle of the practice while others, especially high-attaining pupils, are not sufficiently challenged. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and participation, and pupils respond well as they work sensibly and productively when practising independently of the teacher. More boys participate in extra-curricular activities and GCSE courses than girls. The strengths in physical education teaching include good pupil management, concise explanations, the effective use of demonstration, and the thoughtful use of key words and questions that help pupils think for themselves and increase their understanding. Teachers offer encouragement and constructive comments about pupils work which enables them to know what to do to improve.

140. Teaching is well organised to help pupils develop their listening and speaking skills, and a vocabulary specific to the subject. The careful consideration and effective support given by teachers and learning support assistants enables pupils, including those with special educational needs, to be fully involved in all activities.

141. The department is satisfactorily led and managed and satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection. A satisfactory scheme of work has been updated, and the department has implemented procedures for assessing and recording pupils' attainment and progress. There is not yet enough guidance on how the scheme of work is to be implemented, and how the information from assessment is to be used to inform planning, and so raise standards. The quality of teaching is monitored regularly in line with school policy. However, this monitoring does not focus sufficiently on specific groups of pupils and their learning, to check their progress across the key stages. While the department development plan does not give sufficient emphasis to raising standards, actions are in place to do so. For example, Year 11 GCSE pupils have been set specific targets and know what they need to do in order to achieve them. The excellent accommodation for physical education is well used and whilst sports equipment is adequate, insufficient use is made of ICT to enhance learning in GCSE courses.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

142. Standards in religious education at Key Stage 4 have been much improved since the last inspection due to the introduction of GCSE courses. In the full course GCSE pupils achieve well above the national average and better than in many other subjects in the school, with seventy-five per cent of pupils achieving a grade C or above. Forty-seven per cent of pupils taking the recently introduced GCSE short course achieve grades A*-C which is below the national average. There is some difference in the attainment of boys and girls across all years, and particularly in the short course in Years 10 and 11. The department is aware of this and is planning actions to solve it. The standards achieved by the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with the expectations of the Hampshire Agreed Syllabus, but in parts are not strong enough.

143. Pupils' achievement, including those with special educational needs, is mostly satisfactory or better. It is satisfactory in Key Stage 3, good in the GCSE full course in Key Stage 4, but less secure in the GCSE short course where pupils are not yet achieving at the level expected. In Key Stage 3, pupils' knowledge and understanding about religions is better than their ability to explore and respond to deeper questions and beliefs. For example, pupils in Year 9 are able to identify key religious rites of passage, such as confirmation and Bar Mitzvah, but many find it difficult to explain their deeper significance for believers, or analyse the value of having religious rituals to mark key events in life. Pupils following the Year 11 GCSE full course are making progress in line with expectations. They are able to use appropriate religious terminology and relate previous learning to new issues, as illustrated in a Year 11 discussion of euthanasia in which pupils drew on religious beliefs about the sanctity of life. Progress in the short course, particularly in the current Year 10, is impeded by the disaffection of a minority of pupils, mainly boys. Pupils with special educational needs are well known to teachers and make satisfactory progress. However, higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.

144. Most pupils respond positively to religious education and the quality of relationships between pupils and with teachers is a strength of the department. In most lessons pupils are interested, prepared to offer personal insights and listen attentively both to the teacher and to each other. For example, Year 10 pupils participated well when they were asked to analyse the different forms of evil represented by recent newspaper headlines. They engaged in a thoughtful and informed discussion and gave feedback to the whole class. While some work is unfinished, both class and homework, most pupils try to produce work of a good standard. They are encouraged in this through the use of a clear marking system that they understand. Behaviour is good and pupils are courteous.

145. The overall quality of teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4 is satisfactory and occasionally better. Teachers have an enthusiasm for their subject and a thorough knowledge of it which they use effectively to ensure good behaviour and promote a generally positive response and secure satisfactory progress in religious education among pupils. In all lessons teaching is clearly structured and has a strong focus on the reinforcement of earlier learning. Targeted and challenging questioning by the teacher is a key strength in all lessons, because it is well matched to pupils' different levels of understanding. Another strength is the frequent use of current events which enables pupils to apply their learning to everyday life situations. In Year 11, for example, pupils discussed the ethical and religious dilemma facing the parents of Siamese twins, and in Year 10 pupils examined whether a ski train disaster was an example of moral evil. Sometimes teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning, such as when the range of teaching strategies used is too narrow, and too dependent on teacher led questions. Not enough attention is given to planning challenging activities for pupils of all abilities, including tasks which require high attaining pupils to develop and use a range of skills. A range of suitable resources has been built up over recent years. Effective use is made of display materials both purchased and produced by pupils, to make an attractive and positive learning environment in the classroom.

146. A very detailed department handbook provides clear policies that identify good practice and promote consistent approaches. The department's detailed scheme of work provides a firm foundation for lesson planning. However, units of work and individual lesson plans do not provide sufficient assessment opportunities or clear enough guidance about the standards to be achieved. Assessment has already been identified by the department as needing further development.

147. The religious education department makes a satisfactory contribution to the school's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils. It does this through specifying curriculum content which focuses on matters of religious, spiritual and moral concern, and through the way in which lessons are taught. Pupils are encouraged to learn from the teachings and practices of religious traditions by reflecting on the symbolism and significance of them, and to respect the beliefs and feelings of other people.

148. The department is led by a newly qualified, able and enthusiastic teacher who is supported by a team of three experienced, but non-specialist teachers who work purposefully together. She has inherited a department in which the standards of achievement have been raised in recent years through effective leadership and an improved time allocation and resources. She and teachers who work with her are committed to encouraging a high profile for religious education within the school and improving standards of attainment yet further. Good progress has been made in most aspects of the department's work since the previous inspection.