

INSPECTION REPORT

THE WEALD SCHOOL

Billingshurst

LEA area: West Sussex

Unique reference number: 126068

Headteacher: Mr P May

Reporting inspector: John Woodroffe
OIN 7545

Dates of inspection: 13 – 16 November 2000

Inspection number: 223822

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 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Upper Station Road Billingshurst West Sussex
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr G Parr
Date of previous inspection:	13 – 17 March 1995

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Anthony Mundy, OIN: 9388	Lay inspector		How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mike Dowden, OIN: 11467	Team inspector	Drama	How high are standards? – The school's results and achievements
John Plant, OIN: 20132	Team inspector	Mathematics	
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Peter Hooker, OIN: 10979	Team inspector	Science	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Marcia Foley, OIN: 13228	Team inspector	Geography	
Ian Coulson, OIN: 15352	Team inspector	History	
Ian Hartland, OIN: 15337	Team inspector	Religious Education	
Derek Blease, OIN: 8063	Team inspector	Music	
Jenny Newman, OIN: 4032	Team inspector	Physical education	How well are pupils taught?
Ivor Rushforth, OIN 11258	Team inspector	Art	
Terry Fitchett, OIN: 4426	Team inspector	Modern languages	
Steve Williams, OIN: 14638	Team inspector	GNVQ, sixth form	
Paul Shallcross, OIN: 11240	Team inspector	Information technology, design and technology	
Sue Airey, OIN: 2913	Team inspector	Special educational needs, equal opportunities and English as an additional language	How high are standards? – Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development, How well does the school care for its pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Weald is a mixed comprehensive community school for pupils aged 11 to 19. It is designated as a Technology College. There are 1397 pupils on roll, of whom 288 are in the sixth form. Most of the pupils come from the large rural catchment area which has a higher than average socio-economic mix. The number of pupils identified as having special educational needs is below the national average. The number with statements is broadly in line with the national average. The percentage of pupils speaking English as a second language is low. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is 6.4 per cent which is below the national average. The attainment of pupils on entry is above average and a very high proportion stay on in the sixth form.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school. It embraces inclusion and through its practices actively promotes it. The school has many strengths and no significant weaknesses. Teaching is good and often very good. This promotes above average standards in all subjects. Pupils enjoy coming to school and they achieve well in a caring, purposeful and stimulating environment. All staff, governors and parents give very good support. The Weald is an effective and improving school, leadership is outstanding, management is particularly good and relationships are very good. The school serves its local community very effectively. The school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher provides a very clear and purposeful direction for the school. Senior managers and middle managers are extremely effective. All staff give very good support. The role of the governing body in shaping the direction of the school has had a major influence upon its recent success.
- Standards are above average in Years 7, 8 and 9 and well above average by the end of Year 11. Achievement in the sixth form is good.
- Teaching is often very good throughout the school. In some lessons it is excellent.
- Behaviour is very good. Relationships and personal and social development are also very good.
- The school cares for and supports pupils very well.
- The ethos is very good. Expectations are high and pupils are proud of their school.
- Liaison with primary schools and the provision for work experience are both outstanding.

What could be improved

- The programme of lesson observation should now focus upon: how well literacy skills are developing; the marking of work and how it can raise standards; the further development of ICT and the range of teaching strategies used in all subjects, to spread the good practice already in place throughout the school

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 good progress since the last inspection in 1995. Following a difficult period up to 1998, progress over the last two years has been excellent. The school and governing body are rightly proud of the improvement. Academic standards are higher and pupils continue to achieve well. Management structures are now a strength of the school and PSE makes a significant contribution to the personal development and achievements of the pupils. Accommodation has been improved. However, some of the temporary accommodation is adversely affecting pupils' learning. Health and safety issues have been addressed and an "assessment risk" policy adopted. Improvements in the quality of the curriculum for information and communications technology are very good. There is still non-compliance with the law concerning the provision of collective worship throughout the school and

religious education for some sixth form students. The school has the capacity to continue its improvement.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	B	A	A	A
A-levels/AS-levels	D	B		

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

On entry to the school, standards are above the national average. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, results were well above average in 2000 when compared with all schools and similar schools. In 1999 they were above average and matched results in similar schools except in English where they were below average. In 2000, there was no significant difference between English, mathematics and science. In work seen, standards are above average in all subjects and well above average in modern foreign languages. The proportion of pupils who attain at the higher levels is well above average. Pupils achieve well in all subjects and particularly well in mathematics and modern foreign languages.

GCSE results were well above the average for similar schools in 2000. They were particularly good in German, geography, religious education, science, drama and ceramics. Standards in work seen are also well above average in most subjects. The proportion of pupils achieving 5 or more A* to G (99 per cent) was very high. In the last two years, pupils have made much better progress from Year 9 than in similar schools. Almost all pupils, including those with special educational needs in Years 10 and 11 are achieving very well.

The A level results in 2000 were at the 1999 national average. Results were above average in chemistry, English literature, design and technology, economics, art and modern foreign languages. From work seen in Year 13, standards are judged to be above average. All pupils achieve well and some of them very well. Results in GNVQ are average overall and above average in advanced science and advanced health and social care.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy their work. They are keen to learn, which helps them to make good progress and achieve well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good at all times. Pupils are courteous, trustworthy and treat property and resources with care and respect.
Personal development and relationships	These are very good. Pupils are developing into articulate and thinking members of society.
Attendance	Overall attendance is good and above the national average.

This is a happy and caring school and pupils are keen to be involved in the wide range of activities it provides. The very positive attitudes that pupils have towards their work are a strength of the school.

There is a clear focus upon high standards and the desire to improve is evident at all levels. Pupils behave very well and problems are dealt with very effectively by staff. There is a real sense of a community working together in the school and relationships are very good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in 99 per cent of lessons. It is good or better in 80 per cent, very good or excellent in 39 per cent and unsatisfactory in only 1 per cent. This is very good and an improvement on the last inspection. The high quality teaching means that pupils learn very well and make very good progress. There is some excellent teaching in religious education, modern foreign languages, English and design and technology.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and balanced and stimulates the pupils. The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good and many pupils participate. The curriculum is enhanced further through the involvement of members of the community in lessons and the daily life of the school. Learning is not limited to the usual school day.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This is very good throughout the school. It enables pupils with significant difficulties to be successful.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The few pupils concerned receive good help and support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for personal development is very good. Pupils are mature, confident and articulate. Moral, cultural and social development are very good and spiritual development is good. Pupils clearly benefit from the valuable programme of PSE.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The monitoring and support of pupils' academic progress and attainment are good and improving. Support, guidance and concern for pupils' welfare are very good.

Parents view the school very positively and work very well in partnership to give good support in all aspects. This has an impact upon the attitudes and achievements of its pupils as seen in the 99 per cent of pupils achieving 5 or more A* to G grades in GCSE.

The school does not meet fully statutory requirements in the provision of physical education and ICT in art. The time allocated for religious education is not adequate.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and has a clear vision for the school which is supported by the whole community. The senior managers are very effective and the heads of department and pastoral managers are a key factor in the success of the school. All staff are committed to high standards and school improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The role of governors in shaping the direction of the school and providing on-going support is excellent. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities very well and understand what is required for a successful and dynamic school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The monitoring of teaching and learning is good. It has developed well over the last two years, but now needs to focus upon different aspects. Appraisal and performance management are very good. The principles of best value are applied very well and all matters relating to the budget and financial planning are excellent.
The strategic use of resources	Resources and finances are used well to support teaching and learning. The match of staff to the needs of the school is very good. There are still some temporary classrooms which are unsuitable for teaching and some of the science laboratories are too small for practical work with normal sized groups.

The school is very well staffed by suitable qualified and experienced teachers. Support staff play a very valuable part in the learning process and enable teachers to focus upon their professional responsibilities.

The excellent improvements that the school has made over the last two years are due to the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, supported by a very capable and effective management team. The impact of other staff in management roles has also been very effective.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High expectations of work and behaviour • Friendliness and approachability of staff • Positive responses to comments and suggestions • Quality of care for all pupils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework provision • Communication from school to home

The inspectors endorsed the positive views of parents. They looked closely at the provision of homework and communication with parents and found the provision of homework to be good and communication generally to be very good. Occasional communication failings are attributable to inconsistent procedures among a few form tutors when distributing letters from the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Standards are high. When pupils enter school at the age of 11 their overall attainment is above average and it is still above average three years later when they are 14. It rises to being well above average by the end of Year 11. Although A level results dipped to the national average in 2000, overall standards of students currently studying A level are above average. Pupils achieve well at all stages in their education.
2. The national test results of pupils taken in their last year of primary school show that, taken altogether, they are at an above average standard in English, mathematics and science when they come to The Weald School. This level of attainment is sustained successfully through to Year 9, when pupils are 14.
3. Test results for 14 year olds in 2000 were particularly strong: well above the national average at level 5 in English, mathematics and science and better than in similar schools. Pupils also did particularly well at the higher levels in the tests (level 6 and above). Results were well above average compared to similar schools and compared to all schools. Overall, this was a marked improvement on 1999.
4. The strong leadership of the new headteacher has enabled teachers to help pupils achieve these improved results in all subjects. And now, partly because of very effective leadership by the head of department, there are major improvements in English and standards in the subject are climbing to the same high levels as mathematics and science. Standards of attainment of Year 9 pupils in other subjects are also above the average and they are particularly high in modern foreign languages.
5. In English standards of reading and writing are good and pupils are able to use these skills well in their other subjects. Pupils, including those with special needs, now achieve well from the ages of 11 to 14. The decline in standards, shown in 1999, has been arrested and now they are much better.
6. At GCSE in both 1999 and 2000, the proportion of pupils achieving five or more A* to C and A* to G grades has been well above average compared to all schools and compared to similar schools. They remain at this high level in the current Year 11. Pupils achieve very well at GCSE.
7. Results are now back to the well above average levels achieved at the last inspection. In 1994 61 per cent of pupils got 5 or more A* to C grades, but this declined to only 49 per cent in 1998 from which point, under leadership from the new headteacher, standards have risen. So that in 1999 and 2000, 66 per cent and 63 per cent of pupils respectively, gained 5 or more GCSE grades A* to C and 99 per cent achieved grades A* to G. Over the five-year period therefore, the trend of improvement compared to other schools has been below the national trend, but it has picked up sharply in the last two years.
8. A different way of measuring results, known as the average point score, is calculated by allocating points for each level or grade and averaging them. This gives a figure

which shows how well pupils have done overall. Using this method to measure progress between Year 9 and GCSE, in the last two years pupils' progress has been much better than it has been in similar schools. This helps to confirm the judgement that progress towards GCSE is now very good and that pupils achieve very well.

9. The GCSE A* to C grades for English for both 1999 and 2000 show that pupils achieved above average results compared to all schools and slightly above average results compared to similar schools. Boys did not do quite as well in 2000 as they did in 1999. In mathematics and science, results for all pupils were well above average compared to all schools and compared to similar schools. Results in other subjects were also generally above average and they were exceptionally good in drama, ceramics and religious education where a high proportion of pupils got A* grades and in geography and German where a very high percentage gained A* to C grades.
10. The overall attainment of pupils in the present Year 11 is similar to last year and there is evidence of improvements in boys' English attainment back to 1999 levels. The effective target setting process for each subject, successful in its outcome in 2000, predicts further GCSE improvements for 2001.
11. From the evidence of work seen in lessons, standards are above average at A level. In the A level examinations, students achieve well in most subjects at the higher grades of A and B and pass rates are usually 100 per cent. In 1999 the average point score of 18.7 was above the national average for pupils taking two or more subjects and an improvement on the previous year when it was below average, but in 2000 the point score dipped to average. This lower performance was partly attributable to a lower starting point from GCSE for the pupils involved. GCSE results for that year group were considerably lower than other years. However, work seen in the current Year 13 confirms generally above average performance, particularly in English literature and chemistry where current high standards reflect very good examination results in the last two years. In mathematics and history, attainment reaches the average at A level. Results in advanced GNVQ are, overall, average. They are above average in GNVQ science and GNVQ leisure and tourism.
12. Throughout the school pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Between the ages of 11 and 14 they progress well, through a detailed programme of support, good teaching and individual help with literacy and reading skills where appropriate. Good support is given to pupils with statements of special educational needs and work is well matched to their needs. The progress made by the pupils with English as an additional language is also good. Pupils with special needs in Years 10 and 11, working towards their GCSE examinations make very good progress. They get good individual support in lessons when they need this. As a result they do well in class and in their examinations. In the sixth form pupils with special needs make good progress, particularly in GNVQ courses. Gifted and talented pupils also progress well. They benefit particularly from the very good lessons where a variety of activities (for example in drama) include particularly demanding problem solving activities, especially suited to their needs.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. Pupils are very keen to come to school and they have very good attitudes to their work. This is strength of the school and reflects the aim “to provide a rich educational experience through which young people of all ages, abilities and talents can develop successfully as individual, as students and as future citizens”.
14. Pupils want to learn and in lessons settle to work immediately, listen well, respond to questions and confidently volunteer contributions to the lessons. When offered the opportunity they choose appropriate learning activities. As they progress through the school pupils continue to have very positive attitudes to learning, work hard in lessons and sustain their concentration. In all lessons pupils’ attitudes and behaviour were satisfactory or better and in 87 per cent of lessons they were good, very good and at times excellent. In most lessons, teachers’ expectations are made clear and the tasks set are focused appropriately, resulting in the pupils applying themselves very well. When pupils are required to complete tasks within a definite period of time they act responsibly and work hard without close supervision. The increase in ICT provision has also impacted positively upon attitudes to learning and pupils respond well and will work hard using different ICT software including PowerPoint and video links.
15. Pupils’ behaviour in lessons and around the school site is very good. They know the routines and procedures well and understand the way they should behave in lessons and in the social areas. They are sensible and enjoy responsibility and the trust of teachers. Pupils are courteous to visitors and are keen to join in and instigate conversations. The interviews that inspectors had with pupils in all year groups were an excellent example of the overall maturity and confidence of the pupils. There is a relaxed atmosphere around the school and this is enhanced by the involvement of sixth formers in all school activities and adults from the local community who study with older pupils.
16. The personal and social education (PSE) programme for all year groups places high emphasis on personal development and good citizenship. Teaching is good in these lessons. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Pupils are good at reflecting on and understanding that their own actions will have an impact upon others. When in discussion they listen as well as contribute very well orally and show consideration and respect for others. The few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds are fully included and treated appropriately by their peers. Pupils with significant special educational needs are also respected as valuable members of the community. Pupils and staff are clear about how they should respond to inappropriate behaviour, based upon high expectations of good behaviour and a clear behaviour referral system. Pupils are very aware of the code of conduct that sets out expectations and indicates rewards and sanctions. Pupils of all ages really value the credit system and are pleased to gain recognition for good work and behaviour. The exclusion rate, which was not high in comparison to national averages has recently fallen further and reflects the improving attitudes and behaviour of the few potentially disaffected pupils. The curriculum support faculty also works hard with this group to ensure an appropriate curriculum and to revive the enjoyment of learning. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and those with statements of SEN show interest, enjoyment and sustain concentration. Their attitude to learning is very good and they persevere and make progress, encouraged by teachers and learning assistants. Clear achievable targets and learning objectives within the Individual Education Plan (IEPs) and also Individual Behaviour Plans help to support pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are specific measurable targets that help to improve concentration and encourage a time-related response.

17. Parents, staff and pupils know that if bullying and incidents of oppressive behaviour occur they are quickly dealt with. The anti-bullying policy is clear and concise. The monitoring of pupils' development has high profile and for some includes target setting for personal targets such as improving behaviour and attendance. This is a factor in the high proportion of pupils who achieve 5 or more A* to G grades in GCSE examinations.
18. Attendance is good for all pupils including those with SEN. It is significantly above the average for similar schools and has been maintained at the high level noted in the previous inspection. Consistent attendance and good punctuality in all year groups have a positive effect upon pupils' attainment. Despite the complexities of the school site, most lessons during the day begin on time. Pupils move quickly between classrooms, negotiating narrow corridors and external walkways with patience and good humour. All registration periods by form tutors and subject teachers are brief and efficient.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

19. Teaching is good overall and very good in the sixth form. It is at least satisfactory in 99 per cent of lessons. In 40 per cent of lessons teaching is good and very good in 37 per cent. Some excellent teaching was seen in design and technology, English, modern foreign languages and religious education. Teaching is very good overall in art, music, English, science, geography and modern foreign languages. The quality of teaching has improved well since the last inspection.
20. In this school there is a close correlation between the quality of teaching and how well pupils learn. Learning is good and better in 81 per cent of lessons and is very good and excellent in 39 per cent of lessons. There is no significant difference between the quality of learning in any key stage. Pupils with SEN and English as an additional language (EaL) learn very well. Most pupils show interest and concentration and in the most effective lessons are encouraged to be independent learners by the teachers. Many are also able to discuss their own learning gains and to set further targets for themselves. In small group work pupils sustain an intensive level of learning and make progress. An example of this was seen in a literacy lesson where by the end of the session a pupil with learning difficulties had improved his spelling, had understood a phonic blend and was able to reward himself with a credit point. In some lessons pupils are expected to use their own initiative. They solve problems, question their actions, take risks and learn from their mistakes. These lessons are exciting and pupils are fully involved and learn quickly and well.
21. Pupils are seen to make good progress overall. They maintain interest and work hardest when they are challenged and expected to undertake demanding and challenging work. This is seen in very good and excellent lessons. Teachers are able to motivate and interest pupils in their learning because attitudes are so positive and pupils want to succeed.
22. Most teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and use this to make lessons interesting and challenging. Teachers show an ability to ask probing questions and motivate pupils, reinforcing and extending their knowledge and understanding. Pupils enjoy and rise to this challenge. In a French lesson the teacher's presentation was knowledgeable, dynamic and confident, resulting in pupils being able to articulate the rules of adjective endings with ease and equal confidence. As a result of very skilful questioning and guidance in English, sixth form students, studying "The Handmaiden's Tale", were able to comment perceptively on the irony of

eastern tourists viewing western oppression. This teacher managed to share her expertise without intimidating the students.

23. In most lessons, teaching of the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT is good. However, the teaching of writing skills is not as thorough as it could be in some subjects, such as mathematics, science and history. In these subjects, this part of literacy teaching is only satisfactory. In an advanced GNVQ lesson, students presented the results of their investigation to their fellow students and teachers. They used the video editing facilities and PowerPoint very effectively, resulting in a very polished performance and demonstrating a real understanding of the topic. There are too few opportunities in English lessons for pupils to use ICT to develop and consolidate their literacy skills.
24. Throughout the school, lessons are planned well by most teachers whilst in the sixth form, planning is often very good. The staff supporting pupils with SEN are also involved in this planning. Thorough planning is clear at the start and end of each lesson. At the end of most lessons pupils evaluate their learning confidently and successfully, supported by their teacher. Teachers often tell pupils how the lesson fits in with the whole course, consequently pupils use and adapt previous knowledge to new situations. Sometimes, as in a Year 11 French lesson, pupils contribute and set their own objectives for the lesson. Specific objectives, clear purpose and frequent checks to ensure all pupils understand, result in pupils getting down to work quickly and maintaining their interest and endeavour.
25. Teachers are very aware of SEN issues and are involved in discussion with pupils about their targets. Work is well planned to match the needs of these pupils and consideration has been given to pupils' individual learning styles. In the best lessons, teachers differentiate the work, group pupils appropriately and together with the classroom assistants (CSAs), work around the class to support learning.
26. Teachers expect pupils to reach high standards. In the best lessons there is some skilful teacher performance in asking questions and drawing out key facts from pupils. Some teachers frequently and carefully monitor the work of pupils as the lesson progresses. In an excellent design and technology lesson, the teacher constantly reminded pupils of their targets and deadlines and made clear what was expected from them. The pupils in this lesson settled down to work quickly and knew exactly what they needed to do to succeed.
27. Teachers generally use time in lessons very well. Lessons begin promptly and pupils work steadily and productively throughout. Some excellent organisation of resources and equipment allows for this. In a small proportion of lessons the pace flags and the teacher dominates.
28. Teachers manage and motivate their pupils very well resulting in good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. Relationships are a strength in many lessons between pupils and teachers and the pupils themselves. These relationships promote pupils' learning as motivation is increased following praise, encouragement and celebration of success. Most teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and this enthusiasm is contagious. They generate a supportive atmosphere where pupils feel encouraged to learn.
29. The quality and use of assessment during lessons is good. Some teachers use probing questions to make pupils think and reason, extending their understanding.

These pupils are confident in self-criticism and able to use the criticism of others to good effect. All teachers give feedback that informs pupils what they should do to improve. Verbal critiques are quite common in lessons. In many modern foreign language lessons there is a constant review of work. Whilst marking is good overall, the use of written comments to give pupils guidance as to what they have done well and how they could improve is not common practice in many subjects. Teaching has less impact on learning when marking is not consistently evaluative or descriptive and there are few targets set, extending pupils' thinking skills. In some subjects, for example geography, when teachers set challenging targets and give clear direction in their comments in books and after homework there is evidence that all pupils extend and deepen their thinking.

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

30. At Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form, the school provides a very good range of learning opportunities for its pupils, which meets their interests, aptitudes and particular needs. This range is open to all pupils including those with SEN. In line with its Technology College status the school places extra emphasis on science, technology and ICT, but not at the expense of other subjects. The curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced.
31. Overall the time allocation to almost all subjects is satisfactory. It is insufficient in Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 to cover all aspects of the Agreed Syllabus in religious education. In Year 13 statutory requirements are not being met for religious education. All curriculum documentation is of a high standard and the implementation of Curriculum 2000 has been well managed. The Governors' curriculum committee meets regularly to approve field trips and to monitor curriculum issues, for example recently they asked for a report on the provision for pupils with SEN. The implementation and development of the curriculum is monitored well by the school, both across and within subject departments.
32. The school has a clear philosophy and aims which are outlined in the school prospectus. These are entirely appropriate for a school at the start of the 21st Century. All faculties have a policy for the identification and support of able and talented pupils as well as those with learning and behaviour difficulties. The school organises its teaching through a 10-day timetable, covering 25 hours each week. Currently there are no official policies for literacy and numeracy. Initial steps have been taken to produce a whole school strategy for literacy and staff have considered the implications and received some training during a development day.
33. At Key Stage 3 all pupils are taught the subjects of the National Curriculum, personal and social education (PSE) and religious education. They are also taught drama which is a strength of the school. In Year 7, ICT is taught as a separate subject and in Years 8 and 9 as part of technology. All subjects use ICT to some extent, but this is an area for further development. Year 7 pupils study either French or German and in addition have the opportunity to undertake 'taster' courses in two other languages. Many pupils choose to take two languages in Years 8 and 9. This arrangement is another real strength.
34. At Key Stage 4 pupils follow a core of subjects plus four options. Pupils in PSE lessons are given careers advice on their choices and the school provides a useful booklet to help them. The core, plus options, give pupils an opportunity to study a wide range of subjects to meet their interests and career aspirations. It leads to good

examination results for almost all pupils and an interest in education with over 80 per cent of them continuing with their education. This is a high proportion.

35. Work experience is arranged for all Year 11 and Year 12 pupils. The whole programme is very highly regarded, very well organised and extremely valuable. There are very good links with the community and partner institutions and other educational establishments. The school has strong international links (France, Germany and Sweden) and all students are offered a number of opportunities to study or undertake work experience abroad.
36. In the sixth form, the school offers a very wide range of courses for its students to follow. In addition there is a good and appropriate programme of complementary studies. The changes necessitated by the introduction of Curriculum 2000 have been implemented successfully. There are 29 AS, 8 Advanced GNVQ and 3 Intermediate GNVQ courses and the opportunity to retake GCSE English and mathematics. Students are given every support to help them to choose the right courses for them. Post-16 students take part in the full range of extra-curricular activities as well as developing their own charity and community work.
37. The provision of extra-curricular activities is very good. It includes sports clubs; practices; training and fixtures of every kind; gymnastic and dance clubs; drama groups; concert bands and inter-form sporting competitions. In music 10 per cent of pupils have instrumental tuition in school time and up to 225 pupils are engaged in musical activities across the academic year. There are also homework clubs and subject clinics to support pupils in their academic studies and coursework. Attendance rates are high and are open to all. Late buses have been provided to enable those who live away from the school to take part in the programme.
38. Since the last inspection the issue of non-compliance with the law concerning collective worship and the provision of post-16 (particularly Year 13) religious education has not been resolved. The arrangements for the teaching of personal and social education have been greatly improved since the last inspection and are now considered to be good. Progress has been made in improving ICT provision and access, but it remains an area for further development, for example, in art and design.
39. The spiritual, moral social and cultural development of the students is very good overall.
40. The spiritual development of the pupils is good. Since the previous inspection there has been some improvements in the provision for a daily act of collective worship and a programme of assembly themes has been further developed to encourage opportunities for the sharing of values and beliefs. However, the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not fully met. Subject teachers create opportunities within their lessons to reflect upon experiences that could develop spiritual awareness. For example within certain units in art, pupils use "feelings" as a theme within their own and others' artwork. In lessons such as music, pupils experience and listen to choral music and are provided with time to reflect quietly. Religious education lessons provide pupils with time to reflect upon their own thoughts after considering the religious beliefs of others. A good example of this was seen in a lesson on Judaism, when pupils were learning about the BarMitzvah ceremony. After role-play and discussion, pupils were allowed time to think about why the ceremony might be significant for a young Jewish boy, to consider the importance of the occasion and to reflect on situations when they prepare for adulthood. Good use of reflection time in PSE lessons and tutor time also

encourages pupils to develop self-awareness and self-knowledge. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in providing pupils with opportunities to develop spiritual awareness.

41. The moral development of students is very good. Pupils are polite and well behaved in lessons and around school. They know right from wrong and demonstrate courtesy and consideration towards others based on clear codes of behaviour. Adults in school are very good role models for pupils. They treat pupils with respect, fairness and honesty. In response pupils value the good relationships and achieve the very good standard of behaviour that is expected of them. Pupils with special educational needs are respected and feel well supported by other pupils in the school.
42. In lessons such as PSE, English and religious education pupils discuss morality issues such as racism and prejudice and teachers work with pupils to consider issues about human nature with sensitivity and maturity. In the sixth form students discuss current moral issues such as the recent operation to separate Siamese twins and through their "driver awareness" course consider how best to take responsibility and keep safe on the roads. In drama lessons pupils consider how to deal with teenage issues.
43. Through the work of the form tutors and heads of year pupils take part in supporting various charities and are helped to understand the needs of individuals and groups within the school, local community and beyond. The school is having a positive impact on pupils' lives and they are constantly reminded of their moral responsibilities. The sixth form students are an integral part of the school community. They are seen to help younger pupils especially with ICT. Older pupils and sixth form students especially, value the good relationships that have developed with staff over their years in school.
44. The pupils' social development is very good. Teaching and non-teaching staff expect high standards of social behaviour and pupils are encouraged to show good manners when moving from lesson to lesson. The vast majority of pupils raise their hands to speak, listen to others when talking and are polite when asking questions. There are many opportunities for paired and group work and pupils are co-operative, willing to share, take turns and help each other. Pupils with special educational needs and others currently experiencing difficulties, are also expected to work well individually and in groups and receive good support to help them take turns.
45. During assemblies, around school and on occasions when there are larger groups of pupils together such as lunchtimes, pupils wait in a friendly manner. Lunchtime is brief allowing only limited social eating time, but the extended day allows pupils to work in a relaxed atmosphere after school. There is a breakfast club and additional opportunities for pupils to stay after school to improve their learning.
46. The school provides a number of valuable residential experiences, field study trips and many extra-curricular activities which enable pupils to develop their social skills. Pupils are encouraged to support each other through schemes such as peer mentoring, support for information technology and the prefect system. The school works hard to encourage students to adopt a sense of responsibility towards their community and to fulfil their role as good citizens in society. The pupils respond very positively.

47. The cultural development of pupils is also very good. Throughout the school there are many opportunities for pupils to experience and understand the culture of others through the use of ICT and Email. Displays in and around classrooms also reflect pupils' work related to different cultures and the many experiences of exchanges and holidays abroad.
48. Pupils are also encouraged to study their own culture and the culture of others in religious education, English, drama, geography, social studies, art and history. For example in English and drama pupils make regular visits to the theatre to see productions. There are reading days organised in the summer term when many teachers contribute and talk about their favourite book. In addition the English department produces a very good school magazine which is of high quality containing poetry, reading and pupils' work.
49. In all other subjects, teachers are finding ways to extend the cultural experiences of their pupils. In mathematics, pupils learn about symmetry through looking at a Roman villa and study patterns in Islamic designs. In geography, pupils learn about other countries and their systems, in design and technology pupils start to understand about the design of food in a multi-cultural society. In modern foreign languages and through work experience, students experience cultural exchanges to France, Spain and Germany and make many links through Email. There are many links with industry and the community and also a large number of valuable extra-curricular activities within school providing further appreciation of art, drama, music and literature and sporting culture.
50. Since the last inspection the school has enhanced the opportunities for personal development. Staff and governors see the school as an active community school and welcome the opportunity for broadening all aspects of school life.
51. Community contribution to pupils' learning is excellent. The school is the centre of village life, providing numerous facilities for residents, including the disabled. Adult education courses are available during the day and evening and some adults have the option of participating with students in GCSE, A level and vocational courses.
52. The school makes very good use of community resources. Hundreds of employers throughout the county, the UK and abroad offer work experience places to students. Employers confirm the abilities and commitment of students and the effective support provided by the careers department. Frequent education visits are arranged to local and county places of interest and to theatres, galleries and museums in London. Residential visits include student exchanges with schools in France and Germany. Regular visitors from the community include religious leaders, writers, a police liaison officer and speakers on a wide range of subjects.
53. Pupils regularly participate in community events including a reading festival and a public speaking competition. Collaborative events with schools in Europe are supported enthusiastically. Equipment superfluous to school needs is offered free to community groups and charitable collections are directed to a variety of local good causes and international relief agencies. Each year, senior citizens are invited to a annual party hosted by Year 8 pupils.
54. The range of community links provides excellent opportunities for pupils' personal development and broadens their understanding of the world around them.

55. Excellent links are maintained with partner institutions, including universities, primary and secondary schools and special schools. Many links are maintained with schools in Europe. Pupils are involved each year in work experience at primary schools and their career interests are considered when arranging exchange visits to schools in France, Spain and Germany. Senior staff from The Weald and its 'family' of primary schools meet twice each term and many primary schools are linked through Weald video conferencing facilities. An innovative and valuable exchange scheme encourages primary and secondary subject specialists to teach in one another's schools and share their expertise. High attaining pupils from local primary schools are invited to masterclasses in mathematics, science, ICT and technology. Very good links are established with university teacher training departments and these motivate students to want to succeed and continue with their education. Student teachers are mentored effectively and have opportunities to make valuable contributions to the school's work.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

56. The school provides very good support, advice and guidance for all its pupils and a very positive feature of the school is the commitment by all staff to pupils' personal development and welfare. Tutoring procedures work successfully and pupils are well known and valued within their year and tutor groups. Relationships between the staff and pupils are friendly and positive.
57. The appropriate policies and guidance documents cover a range of issues that are crucial in supporting the personal developments of pupils and tutors, heads of year and heads of school, work hard to maintain this high standard. The programme of induction for new pupils is particularly effective and there is also very good support for pupils with special educational needs on entry to school. Links with primary schools are very good and include valuable curricular progression. Year 7 pupils are positive about school and are enthusiastic about the work they are doing.
58. Communication between staff about pupils' progress and work is very good. The procedures for monitoring pupils' progress and educational development in Year 11 are very good and are providing valuable information for tutors and heads of year to set targets for improvement. The mentoring system for older pupils is also very supportive, as are the homework clubs aimed at providing extra support for pupils. This process is progressing through the school to involve all year groups.
59. Although it is a very large school all pupils, including those with SEN, are well known to heads of year and deputy headteachers. Teachers and all other staff also know the pupils well and care about them. In return pupils are expected to be polite and helpful and there are many occasions in and around school when this happens.
60. The school has made considerable strides in developing and refining its procedures for assessment and recording pupils' attainment and progress. A comprehensive whole-school assessment policy is in place and this has been translated to detailed departmental policies based on agreed grading criteria for assessing achievement and effort. Marking of pupils' work is carried out conscientiously and in some subjects commentary upon their work is sufficiently diagnostic and indicates how they can improve. Departments have set up systems to standardise assessment of pupils' work and record-keeping arrangements are efficient. In lessons, teachers frequently provide oral feedback to their pupils and in many cases pupils are encouraged to assess their own work critically, based on an understanding of clearly defined learning objectives.

61. There is strong evidence that departments are using assessment data to identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses and that this is effective in planning an inclusive curriculum and appropriate grouping arrangements. In most lessons teachers are aware of pupils' levels of achievement and increasingly take account of these in planning differentiated activities and adjusting their teaching strategies to ensure that their pupils succeed.
62. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are of high quality. Full account is taken of baseline assessment from Key Stage 2, cognitive ability test (CAT) scores, end of Key Stage 3 results and Autumn Package statistics to target pupils' progress. The school obtains unusually detailed information from its feeder primary schools on the attainment levels of its new entrants. Subject departments are encouraged to set targets for individual pupils and to track their progress and this is effective in most departments. Subject records of progress are used for ongoing evaluation of pupils' work, to predict future performance and identify underachievement. The strategies to support the improvement in learning of Year 11 pupils and the particular focus on homework as an aid to learning are strong elements of the school's monitoring of pupils' academic development. School reports are detailed and meet statutory requirements. Both parents and pupils consider reports as helpful and informative. The creation of a number of fixed-term contracts for serving teachers to carry out specific tasks to monitor and raise achievement is a valuable initiative and reflects the school's concern to focus on pupils' progress at all stages. The school is very rigorous in its monitoring of pupils' attendance and pupils are fully aware of the school's procedures.
63. There is strong emphasis on encouraging and supporting those pupils on the special needs register. The Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and statements of SEN show a good match between needs and targets and effective liaison within the school ensures that the support to meet these targets is a priority. Pupils work confidently and make good progress as a direct result of this attention. In addition pupils set their own targets and with support from form tutors and curriculum support assistants (CSAs) suggest strategies to meet their targets. Effective liaison within the school and with external agencies where appropriate, ensures that the support to meet these targets is a priority. The Annual Review procedures are completed efficiently and good monitoring of provision through the year ensures that the provision for pupils with statements of SEN is implemented. Pupils work confidently and make good progress as a direct result of this attention.
64. A school counsellor is provided for those pupils who are experiencing difficulties at particular times in their lives. Pupils and students and their parents value her work. She maintains regular contact with the school nurse. Pupils value the opportunity to receive support and guidance at key points in their school career, such as option time in Year 9 and planning for post-16.
65. The school has effective measures for promoting good behaviour and the prevention of bullying. There are appropriate systems for rewarding efforts and achievement and pupils value the merits, certificates and awards that they receive for good behaviour and attendance. Pupils respond well to behavioural expectations both within lessons and around school. The procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and behaviour are very good.

66. All staff are aware of the detailed and appropriate child protection policy used by the school and there are clear lines of communication between the various agencies that deal with child protection issues.
67. The school has a good health and safety policy and reviews are carried out regularly and effectively. A valuable "assessment risk" policy has been adopted. The issues raised in the last inspection have been addressed. Practice within the school is very good. Several staff are trained in first aid and pupils know about the arrangements made for them if they feel ill in school. In addition the arrangements for taking pupils on school visits and the procedures to follow are thorough and very clear to staff.
68. The school continues to care for and support its pupils very well.

Attendance

69. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good. The computerised registration system conforms with legal requirements. The school has high expectations of attendance. A special telephone number is provided for parents to notify the school office on the first day of a pupil's absence. If contact from home is delayed, the secretarial staff telephone homes and workplaces to locate parents and enquire reasons for absence. Senior staff write to the parents of students whose attendance is deteriorating and may follow the letter with a personal call at home. The educational welfare officer provides consistent support to the small number of families who do not fulfil the legal requirement of ensuring their children's regular attendance at school.
70. Pupils returning to school after extended absences are quickly reintegrated and offered additional help to catch up with work they have missed. The small number of senior pupils who are disaffected may be offered reduced timetables or opportunities to attend part-time at further education colleges. Family holidays in term time are discouraged.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

71. Parents' views of the school are very favourable. At a pre-inspection meeting for all parents, opinions of the school were overwhelmingly positive. These opinions were confirmed by responses to questionnaires and by discussions with a number of parents during the inspection. The inspectors endorse parents' favourable views of the school. At the pre-inspection meeting, a number of parents recalled instances when communication from the school had been unsatisfactory. The inspectors looked closely at the school's procedures for communicating with parents and found them to be very good overall. Occasional failings are attributable to inconsistent procedures among a few form tutors when distributing newsletters to pupils. In questionnaire responses, 16 per cent of parents disagreed with a positive statement about homework. The inspectors found occasional inconsistencies in the setting and marking of homework, but judge provision to be good overall.
72. The school's links with parents are very good and are greatly beneficial to pupils' attainment, progress and personal development. Parents have very good access to form tutors, subject teachers and members of the senior management team. The school is pro-active in telephoning parents when a pupil's progress or behaviour is causing concern. The Weald School Association [W.S.A] of parents and friends organises regular social and fundraising events and contributes significantly each

year to the school's budget. Recent purchases have included a kiln, playground benches and computer software for pupils with special educational needs. Additionally, the association funds 50 per cent of the leasing cost of the school minibus. The W.S.A cooperates very effectively with the school's governing body. Some families are active on both committees.

73. The quality of information for parents is very good. Parents of primary school children are very well informed about the school. A thoughtful and detailed programme prepares children for secondary school during their primary Years 5 and 6 and, after transfer, supports them fully until settled in Year 7. The school prospectus and the most recent governors' annual report to parents conform fully with legal requirements and include much additional information. The school magazine is exceptionally well written, informal and entertaining. Parents are closely involved in pupils' options choices for GCSE and the sixth form.
74. At annual consultation evenings for pupils and their parents, teachers give clear information about progress and standards of work. Teachers' annual subject reports to parents are good. Reports indicate strengths and weaknesses and most show clearly how achievement may be improved.
75. Parents have very good involvement in their children's learning and staff are always willing to discuss how individual involvement may be developed. A register of parents' skills and interests, maintained by the WSA, enables the school to contact parents when suitable opportunities arise for support within curriculum subjects, extra-curricular activities, or work experience. A number of volunteers help pupils as learning support assistants: an unusual and welcome role for parents in a secondary school.
76. Parents of pupils with SEN are involved in annual reviews and are kept well informed about progress, as part of the reporting to parents system. Information regarding IEPs is sent home termly and if there are changes to levels. The curriculum support co-ordinator attends all parent-staff consultation meetings to be available to talk to parents of pupils with SEN and members of the team work in close partnership with parents. There is also a parents' week when parents of pupils with SEN come into school and observe their children at work and then have a meeting with the SEN staff to discuss progress.
77. The curriculum support staff have very good working links with feeder primary schools, local colleges and with many external support services. Pupils and their families are supported by social services and the Educational Psychology Service and voluntary agencies, which exist to support families in a wide range of difficulties. Pupils with English as an additional language receive appropriate teaching from the language service and receive support and advice appropriate to their needs. Curriculum support is a vibrant part of the school and many pupils benefit from the very good working relationships developed between the school, links with outside agencies and the community. This has improved since the last inspection.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

78. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. He is very well supported by a highly effective and efficient management team. There is a clear vision and educational direction in all that the school undertakes, focused upon raising achievement and high expectations. This underpins the good standards achieved and the good progress made since the last inspection. The staff is well aware of

what must be done to continue this improvement. They have high expectation of themselves and the pupils. They expect to do well in both the academic and personal development of the pupils. The ethos of the school is very high.

79. The aims of the school, all of which relate to high expectations and care for the individual, are met very successfully. Developments in the delivery and content of the curriculum and a programme to monitor its impact have had a positive impact upon pupils' academic progress. The school adds value to the attainment of pupils in all key stages. Relationships are very good throughout the school and all individuals are valued members of a purposeful and caring community. This encourages all pupils to want to succeed as shown by the high proportion (99 per cent) of pupils who achieved 5 or more A* to G grades in GCSE examinations in 2000.
80. Heads of subject departments and senior staff manage their teams very well. Heads of subjects are particularly effective as can be seen in the recent improvements in English and the teamwork of the mathematics department. The way in which the head of religious education has developed the subject and achieved such high levels of active pupil involvement through experiential learning, indicates the trust that the senior team has in the staff. The introduction of fixed-term contracts for staff to develop their individual interests and whole school initiatives is very good. It is already impacting upon boys' achievements and is expected to improve teaching through the use of cognitive ability tests to identify strengths and weaknesses. The impact of the Technology College initiative is seen in the development of very good primary school links and special projects in technology at a national level.
81. Managers at all levels are involved in programmes to monitor the work of both pupils and staff and are using this to raise standards and improve teaching strategies. Staff discuss what works and where there is need for change. Pupils and teachers are aware of the specific areas for improvement. Monitoring of behaviour and personal development is seen as a priority and pupils and their parents are kept well aware of any areas of concern. A strength of the school is its focus upon valuing all individuals, both pupils and staff. Monitoring and the evaluation of teaching and learning has had a positive impact in all subjects, but should now change its focus to develop other aspects of the process.
82. The provision for and management of pupils with special education needs are good, particularly for those pupils with statements of special educational needs. The deployment and management of curriculum support assistants are very good and clearly focused upon and informed by pupil's needs. They are very effective in their work.
83. Documentation is of a very high standard and appropriate for its needs. Planning clearly identifies priorities for development and the value of consolidation of good practice. The planning and preparation for the inspection has been very good and the quality of the required documentation has been high.
84. The governing body gives excellent support. They share and promote the vision of the headteacher and clearly understand the strengths of the school and what must be done to continue the good progress. The manner in which they view all those working in the school as an integral and vital part of the school community is a crucial factor in its successful development. Support for pupils with special educational needs from the governing body is good and effective. The governing body fulfils all statutory requirements and the target setting and performance management procedures for senior managers and all other staff are good and focused upon raising standards and

bringing about success. They have addressed the issues raised at the last inspection successfully.

85. Excellent financial planning and management, underpin the progress that the school has made and the developments in which it has been involved. The audit report is satisfactory and the school applies the principles of best value very well. Unit costs and all other expenditures are appropriate and the additional grants that the school has received from a number of sources over the past years have been used extremely effectively. Finances and resources are deployed well to the benefit of all abilities and ages, including the sixth form. This is a very good example of a school that has embraced curricular and management developments, both local and national, for the benefit of the pupils. Governors, staff, parents and pupils are rightly proud of their school.
86. Teachers in all departments are experienced and well qualified subject specialists. The qualifications and expertise of the head of curriculum support, the teachers of SEN and CSAs are good and help to improve pupils' progress. Technical support staff in departments are skilled and provide support in a wide variety of ways and situations. Staff responsible for administration and for the maintenance of premises and grounds contribute significantly to the smooth running of the school.
87. A very good handbook is provided for staff. Very effective induction and mentoring supports newly qualified and newly appointed teachers. Mentoring and training courses are provided for newly promoted teachers. The programme for staff development is very good and has been an important factor in the recent improvements. Numerous training opportunities are available and the school has planned very carefully to link performance management with long-term professional development. Senior members of staff and heads of subject department monitor and evaluate teaching in all areas. They have identified areas for improvement and have ensured that appropriate changes have been made. This has had a major impact upon school improvements. However, they should look at what needs to be done next and plan the programme accordingly.
88. Accommodation is satisfactory overall and the new library/resource centre is a very valuable support for learning. It is well used by many pupils and members of the local community. However, despite the best efforts of teaching and maintenance staff, some dilapidated temporary buildings are adversely affecting the quality of learning in business studies and information and communications technology. In some science laboratories, inadequate space makes practical work difficult and in the art department, a kiln is unguarded. The sports fields, all weather pitches and communal areas are well maintained and widely used by the school and other organisations. The school site and buildings are free of vandalism, graffiti and litter.
89. The provision of learning resources is generally good, although as in all schools some weaknesses are identified. Resources are particularly good in information and communications technology, physical education and music. The library stock is up-to-date and in good condition. The library has a good selection of newspapers and periodicals, and many modern computers. It is a very valuable resource and well used by pupils and the community.
90. The school welcomed this inspection as an important part of its evaluation process and development. The issues raised in the last report have been addressed successfully with the exception of the provision of a daily act of collective worship throughout the school and religious education for some sixth form students.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

91. The school has very many strengths and has made very good progress over the last two years. It is constantly seeking ways to improve further to enhance learning and raise standards.

THE SCHOOL AND GOVERNORS SHOULD:

92. Good practice is evident throughout the school in all aspects of its work. The programme of lesson observation should now focus upon:
- * Developing further the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening in all subjects and linking these through a whole school literacy policy (paragraphs 23, 32, 96, 99, 103, 118, 134, 156, 223, 226);
 - * Improving the marking of work so that pupils know what a mark means in terms of their own knowledge and progress. There should be more written feedback which tells pupils what they must do to improve. Self-assessment should be developed so that pupils understand their own strengths and weaknesses better and set their own targets for improvement (paragraphs 29, 60, 99, 146, 155, 179, 196, 217);
 - * Developing and extending the use of ICT across the curriculum to enhance all subjects in areas such as research, analysis, creativity and communications (paragraphs 23, 38, 87, 102, 143, 186, 217);
 - * Extending the active involvement of pupils in their own learning by allowing them to solve problems and be more independent, without it detracting from the present focus upon high expectations and hard work (paragraphs 14, 27, 99, 121, 166, 208, 209).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	221
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	42

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	37	40	19	1	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1,109	288
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	71	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	21	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	224	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	42
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	57

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	6.2
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	131	92	223

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	91	104	106
	Girls	77	71	70
	Total	168	175	176
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	75 (68)	78 (74)	75 (70)
	National	63 (63)	62 (62)	63 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	46 (26)	58 (51)	52 (35)
	National	N/a (28)	N/a (38)	N/a (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	86	106	101
	Girls	68	74	72
	Total	154	180	173
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	69 (66)	81 (81)	78 (82)
	National	N/a (64)	N/a (64)	N/a (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	38 (33)	61 (53)	56 (55)
	National	N/a (31)	N/a (37)	N/a (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	117	108	225

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	61	116	118
	Girls	80	106	107
	Total	141	222	225
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	63 (66)	99 (98)	100 (99)
	National	48 (47)	89 (91)	94 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	49 (49)
	National	N/a (38)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	10	90
	National		N/a

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	75	74	149

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	16.6	18.4	17.6 (18.7)	2.4	2.9	2.6 (2.2)
National	N/a	N/a	17.9 (17.9)	N/a	N/a	3.0 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	58	96.6
	National		N/a

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	2
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	3
White	1379
Any other minority ethnic group	10

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	39	2
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	84.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	25
Total aggregate hours worked per week	576

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.3
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25.3
Key Stage 4	21.9

Financial information

Financial year	2000
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	£
Total income	3,691,436
Total expenditure	3,602,649
Expenditure per pupil	2,566
Balance brought forward from previous year	35,764
Balance carried forward to next year	124,551

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1,397
Number of questionnaires returned	235

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	32	56	9	1	2
My child is making good progress in school.	42	49	5	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	20	63	7	1	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	59	13	3	5
The teaching is good.	29	61	5	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	59	7	2	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	39	4	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	37	1	2	2
The school works closely with parents.	30	54	9	1	5
The school is well led and managed.	40	52	3	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	37	57	3	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	49	6	1	7

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

ENGLISH

93. The attainment of pupils in English is above the national average at the end of Key Stage 3. In the most recent National Curriculum tests near the end of Year 9 pupils' scores were well above the national average when compared to all schools. The proportion assessed at level 5 and above is in line with schools of similar intake, but the percentage of pupils assessed at level 6 and above is higher than the average for similar schools. These test scores in 2000 represent a major improvement on what was achieved in 1999. They indicate also that both boys and girls achieve well above the national average with girls outperforming boys in approximately the same proportion as they do nationally. The attainment in the national tests remains below the levels achieved in mathematics and science, but it is much closer than it was in 1999.
94. By the age of fourteen pupils read confidently from a range of poems, novels and plays. During the inspection pupils also wrote well in response to what they were reading. One group in Year 9 compared well the similarities and differences between two short stories they had read using a well designed framework to guide their thinking and paragraphing. Others enjoyed reading with the teacher the novel, 'Daz 4 Zoë' and discussed and wrote well with guidance about the characters, the language and the structure of the plot. In the lessons observed in Year 9, teachers used time very effectively to ensure that all pupils practised reading, writing and speaking skills productively. Lessons stretched pupils in all attainment sets.
95. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is above the national average in English. The higher grade A* to C pass rate in both English language and English literature in 1999 was above the national average for both boys and girls with girls achieving more highly, as they do nationally. These results are similar to what is achieved in mathematics, but below the levels achieved in science. The higher grade pass rate is similar for English language in 2000, but confirmation has not yet been received of the final grades awarded in English literature. Almost all candidates in the last two years have been awarded a grade A* to G pass in the GCSE examination. This reflects the careful teaching and support given to all pupils including those with special educational needs.
96. The pupils' work in lessons in Key Stage 4 and their completed writing is of a good standard. The folders of coursework show that writing improves in maturity, thoughtfulness and presentation from Year 10 to Year 11 as is expected. Some of the first drafts of writing by some pupils, particularly boys, in some, but not all groups, are untidy and show inaccurate spelling. In a range of lessons observed in Year 11, pupils wrote perceptively about the characters and their behaviour in 'Of Mice and Men', rewrote a scene from 'Animal Farm' as a play script and others presented, with varying degrees of skill, their group's analysis of the poem, 'In Romney Marsh'. In all lessons the work was challenging and provided appropriate opportunities for all pupils to improve reading, speaking, listening and writing. Many pupils use well-developed word processing skills to enhance the presentation of their finished writing.
97. The standards of work at post-16 are good. The GCE A level courses are taught well and, for most students, lead to good examination results. In English literature in 2000

all candidates gained A to E grades with a half of the group achieving A and B grades, well above the average for schools nationally. In the combined language and literature examination all 10 candidates were awarded a grade between A and D with five gaining a higher grade A or B pass. Of the largest cohort of students studying English language, all but one of the 28 entrants achieved an A to E graded pass. A quarter of these students achieved A or B grades, a proportion slightly below the national average.

98. The observations of work in progress in both Years 12 and 13 showed students working at appropriate levels for the A level examinations. The coursework assignments completed recently by students on the English language course are of a high standard, both in content and presentation. The most successful of these projects, involving the writing of a guide or introduction to a hobby or area of knowledge and demanding the use of information and computer technology for research and illustration, match the requirements for the highest A level grades. Discussion of a very high standard was heard from students in Year 12, reading and responding articulately to 'The Handmaid's Tale' after analysing sections of the novel, in groups. These students have a detailed knowledge of the text and comment perceptively on characterisation, themes and the implications of the practices they observe in the novel. The high quality of learning in the A level course is linked closely to the demanding standards of teaching.
99. Teaching is generally of a good standard throughout the school. Almost all lessons were satisfactory or better. Over four fifths of the lessons were judged to be good or better and a quarter reached a very high standard. However, there was some variation in the quality of teaching and pupils' learning in the lessons observed. In most lessons time is used effectively to ensure that pupils develop and practise literacy and oracy skills regularly as well as making progress with their main units of work. For example, pupils in Year 10 were encouraged to write briskly in response to reading 'Journey's End' and then to proof read each other's writing to search for spelling and grammatical errors. In lessons with lower attaining groups in Years 9 and 11, the reading of the novels was interspersed with writing activities using prompts and frameworks to guide the pupils to write clearly paragraphed responses. The outcome of such lessons is that the reading is completed successfully and enjoyably and that activities are varied and skills are practised regularly. In other classes, the pupils' drafting books, mainly in Years 10 and 11, indicate that there is much less writing taking place except when pupils are engaged in a longer writing exercise. There is some variation also in the detail of lesson planning. In most lessons teachers plan with considerable care both the content of the lesson and the groupings of pupils to maximise the impact of the lesson. In contrast in a few cases, the lessons were less effective where pupils chose to sit in positions which did not allow them to participate in discussion with others. Teachers' standards of marking and assessment are generally good in English. The only exceptions to this occur in Key Stage 3 where some teachers allow pupils to write up final drafts without giving sufficient guidance on how to improve the accuracy and content of the writing.
100. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good in English lessons. Teachers expect good behaviour and pupils respond appropriately. Care is taken to accommodate well pupils with special educational needs including those who could, on occasions, disrupt the work of a class. Pupils' attitudes are very positive within lessons. They respond best when challenged to work in a group to present information to the whole class within a clear time scale. They value the positive feedback and encouragement they receive from teachers.

101. This is a very well managed and extremely well led department. The quality of the operating procedures, the detailed departmental handbook, the thorough analysis of the previous year's work and the level of discussion about developing new units of work all reflect the high standards set by the head of department. Important progress has been made in the last two years to raise pupils' performance in the Key Stage 3 tests and to improve the schemes of work for the junior part of the school.
102. The department has considered carefully the previous Ofsted report and has made an appropriate response. Units of work now include media and non-literary texts which were lacking before and there are now more examples of differentiated tasks within the units of work. There has been valuable collaboration with the drama department to help the pupils' appreciation and understanding of Shakespeare as is required within the Key Stage 3 curriculum. This useful initiative could be extended further to discussion of how the drama elements in the new National Curriculum guidelines for English could be brought more centrally into the curriculum. The department has been less successful in increasing the use of information and communication technology within the classroom. At the moment only one Year 7 group uses the school computers. However, many pupils and sixth form students complete final drafts of work using word processing techniques and select illustrative matter and information from the Internet. The very lively school magazine, 'The Creature', produced in the school, originates from the enthusiasm and expertise of an English teacher and a team of pupils, with some technical assistance from a school governor.
103. The school has made a good start to developing strategies to improve literacy across the school curriculum and standards have risen. Many subjects are beginning to make a contribution to the development of literacy, but this is not yet a strength. Since January of this year there has been awareness training for all teachers and specific training for a co-ordinator which has included the observation of literacy hour lessons in contributory primary schools. The co-ordinator has had useful contact with most subject faculties to discuss ways of improving literacy. A whole school event was a Reading Festival arranged in the summer term. This included silent reading time for the school and a series of reading workshops run by different subject teachers and visitors. Other extra-curricular events organised within the English department have included a theatre group coming into school, a poetry evening and participation in a public speaking competition. All help to support the development of literacy and oracy.

Drama

104. Attainment in drama is very high. By the time pupils reach GCSE, standards are well above average. In 1999, 85 per cent of pupils gained an A* to C grade and in 2000, 88 per cent of pupils achieved this. Twenty one per cent were awarded A* grades, which is outstanding achievement. Similarly high attainment is reached by pupils in the current Year 11.
105. Particular strengths include pupils' capacity to understand, talk about and apply modern theatrical techniques. Other strengths include pupils' ability to tackle difficult texts (for example Brecht's "Handbook of City Dwellers") and turn them into arresting and moving improvised drama. Pupils are also good at creating different characters through movement, facial expression and group "photograph freezes". Pupils evaluate their work very well.

106. By the time pupils reach the age of 14 their standards in drama are also well above average. Pupils achieve very well between the ages of 11 and 14. They are able to improvise and perform drama on many different themes. They are especially good at taking stories from literature and turning them into imaginative pieces of drama. When working together, pupils are very good at generating new ideas. They also co-operate with each other well, discussing and planning how they will develop the subject they are working on. In Year 7 pupils are taught how to be constructive critics and by Year 9 this skill is very well established.
107. Pupils also achieve well in A level theatre studies. In 1999 and 2000 the proportion of A and B grades was above average. Students currently in Year 13 match this standard. They can improvise work of high quality based on texts by difficult modern authors (for example Edward Bond). They also have a good understanding of the historical context in which the plays they study are written.
108. Teaching is very good. There are a number of strengths. Firstly teachers choose activities very well. Through these activities pupils learn new theatrical techniques and clearly enjoy what they are doing. For example a Year 9 class movingly dramatised Shakespeare's "Seven Ages of Man" in a modern setting, using a series of "photographic freezes" backed by music. Secondly, teachers manage the class very well with lots of energy, drive and praise. They also ask pupils searching questions and expect them to evaluate their own work using targets which have been fully discussed. Sometimes pupils could be asked to relate the themes and ideas they are exploring more fully to their own experience of life.
109. Attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils concentrate well and are highly committed to improving their own performance. You often hear them discussing how they can make their drama work even better. It is also noticeable how well boys contribute to planning, performance and evaluation.
110. The department is well managed. The head of faculty has maintained good oversight during a term without a head of department. A detailed handbook sets out expectations in all aspects of policy and these are realised in practice. Approaches to assessment and target setting are particularly good. Written plans for all lessons are very detailed and help to make sure pupils progress well from term to term.

MATHEMATICS

111. The mathematical standards that have been achieved by pupils entering the school are above the national average.
112. At Key Stage 3, pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well and make good progress. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards in mathematics are well above the national average. Over recent years, there has been a significant improvement in the results in the Key Stage 3 national tests. In 1999, the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 or higher was 72 per cent. In 2000, the proportion increased to 78 per cent, which was well above the national average for all schools of 65 per cent. Between 1999 and 2000, the figures for level 6 or higher, rose from 49 per cent to 58 percent, which was also well above average. When compared to similar schools, attainment at Key Stage 3 is above average. The standards being achieved by pupils presently in Year 9 reflect the continuing trend of improvement. Higher attaining Year 9 pupils are successful in tackling a wide range of complex algebraic and geometric tasks and the most able mathematicians are working at level 8. Pupils in lower sets

are able to handle challenging work such as plotting linear graphs although many have difficulties with basic number work, particularly mental calculations.

113. At Key Stage 4, pupils achieve very well. Pupils of all levels of ability make very good progress. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is well above the national average. In 1999, 56 per cent of pupils gained grades A* to C in GCSE mathematics. In 2000, the A* to C figure rose to 61 per cent, which was well above the national average of 46 per cent and well above average for similar schools. Also in 2000, 99 per cent of pupils achieved grades A* to G in mathematics. The progress made by pupils as they follow the GCSE course is well above average compared with similar pupils in other schools. The proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades of A and A* in GCSE mathematics are also above average. The GCSE results in mathematics represent a significant success for the school.
114. The mathematics faculty has a successful record of setting and achieving challenging targets. In the present Years 10 and 11, predictions indicate that standards are continuing to rise. One of the factors contributing to the rising standards is the improvement in the pupils' GCSE coursework. This results from better teaching. For example, in a very good Year 10 lesson, pupils were given excellent guidance on coursework, supported by graded examples. This year, the most able mathematicians in Years 10 and 11 are also studying GCSE statistics.
115. Both at Key Stage 3 and at GCSE, there is no significant difference in the performance of girls and boys. Last year, the department provided focused support for several groups in Year 11 that helped raise the attainment of boys through improved coursework. Levels of attainment in mathematics are generally consistent across the different aspects of the subject.
116. In the sixth form, many students follow A and A/S level courses and achieve well. Mathematics is becoming an increasingly popular choice of study. In 1999, attainment of students on GCE A level and A/S level courses was average with 44 per cent achieving the higher grades of A and B compared with 43 per cent nationally. In 2000, the levels were slightly lower, but not significantly. The school continues to offer Further Mathematics GCE A level and this provides for the most able students and encourages them to continue their mathematical studies at university. On GNVQ courses, students are given very good support through the teaching of the key skill "*application of number*" and they achieve well in their mathematical studies.
117. While many pupils have good numeracy skills, some pupils have a weak understanding of basic number work that hinders their progress in mathematics. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, several pupils had difficulty identifying pairs of angles with a sum of 180° . Even in the sixth form, A level students occasionally struggle to substitute simple fractions into algebraic expressions. The pupils are given too few opportunities to practise and consolidate these basic skills. In Year 7, more use needs to be made of the excellent Key Stage 2 information about pupils' mathematical development. Year 7 pupils are taught in wide ability classes for the first term and teachers have difficulty meeting the needs of all pupils. As a result, pupils' progress in some aspects of their work is restricted as prior knowledge is neither consolidated nor extended.
118. Overall however, the numeracy skills of pupils are generally sufficient to support their learning across the curriculum. In subjects such as science and geography pupils are able to apply their mathematical knowledge in wider contexts successfully. In Year 8 science lessons, pupils studying the properties of light are able to measure and draw

lines and angles accurately. There are some good links between mathematics and other subjects. For example, pupils are required to interpret population graphs in both mathematics and geography. There are inconsistencies in the way graphs are drawn and labelled in different subjects. The faculty has identified numeracy as a key area for development and the mathematics primary liaison initiative provides an excellent foundation for consolidating and extending the skills and knowledge that pupils have acquired at primary schools. Pupils' literacy skills are sufficient to meet most of their needs in mathematics. However, there is insufficient attention given to support the introduction and use of key mathematical vocabulary. As a result, some pupils have difficulty describing their ideas articulately using the appropriate mathematical language.

119. There have been many positive developments in mathematics since the last inspection and particularly, over the last two years with the appointment of a new head of department. There has been a strong focus of developing initiatives that have promoted better teaching and learning. New schemes of work have been introduced to support lesson planning and extensive monitoring systems have been established to maintain high standards. The use of ICT is very effective in supporting and enhancing the teaching of mathematics. It is a strength and it continues to improve with the active involvement of the department. Spreadsheets, LOGO and other mathematical software are used extensively. In two very good lessons observed, teachers' carefully planned use of computers significantly enhanced and challenged pupils' understanding. Overall, improvement since the last OFSTED inspection has been very good.
120. Overall, teaching in mathematics is good. Teaching is satisfactory in 40 per cent of lessons, good in 25 per cent and very good in 35 per cent. In no lessons observed was teaching less than satisfactory. The good teaching enables pupils, including those with SEN, to achieve well and make good progress. The teachers work hard. Morale is high and the members of the department work very effectively as a team to support one another. The teachers strive to teach better in order for their pupils to achieve more. For example, they have collaborated to produce high quality packs of resources to share for classroom use. Teachers organise their classes and manage their pupils well and there is often a strong empathy between the teachers and their pupils that enables them to pitch their teaching at an appropriate level. Teachers' expectations are clear and shared with pupils and, as a result, pupils work hard and behave well. A particular strength is the extent to which teachers try to introduce new ideas in a practical and interesting way. For example, a Year 7 class was shown a 'function' box to demonstrate a new algebraic idea. The teachers are very successful in conveying to pupils that mathematics is fun and relevant, for example: through exciting displays of work around school; through their involvement in competitions such as the UK Mathematics Challenge, and through visits such as the Year 9 trip to a Roman villa. Teachers' successes are often founded on their ability to share their enthusiasm for mathematics with their pupils. The rewards system is exceptionally effective in motivating and encouraging good work and can lead to praise being passed on to parents. For example, sixth formers receiving back their marked assignments were pleased with their stickers. Overall, pupils perceive mathematics as a useful and rewarding subject. For example, a group of pupils in the lowest ability set in Year 10 were able to recognise the relevance of their graphs to their work in other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs are often well supported by learning support assistants.
121. However, there are some weaknesses in the teaching. Some lessons are too directed by the teacher and pupils are not given enough practical tasks. For example

in Key Stage 3, pupils were asked to imagine or draw patterns involving coins and matchsticks, when using the real things would have been exciting and would have helped pupils discover the mathematical principles for themselves. Some pupils are able to talk very articulately about their work. Others struggle because mathematical discussion is not sufficiently promoted through paired or small group work.

122. There is some very good teaching in the sixth form that encourages the full participation of the students. For example, a group of Year 12 students enjoyed a 'pond dipping' task. This simple practical task fuelled interesting and challenging discussions on sampling applications and methods. However, in some A and A/S level work, teachers fail to challenge students' uncertainties adequately and hence fail to expose misconceptions. Students' thinking needs to be more rigorous as does the teachers' questioning. Students need greater guidance to help them explain, justify and check their thinking both orally and in written work.
123. Homework contributes significantly to the pupils' progress. It is set regularly and completed by most pupils. It is well marked although corrections need to be done more often so that pupils' errors can be used to assist learning. The department has an excellent system for monitoring homework.
124. Since appointed, the head of department has had a tremendous impact on the work of the department. Under her leadership, the mathematics department has developed into a highly motivated team that are extremely committed to improving the quality of their teaching to help pupils achieve higher standards. All teachers in the department give their own time to provide 'Flexi-time' additional support for pupils at lunchtimes or after school. There are many first class initiatives in the subject that are successful because they are owned and supported by the whole department. Some of these developments, such as the Key Stage 2 Liaison Project, are having a significant impact in the wider context of the school's importance in the local community. Monitoring is strong. Teachers are observed regularly and pupils' work is closely monitored and assessed. Developmental planning is very good and at its heart is the desire to develop and extend good practice in the classroom. Target setting is very effective. Overall the management and leadership of the faculty are excellent.

SCIENCE

125. Many pupils enter Year 7 having achieved above average science results in their Key Stage 2 standard assessment tests (SATs). All pupils, including those with SEN, make good progress. By the end of Year 9 the percentage reaching at least level 5 is well above that of all schools nationally (79 per cent compared to 55 per cent) and is also well above similar schools. The percentage reaching level 6 is well above that for similar and all schools nationally (51 per cent to 23 per cent). The attainment in science is similar to that in mathematics, but above that in English. There is now little difference between the levels achieved by boys and by girls.
126. From evidence gained during the inspection, pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are attaining levels well above national averages in all four attainment targets. Their investigative work benefits from the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in science lessons. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on melting and a Year 9 lesson on the reflection of light from different coloured materials, ICT enhanced the activity and raised the standard of work produced. Pupils work confidently during practical sessions and show good basic laboratory skills.

127. In Years 10 and 11, pupils follow a course in double modular science or in the three separate sciences, physics, chemistry and biology. The majority take GCSE double science and of these, in 2000, 63 per cent attained an A* to C grade, a percentage well above that of similar schools and all schools nationally. Twenty five pupils took the triple science option and all of these gained an A*, A or B grade. Overall in 2000, 28 per cent of entries gained an A* or A grade in either double or triple science. Pupils at this school attain well above the average in science.
128. From results already achieved in modular tests and the quality of their coursework, current Year 11 pupils are expected to do at least as well as those in 2000 if not better. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' written notes and homework tasks are complete and of a very good standard. Practical skills are good and all work is well presented. Pupils of all levels of ability including those with SEN are achieving well.
129. At A level in 1999, all students who were entered for biology and chemistry gained an A to E pass, whilst 92 per cent did so in physics. The percentage reaching the higher grades A and B was above average in all three subjects. The 2000 results showed a decline in biology and physics, but a further improvement in grades in chemistry. Pupils in this school do very well in chemistry. The school predictions for the current Year 13, based on end of year tests and ongoing assessments is that results in biology and physics will recover at least to 1999 levels. Evidence from lesson observations support this, as students are well motivated and are working hard, practical and evaluative skills are being developed and there is a good work ethic in the groups.
130. In the sixth form, GNVQ results are broadly in line with national averages and the drop-out rate is low. Results have improved steadily since 1998. Attainment is above average in advanced GNVQ science and in AVCE science in Year 12, attainment is average.
131. High quality teaching is a strength of the science department. Teaching across the school is consistently good and never less than satisfactory. Many lessons in all years are very good. Teachers know their pupils well and develop good working relationships with them. They have high expectations of behaviour and the quality of work. Pupils respond accordingly.
132. Teachers prepare their lessons well in terms of content, but in some classes they do not match the level of work sufficiently closely to the ability of some pupils. However, there are examples of good practice, as in a lesson on forces in which extra work was given to a number of very able pupils. The school's schemes of work lack clear guidance on this aspect. In many lessons, what is to be learnt is shared with pupils at the start and reinforced at the end. Teachers give appropriate homework which complements the work in class. In the lower half of the school, pupils are given a homework book which contains questions and various activities and helps give consistency in approach.
133. Pupils are attentive and have a good attitude to their work. They show high levels of concentration and take care over their written tasks. When asked questions directly by their teacher they are articulate and answer with confidence. They work well together in groups and individually. Pupils' attitudes to science are good and have a positive effect on learning.

134. In all years, schemes of work are well organised, as is the monitoring of standards and pupils' progress. Work is marked regularly – marking is of a high standard and it is clear from teachers' written comments and verbal feedback, what pupils need to do to improve. A greater emphasis on literacy – particularly new vocabulary and styles of writing would help to improve standards even further. The use of word banks and subject displays which support learning, should be considered.
135. The science faculty has very good detailed documentation including an excellent handbook, schemes of work and monitoring systems. The faculty is well led and reviews its performance regularly and plans appropriately for future changes necessitated by, for example, Curriculum 2000.
136. Resources are used well and are generally adequate. The laboratory technicians give good support to teachers. As identified in the last inspection report, accommodation is still a problem. Some laboratories are small and cramped, making practical activities very difficult. Even the larger laboratories have limited access to services such as gas and pupils have to work on the perimeter benches. Technician preparation areas are also cramped.
137. Since the last inspection the achievement of boys has improved and is now in line with that of the girls. The quality of teaching has improved and is now consistently good.

ART

138. This is a good art and design department with many strengths.
139. By the end of Year 9, the attainment of most pupils in art and design is above the national expectation and many pupils exceed this by a significant degree. The attainment of boys is above the national trend. The department has made good progress in improving standards since the last inspection. In Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils, including those with special educational needs achieve well. In Year 7, attainment on entry is above average overall.
140. In a Year 8 project on 'Self Portraiture', pupils explore ideas about emotion and mood and relate their own work to the way that other artists have explored this theme. They develop good practical skills in imaginative drawing and colour through distorted portraits and experiments, with abstract images portraying mood. In Year 9, pupils learn about the art of other cultures and apply this knowledge effectively in designing often quite complex patterns and designs. They can translate these ideas successfully into three dimensions, as in a project on Native American Indian art where imaginative designs for slab pot constructions in clay are being developed.
141. Standards have improved since the last inspection. In 1999, GCSE results at grades A* to C, were above the national average for all schools with 71 per cent of pupils reaching this standard. In GCSE ceramics, results were outstanding with 98 per cent of the pupils gaining A* to C, with excellent performance at grades A* and A, significantly well above the national average for all schools. In 2000, the GCSE examination results dipped to 62 per cent A* to C as a result of staffing changes arising from long-term sickness. In GCSE ceramics, examination results are excellent, with 95 per cent of pupils' awarded grades A* to C and 68 per cent at the highest grades. The scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that current standards are above average in art and design and well above average in ceramics.

142. In the sixth form, A level results in 1999 were above the national average for all schools at grades A to E with a 100 per cent pass rate, but below average in attainment at the highest grades A and B. In 2000, standards have improved overall with a significant rise in attainment at grades A and B. Attainment of the current Year 13 in A level art and design is above average. The standard of work in A level ceramics is exceptional, with very exciting work produced informed by visual research of a high order. Attainment at GNVQ Advanced art and design is in line with the national average for all schools with 60 per cent of students awarded a merit grade. Attainment of the current cohort of GNVQ Advanced art and design students is in line to match the previous year's results. A very good start has been made in introducing the new AS course in Year 12, students are producing a high standard of visual research and are demonstrating confidence in presenting their ideas to others.
143. Throughout all year groups there are too few opportunities for pupils to use ICT in support of their creative work in art and design. This is a continuing weakness from the previous inspection report.
144. Pupils have positive attitudes in art and design, enjoy their lessons and work hard. The number of pupils on GCSE courses is good and recruitment into the sixth form is healthy. Pupils behave very well in lessons and the fostering of positive relationships is a teaching strength. Pupils work well together and co-operate sensibly. Homework is conscientiously completed and many pupils are keen to continue work outside lessons, attending the art rooms for after-school sessions. Throughout the school, pupils are very well motivated.
145. The quality of teaching in art is very good overall and never less than satisfactory. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and this together with the strengths in lesson planning helps to ensure that pupils achieve well in the subject. Lesson planning is often detailed, with clear objectives for learning which are consistently shared with pupils so that they clearly understand what is expected of them. The match of task to ability of pupils within teachers' lesson planning is not always sufficiently challenging for the most able pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well by their teachers and learning support assistants and as a result make good progress in their learning in art and design.
146. The setting and marking of homework and coursework units is good. Marking is regular, but not always consistently informative about individual pupil's achievements and how to improve. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form the methods for monitoring pupils' progress are effective and well matched to examination criteria. Pupils and students are involved appropriately in the assessment and evaluation of their own learning.
147. The art and design curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and external examinations with the exception of ICT. Cultural development is well supported within the schemes of work and by sixth form gallery visits, together with many opportunities for the study of other cultural traditions. The lack of study visits to galleries and museums at Key Stage 3 is a weakness. The range and quality of displays and exhibitions of pupils' and sixth form students' work in the art rooms and around the school is of a very high standard and significantly enriches the environment.

148. The teachers in the department work well as a team and are led effectively by the head of department who gives good support. Departmental documentation is of a good standard. Planning for the future development of art in the school is good and targets for improvement set. Resources have improved since the last inspection and are now good. The departmental technician provides good support for teachers. The ceramics room still suffers from a high build up of clay dust. This is an item outstanding from the previous inspection. The kilns are not caged and as such present a health and safety hazard when in operation.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

149. Design and technology is a strength with good standards in practical and key skill areas such as problem solving, good use and application of information technology and a high profile amongst the pupils.
150. Standards of work seen in the subject are above average. The attainments at GCSE A* to C and A* to G grades across a range of design and technology subjects are above the national average. Attainment at A level is above average with all students entered achieving a pass grade. Standards and results have gradually improved since the last inspection. The greatest room for more improvement is in resistant materials. Recent staffing and scheme changes should help efforts to raise standards further.
151. Attainment is above the national average by the end of Year 9. Achievement is good in 75 per cent of lessons with none less than satisfactory. Achievement of girls and boys at the end of Key Stage 3 is good. Achievement of pupils with SEN is also good. The vast majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs make good progress. Pupils achieve well in completing a wide range of practical tasks and associated design and theory work. Investigation tasks in Years 7 and 8 food lessons for example, build knowledge and understanding for design and make assignments ensuring pupils achieve well. Pupils make good progress in using hand and machine tools to manipulate materials. They are usually quick to learn how to use tools like lathes and cookers safely. Pupils draw reasonably accurately and are encouraged to use colour effectively to illustrate their products. Some three-dimensional drawing needs improvement. Pupils' designing skills are good with aspects such as analysing the task and generating ideas. Pupils' knowledge of computer-aided design and control is sound and improving. Structured booklets are completed successfully in all year groups, these ensure consistency of standards between teachers and across year groups and are particularly good in food lessons.
152. In Year 10, pupils opt for specialist GCSE courses within design and technology and standards are above the national average. In Years 10 and 11, attainment is above average and sometimes well above average in half the lessons and in all the others it is average. Where standards are only satisfactory pupils need a faster pace of work and to learn skills in greater depth so that they might apply them more accurately. Progress is always good and sometimes very good across courses. Practical work is progressing well in all design and technology subjects. Some progress has been hindered by recent staff changes. Standards are above the national average at the end of Key Stage 4. Some of the best work, as seen in Year 11, combines materials and components to make products such as hats, special food products, racks, controlled circuits and model buildings. Pupils complete extensive design folders to a very high standard. They construct products accurately and with some imagination. By the end of Year 11 some pupils are very good at control aspects.

153. Standards in the sixth form are above average. Students in Year 12 and 13 are making good progress towards examination goals. A new GNVQ in engineering has started and is satisfactory. In Year 13 students are designing complex projects to fulfil rigorous design specifications such as a remote control camera for environmental work.
154. There is a good match between teaching and learning seen in lessons. In both key stages and the sixth form, pupils' attitudes to learning are good in lessons and club activities. Pupils show a very keen interest in practical problem solving activities. Pupils are very eager to complete practical tasks, yet work safely. Concentration rates are often very high in teacher-directed as well as the majority of independent study sessions. Pupils enjoy and complete the majority of tasks to their satisfaction. Tools, equipment and accommodation are respected and used well. Participation in national competitions has been very fruitful, extending a minority of pupils and stretching their capability and outlook on engineering.
155. The quality of teaching is good overall and never less than satisfactory. There is a significant amount of very good teaching throughout the school. In the sixth form it is consistently very good with a minority being excellent. Lessons in all years are well-planned, which contributes to achievement and pupil motivation. Teachers' expectations are usually high. Where lessons are only satisfactory, teachers need to specify more detail in the content and keep the pace of learning fast. Assessment and marking of work is good with some excellent and this contributes to good learning. Best practice includes detailed criteria and target setting to help pupils improve their work. This was particularly so in food, AS and A level courses. Some high quality comments from teachers indicating how work could be improved is not always followed through by the pupils, this is a weakness. Good assessment work in Key Stages 3 and 4 should be shared across the team so as to help raise grades even higher, especially at A*. Best teacher produced coursework materials tease out the GCSE and A level criteria in detail, specifying exact activities necessary to achieve the highest grades. There are plans to continue to develop assessment strategies amongst all teachers to support the setting of higher standards.
156. Relationships are very good, providing a secure environment for learning. There is a good match of number and qualifications of teachers to the demands of the curriculum. The technicians make good contributions to the faculty. The teachers have been developing valuable teaching strategies for supporting literacy through the use of key words, for greater impact this should be extended to encompass key design phrases and writing frames as well as focussing on numeracy.
157. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and all pupils have equal access. The teaching of graphics needs developing in Key Stage 3 to support new syllabus demands. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well through being taught different or modified tasks to suit their abilities. Gifted and talented pupils are supported through some clubs and competitions, but more work is needed on improving support for them in lessons. Pupils consider design problems with associated moral and cultural issues and this contributes to their personal development.
158. Leadership of design and technology is very good and the faculty has developed well and standards have improved. There is a strong team spirit with equally strong delegation of tasks and roles. The department has clear aims and objectives and the ethos in which the subject is taught reflects and builds on the school aims. There are well-defined development plans, which link with whole school issues such as

information technology, links with outside agencies, other schools and Technology College status.

159. Learning resources are well cared for by the staff and pupils and used well within their sometimes severe limitations. Modern computer software and visual aids are used well to support effective teaching and demonstrations. Whilst the school has some very up-to date machines many of the machine tools are out-dated and in need of upgrading some with improved safety features against BS4163 2000 code of practice guidance. Funding has been spent wisely on a new and improved range of equipment and consequently more processes are available in some areas to complete designs and raise standards. Some of the workshops are too small for practical work to be really successful and preparation areas are restricted. The faculty provides good value for money.

GEOGRAPHY

160. By the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils in Year 9 reach the average national expectation and many achieve beyond it. Their geographical knowledge of different physical and human environments is good. For example, examination of their work shows they are able to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of approaches to South American rainforest exploitation well. The weakest part of their learning is the ability to develop their own geographical investigations. This skill is beginning to be developed, although inconsistently.
161. Therefore, standards in this aspect of the National Curriculum are not yet good enough although there is a growing understanding of how to improve. There are some good enquiry strategies in use, but consistent emphasis on the use of these across the department is inadequate. Writing skills for the most able pupils are well developed and they are able to communicate their understanding through extended writing.
162. In 1999 GCSE results at A* to C (73 per cent) were well above the national average and those for similar schools. A* to G results were similarly very good. 2000 results are even better at 86 per cent with a good number of A* grades. Both boys and girls attain better than the national average, although boys do less well than girls. The pattern of GCSE results has generally been an improving one with a dip in 1998, partly related to the temporary absence of a key teacher.
163. Pupils in Year 11 of all abilities make good progress in lessons. For example, tasks about the development of tourism, as an example of a service industry, are presented in different ways, through numerical and written data to help pupils of differing abilities relate to difficult concepts. High ability pupils in Year 10 make very good progress from Key Stage 3, when presented with complex work on the regeneration of Glasgow using a range of maps, numerical data, visual information and other key information in order to act as urban planners.
164. Standards in A level are good and above the national average. In 1999 all pupils obtained A to E grades which was better than the national average. Forty per cent of pupils obtained grade A. In 2000, there were only a small number of students and they all achieved pass grades. Students across the ability range achieve very well. Present Year 12 and 13 students are making very good progress and are on track to achieve very good results. They are able questioners and can develop an argument well, both in discussion and assignments. They have a high level of knowledge and

understanding about, for example, the immediate and longer-term impact of flooding locally and nationally.

165. The quality of teaching in the department is very good. It has improved since the last inspection and clearly raised standards of attainment. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers are enthusiastic and set clear standards for pupils about their pace of work. Their lesson structure is usually very good, reminding pupils of what was learned in the previous lesson, clearly sharing with pupils what is to be learned by the end of the lesson and then checking on that learning towards the end of the lesson. Geographical vocabulary at a challenging level is used and explained carefully in all lessons, with an increasing visual presentation of key words on display to prompt correct spelling and memorisation. Good teaching provides a variety of writing frameworks to support the development of writing for average and lower attaining pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported.
166. In some lessons, teachers do not take opportunities to allow pupils to develop their independence by suggesting geographical questions or focusing in pairs or groups on a task for a few minutes. This was particularly the case in the one satisfactory lesson where the teacher talked for far too long. It is also an area for improving the good teaching to very good. Teaching for GCSE and A level is a strength of the department. For example, complex tasks which integrate the knowledge of physical processes and the environmental impact of coastal management strategies, challenge pupils to develop their learning through personal research, direct teaching and group presentation. Constant hints and support for examination awareness are good integral parts of teaching.
167. Homework tasks are varied and interesting and sometimes develop pupils' independent learning skills well. For example, a Year 7 class was required to question grandparents about geographical changes and their attitudes towards them.
168. The quality of marking is generally good with comments often written on work and a consistent system of grading used by the department and understood by pupils. Some assessments in Key Stage 3 are successful at summarising pupils' levels. More work is needed on others.
169. Attitudes to learning are very positive. Pupils come to lessons wanting to learn and settle quickly and co-operate well with each other and teachers. This is linked to the good expectations of the geography staff and the good climate for learning. When given the opportunity to work in groups or pairs, pupils co-operate very well. For example, in an A level lesson the students co-operated well to prepare high level presentations on coastal management issues and learned more through sharing knowledge and attitudes from a greater variety of issues, than they could have researched alone in the time available.
170. The geography curriculum shows good progression and topical examples are well used to motivate pupils and keep the subject up-to-date. Fieldwork is a strength of the subject in GCSE and A level.
171. Leadership of the department is effective and has been helped by the very clear expectations provided by the school leadership. The department has improved considerably since the last inspection and many strategies for further improvement are in place. Staffing is very good and valuable work has been done on helping pupils achieve well in GCSE.

172. Resources are now good. ICT, which was weak at the time of the last inspection, is now satisfactory and developing well. ICT resources are beginning to enhance the department's teaching very well, for example about topical flooding in the UK, Kenya and urban regeneration in Glasgow. Increased access to provide sufficient opportunities for all Key Stage 3 pupils to use ICT skills as a tool to process and develop geographical information as stated in the schemes of work, is necessary to fulfil the requirements.

HISTORY

173. Pupils and teachers work hard in history to maintain a lively and successful department.
174. Progress from the last inspection has been good overall. Standards of work and the quality of teaching have improved.
175. On entry the attainment of pupils is above that expected from pupils of a similar age. By the end of Key Stage 3 the majority of pupils exceed national expectations in their levels of attainment. Pupil attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is better than the national average. The results of girls are higher than boys, especially at levels 6 and 7. The department is making positive efforts to raise the attainment of boys. SEN pupils achieve good results and are well supported. Pupils perform especially well in lessons where there are a variety of activities. For example in Year 8, a class studying the Armada used a variety of strategies to explain the failure of the Spanish expedition, these were interesting and challenging for the pupils and well managed by the teacher.
176. The GCSE results were above the national average in 1999 with 67 per cent achieving grades A* to C. The results in 2000 slipped to 53 per cent of pupils achieving grades A* to C with pupils doing less well in history when compared with the results in their other subjects. This was due to staffing difficulties which resulted in pupils producing coursework of a below average standard. The staffing difficulties have now been resolved successfully. Attainment in history in the current Year 11 is above average. The course is varied and presents pupils with the need to understand complex historical concepts. The use of carefully chosen teaching activities encourages analytical thinking. Many pupils benefit from the high expectations of the staff, but a significant number need more systematic support, especially those on the grade C and D borderline. Overall pupils achieve well and make good progress.
177. At A level the proportion of students achieving grades A to E is below the national average. In 2000, 25 per cent of students achieved grades A or B, but 25 per cent failed to gain at least a grade E. In previous years, the results at A level have matched or exceeded the national averages. In the present Year 12 and 13, standards are above average. The department has, this year, reviewed its teaching strategies and schemes of work to ensure that students of all abilities are adequately prepared and catered for throughout the course. Students are most successful in Year 12 and 13 where the lessons are challenging and where there is the effective use of study skills. Recent initiatives in the department are making a positive contribution to raising standards.
178. Overall, the quality of teaching is good in the majority of lessons in all year groups. There is some very good teaching of historical skills in all key stages. For example in

Year 12, students use note-taking frameworks to help analyse the complexities of the 1911 Parliament Act. The approach ensures an informed and sophisticated analysis. When teaching is most effective pupils are provided with activities that make them think and teachers' questioning is incisive. In the majority of lessons pupils of different abilities are provided with a range of materials. The department produces some very good support materials that supplement the standard textbooks. Teaching strategies are carefully selected and planned for pupils at both ends of the ability range. Support for pupils with special educational needs is good. The department works closely with the SEN co-ordinator and the support for individual pupils is well planned and appropriate.

179. The teachers assess all pupils regularly using planned assignments. In all years, lessons and schemes of work focus on clear objectives. The use of target setting is underdeveloped, consequently pupils are not always able to explain how they can improve their work. Pupils' work is marked regularly and conscientiously, but the marking often does not focus sufficiently on historical concepts and skills in Key Stage 3. Marking in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory and at A level it is good especially where the strengths and weaknesses are highlighted in language that is understood by the pupils and based on targets set by the teacher.
180. The department is conscientiously managed and works well as a team. The department shares good practice and there has been some lesson observation that has helped focus on good teaching strategies. The finances of the department are well managed. The development plan is focused appropriately on raising standards, it is realistic and has clear success criteria. The department has been involved in a number of new initiatives since the last inspection. For example, a start has been made to introduce strategies and materials to support non-fictional writing in Key Stages 3 and 4. This initiative is being extended to ensure that it has impact on standards in each year group. Fieldwork forms a regular part of the curriculum in Key Stage 4, but not in the early years.
181. Effective use is made of ICT by both pupils and staff. As yet ICT has not been written into the schemes of work, but there is a bank of lesson plans and activities that are now in regular use. The department has a growing body of ICT resources, for example good use is made of a selection of CD ROMs and appropriate Internet resources. ICT lessons are well managed and effective.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

182. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is above the national standard. Assessment procedures have been changed to ensure greater accuracy in the measurement of attainment. Pupils have a broad and balanced experience of the statutory programmes of study for the old and new National Curriculum and this is used to achieve solutions to complex problems. Pupils use industry standard software programmes such as word processing, databases, spreadsheets and desktop publishing and standards achieved are good and sometimes very good. Attainment is improving with each successive year group due to increased and more efficient access to and use of computers and software. Pupils with SEN and EAL achieve well, but gifted and talented pupils need more stimulus so as to achieve at a higher level.
183. The 2000 GCSE examination results were just below the national average. This was due to insufficient curriculum time being allocated for examination preparation. Many subjects are using computers to enhance their coursework marks; this is helping to

raise standards. Pupils in science, mathematics, design and technology and modern foreign languages achieve higher grades due to the appropriate use of computers. The school has changed its accreditation to a more appropriate assessed system.

184. At the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' attainment is now above the national average. The majority of the programmes of study are covered well and this leads to good levels of attainment. Pupils achieve well using data logging in science to help them interpret experimental data quickly and accurately. They are confident in the use of spreadsheets and graphs. In design and technology, pupils design parts of their coursework with advanced computer aided design and manufacturing software. In mathematics teachers investigate patterns with the pupils using a spreadsheet. Similar activities speed up analysis and problem solving in a range of subjects.
185. Attainment in sixth form courses matches national standards with students producing good work in design and technology and leisure and tourism. Where there is a new focus on developing key skills, standards are improving and students are achieving well. The Advanced GNVQ information technology group is small and standards are good at this early stage in the course.
186. Standards in information technology are above the national average in most other subjects of the curriculum. For example in science, pupils in all years use sensing methods in experimentation, then analyse and interpret data using the computers and peripherals. In design and technology, sophisticated computer programmes are used to develop industry standard solutions to problems. In one collaborative project an aircraft was modelled across several schools sharing files and data. The Internet is used by subjects such as history, design and technology and geography to deepen and broaden research. In French, electronic mail is used to communicate between other pupils in local schools, giving an excellent experience. Business studies uses a wide range of programmes effectively, working closely to commercial standards. However, all departments recognise that the application and use of ICT are still areas for development. The recent programme of staff training in ICT is helping teachers to increase their knowledge and confidence. The technician support staff work very hard to ensure that computers are used efficiently and their support for teaching and their impact on learning is effective.
187. The quality of teaching is good in Key Stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form. It is very good at times and is never less than satisfactory. Where teaching is most effective a fast pace is set and maintained as in a French lesson where pupils were using electronic mail to communicate with other schools. Teachers use a wide variety of software and hardware well to support and extend the curriculum. Teachers' planning and assessment have changed recently and there are clear signs of improvement. However, this new methodology will need monitoring and tuning. Systems are in place to do this so as to assure that standards continue to improve.
188. The quality of learning in all years is good. However, key skills are underdeveloped in post-16 courses. Pupils in all key stages work hard on projects combining data, images and text from different software. They work well together, often for extended periods of time. Pupils' attitudes to the subject and its application in their coursework in other subjects are good. Relationships between the teachers and pupils are positive. In lessons, pupils are usually very well behaved; they listen carefully and settle down quickly to work. Pupils use computers enthusiastically, but access could be extended during lunchtimes. Positive attitudes are illustrated by pupils' independent use of computers in the library and after-school clubs. The progress pupils make in all years, including those with SEN, is good, particularly in design and

technology, science, mathematics, languages, music, history, geography and business studies. Talented pupils should be supported more so as to stretch them.

189. There are equal opportunities for all pupils to use computers. The use and application of computers across the curriculum has grown. This is very positive and contributes to improved attainment. The breadth and depth of use has improved significantly since the last inspection and there are plans in place for further improvements. Pupils are taught the use and abuse of computers in society. Liaison with primary schools through Master Classes is strong with pupils designing web sites. The school web site is developing with some good features under the guidance of sixth form students.
190. The management of information technology is good. Monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum and its positive impact in raising standards is being felt. Where new initiatives are introduced, staff training is chosen carefully to support development and this is good.
191. The quality of learning resources is very good. The number of modern computers to pupils is satisfactory at 1:6 , which is better than the national average. Computers and network systems are of high quality and very well maintained. There is a planned replacement and improvement programme. There are new resources such as computer controlled milling machines, which are enhancing teaching. The local community use the resources and there are plans to extend this.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

192. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is high. The recent assessment by teachers that pupils are reaching levels which are well above the national average is supported by the observation of standards in lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work. Pupils have a very sound grasp of structures and most can apply these accurately when speaking and writing in the foreign language. Listening skills are particularly well developed and few pupils have difficulty in understanding or responding to instructions in the foreign language. Pupils in top sets deal very well with challenging tasks and are usually able to use increasingly complex language with confidence. Both boys and girls achieve well and there is evidence of very good progress in many lessons with a number of pupils already beginning to use the foreign language unprompted. In two exceptional Year 9 French lessons and in a Year 9 German class pupils responded enthusiastically to probing questions, manipulated complex constructions and succeeded in creating a breadth of language with accuracy and flair. There is no evidence of underachievement in Years 7, 8 or 9.
193. GCSE results in all languages have been at above average levels for grades A* to C over the last few years with an increased number of A* and A grades in both short and full course GCSE examinations, indicating well above average levels of attainment for abler pupils. The most recent results in French in the full course at GCSE, have shown a dip over the previous year. However, this is more than compensated for by the outstanding 100 per cent pass rate at grades A* to C in the GCSE short course in which half the candidates obtained A* and A grades. Attainment of pupils in lessons in Years 10 and 11 maintains the high standards lower down the school. Most pupils are working at levels above and often well above national expectations. They can articulate grammatical rules and have a solid vocabulary base upon which they build. Listening skills are usually good and pupils respond confidently to the high expectations that teachers have. In top sets, pupils use extended language and in several Year 11 classes there were notable examples of fluency. In a Spanish lesson for example, the quality of spoken language was very high with excellent pronunciation and a confident ability to understand the spoken language delivered at near-native speed.
194. At A and AS level, a small number of students have continued to attain high grades with recent strengths in German and Spanish. Results in the post-16 GNVQ language units are also good. Observation of lessons and of students' work, indicate attainment that is above the national average in all languages. Students are able to discuss, question and produce oral and written work of high quality building upon a solid grasp of grammatical structures.
195. Since the previous inspection, examination results at GCSE have maintained the above average standards overall with evidence of improvement in German at the highest grades and continued well above average attainment in Spanish. Results at A level have been sustained with improved pass rates in German. Major areas of development have been in the greater breadth of provision to include GNVQ language units in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form as well as increased application of information technology in teaching and learning through, for example, an Email project with neighbouring schools. The number of students studying a foreign language post-16 on either AS, A level or GNVQ programmes has shown a substantial increase.
196. The quality of teaching is very good overall and in some lessons it is excellent. In virtually every lesson it is good and there is no unsatisfactory teaching. The consistent sharing of lesson objectives with pupils and the high levels of presentation

and explanation ensure that pupils know what to do. A crisp start and brisk pace are features of most lessons and classroom management is invariably very confident and a planned range of activities provides stimulation and variety. In the outstanding and very good lessons, teachers have high expectations and set challenging tasks. Overall, teachers use the foreign language consistently for classroom instruction and this is having a benefit upon pupils' listening skills. However, in a minority of cases pupils are too passive and teachers are not always encouraging them to use the foreign language for routine communication in the classroom. Teachers have established very positive relationships with their pupils, know them well, use much praise and expect and receive exemplary behaviour from them. Pupils' work is regularly marked though there is some inconsistency in the quality of commentary on pupils' work. The commitment of teachers to the wide provision of opportunities for links, exchanges and work experience abroad is to be commended.

197. This is a strong modern languages department. The management and leadership is excellent. The head of faculty in collaboration with a team of dedicated teachers has had a significant impact upon raising the profile of foreign languages in the school. Schemes of work are very detailed and the strategies for monitoring pupils' performance and targeting individual pupils to raise achievement are good.

MUSIC

198. Standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 are above the national expectation for all schools and similar schools. Pupils are able to work well in group, paired and individual composing and performing activities; they have a good understanding of the elements of music and apply their knowledge well in melody writing and keyboard performances; demonstrate good aural, ensemble and instrumental skills; understand basic harmony and apply their knowledge well in compositions involving the use of ICT. One group of pupils made particularly effective use of a sequencer to create a composition which moves from "chaos to order". This highly effective and sensitive composition involved pupils in recording and editing all individual parts, selecting timbres, looping the piece and muting parts. Pupils are able to appraise their work critically and learn from the comments of others.
199. At the end of Key Stage 4 and the sixth form standards of attainment are well above the national expectation for all schools and similar schools. Compositions show good instrumental and ICT skills; scores are detailed and reflect well-structured, sensitive and imaginative works for keyboard, piano, voice, guitar and a range of ensembles. Performances of these and other works are frequently of a very high standard. Over recent years take-up for GCSE has ranged from good to satisfactory. GCSE results have been variable, but the trend has been one of clear improvement. This year's results were significantly above the national average for all schools.
200. A level take-up is generally small, rendering statistical analysis of limited value. However, results are good and in line with students' ability. Standards of instrumental performance are high and ICT skills are good. Pupils demonstrate considerable skill in analysis of Baroque works and show very good aural skills through accurate responses to questions and dictation. Historical and stylistic awareness are of a high standard. Standards of attainment have improved since the last inspection.
201. When pupils join the school in Year 7, attainment in music is varied, ranging from below to slightly above national expectation. Pupils of all abilities make good progress at Key Stage 3 and very good progress during Key Stage 4 and the sixth form in all areas of the music curriculum.

202. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. At Key Stage 3 it is very good in over two-thirds of lessons and good in the remainder. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, the quality of teaching is very good. Teachers demonstrate very high standards of specialist knowledge, skills and understanding and provide a stimulating and challenging learning environment to which pupils respond very positively. Lessons are well planned, prepared and structured, include an excellent range of teaching strategies and are delivered with contagious enthusiasm and energy. Differentiation has improved since the last inspection and effective short-term targets are set during group, paired and individual work in order to maximise pupil progress and enhance pupil attainment. In the most successful lessons excellent progress is achieved by drawing upon pupils' skills gained during instrumental lessons. For instance, violinists and guitarists skills are used in one Year 11 lesson to illustrate chordal and melodic features in Eine Kleine Nacht music. Teachers frequently use skilful questioning to stimulate thought and learning and plan careful sequences of small, but significant learning steps, in order to maximise pupil potential and accelerate progress. High behavioural and musical expectations are well established, effectively enhancing pupil attainment. As a result of the very effective teaching approaches adopted: pupils are highly motivated; confident; sustain interest and concentration well; achieve a very good standard of attainment and swift progress and clearly enjoy music. Pupils value music provision highly. This is well reflected by the high level of involvement in extra-curricular activities, public performances and instrumental lessons.
203. The music department benefits from very strong, sensitive leadership. There is a clear, shared sense of direction and high aspirations for music within and beyond the curriculum.
204. Significant progress has been achieved in a number of major areas since the last inspection due to the dedicated and talented staff and support of governors, the headteacher and senior management of the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

205. Standards in physical education overall in Key Stage 3 are mainly in line with national expectations, although in the two lessons seen in Year 9 (which were lower ability groups) standards were below the national average. All pupils have good knowledge of rules in games and they can organise themselves well. They also know and can use technical language well. For example, in a good hockey lesson pupils used terms such as "drawing the defence" and "covering the attack" confidently and in the correct context showing they understood the terms. In very good lessons throughout Key Stage 3, pupils know the main muscle groups and how to prepare their bodies for physical activity. When given the opportunity, pupils evaluate their work accurately. In a Year 7 netball lesson pupils were able to change their practice (which tested their peripheral vision). The groups made it harder once they mastered the task. They enjoyed this challenge. Standards in volleyball in this key stage are below average. To improve standards overall in Key Stage 3 pupils should be given more time to consolidate and improve their skill and more chance to use their initiative to analyse their work and suggest ways of improving.
206. GCSE results have improved in 2000. Of the pupils who were entered for the examination, 68 per cent gained an A* to C grade. GCSE results in 1999 were just above the national average compared with similar schools with 53 per cent gaining an A* to C grade. There has been a steady upward trend over the last three years.

Standards of work seen in non- GCSE lessons at Key Stage 4 are mainly in line with national expectations. Standards overall at Key Stage 4 reflect an improvement in performance and good progress made by pupils during their time at The Weald School. When given the opportunity they can analyse the problems in performance and often know the cause of the problem. However, they often do not know the solution. Pupils work safely. In a Year 10 outdoor adventurous activities lesson, pupils were fully aware of what constituted safe practice in belaying techniques and confidently used correct climbing terms. They took responsibility for checking their own safety and that of each of their group. They also organised themselves very efficiently. To improve achievement further in this key stage, pupils need to be more actively involved with planning their own targets and evaluating their work.

207. A level results match the national average. These students achieve well in lessons, supported by good teaching and comprehensive planning. They produce a lot of work and have lively discussions. Pupils with special educational needs are achieving within expectations and make good progress. Many pupils are achieving success within the after- hours school programme at local, district and county level. The faculty provides an extensive range of opportunities and teachers work very hard after school.
208. Overall the quality of teaching in physical education is good. In 63 per cent of lessons teaching is good and better, with examples of very good teaching in 31 per cent of lessons. Teaching is slightly better in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Teaching has a clear impact on the quality of learning. However, the quality of teaching varies. All teachers prepare lessons well and have good subject knowledge, but some teachers have not yet updated their plans to accommodate the four areas of learning in the new National Curriculum. Lessons start promptly and are organised efficiently. Every lesson has clear objectives and pupils know what they are going to do during the lesson. All teachers want pupils to succeed and are very supportive. They care for them and encourage them by acknowledging and celebrating pupils' success in lessons and on notice boards. Pupils react positively to this by working collaboratively, behaving very well and supporting each other. They sustain interest and work really hard. Pupils also organise themselves well. Teachers generally use time in lessons very well. Some very good organisation of resources and equipment allows for this. In a small proportion of lessons the pace flags and the teacher dominates, giving over-long explanations and not allowing pupils to think for themselves or solve problems.
209. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility for planning. In a successful Year 10 fitness lesson the girls enthusiastically designed their own circuit within a tight brief and time-scale. Another group of Year 10 pupils was fully involved in analysing the effectiveness of their performance from a previous week's trampoline lesson. In less successful lessons teachers do not always identify those pupils who are able to achieve higher standards. Pupils are often given the same task and equipment regardless of their different abilities and needs. In the best lessons pupils who are not able to take part in physical activity are included and given challenging tasks as critical observers and peer coaches. This procedure does not happen often enough to improve analytical and leadership skills.
210. The management and leadership of physical education are satisfactory, with some very good aspects. The department is very well organised and the systems of assessment and recording pupils' progress are good (although the criteria for assessment at Key Stage 3 is out of date and not related to the current level descriptors nor the four key areas of learning). The development plan highlights

appropriate targets and reflects the aims of the school. The deployment of teaching staff, resources and accommodation is managed very efficiently and effectively. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are satisfactory and now need to be focused on ensuring that best practice is shared and becomes more consistent.

211. Curriculum planning for Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory. The way that the timetable within physical education has been organised results in an over-emphasis on games. Pupils will not have enough time to reach the required standard in three of the four areas of activity. No schemes of work have been written to support the implementation of the changes to the curriculum, hence the inconsistent practice. Some teachers give pupils time to acquire, develop, apply and evaluate their skills and suggest improvements. Others do not. Planning for Key Stage 4 is much better and is almost complete in preparation for the implementation of the new curriculum in 2001. The faculty team is very hard working and committed to the pupils, school and the subject. The subject has continued to make good progress and develop well since the last inspection.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

212. Overall pupils achieve good standards in religious education. Staff are capable and experienced. They work very hard and are committed to improvement. Subject leadership is very good. Most pupils display a positive attitude towards religious education, an interest in religious and moral issues and behave very well. Religious education makes a major contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development.
213. Standards of attainment on entry are above the national average. At the end of Year 9, standards of attainment are above expectations for the majority of pupils, including the least able. Most pupils make good progress. Pupils know about aspects of Christianity such as the teaching of Jesus and Christian worship and festivals. They know about a number of features shared by religions such as symbols, sacred writings and ceremonies to mark stages in a person's life. They know about some distinctive features of different traditions such as the place of Jesus in Christianity and the Torah in Judaism, the names of Hindu gods and the importance of pilgrimage in Islam. They understand moral issues such as the consequences of prejudice and discrimination in the treatment of Jews in the Holocaust. They understand what is meant by an ultimate question and are able to reflect well on the implications of their learning for their own lives.
214. At the end of Year 11, standards of attainment are above expectations for those taking compulsory religious education. Most students develop a good understanding of moral issues and religious responses to them such as views about marriage and divorce, euthanasia, wealth and poverty. They learn about why people believe in God and about how religious believers explain the fact of evil and suffering. Standards of attainment are well above expectations for students taking the full GCSE religious studies course where pupils learn about the rich diversity of the Christian tradition. Examination results last year were very good when all students gained a pass at A* to C grade with half achieving an A* or A which was well above the national average. Examination results this year were also very good when most gained a pass at A* to C and more than half achieved an A* or A grade. The single student entered for the religious education short course gained an A*. There is insufficient evidence to judge attainment and progress in the sixth form where students only attend a school-based conference in Year 12. Students taking the AS course are making good progress in learning about issues in ethics and the philosophy of religion. There have been no A level examinations in recent years.

215. Overall throughout the school, teaching is good and never less than satisfactory. In some lessons it is outstanding. It is very good in the sixth form examination class. Effective teaching uses appropriate resources to stimulate and reinforce learning such as in a lesson on the Bar Mitzvah when Jewish artefacts were used to help pupils understand key features of the ceremony and the classroom was laid out as a synagogue. Good teaching uses precise questioning which elicits thoughtful responses which then allows the teacher to build on those responses. A good example of this was in a lesson on adult baptism when a pupil spoke about the presence of steps at the baptistry in a Baptist church and the teacher then asked why there were two sets of steps. Good teaching is displayed in a concern for all pupils to make good progress especially the less able and was seen in lessons when weaker pupils were given individual attention when most were engaged on other work. Good teaching is seen when teachers display good subject knowledge and are able to highlight diversity within one religion such as in a lesson on confirmation when the teacher pointed out that some churches now allow young children to take communion before they are confirmed.
216. The majority of pupils enjoy religious education. This is a considerable achievement for the department. Pupils are willingly and enthusiastically respond to questions and can sustain concentration in discussions and when writing. Pupils work very well together and respect each other's views. Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils are consistently very good.
217. The subject is very well led and managed. Departmental documentation is comprehensive and supports staff very well. Planning for improvement is very good. Detailed schemes of work based on the local Agreed Syllabus offer good guidance. However, in Key Stage 3, planning covers too many different traditions in a mainly thematic way to allow sufficient learning in depth of religions apart from Christianity. Statutory requirements are met in Years 7 to 11, but there is no provision for the subject in Year 13 and so statutory requirements are not met. The provision for religious education for post-16 was an issue in the last inspection and the school has not made sufficient improvement. Curriculum time is below expectations in Years 7 to 11 for core religious education. This limits the progress and standards of achievement which pupils are able to make as well as giving fewer opportunities to use computers. Pupils' work is marked regularly and well, but sometimes with too little comment making clear to pupils what they need to do to improve. Pupils have opportunities to assess their own and each other's work. Marking of work in examination groups is very good. Several staff from other departments teach religious education. Non- specialists have good subject knowledge and expertise and are well supported. Resources have improved considerably in recent years. There are very good sets of artefacts and videos. The displays are outstanding including one room and corridor devoted to images of the Holocaust, another to the setting for a Bar Mitzvah and another with two entire walls with artefacts from six different religions.
218. Progress since the last inspection has been good. Overall the department has improved a great deal with outstanding GCSE examination results, improved standards of attainment and better teaching and learning across the school. This is a very good department which contributes much to the personal development of the pupils and ethos of the school.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

219. In 1999, results in GCSE business studies and information technology (combined) were below the national average, but showed a significant improvement in 2000 where they were above average. Attainment of pupils in business studies lessons seen in Years 10 and 11 was above average. Work related courses leading to NVQ accreditation for a small group of pupils in partnership with local colleges have been introduced very recently, but there is insufficient evidence to date to assess standards of attainment.
220. Key Stage 4 business studies pupils achieve well and use information technology very effectively in their work. Lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs achieve very well.
221. There are two business education courses offered at GCE A level. In A level business studies students' attainment is average, although few students attain the higher grades. In A level economics, attainment is above average. Students achieve well in business studies and very well in economics at A level.
222. In the sixth form GNVQ results are broadly in line with national averages and the "drop out" rate is low. Results have improved steadily since 1998. Attainment is above average in advanced GNVQ and AVCE health and social care. Attainment is above average in advanced GNVQ and AVCE courses in leisure and tourism, leisure and recreation and travel and tourism. Attainment is above average in advanced GNVQ science and in AVCE science in Year 12, it is average. Attainment is also average in GNVQ and AVCE business. Attainment of students in the new vocational AS level in information technology is above average and the attainment of students following the new vocational A level in engineering is average. All students achieve well and many very well in all vocational subjects at advanced level in the sixth form. In the case of the relatively small number of students on intermediate level GNVQ courses in the sixth form, results are in line with the national average and students achieve well.
223. GNVQ students understand the main concepts and terminology of the subjects they study and show very good knowledge of the relevant vocational contexts. In some vocational subjects, students make good use of the Internet as a research tool and undertake primary research very effectively. However, students make insufficient use of other reference sources such as textbooks and reference books to develop enough depth of understanding of concepts and theories and their independent learning skills are sometimes underdeveloped. The standards of key skills and their application are satisfactory, but could be improved with a greater emphasis upon this aspect of the curriculum.
224. The attainment of GNVQ students in the sixth form has improved since the previous inspection.
225. In GCSE business studies the teaching seen was good. In A level economics, teaching was very good. On GNVQ courses the overall quality of teaching is good and it is often very good. In over a third of the lessons seen, teaching was very good and the quality of teaching was never less than satisfactory. Lessons are very well planned and clear objectives are set which are almost always shared with students. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, are enthusiastic about their subject and maintain a very good pace in lessons. Expectations are high. Teachers provide very effective support to students as they work in classrooms and make very good use of vocational contexts in their teaching.

226. Vocational students seeking key skills accreditation are taught by key skills specialists and they are achieving at an appropriate level as a result of this specialist teaching. However, key skills are used insufficiently to support the raising of attainment in vocational subjects. Although it is not consistent, there is very some good practice in the use of ICT in vocational courses. For example, in an advanced GNVQ leisure and tourism lesson, students presented the results of their investigation of Beachy Head as a honeypot tourist attraction to a range of students and staff, including the headteacher. Through their work they had made very good use of the video editing facilities and they made very effective use of PowerPoint in their presentations.
227. A wide range of vocational subjects is offered and students at both Key Stage 4 and post-16 are able to study vocational language units in French, German, Spanish and Italian. Curriculum planning is very good and the school has adapted well to the significant changes which have recently occurred in post-16 vocational education. The new structure of the vocational qualifications in leisure and recreation and travel and tourism has been used by the school as an opportunity for students to take either a leisure and recreation or a travel and tourism pathway. The way the curriculum in this area is planned at The Weald School enables students to make an informed choice at an appropriate point in their course.
228. Vocational education is very well managed and the common management of vocational education, careers and work-related learning is a real strength. Very effective use is made of vocational experiences and work placements in supporting the raising of achievement in vocational subjects.
229. Accommodation for GNVQ students is generally good, although the accommodation for business education in the temporary huts is unsatisfactory. Resources for learning are generally satisfactory, although there is sometimes a limited range of resources in school to support some of the optional units at advanced level. There is a good range of relevant books and journals in the library and there is access to the Internet which is increasingly being used by vocational students.