

INSPECTION REPORT

SOUTH HOLDERNESS SCHOOL

Preston

LEA area: East Riding of Yorkshire

Unique reference number: 118080

Headteacher: Mrs V Ellis

Reporting inspector: Calvin Pike
1565

Dates of inspection: 13 – 17 November 2000

Inspection number: 223899

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 - 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Station Road
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs R Taylor

Date of previous inspection: 30 January 1995

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

South Holderness School is a mixed community comprehensive to the east of the city of Kingston upon Hull. It gained Technology College Status in 1997. The school serves Hedon and Preston as well as the surrounding area of small villages. Up to 20 per cent of pupils come from Hull each year. More than a thousand pupils are transported daily to and from school by bus. With 1875 pupils aged 11-18 on roll, the school is much bigger than average for a comprehensive school and, as a result of its popularity, the number of pupils on roll continues to increase. There are 218 students in the sixth form.

Standards on entry represent a balanced range of attainment in line with the average for a comprehensive school. Pupils are mainly from socio-economically advantaged homes but pupils' backgrounds are varied, ranging from quite high levels of advantage to others with levels of disadvantage. Only 2.1 per cent of pupils are from ethnic minority families and the number of pupils who are using English as an additional language is low. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is below the national average, although the proportion of those with statements of special educational needs is broadly in line with the average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

South Holderness is a good school. It is effective in raising standards and providing a caring community for its pupils and provides satisfactory value for money. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory: in some subjects they are good. Pupils behave well. They have positive attitudes to their work and good relationships with each other and their teachers. Teaching is rarely less than satisfactory: in just over half the lessons observed it was good and in nearly a fifth it was very good. There is very good leadership by the headteacher and good management overall by other key staff, although the use of assessment information is not yet sufficiently well used across the school.

What the school does well

- The school is led very well: its management overall is good.
- It provides a caring and supportive ethos in which individuals are valued.
- Standards are good in mathematics, geography, art and music in Years 7-9, and in drama, food technology and textiles in Years 10-11.
- There is good teaching in the sixth form and within most departments throughout the school.
- Provision for and standards attained by pupils with special educational needs are good.
- Pupils show good behaviour and attitudes to school: their attendance levels are high.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are positive and mutually respectful.

What could be improved

- Teacher expectations linked with learning outcomes
- The use of evaluation and assessment information to inform teachers' planning
- Provision for and standards in information and communications technology (ICT)
- Meet the full requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education
- Adequacy of accommodation, including library provision and its use across the curriculum

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Standards overall have risen in line with national trends since the school was last inspected in 1995 but attainment has fluctuated. The quality of teaching has improved significantly. There have been good improvements in four of the seven issues of the last inspection. The implementation and monitoring of the school's assessment policy have been refined. Teaching materials have been developed. Appropriate training has been provided to improve middle management. Good strategies have been developed for assessing pupils with special educational needs: provision for them is now good. Satisfactory improvement has been made in relation to monitoring pupils' progress which is now effective, but the use of this information is not being used fully to improve lesson planning and practice. Two previous issues have not

yet been progressed well. The school's review of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development has not been used to ensure the curriculum is enhanced fully. The act of collective worship is not provided for all pupils daily: provision of religious education still does not meet requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Additionally, improvements have been made in sixth form provision but do not include sufficient time for the teaching of key skills. Links with primary schools have been improved well. The school has been creative in using its buildings but increased demands make them inadequate in some areas. Although the school has gained Technology College status, the application of information technology is not co-ordinated effectively. Overall improvement is satisfactory.

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	C	C	C	C
A-levels/AS-levels	D	C	C	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

There are sound standards in the school. The majority of pupils achieve standards which are in line with those anticipated from their standards on entry.

2000 Year 9 results are in line with average in English and science and well above average in mathematics. Between 1996 and 2000 the trend in results is much the same as the national trend. In 1999 achievements in English and mathematics were well above those in schools whose pupils come from similar backgrounds. Work seen shows improvement in these subjects, especially in mathematics.

Strengths at GCSE in 2000, with above national average results, were in English, mathematics, science, design and technology and physical education; they were very high in drama. Pupils did better in mathematics than overall in the rest of their subjects. Results were just under averages in history and German but below averages in French, Spanish and geography and business studies. The weakness in achievement of higher grades was in Spanish, art and music; pupils did less well in these subjects than overall in the others they took. The average A and AS level point score in 2000 was in line with the national average. Results were high in drama, but below average in English Literature and English Language, mathematics, science, and history. They were in line with averages nationally in design and technology, German, and music.

The school's realistic targets for GCSE were narrowly missed in 2000 in terms of average points scores, A*-C and A*-G grades. This was largely as a result of the number of pupils who obtained slightly lower grades than anticipated.

In work seen, strengths are in mathematics in Key Stages 3 and 4, in design courses in the sixth form, in art, performing in music, and in drama where standards are well above those expected throughout the school. In the majority of other subjects, standards are just in line with those expected. As a result of the school's attention to mathematics, the work seen during the inspection showed improvement compared with the previous Year 9 results. In ICT and religious education, work seen was in line with average but a limited range of understanding, knowledge and skills is developed as provision does not meet statutory requirements for ICT or those of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are eager to come to school and their attitudes to learning are good. The pupils have mutual respect for other pupils and adults.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils are courteous, friendly and do not tolerate oppressive behaviour. They know the high standards expected of them and they achieve these. The overall behaviour is a strength of the school.
Personal development and relationships	Good. The pupils develop well as they pass through the school. They grow in confidence and maturity and they have good relationships with each other and the staff.
Attendance	Very good

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 11-14 years	Aged 14-16 years	Aged 16-18 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Good

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

Very little unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teaching was good in 38 per cent of lessons, very good in 14 per cent, and excellent in 4 per cent. The consistent quality across the sixth form and Year 11 groups is a strength. Teaching is good in English, geography and art, and very good in mathematics in KS3; in history, art, English and music in KS4; and in English and art in the sixth form. Teaching is a particular strength in mathematics throughout the school. Teaching is most often good and some is excellent in personal, social and health education (PSHE), including careers education. In most subjects there are examples of very good teaching, while this is less evident in science, design and technology, information technology or modern foreign languages.

Literacy and numeracy skills are taught effectively in English and mathematics respectively, but opportunities for writing and number work to be developed in all subjects are insufficient. Across the curriculum teachers use a range of methods which help pupils to learn effectively but in most departments pupils are not encouraged enough to take initiative or responsibility for their own learning. Teaching is only satisfactory when teachers are overly directive or when lesson objectives are not linked closely enough to what pupils know, can do and understand – partly because assessment information is not yet used fully. Pupils' learning is most often good. There are strengths in mathematics, English, art, geography, music and business studies. Pupils are not sufficiently helped to evaluate their own learning in science, design and technology, information and communications technology (ICT) and modern languages.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good for all pupils; strengths in careers education and work-related opportunities, and in links with primary schools and colleges. Requirements for ICT and religious education are not fully met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils' interests and abilities are carefully taken into account in planning and setting targets.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	The school does well by its pupils in terms of their social, moral and cultural development but does not give sufficient attention to their spiritual development.

How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school is a caring community in which teachers know their pupils exceptionally well. Arrangements for assessment are generally effective in checking how well pupils are progressing.
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HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good leadership by the headteacher: good management by senior team and most other key staff; strong sense of professional community; clear aim to raise standards; whole-school management systems well developed but monitoring information not fully used.
How well the governors fulfill their responsibilities	Governors are well-informed and constructively critical. They carry out their responsibilities with a clear focus but have not ensured that requirements are fully met for ICT, religious education and worship. Their financial oversight is very good.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good; steady and thorough improvement because strengths and weaknesses clearly diagnosed; positive effects from monitoring teaching but not having sufficient impact on lesson planning. Firm action taken where teaching is below par. Formal arrangements for checking and reporting on the quality and evenness of provision across departments are not consistently implemented or used.
The strategic use of resources	Adequate staffing, weaknesses in accommodation, especially the library and some physical education, and computer use which affect the curriculum; good care taken to achieve best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school • Their children make satisfactory progress • The good behaviour of pupils • The good standard of teaching • The school's high expectations • The school is well managed and led • Their children are helped to be considerate, mature and responsible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's use of information about their children's successes in the primary school to plan teaching • The quality of information for parents • The amount of homework that is set • The range of extra-curricular activities

About a quarter of parents returned completed questionnaires; a small number, four per cent, attended the pre-inspection meeting. Inspectors support the positive views expressed by parents. The inspection team did not find an overall weakness in the school's use of information from primary schools to plan lessons for younger pupils in the school. The quality of information provided for parents was judged to be good, although inspectors found some end-of-year reports described the experiences rather than provided an evaluation of pupils' strengths and areas for improvement. Mindful of the constraints imposed by the distance between school and the homes of many pupils, inspectors viewed the range of activities outside lessons to be adequate.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

Key Stage (KS) 3

1. Achievements are satisfactory with most pupils making sound progress at this stage. The overall national curriculum points score attained by Year 9 pupils in the end of year National Curriculum tests in 2000 was above average, although the attainment of the same pupils was in line with the average when they started at South Holderness. The trend in results over the last four years is much the same as the trend nationally. This was supported by a distinct improvement in 1999 in English and mathematics at the same time as science results fell.
2. There are differences between the Year 9 test results compared with the picture in all schools nationally in 2000. Pupils did best in mathematics where results were well above average and in English where they were just above the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels for their age in science is below average. By contrast, in mathematics a higher percentage of pupils than that found nationally achieved the higher levels. In each of the three subjects girls attain higher than boys, although the difference is less than that found nationally.
3. When compared with schools whose pupils come from similar backgrounds, Year 9 results overall are average. There is a notable difference between the subjects. Mathematics results are well above the average for similar schools, while in English the percentage of pupils achieving expected standards is in line with similar school averages but just below them for those obtaining the higher grades. In science, the percentage of pupils achieving expected and higher standards is below that of similar schools. This analysis shows how right the school is in giving close attention to teaching in all three subjects, including planning and teaching in English and science.

Key Stage 4

4. Compared with all schools, in Year 11 examinations in 2000 the percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more A*-C grades was in line with the national average and the percentage achieving one or more A*-G grade was slightly higher than the average. A higher percentage of pupils was entered for GCSE examinations than in schools nationally. However, the average point score for both boys and girls was below their separate national averages, although this was less so for boys than girls. There was no significant difference in the results of pupils from ethnic minorities and other pupils in the school.
5. Over the last three years both boys' and girls' results have been close to the national average. Whilst there has been a slight increase in the average point scores in the period, the trend in improvement has been below the national trend.
6. When compared with schools whose pupils come from similar backgrounds, overall GCSE results are just above average in English, mathematics and science – a sound achievement. However, the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades is below average.

7. The strengths at GCSE in 2000, where a greater percentage of pupils attained A*-C grades than nationally, are for boys and girls in English; for boys in drama; and for girls and, particularly, boys in physical education. Average points scores in all other subjects are below the national figures. The weakness in the achievement is the below average number of higher grades in English language, mathematics, art, French, business studies and music for boys and in English language, science, German, and music for girls.

Work seen

8. In Key Stages 3 and 4, the work seen shows overall standards at the expected level in English, mathematics, science, art, design and technology, history, physical education, French and Spanish. Standards are above expectations at KS3 and well above at KS4 in drama and above expectations in geography in both key stages and for the lower age group in music. Whilst the quality of work in information and communications technology (ICT) and religious education matches expectations, standards of attainment overall are below average as the curriculum is too narrow to meet the statutory requirements for ICT or requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. In German, attainment is below expectation at KS3 but above average at KS4.
9. Pupils make sound progress overall in KS3; Year 9 pupils in 2000, for example, having started at the school with attainment levels that were just in line with average. In English and, particularly, in mathematics pupils make adequate progress across KS3 and 4 but in science this is less even. In other subjects pupils achieve well over time in music in KS3 and in modern languages in KS4. With reference to examination data in 1988 and 2000, pupils made adequate progress through KS4 in the areas of mathematics, English and science compared with those of similar backgrounds. However, considering their prior attainment at the end of KS3, the same pupils made insufficient progress across other areas of the curriculum through Years 10 and 11. Students in the sixth form make satisfactory progress. The school adds value to much of its work, concentrating recently particularly on liaising with primary schools to ensure that progress continues for its younger pupils. Consequently, there are very good relationships between pupils and adults and very good attitudes to work shown by pupils. There is also much good teaching and departmental planning, though this varies between and sometimes within departments.
10. The reason for inadequate rather than satisfactory progress in ICT for all pupils is the patchiness of provision across subjects so that continuity in learning is not achieved. This is true in the subjects responsible for providing ICT in the school as well as those where it should be integrated into the subject curriculum. Similarly, whilst literacy and numeracy skills are taught effectively in English and mathematics, standards are below expectations in some subjects because writing and, to a lesser extent, number skills are not reinforced enough to enhance the quality of work pupils produce. In modern languages, the most able pupils are sometimes not sufficiently challenged by the work set. In science, work is not planned for individual lessons to match the learning of individuals and pupils' understanding is not thoroughly checked out in all lessons. Together, these factors limit progress in science.

11. Since the last inspection, there has been clear improvement in English attainment, with attainment now being in line with national expectations. There are now shared systems in preparing lessons and the quality of teaching has been raised. Pupils show that skills of reading and writing have been maintained but teachers apply the department's policy concerning drafting inconsistently. Too little use is made of information technology for referencing or to encourage independent writing. Although assessment data has been improved considerably, it is not used fully to ensure pupil progress across the department. High standards in drama have been maintained, showing, for example, in improvisation and teamwork. At KS4, pupils have confidence in experimenting and respond well to new challenges, such as producing one scene in different styles.
12. In mathematics, standards have improved at KS3 and 4. Attainment is now above the national average. This has been brought about by a number of developments: assessment is now widely used to support pupil progress; a wide range of teaching approaches has been introduced; better use is made of resources and equipment; and, good teaching is shared within the department. Year 7 pupils can express rules for a sequence using algebra, and Year 9 apply Pythagoras' theorem to find the length of a side of a right-angled triangle. In the sixth form, improvements are less evident in standards now attained, although nearly a third of students attained the highest grade in 2000. At the same time, more students are now following an A-level mathematics course and the ability range of those involved has widened.
13. In science, average standards have been maintained since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved overall, especially in the sixth form. At KS3, younger pupils show understanding of environmental issues when studying energy resources, and Year 9 pupils apply their knowledge of photosynthesis well when considering the microscopic structures of a plant. KS4 pupils used their skills effectively to plan a study on enzymes and to explain outcomes. In the sixth form, students are confident in their work on DNA fragments, including conducting a literature search on DNA and RNA structures. At each stage, there is sound development of general understanding of scientific concepts and the processes of investigation.
14. Results in art have shown a steady improvement since the last inspection. Although the highest grades have not been attained until recently, standards in the sixth form are high, and in KS3 and 4 they are good. Pupils now show good drawing skills and use technical language and information technology effectively to support their work. In design and technology, there have been sound improvements in GCSE and A-level results and clearer progression in KS3. The practical work of younger pupils is now most often good, although research skills are limited. In KS4, pupils show good presentational and graphical skills and use ICT to illustrate their work well. In the sixth form, students studying AS and A-level design courses use Pro-Desk top and digital cameras effectively and discuss their skills and research findings confidently. Better targets are set for pupils and teachers are now beginning to use assessment information more consistently. Additional resources for information and communications technology now support the curriculum. In geography, standards have improved steadily and are now in line with expectations, largely due to the different styles of teaching and learning through an enquiry approach which have been introduced since the last inspection. At KS3, pupils can compare and contrast information about different places and present their findings confidently. Year 11 pupils have a good understanding of the environmental implications of pollution and discuss associated moral arguments well, with higher-attaining pupils writing them confidently. Sixth formers have good observational and map-reading skills and can interpret evidence effectively but need support in synthesizing ideas from different sources.

15. There has been satisfactory progress in history since the last inspection, with steady improvements in examination results and standards now in line with expectations in each key stage. The quality of teaching has improved through good departmental management which has refined documentation including schemes of work, shared good teaching approaches, and extended the range and use of historical artifacts. At KS3, this shows in satisfactory understanding of the main features of the period studied, as in knowing the differences between Catholic and Protestant faiths and how they influenced events leading to the Gunpowder Plot; at KS4, in good factual knowledge and recall, and pupils' ability to analyse issues such as those surrounding nationalization; and in the sixth form where students showed good research skills in presentations on society and religion in the 17th century. The improvement has been achieved through good use of staff training opportunities and improved teaching.
16. Whilst the school has improved its resources for information technology, the quality of some aspects of learning at KS3 and in its advanced course in the sixth form, weaknesses in the previous inspection report have not been overcome. Although some provision is good, it is patchy overall and does not meet statutory requirements. Improvements overall are less than satisfactory. Consequently, in cross-curricular ICT, standards are below those expected at each key stage. There is a lack of evidence of work in ICT across the curriculum at each stage. The weakness is mainly in the school's management of ICT but in discrete lessons work focuses only on word-processing skills and these are of a satisfactory but not advanced level. The quality of teaching of separate IT lessons in KS3 has improved and it is good in the Advanced Course in the sixth form. The school has been active in ensuring that suitable numbers of teachers are involved in training to gain confidence in using information technology but this has not focused sufficiently on the teaching of information communication technology. Attainment in religious education is also below expectations. What has been introduced at KS4 in response to the findings of the last inspection is inadequate for pupils to achieve the standards expected and there is little evidence of pupils' work. In the sixth form, the units of study provided within the general studies programme are well matched to the requirements of the agreed syllabus but there is insufficient time devoted to them to ensure that standards match expectations for students involved. At KS3, standards are similarly below expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils can discuss the main features and beliefs of the main world religions and have some opportunities to give personal responses. However, attainment is stronger in gaining knowledge and understanding rather than developing personal reflection, partly because the time allocated is inadequate to ensure the breadth of learning required.
17. There has been improvement in modern languages since the last inspection, although there was a decline in examination results in 2000. In Spanish, standards have risen from below average to being in line with expectations; in French, standards have been maintained overall; in German, they have improved but remain below average in KS3 partly because pupils have had limited time to study the language. Younger pupils are developing good accents in German and those in KS4 can write accurate and detailed descriptions as well as read complex passages with confidence. Of the few students taking German in the sixth form, standards are high. In French and Spanish, higher-attaining pupils show good understanding of past tense and sound knowledge of grammar. Expected standards are reached to match course requirements in the sixth form but students lack confidence in the languages as they have relatively few opportunities to work on oral skills.
18. There has been good improvement in music since the last inspection. Standards are now above expectations nationally in KS3. Although results in examinations are below

averages in KS4, they are in line with expectations in work seen. In the sixth form, standards are average. Good attention has continued to be given to composing skills and performing using traditional instruments, keyboards and increased computer resources. Younger pupils sing well and older pupils produce computer-generated compositions with confidence. Appraising skills are variable but pupils are supported effectively by good teaching. The accommodation for music has improved in recent years and the department continues to be led effectively. Average standards have been maintained in physical education, with some older pupils achieving higher standards in GCSE physical education introduced 1998. At KS3, pupils develop a good understanding of defensive and attacking line in ball games and higher-attaining pupils show good skills in passing the ball as well as changing direction of attack. In KS4 pupils can apply their skills in a variety of sports and competitive games. Those studying GCSE know the working of muscle groups in different sports.

19. Pupils use number skills required in some curriculum subjects. There is no numeracy policy implemented across the curriculum but there is one used jointly by the mathematics, science and design and technology departments. In science, pupils are confident in numeracy and use statistics effectively from simple tallying to sophisticated work in the sixth form. Pupils use mathematics well to support their work in design and technology, for example, in measuring and in interpreting data. Pupils display good spatial awareness in both art and physical education. They are competent with number in geography and use statistical data effectively. In Year 7, pupils interpret bar charts and pie charts in history, and scale is used in topographical maps in Year 10. Sixth-form students use spreadsheets effectively in ICT.
20. Standards of literacy in other subjects are generally sound. Pupils have satisfactory reading standards, though wider, independent reading and reading for research is limited by the school libraries' inadequate stocks and supervision. A recent Book Week successfully involved parents, teachers, pupils and professional writers in sharing the pleasures of reading. In all subjects pupils make notes using correct vocabulary for that subject and write in response to structured questions. However, drafting and developing more extended, independent writing is restricted to one or two subjects and this is a weakness. There is limited experience of writing for different purposes and audiences. A whole-school policy on developing literacy across the curriculum has been introduced and training has made teachers more aware of the issues in literacy but there are inconsistencies in teachers' expectations and approaches.
21. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. There is a strong link between good progress on the one hand and the impact of specialist teaching and the presence of support staff on the other hand. In English, pupils withdrawn for specialist teaching at KS3 write drafts for a book jacket blurb and they make good progress in selecting relevant information from the story and writing in an appropriate style. In mathematics, pupils withdrawn use their knowledge of the 12-hour clock to distinguish between a.m. and p.m. and they make good progress in their understanding of how to use the 24-hour clock. They make very good progress in using number skills to find hidden messages in codes. In science, pupils make satisfactory progress at KS3 in developing investigation skills. In history, pupils show knowledge and understanding of events leading up to the Gunpowder Plot, and they make good progress in interpreting facts to analyse trends. In French, pupils make good progress in using dialogue, and in German they make satisfactory progress in practising vocabulary. In art, pupils make good progress in their use of sketch-books to develop ideas for drawing and sculpture. In design technology, pupils use tools, including power tools, safely and with confidence and make satisfactory progress in developing practical skills. In physical education, pupils display very positive attitudes in terms of motivation and involvement. They make

at least good and some very good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of defensive and attacking tactics in rugby. At KS4, pupils following a Life Skills course explain the advantages and disadvantages of different forms of shopping. In English, pupils re-arrange groups of words correctly to form sentences and they make good progress in developing their understanding of different types of sentences. In mathematics, pupils know the terms 'multiples' and 'factors' and that the order of multiplication can be reversed. They identify equivalent fractions with the aid of diagrams and some pupils use division by common factors to simplify fractions. In science, pupils measure the time taken for a solid to dissolve at varying temperatures. The good results gained by pupils following the science plus course and the fact that a very high proportion of pupils gain GCSE pass grades in science shows good progress made. In German, pupils' accents are satisfactory and they remember numbers well. In French, they make good progress in using dialogue. In design technology, pupils achieve a satisfactory standard in isometric drawing. In history, they assess the reliability of evidence and make good progress in analysing the link between poverty and crime. There are limited opportunities to enable gifted and talented pupils to achieve the standards of which they are capable. These are confined to individual subjects as the school's organization rarely allows for early entry to examinations or closer links with primary schools for younger age pupils to join the school early.

22. The school exceeded its anticipated test results in mathematics, science and English in KS3 in 1999 but there was a drop in English and science results in 2000. At KS4, the school narrowly failed to meet the appropriate GCSE targets it set for itself for 1999. Although there was a decline in the results of some subjects in 2000, the average point score increased slightly but not in line with the increase nationally. Targets for the sixth form were more closely met and the average point score increased. Across each year, the school entered a higher percentage of pupils for GCSE examinations than schools nationally. The work seen during the inspection confirms the improvements being made.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

23. Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and to their learning. They express their eagerness to come to school and appreciation of the support offered to them. They can sustain concentration for long periods and take responsibility for personal study and their own progress.
24. The behaviour of pupils in and out of the classroom is good. This aspect was commented on favourably in the last report and it continues to be a strength of the school. The vast majority of the parents are satisfied that behaviour in the school is good and the inspection findings support this view. There has been only one instance of permanent exclusion in the last year.

25. Pupils make good progress in their personal development supported by the school's well-structured personal, social and health education programme. This enhances pupils' confidence in coping with everyday life. Relationships are good. There is mutual respect between pupils and staff. In addition, pupils support each other well: for example, Year 10 pupils support Year 7 pupils in their reading programmes and also assist pupils of a local primary school. They are keen to be involved in this activity. A student council operates in all years and the members of these councils discuss a wide range of issues.
26. The pupils' attendance record is very good and well above the national average. The percentage of unauthorised absences is well below the national average. Procedures for recording attendance are adhered to and fully satisfy legal requirements. There are good relationships with the education welfare service and very good co-operation to follow up the very small amount of unauthorised absence. Most pupils arrive at lessons on time in spite of the size of the site and the time needed to move from one area to the next.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

27. Teaching is generally satisfactory in Key Stages 3 and 4 and good in the sixth form. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection as a result of thorough developmental work, so that very little unsatisfactory teaching was seen. In addition, the proportion of good teaching is now higher. Seventeen per cent of the teaching seen was very good. Whilst the quality is satisfactory overall in the first two stages, much good and some excellent teaching was observed. However, the quality varies between and sometimes within departments.
28. The strengths in teaching are in mathematics, geography, history, music and art throughout the school; in English, science and design and technology in the sixth form; in drama in KS4 and the sixth form; and in physical education at KS3 and the sixth form. In some lessons in music, German, and personal health and social education, teaching was excellent.
29. This quality of teaching brings about sound and often good learning and strengthens pupils' positive attitudes. In turn, pupils' attitudes support their learning well and the quality of relationships inspires confidence. In very good teaching, the quality shows in the demanding pace of work which in mathematics, for example, maintains pupils' interest and effort and keeps expectations high. It shows in searching questions which probe pupils' understanding, for example, in geography, when Year 11 pupils were considering the causes and effects of acid rain. Well-judged comments focus thinking so that in Year 9 history, for example, pupils are enthusiastic to compare contemporary economic conditions with those of the industrial revolution. In the best lessons progress is vigorous but the lesson does not feel rushed; in science, for example, experiments are most often well managed to include demonstrations and opportunities for pupils to practise as well as ending with a review of what has been learned. Teachers' vocabulary is selected well to meet the needs of the range of attainers in lessons. They give very clear explanations using technical language so that in music, for example, pupils use technical language confidently. In the best lessons in modern languages, there is an emphasis on good pronunciation.
30. Good lessons are also characterized by an effective use of resources, especially using information and communications technology skills. Sixth formers in design and technology, for example, were encouraged to enhance the quality of their work by finding solutions to design challenges to meet the needs of a disabled sportsman. Similarly, at the end of very good lessons there are helpful reviews of what has been learned; for

example, in a very good business studies lesson, sixth-form students were skillfully encouraged to review what they had been learning about business strategy by exploring issues themselves and presenting outcomes of group work to the rest of the group. Similarly, in music, Key Stage 4 pupils were encouraged to reflect well on how their performance and listening skills had improved when using a repeated bass pattern as a starting point for composing.

31. More systematic attention to planning based closely on how much pupils know, understand or can do in previous lessons would make satisfactory teaching better. Although the school has developed sound approaches in assessing pupils, the information from assessment data is not yet sufficiently well used to meet the different needs of pupils. In other cases, good teaching does not have sufficient impact on learning because pupils are unsure as to how to make the necessary improvement.
32. The quality of day-to-day marking is good. In many lessons teachers mark work as it is produced. Sometimes it is recorded. Pupils' and students' work is marked regularly. In design and technology, marking is set against national grade levels whilst in art marking is focused but does not refer to levels. Marking procedures vary across departments, each with its own policy. There are some very good practices which are not fully shared with other departments.
33. In English, despite many strengths in teaching, there are weaknesses in ensuring that all pupils are suitably challenged, especially in mixed-ability groups. Consequently, in some lessons where other factors made teaching satisfactory, learning was limited as more able pupils were not motivated enough to work at a good pace and lower-attaining pupils struggled. In science, some weak planning which does not demand enough from the pupil leads to lessons which lack direction or insufficient intervention from the teacher. Similarly, otherwise good lessons in design and technology do not have sufficient impact on pupils' learning as objectives or what is expected of the pupils are not made clear enough. In information and communication technology lessons, teachers sometimes lack confidence in teaching the skills to others. In modern languages, good planning has limited impact on learning as pupils lack confidence in speaking in the language because the teacher has not previously used the language frequently enough. In a number of departments, insufficient use is made of the considerable amount of assessment data about pupils which the school has now developed. Departmental planning does not yet focus on the details of this data to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met fully over a period of time. The use of assessment in lessons to establish precisely what has been learned in order to refine learning targets for subsequent lessons is unsatisfactory.
34. The specialist teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. In the most effective teaching, lessons have clear objectives so that pupils know what they have to achieve. In one example pupils are given a very clear idea of the style of writing required for a book jacket blurb, enabling them to make good progress in writing in an appropriate style. In mathematics, the use of a variety of resources which give pupils many opportunities to participate enables pupils to learn effectively through their own efforts. Pupils following the Life Skills course at Key Stage 4 make good progress when discussing food consumption and diet because very effective pupil management ensures that individuals feel their contributions are valued which, in turn, encourages them to participate. Support staff are an essential requirement to encourage pupils with significant learning difficulties to participate in class discussion, for example, in work on the use of the 12- and 24-hour clock. In mathematics, a very clear explanation at a suitable pace, together with a thorough check on individual progress, enables pupils to make very good progress in the use of addition and subtraction to interpret a secret code. In French, the use of a variety of activities and a brisk pace maintains pupils'

interest and contributes to their good progress. In different subjects the pairing and grouping of pupils with special educational needs with higher attainers has a positive impact on progress made. In physical education, teaching is very effective in creating a positive learning environment with high expectations, which motivates pupils to participate fully. In design technology, the effectiveness of the teaching is enhanced by clear explanation and thorough assessment to ensure that work is completed correctly, using correct spelling and terminology. In history, good use is made of support staff to assist pupils researching sources to compile an account of life in ancient Rome. Support staff are well used in modern languages to assist, for example, with reading dialogue and pronunciation. Teaching is less effective when support staff are not present. In one example with no support the teacher is not able to devote sufficient time to a pupil with literacy difficulties. In the majority of lessons where they are present, support staff are well informed about lesson content and objectives, although their effectiveness is limited in a minority of lessons when this is not the case. Individual education plans are of limited use when subject-specific strategies have not been identified. In some lessons resources are not well matched to needs in terms of reading level.

35. Skills in literacy and numeracy are taught well in English and mathematics but these are not extended sufficiently to develop writing and number skills across all subjects where appropriate. A clear policy to encourage numeracy skills has been developed by design technology, science and mathematics departments but this has not been extended across the curriculum. In practice, there are strengths in mathematics, design and technology, physical education and some elements of music. Written skills are enhanced as part of learning in history and geography but are not extended fully in other subjects. Pupils' use of technical language is developed well in physical education and music. Key words are displayed in classrooms, for example, in design and technology, art and music. Pupils in design and technology are required to calculate the energy values of foods, at first without calculators. Teachers' clear explanations often provide a good model of language.
36. Inspectors agree with parents' positive comments about teaching. They did find some examples that illustrated concerns parents expressed about homework. In particular, the use of homework to develop research skills and extended writing is too limited. These areas are partly related to the unsatisfactory resources of the school's libraries and insufficient planning to incorporate library provision and supervision. Overall, however, inspectors judge the school's arrangements for homework to be effective.

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

37. The quality of the curriculum is good at all key stages but its range is unsatisfactory. This is because the statutory requirements to provide information and communication technology at Key Stages 3 and 4, and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are not met. In addition, in design and technology and science at Key Stage 3, curriculum time is below the minimum usually found, and in physical education throughout the school there is insufficient accommodation, which restricts coverage of the programme. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, the range of academic subjects offered is very good but there is minimal provision for vocational courses at Key Stage 4 and no provision in the sixth form. By contrast, work experience is well organised for pupils in Years 10 and 12.
38. Curriculum balance for individual students in the sixth form has improved this school year with the introduction of a range of GCE AS-level subjects in Year 12 leading to three

or four GCE A level subjects for examination in Year 13. Additional courses, for example the RSA Certificate in Business Language Competence and Computer Literacy and Information Technology, supplement GCE AS-level provision for a minority of students. Sociology, law and electronics are available in the sixth form and are taught by video-conferencing.

39. Improvement in curriculum provision since the last inspection has been good. There is an increased range of opportunities to assist pupils in their personal, social and moral development and, to a lesser extent, spiritual and cultural development, including multicultural development. Whilst the intention to expand vocational opportunities to provide for a sixth form without a restricted entrance has not taken place, the school, following recognition as having technology status, has embarked upon innovations to enable mathematics, science and design and technology departments to improve their methods of planning and teaching and to raise standards.
40. Pupils, regardless of ability, gender, social circumstances or ethnicity, are fully integrated into the life of the school. A recently introduced policy for gifted pupils is now used successfully to identify talented and able pupils. Satisfactory provision is made to develop their knowledge and skills. Good practice is not consistent across subject departments because of a lack of appropriate resources. Analysis of examination and test results has led to some single-sex teaching groups in art and modern foreign languages and to improved standards. Higher-attaining pupils commence a second language in Year 8 which restricts average and lower-attaining pupils from taking a second language at Key Stage 4. Parents have drawn attention to this curriculum restriction. However, very few of these pupils request this choice. In cases of unusual curriculum choice at Key Stage 4, the school takes decisions in the best interests of the pupils after discussion with parents.
41. Curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is good in Key Stages 3 and 4. It is satisfactory for students in the sixth form. At Key Stage 3 pupils follow a core curriculum, with a small number of pupils with specific learning difficulties being withdrawn from English and mathematics lessons for basic skills teaching by specialist teachers. This continues for some pupils into Key Stage 4. The support is effective in developing basic skills in numeracy and literacy. It enables some of these pupils to return to mainstream teaching where, with continued in-class support, they make good progress. At Key Stage 4, pupils with special educational needs follow the core subjects and link courses with the local college of further education. They also take part in work experience placement. The curriculum provides fully for their personal and social development and health education.
42. The school has, in addition, provided Key Stage 4 pupils with a number of additional opportunities to experience college courses and extra work experience. In the sixth form individual students receive good support to ensure that they have full access to courses. However, the sixth form curriculum does not offer students with special educational needs a wide range of opportunities.
43. The school's good relationships with other educational establishments, business, industry, commerce, the community and other institutions support the curriculum well. Curriculum liaison with the ten main contributory primary schools is very good. Regular meetings have ensured that recent national initiatives in numeracy and literacy in the primary schools have been successfully extended and continued into Key Stage 3. A well-attended summer school this year for Year 7 entrants with weak literacy and numeracy skills proved successful in raising the achievement of most. Curriculum transition in mathematics has been further strengthened by agreement to use nationally

developed bridging units. The development of the curriculum resulting from technology college status has further contributed to effective curricular liaison, for example, in design and technology and science. Support for pupils' learning is aided by the transference of information between the tiers of education. Links with the primary schools ensure a smooth transition for individual pupils to continue their academic, social and personal development. Those with further and higher education are satisfactory. Both areas contribute to numerous school activities including debates, advice and curriculum support.

44. The school's ethos of openness and co-operation has contributed to its extensive links with local business, industry and commerce including British Petroleum, Barclays Bank, and British Aerospace. The knowledge and skills which local businesses and corporations have are freely shared with, and used by, the school to enrich the curriculum through the provision of work experience placements, talks, visits and material support. Links with the wider community, including local radio, charity groups and the public service organizations, are numerous and are used effectively to enrich the curriculum. The school's links with parents are satisfactory. However, the participation of the majority of parents in the work of the school is minimal despite continuing efforts by the school to improve such involvement.
45. Careers education is a strong feature at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Pupils are given advice and support from an expert team of well-trained teachers and careers officers. They are prepared well for entering the next stage of education or work. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) is satisfactory overall with some strong features. It includes health education, sex education and information on drug abuse; it meets legal requirements. This provision is made for all years except Year 8, where information and communications technology is taught instead. The absence of PSHE for Year 8 is a weakness that is not sufficiently strengthened by teaching the topics in daily tutor time of 25-minute duration. In the sixth form and at Key Stage 4 there is very good provision through teachers who are trained in all aspects of personal, social and health education. At Key Stage 3 the programme is co-ordinated by Heads of Years 7, 8 and 9 and taught mainly by form tutors. The school has recognised the need for a more coherent, structured and continuous course from Year 7 and senior staff are presently developing a scheme based on the present well-conceived scheme of work.
46. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities with contributions from most teachers and subject departments. To benefit pupils who are transported to and from school, the governing body has financed later transportation on two evenings each week. On these days homework facilities are provided in addition to a wide range of sporting activities. A number of departments, including music, art, information and communications technology and design and technology, provide facilities for curriculum enrichment and consolidation at lunchtime. Further curriculum extension results from world and European awareness days and there are good links with schools in France, Germany and Spain. Opportunities to raise pupils' awareness of Japan and its people have been taken. The needs of the gifted pupils are met by specific clubs and through competitions including technological designs, for example Eurobus, buggies and 'egg' races. Cross-curricular provision in economic awareness, information and communications technology, personal and social education, health education and citizenship is appropriately addressed in the general studies course. There are effective strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy skills. A policy for literacy enhances the work pupils undertake in English. Most departments follow the policy effectively, though there are relatively limited opportunities for pupils' to write at length. The policy in numeracy is followed only by mathematics, science and design and technology and the

use of pupils' skills in numeracy is inconsistent in subjects. Consequently, for example, it is good in design and technology and weak in geography. The use of information and communications technology across the curriculum is unsatisfactory overall.

47. Overall, the provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory, even though a number of subjects contribute to raise pupils' spiritual awareness. In geography, for example, pupils were moved by visual presentation of the death of rain forests and pollution of lakes. They showed concern when reflecting deeply on the consequences. In art, much inspirational work is seen, particularly at Key Stage 3 when studying original African art. In physics, pupils showed wonder when observing the range of uses of ultrasonics to cure malignant disease. However, the contribution religious education and collective worship makes to spiritual development is unsatisfactory. This is because the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education are not met and, although the quality of the act of collective worship is good, this is not held daily for all pupils. Most subjects do not incorporate opportunities for pupils' spiritual development into their schemes of work. In consequence, pupils' spiritual development is largely through chance encounter of suitable experiences.
48. Provision to develop pupils' moral and social development is good. The school encourages good relationships and positive attitudes through its clear rules and support systems which value pupils as individuals. Findings of the inspection confirm parents' views that these are strengths of the school. In physical education, pupils are taught to play to the rules and accept decisions easily. In out-of-school activities pupils are developed through a range of extra-curricular clubs which support their social development. Within other subjects, pupils are expected to take responsibility for working co-operatively in pairs and small groups, dealing constructively when criticising or appraising the work of others. They are encouraged to consider moral issues in their writing and as inspiration for their work in art, music and dance.
49. Older pupils are organized to help younger pupils: for example, Year 8 pupils mentor new arrivals in Year 7. Residential visits and field trips further assist social development and the school's involvement in competitive sports, both within and outside of school, further supports their social and moral development. Drama lessons and school concerts and productions strengthen teamwork, and the positive influence older pupils have upon younger ones is good.
50. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. There is an appropriate emphasis on developing an awareness of cultural heritage and tradition. Pupils respond well to visits, for example, to a medical history museum, to places of interest which show the region's close affinity to the fishing, farming and commercial industries, and to external visitors who explain the work of charities and support agencies. Work experience placements in France and Spain extend cultural opportunities. In art, there is extensive coverage of cultural traditions of many artists. Opportunities to study other cultures are given, for instance the study of real African artefacts in art, even though they are not programmed coherently to enable pupils to appreciate the diversity of other cultures fully in all subjects.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

51. The school is a very caring community and provides a safe and pleasant environment for its pupils, staff and visitors. The school promotes and achieves a high standard of health and safety through risk assessments, building and grounds maintenance, safe systems of working and excellent medical and first-aid facilities.

52. The structure of the building and the grounds are very well maintained and cleaned. There is little evidence of graffiti or litter, reflecting very well on the attitudes of both the pupils and the staff. Equipment is well maintained, kept safe and in good order. Day-to-day practices enhance the safety and security of the site and its occupants. For example, great care and supervision takes place at the beginning and end of the school day when over 1000 pupils arrive and depart in more than 20 buses. This involves safe routes for the movement of pupils and vehicles.
53. The pastoral system is very effective, with regular meetings between heads of years and senior management members. Most heads of year move through the school with the same cohort of pupils from Year 8 to Year 11, helping them to build personal relationships that underpin the school's provision. The Head of Year 7, on the other hand, remains constant, enabling strong links to be fostered with the 32 primary schools whose pupils transfer to South Holderness. There is, similarly, a permanent Head of the Sixth Form to support students through their last years at the school.
54. Pupils' progress, both in academic work and in personal development, is closely monitored and recorded. The school is well served by its contributory primary schools in providing valuable information on individual pupils' personal, social and academic development. The school constructs a comprehensive baseline profile on each pupil. This profile is completed regularly up to the statutory school leaving age and beyond if the pupil remains at school to provide a detailed record of achievement over all aspects of the pupil's development. The content is owned by the pupil and forms a useful basis for the pupil's curriculum vitae.
55. Academic monitoring, in the form of interim assessments, commences in Year 7 with the administration of cognitive assessment tests. These are used to predict individual grades in standard attainment tasks at the end of Key Stage 3 and to set targets for achievement. A similar process is used to make predictions for GCSE examinations from assessment information available at the end of Key Stage 3. Regular monitoring is effective in identifying underachievement and pupils who have good academic potential. However, the school's use of data to make judgements about the progress of the school, boys and girls, groups of differing levels of attainment, and individual pupils, is under-developed. Except for targets for pupils with special educational needs which are good, targets for other pupils generally lack a clear focus, are not specific and usually lack a timescale. Overall, pupils are not sure how they might achieve the targets. In some departments, such as in design and technology, targets are set with and understood by pupils who are aware of the meaning of national curriculum grades and what is expected. In mathematics, the monitoring is thorough and targets for improvement are specific. In modern foreign languages, the targets set are usually undemanding. In physical education, targets based upon national curriculum level descriptions are used in each sport to heighten achievement. There is a lack of consistency across departments in understanding and using targets to improve levels of attainment.
56. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. In art, there is very good assessment practice set against agreed criteria used for self-assessment. In geography, assessment forms part of Key Stage 3 enquiry and in other subjects, including science and design and technology, assessment results arise from end-of-module testing. Procedures for assessing pupils, measuring their progress and identifying talented pupils are a strength of the physical education department. The careers department, at Key Stage 4, leads pupils to measure their own progress and assess their potential for further study or employment. Homework is used effectively in most subjects to assess pupils' attainment and progress.

57. The use of assessment information to guide curricular planning is satisfactory overall but there are some weaknesses. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from the good use of assessment information to improve planning and raise standards. In mathematics, effective lesson planning results from using regular classroom mental tests to check understanding and plan lesson objectives. Teachers in the geography department evaluate their teaching by assessing the pupils' acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills and by planning lessons appropriately. In science, the link between assessment and lesson objectives is not sufficiently clear. Most schemes of work indicate to only a limited extent how content is to be varied to match the level of attainment of an individual or groups of pupils. In modern foreign languages, the scheme does not show how content varies to meet pupils' different needs. Some, but not all, departments vary homework to match pupils' previous levels of attainment. Overall, there is a reliance on organising pupils into groups with similar prior attainment rather than recognising the individuality of each member of the group and the necessity of matching content to their attainment.
58. Since the last inspection the school has agreed a policy for assessment, recording and reporting. However, inconsistencies in its interpretation remain between departments and, to a lesser extent, within departments who remain largely autonomous in their interpretation of the policy. Strategies to ensure the diagnostic assessment of pupils with special educational needs are effective, including procedures that enable pupils' progress to be monitored closely from entry until they leave school. Close monitoring enables the performance of individuals, groups, year groups and key stages to be determined. At present, monitoring is more effective than the evaluation of the outcomes. Improvements in assessment procedures and processes since the last inspection have been satisfactory.
59. Identification procedures for pupils with special educational needs on entry are good, with full use being made of information from primary schools including test scores and placement on their registers of special educational needs. The head of special needs works closely with the Head of Year 7 to ensure that the school achieves an accurate overview of the range of special educational needs on entry. There is very good use of testing procedures by the school early in the autumn term, including spelling, reading and mathematics to inform placement on the school's register of special educational needs. The testing of the whole of Year 7 later in the autumn term is also used to inform register placement. Tests in mathematics and English and the associated movement in and out of withdrawal groups are useful indicators to inform the accuracy of register placement. Review procedures are very good, with individual education plan targets set by specialist staff in November of each year and reviewed in the following February. Pupils are involved appropriately in review procedures. Stage 5 reviews are thorough and meet statutory requirements. Procedures and practices for child protection issues are very good and they fully comply with the regulations. Records are fully documented and securely kept. The school's liaison with the outside agencies in this sensitive matter is very good.
60. The school has a good policy to ensure equality of opportunity. This is monitored annually by the senior management team. Relationships within the school and the local community are good. Pupils regardless of ability, gender, social circumstances and ethnicity are fully integrated into the life of the school.
61. Since the last inspection the school has continued to care for its pupils well, with good improvements made in some areas. Staff awareness of the issues involved has improved. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support. The policy for gifted pupils identified in the last inspection has been implemented. High-attaining pupils

are now identified in all subjects, and provision made for their further education and development. The progress of some pupils continues to be adversely affected by the lack of learning materials designed for their correct level of ability. A marked gender imbalance continues to be apparent in some sets. The school analyses examination results with regard to gender. As a result, some single-sex teaching groups have been formed in art and modern foreign languages, and the achievement of these pupils has risen. Since the last inspection, the number of females in positions of responsibility in the school has increased and these teachers provide good rôle models for girls.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

62. The school works effectively with parents: its partnership is strong. Parents value the work of the school. They are very satisfied with the amount and quality of the information provided by the school about the academic and personal progress of their children. The inspection findings support this view. New parents are encouraged to visit the school before commencement and the support for the annual parents' evening continues to be very good. The arrangements for parents to attend both the initial and subsequent annual meetings are well co-ordinated by the pastoral staff.
63. The school operates an open-door policy for any parents who have specific problems about any aspect of their children's education and these are dealt with promptly and effectively. Written information sent to parents, such as the prospectus, letters and annual reports, is of a high standard and fully meets statutory requirements. The quality of communication with parents is kept under review. For example, the annual reports to parents have recently been modified to make them more user-friendly and with particular emphasis on encouraging feedback from parents. Reports are well structured. The content reflects the individuality of each department within a broad structure of reporting. Pupils interviewed felt that the reports were understandable and helpful to themselves and their parents.

64. The school is at present reviewing the arrangements for parents' evenings in the light of some concerns expressed by parents. It intends to consult with all interested parties before making a decision. A small number of parents expressed the view that information provided for parents was not adequate. Inspectors do not support this view. A small minority of parents also felt dissatisfied with the range of activities provided by the school outside lessons but inspectors judge the range of extra-curricular activities to be satisfactory, especially considering the distance many pupils live from the school.
65. Links with parents of pupils with special educational needs are very good. Parents of new pupils are invited to an evening early in the autumn term and there is a very good level of attendance. Parents are kept fully informed of pupils' placement on the register of special educational needs and of any subsequent changes. The pupil planner keeps parents up-to-date with information about targets in individual education plans. Special needs staff are available for consultation at parents' evenings and there is specific advice given at the time of subject option choice.
66. Homework planners are used extensively and effectively. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in supporting their children and are active participants in the annual assessment review.
67. The school supports the parents in a variety of ways and encourages the Parents' and Friends' Association. However, constraints on attendance at school functions for many parents caused by distance between home and school reduce the number of parents involved at school on a regular basis.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

68. Very good leadership by the headteacher and good management by deputies and other key staff have established the school's strong sense of community. There is a clear vision and direction set by the head and senior staff, supported effectively by governors. At the heart of this is a concern to raise standards whilst maintaining a caring and supportive atmosphere in which individuals are valued. To this end, the well-established headteacher and deputies have developed strong management systems and structures which are implemented by middle managers in departments and year teams effectively in the main.
69. Since the last inspection there has been a close focus on improving the quality of teaching, with significant success. In other aspects of the school's work, some challenges have not been addressed fully and their impact on learning has not yet been realised. The work in developing assessment policies and practice has progressed well but the use of the substantial data which the school now has available to review its success overall and refine lesson planning of individual teachers remains unsatisfactory. Similarly, the school has gained Technology College status but the use of information communications technology has not yet been effectively co-ordinated or planned across the curriculum. Pupils do not use ICT sufficiently or regularly. As result, the pace of improvement has been slow in these areas.
70. In most subjects there is good leadership and management. There are, however, some weaknesses in monitoring teaching in some departments which have a large number of teachers; the evaluation and use of assessment data are limited in most departments; subject departments are not collectively encouraging the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Similarly, most subjects do not provide for information and communications technology development as required. This is partly because the

information technology department is currently focused too closely on the provision of discrete information technology to the detriment of planning to enhance the use of information technology across all departments. In general, subject teachers monitor the work of their departments and know what is happening in their subject. The school benefits from the high commitment of its staff and many teachers have taught in the school for some time. Heads of Year play important management roles. They enhance the quality of provision overall by monitoring pupils' personal development as well as maintaining profiles of academic achievements. Their role in evaluating the achievements of individual pupils to ensure that they make appropriate progress is, however, largely reactive.

71. A deputy head is currently the acting special educational needs co-ordinator, overseeing the work of the acting head of special needs and her team. The link between senior management and the acting head of special needs is good. These arrangements work well in terms of administration but the effect on the school's provision is that there is one less specialist teacher since the resignation of the previous co-ordinator. This reduction in staffing limits the degree to which specialist staff can be attached to faculties and attend meetings. A system of faculty link teachers to meet termly with the acting head of special needs has been recently introduced. A new permanent appointment of a special educational needs co-ordinator is planned. The dissemination of information to staff is very good, including the use of faculty heads to hold information and the production of profiles on statemented pupils issued to all staff. The special needs staff have achieved a high standard in the clarity of records kept on individual pupils. Targets in individual education plans are clear and specific and there are regular reviews of progress. Staff are mainly well qualified. Links with outside agencies are very good and the school is proactive in its use of support services including the purchase of additional support. There has been good progress since the last inspection in the key issue of assessment and provision in special educational needs.
72. The governing body is well informed about the school's work. Governors carry out their responsibilities with understanding, commitment and clear appreciation of the school's strengths and future challenges. This is reflected in the minutes of governors' meetings. The governing body is managed and supported through an effective committee structure: all work closely with the headteacher and other key staff. Governors bring a range of expertise which they contribute well to decision-making, contribute effective constructive criticism through formal meetings as well as separate evaluation and review days where necessary. The whole-school approach to special educational needs is supported by a designated member of the governing body. The school has adopted a staged approach to special educational needs which takes full account of the Code of Practice. The governors' annual report to parents contains sufficient information on the implementation of the school's policy. As a result, governors have effective oversight of special needs provision. In most respects the governing body fulfills its statutory obligations, but is not fully meeting them in relation to collective worship and the curriculum for ICT and religious education. The governors are aware of these issues and are involved in progressing them.
73. Since the last inspection the school has been able to improve its work because strengths and weaknesses have been clearly diagnosed. Moreover, the process of identification has involved all staff, leading to clear planning and priorities which are shared by all. There have been positive effects on most areas of work. The school has been successful and entrepreneurial in making improvements in the building and site, where possible, with limited internal finances. There is considerable strength in the way priorities have been phased and the school two-year planning programme has helped to ensure that most issues are dealt with at a suitable pace. However, the rate of progress

in improving information and communications technology across the curriculum has been too slow. The school is aware that this is a priority for the future. Similarly, there has been an over-reliance on the use of assessment data at departmental level without monitoring such use. As a result, monitoring of teaching and planning is focused insufficiently on learning.

74. The school uses money for the benefit of its pupils well. Financial planning and control by the bursar and temporary bursar are geared to achieving the best value. Imaginative solutions have been found in developing the year areas of the building and in refurbishing other parts of the school. Funding reserves have enabled the school to bid successfully to gain technology college status. The governing body has overseen financial planning very well. There are good systems for consulting with staff, governors and parents - for example through parents' questionnaires and with pupils, through the school council.
75. Staff are suitably experienced and qualified. Teaching is by specialists apart from in information and communications technology and in religious education. In these areas there are some limiting effects on the curriculum. Staff training is managed effectively to ensure that areas of work being developed are well supported. There is a very good and effective induction programme for teachers new to school.
76. Although the school has shown initiative in developing some areas of the accommodation, weaknesses remain. Numbers in the school are growing but the building programme is not meeting current or projected needs. In particular, facilities for the sixth form are too cramped and inadequate for the number of students involved. Imminent building developments are likely to address current needs but not projected numbers for the foreseeable future. Science laboratories are suitably equipped but some are too small for current class sizes. Accommodation for physical education is unsatisfactory. Changing facilities are insufficient for the large numbers participating; they are also unhygienic and in need of repair. There is insufficient specialist accommodation to accommodate pupils successfully in order to meet national curriculum requirements for physical education. The department compensates by modifying group size and rotating groups. These remedial measures are unsatisfactory as they inhibit the depth of programme.
77. Learning resources are generally adequate for the curriculum. Although there is adequate computer provision, it is not used fully and departments do not direct pupils to use them outside lessons sufficiently, and individual pupils do not show habits in utilising the resource as an aid to learning. The school's central library facilities are poorly resourced and insufficiently well organized. They have limited staffing and are under-used by pupils to enhance subject learning or for personal study.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

78. The following issues are in order of their importance for raising standards in the school. They should be included in the governors' post-inspection action plan.

- (1) Raise teachers' expectations where necessary by:
 - sharing good practice of teaching and pupil learning
 - developing teacher's skills in planning lessons based on known information about what pupils have previously learned
 - refining lesson plans so that they more fully meet the needs of pupils of different levels of prior attainment(paragraphs 27, 29, 75, 88, 105, 114, 135, 141, 148, 154, 162, 188)
- (2) Use evaluation and assessment information more fully by:
 - developing staff expertise in interpreting performance data
 - tracking pupils' progress to plan and set sharper future targets
 - incorporating the data when monitoring the quality of teaching and learning(paragraphs 31, 33, 55, 57, 58, 69, 70, 89, 107, 114, 128)
- (3) Improve provision and raise standards in information and communications technology (ICT) by:
 - ensuring that provision meets requirements in all year groups
 - establishing efficient management of the ICT curriculum and facilities
 - implementing a scheme of work which incorporates the planning and assessment of pupils' learning in all subjects
 - ensuring computer equipment is readily available for subject departments
 - providing further training opportunities for all staff to ensure that they are confident in using ICT in their subject(paragraphs 37, 46, 70, 72, 75, 83, 85, 143, 145, 146, 149, 190)
- (4) Meet fully the requirements for religious education by:
 - making sufficient time available to meet requirements for the teaching of the locally agreed syllabus
 - ensuring the work for Key Stage 4 builds suitably on provision in Key Stage 3
 - providing a training programme for non-specialist teachers(paragraphs 37, 76, 180, 182, 184, 187)
- (5) Improve accommodation and its use by:
 - improving the changing facilities for physical education and extending provision for the sixth form and for laboratory work in science
 - increasing the quantity and quality of library resources to match the needs of the school as a whole
 - training staff in the use of central library resources
 - encouraging pupils to utilise library resources to improve their research skills and enquiry approaches in all subjects(paragraphs 76, 84, 115, 178)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	236
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	60

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	14	39	42	2	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 – Y13	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1875	218
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	149	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y13	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	37	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	126	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	8

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	41
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	46

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	92.8	School data	6.2
National comparative data	91.0	National comparative data	7.9

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000 (1999)	169 (155)	157 (171)	326 (326)

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	93 (98)	123 (107)	105 (93)
	Girls	121 (151)	116 (126)	84 (112)
	Total	214 (249)	239 (233)	189 (205)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	65.6 (76.4)	73.3 (71.5)	57.9 (63.0)
	National	63 (78)	65 (72)	59 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	20.0 (36.5)	47.0 (47.2)	23.0 (24.2)
	National	35 (37)	40 (47)	29 (24)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	94 (86)	112 (106)	146 (105)
	Girls	117 (132)	116 (132)	138 (119)
	Total	211 (218)	228 (238)	284 (224)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	64.7 (67.0)	69.9 (73.0)	87.1 (68.7)
	National	63 (67)	66 (75)	60 (70)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	28.0 (34.7)	41.7 (45.0)	36.2 (39.0)
	National	31 (35)	39 (46)	29 (39)

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	140	169	309

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	57	129	146
	Girls	93	158	170
	Total	150	287	316
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	49(49)	93(94)	93(97)
	National	49(47.9)	88.8(88.5)	94.4(94)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	37.6(37.0)
	National	38.7(38.0)

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	5	20%
	National		11

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	45	39	84

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	15.3	19.0	17.0(15.4)	N/a	N/a	N/a
National	17.7	18.1	18.5(18.2)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	N/a	N/a
	National		72.9

N/a = details not available.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	2
Indian	0
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	3
White	1836
Any other minority ethnic group	3

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	51	0
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)	105.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	16.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	505

Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.0
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Average teaching group size: Y7– Y13

Key Stage 3	22.9
Key Stage 4	23.7

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	4,527,483
Total expenditure	4,435,302
Expenditure per pupil	2,403.86
Balance brought forward from previous year	6,193
Balance carried forward to next year	93,900

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1875
Number of questionnaires returned	436

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	48	6	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	44	48	2	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	58	4	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	64	9	2	1
The teaching is good.	32	56	1	0	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	46	16	3	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	44	5	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	36	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	22	51	16	2	8
The school is well led and managed.	38	49	2	1	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	54	5	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	47	8	1	12

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

ENGLISH

79. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 have risen since the last inspection, but there has been some annual variation. There was a significant improvement in 1999 when standards were well above the national average and results in English were similar to mathematics and better than science. However, this was not matched in 2000 when English results fell in line with schools nationally as well as those of schools with similar backgrounds, and the percentage of pupils achieving the higher levels fell below the national figure. Assessment by the teachers closely matches the test results. GCSE results in English Language in 2000 were above the average for similar schools. In addition, all pupils were entered for GCSE English Literature where results in 2000 were in line with the national average. Girls outperformed boys in both examinations to the same extent as that found nationally. Although there has been some variation in GCSE results in both subjects over the last five years, the trend is upwards and this shows a significant improvement since the last inspection. Although A-level results were below average in 2000 and few students achieved the highest grades, this indicates an improvement in attainment at A-level since the last inspection.
80. Currently, the overall standard of work by pupils is satisfactory to the end of Year 11 but below average in the sixth form. Attainment by the majority pupils aged 14 accords with national expectations. Pupils speak with ease when answering direct questions but few show the confidence to give longer presentations to the class. Reading standards vary widely. Carefully chosen and studied class reading books are having a positive impact on standards. In general, pupils do not read widely for pleasure or for information and the library does not support independent reading adequately. Most pupils write satisfactorily in a variety of styles depending on the task, and the basic skills of spelling, punctuation and grammar are given particular attention in the lower school. Pupils in a Year 9 class used the special terms of literature criticism in their analysis of the poem, 'Telephone Conversation', and many identified the narrator's tone of sarcasm. For the average and below-average attainers, there is much reliance on answering direct questions set by the teacher which limits the opportunities for a more independent response. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress when withdrawn for individual help. A sensitive approach by the teacher and a good knowledge of the pupils helps their integration on return to class. Higher-attaining pupils show concentration and perseverance in their writing, though there are too few instances of planning, drafting and redrafting to produce polished finished work.
81. By the age of 16, the attainment of most pupils is satisfactory, though the gap widens between the higher and lower attainers. Pupils become fluent speakers. They display a spontaneous, confident manner in informal situations. They readily volunteer to answer questions in class and the strong emphasis on working in pairs and groups creates good opportunities for learning through oral activities. However, there is still a lack of confidence in more formal speaking or in developing ideas in discussion or debate. Pupils are involved in reading novels and plays for GCSE and, with constructive and detailed guidance from the teacher, are successful in finding information to support their statements. A Year 10 class studying 'Much Ado About Nothing' was inspired to look deeply into Shakespeare's text by watching extracts from the recent film. The Internet is used at home for extra research. There are some notable achievements amongst the lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, all of whom follow a full language and literature course. Accurate writing continues to present a problem for some pupils and few take the time to re-work assignments. There is a reliance on the teacher to

help structure and correct work. Amongst the higher attainers, there are examples of well-crafted, extended pieces of writing, particularly in response to GCSE texts, media and language assignments. Some work is excellently presented, thoroughly checked and word-processed, but usually this depends on pupils' access to computers at home.

82. At AS and A-level, standards of work overall are below average. However, there are students working at a high level who rise to the challenges presented to them. Year 13 Language assignments on topics as diverse as *The persuasive language of junk mail* and *Churchyard Humour* show coherent organisation, good research and incisive and imaginative commentary. A student's study on *The Seychelles* was immaculately word-processed. It included personal writing, a web site, an encyclopedia entry, a specific study of the local Seychelles dialect and a full bibliography. Many of the growing numbers of students taking English or English Literature in the sixth form are too passive in class and too reliant on the teacher for guidance. With average or lower attainment at GCSE, some students experience literacy difficulties and struggle with the extended writing requirements; this is reflected in their A-level results.
83. Co-ordination of literacy in the school is good but not yet fully effective. The policy is well monitored and evaluated. There has been some useful staff training. Many teachers have begun to include the specific teaching of reading and writing in their lesson plans. Subject-specific vocabulary is now promoted effectively in a range of subjects, and this improves learning, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Initiatives, which are already effectively raising standards, include "Literacy catch up". Pupils who are just below the standard of reading and writing expected are encouraged on arrival at the school in Year 7 to attend a well-organised Summer School to improve their literacy skills. The progress of these pupils is carefully monitored and supported as they develop through the school.
84. All pupils read the books and learning materials they are presented with in lessons with at least a basic level of understanding. Many pupils do not support their subject learning by reading more widely than this, choosing instead to read simple age-appropriate fiction and magazines which reflect their leisure interests. In the sixth form, students read more widely. Students studying English language for A-level were reading a wide range of fiction and non-fiction including "Emma", "Stalingrad" and "The Birthday Party" for interest and pleasure during the week of the inspection. Useful but limited whole-school initiatives such as "Book Week" are beginning to raise pupils' awareness of books but the lack of good library facilities limits the progress that can be made and does not support either research skills or wider reading.
85. Pupils' writing throughout the school contains major errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar. This is partly because pupils do not adhere to the school redrafting or spelling policies sufficiently to improve standards. Lack of independent writing skills is a significant weakness at both key stages and in the sixth form. Few examples of extended writing were seen. The standard of handwriting and presentation skills varies widely. Pupils do not use computers enough to present their work to a high professional standard, nor to re-draft their work until it is substantially correct.
86. From an average standard of English when they first come to the school aged 11, pupils make satisfactory progress. A Summer School aimed at pupils coming from Year 6 with weak basic skills was successful in offering support and created a good link between primary and secondary schools. Plans have already been made to extend this next year. A Year 7 Reading Journal is a good new initiative to encourage wider reading. Pupils observed reading the novel 'The Silver Sword' acquired skills in interpreting the story and relating incidents to their own experiences. Moving through Years 8 and 9, pupils read more demanding texts with growing critical awareness. The study of good literature helps

pupils focus on effective language use. Pupils make less progress when grammar and punctuation are taught as repetitious, isolated exercises, an approach which is frequently dull and does not stimulate their interest. The majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 make sound progress and this is supported by teachers' detailed, constructive marking of the work. For a minority, basic errors persist in spelling, punctuation and particularly in the development of ideas in longer essay writing. Progress throughout the one-year AS and two-year A-level courses is often slow but is supported by good specialist knowledge of the teachers.

87. Pupils' attitudes are good. They behave well in lessons, are polite, courteous and willing to do what is asked. They show a high level of tolerance and respect for each other's differences. Relationships are good. They appreciate and respond well to the care taken by the teachers over the marking of their work and, at GCSE and A Level, the setting of targets for improvement. They like knowing their levels of attainment, but their plans on how to improve are too vague. As a result, opportunities are missed by pupils to develop their work independently.
88. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. More than a third of lessons seen were never less than good and a small number were very good. Excellent work is actively celebrated with merits, certificates, prizes and very attractive displays on the classroom walls. This motivates pupils to take a pride in their work and respect the effort of others. The best teaching is characterised by enthusiasm for the subject, very good preparation of materials, especially at sixth form level, and friendly, supportive relationships. Lessons start promptly and instructions are clear, with a variety of short tasks planned to keep interest alive. Despite these strengths, there were several common weaknesses in satisfactory teaching. Pupils are often taught, even in mixed ability classes, as if they all work and learn at the same pace. This creates a lack of challenge for the higher attainers whilst leaving some lower attainers struggling. Teachers frequently do too much for the pupils, which prevents them developing independence. The quality and use of day-to-day assessment is often weak in the lower school. Although tasks are usually written on the board, the learning objectives of the lesson are often not clear in teachers' planning and rarely explained to the pupils. Consequently, pupils are not always certain what they have learned and teachers have no explicit criteria to judge the success of their lesson planning.
89. Good general subject guidelines ensure pupils encounter a full range of experiences as they move through the school. A recent critical review of resources has enabled out-of-date materials to be discarded and up-to-date lists compiled. New materials have been purchased to promote reading. Teachers make many of their own good resources. Communication in this large team of teachers is assisted by the weekly departmental bulletin. However, a drafting policy, clearly described in the Handbook, is not consistently applied. There is little evidence of the use of information technology either as a source of reference in lessons or for independent writing. Practice in assessment varies. In spite of a substantial amount of assessment data being collected and collated, it still fails to be used fully to support the teaching and learning of all pupils. Challenge and expectation of high standards of work are limited by teaching which fails to create enough opportunities for pupils to use their initiative.
90. The department has sound leadership and management in which many responsibilities are shared. Strengths noted in the last inspection report have been maintained and good progress made. The last inspection raised the need to develop shared systems to make approaches to teaching more consistent. This has been addressed as there are now sound accepted systems in the delivery of the subject and teaching has improved. There is a strong ethos of commitment and care and working for success in the department.

This makes a good contribution to the raised standards pupils achieve and the progress they make.

DRAMA

91. GCSE results in drama in 2000 were very good and well above average. All 38 pupils entered achieved a grade A*-C. They were similarly high in 1999 when all pupils achieved grades A*-B. These high results have been a stable feature since the last inspection. Sixth form students taking A-level Theatre Studies gained grades A or B in 2000, but the numbers were too small to make any valid comparison with national figures.
92. Pupils aged 14 achieve good standards in lessons. They build on drama skills learned in Year 8 when drama is introduced into the timetable and reinforce these skills as they move through Year 9. They are able to work in groups and perform short improvised or scripted scenes. Many have a good understanding of basic techniques in drama such as 'hotseating', frozen pictures, sound effects and mime.
93. By the age of 16, standards are very good. Pupils' written work on theatrical topics and evaluation of their own performances show a wide range of individuality. Girls are predominantly attracted to this option, many of whom are high attainers. Their writing shows intellectual rigour as well as very good research skills. Some of the lower attainers experience difficulties with basic literacy skills and writing in sufficient depth. Practical drama is a strength of the subject in the school. Pupils in Year 10 studying Shakespeare's play 'The Tempest' had already learned lines from Scene 1 in time for their second lesson and arrived at the class with an array of props and ideas for an ingenious use of the space in the drama studio. The task of producing two versions of the scene, one in a traditional mode and the other in a contemporary style, offered an excellent challenge and captured pupils' imagination. Pupils are keen to try new approaches for themselves and, as a result of good teaching, have the confidence to be experimental.
94. In the sixth form, standards are sound. A small, but very conscientious, group worked well together in planning a performance based on the Suffragettes. Keen to avoid stereotyping, they showed sensitivity to the characters they were acting and spent considerable time discussing the individual relationships and feelings of each character to the action of the play.
95. Pupils' attitudes to drama are very good. Drama is a popular subject and pupils take their work seriously. Many spend their spare time at break and lunchtime in the drama studio planning or refining their group work. In this they receive full encouragement from the drama teachers who are always on hand to help. Experiences gained from their many visits to the theatre are used in their work in school. The sixth form pantomime is organised entirely by the students and includes one afternoon performance for primary schools as well as two evening performances for parents and friends. Another annual school production, this year an ambitious 'Twelfth Night Rock', adapted by the acting head of drama from Shakespeare, involves pupils from Year 7 to Year 13 in acting, singing and dancing.
96. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 8 and 9 and good in GCSE and A-level lessons. The head of faculty and acting head of drama provide good staff training to less experienced teachers, monitoring lessons and sharing good practice. With recent changes in the teaching staff, this offers very good support which could be beneficially developed. In the best lessons, tasks and learning objectives are made clear at the start and teachers keep a constant check on pupils' understanding and the skills they are acquiring. Expectations of work and behaviour are very high. Accommodation is adequate

with a good drama studio, lighting rigs and sound equipment, but increasing numbers at GCSE means that rooms are sometimes overcrowded in practical work.

97. Strengths identified in the last inspection are being maintained. Although staff changes have resulted in new leadership, talent, commitment and clear direction are still in evidence. The acting head of drama leads by example and does so with enthusiasm. As a result, the department is continuing to make a very positive impact in the school.

MATHEMATICS

98. Standards in mathematics in Years 7 to 11 are good. Pupils' performance in the 2000 tests at the end of Year 9 was well above the national average. Boys' performance overall was slightly below that of girls, although more boys attained the highest level. Over the last three years there has been a steady upward trend in performance. Pupils' performance is well above that of similar schools and more than half the pupils' results showed an increase of at least two levels since joining the school.
99. In 1999, GCSE results were above the national average. More girls than boys attained grades A*-C, but more boys attained the highest grade. Results for A*-C in 2000 were poorer than 1999, but better than the predictions based upon previous test results. Over the last three years the average points scores show a broadly improving trend. In comparison to other subjects, pupils did well in mathematics. Compared with other subjects, boys did best and girls did second best in mathematics across the school.
100. Standards in A-level mathematics are less good. In 1999, both the proportion attaining grades A and B, and the average points, were well below the national average. In 2000, there was a great improvement in the number of pupils attaining the highest grade but results overall show a slight fall in the average points from the previous year. There is no obvious trend since the percentage of passes has oscillated over the last five years.
101. During the inspection, the standard of work seen in pupils' books and in lessons in Years 7-9 and Years 10-11 was generally average and some of it was high. For example, pupils in Year 7 can express the rule for a sequence algebraically and pupils in Year 9 can apply Pythagoras' theorem to find the length of a side of a right-angled triangle. In Year 11, pupils re-arrange complex formulae to express them in terms of a different variable. Standards are below national expectations in the lower sets. For example, pupils in Year 8 needed cubes to help them understand how to calculate the volume of a cuboid, and some pupils in Year 10 were unable to use common factors to find equivalent fractions and could only do this with the aid of diagrams.
102. High standards were observed in the sixth form. Students in their first term of the new AS course can use differentiation to find the gradient function of a curve and are learning how to use this to identify stationary and turning points prior to sketching the curve.
103. To raise standards, teachers should help pupils in Key Stage 3 to improve their listening skills that are sometimes under-developed, and also improve the skills of basic calculation and understanding of number in the lower sets in Key Stage 4 which are below expectations. In the sixth form, students do not always use calculators correctly and with confidence.
104. Since the previous inspection there have been some notable improvements. Assessment is now widely used to ensure that pupils reach their potential. A wide range of appropriate teaching strategies is evident. Very good use is made of suitable textbooks, computers and other resources. Good practice in teaching is shared around the department. All of

these have contributed to the rise in standards in Key Stages 3 and 4. Less improvement has been made in overall standards in the sixth form. However, there are an increased number of pupils doing A-level mathematics compared to five years ago, encompassing a broader range of ability. This fact may contribute to the lower than average point scores. In addition, nearly one-third of the students achieved the highest grade in 2000, which is good.

105. Overall, the teaching of mathematics is good. In approximately half or more lessons observed in Key Stages 3 and 4 the teaching was good or better and it was very good in the sixth form. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Teachers maintain a brisk pace throughout the lesson, setting appropriately challenging tasks and using good resources - for example, giving a time allocation for completing tasks and using the computer software Omnigraph to solve simultaneous equations. A variety of teaching methods is used effectively, including practical work, investigations and some very good interactive, whole-class teaching. The department uses good strategies to improve pupils' numeracy skills, especially in Key Stage 3. While pupils are engaged in individual work, teachers monitor their progress, stopping the class to explain significant points and insisting on full concentration on their work. This maximises pupils' learning. Many teachers share with pupils their aim or target for the lesson and summarise the achievements at the end. In a small minority of lessons, teachers do not insist on pupils being silent when they, or other pupils, are speaking, which makes the learning less effective.
106. Pupils are making good progress in their learning. In almost half the lessons in Key Stage 3, progress was good or very good while in Key Stage 4 it was average with some very good features. All students are making good, and some very good, progress in the sixth form. For example, pupils' levels of performance show a good increase from entry into the school to the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils' recent results in GCSE are better than those predicted for them at the end of Key Stage 3. In lessons, pupils make good progress when the exercise set from a textbook or worksheet is well matched to their previous attainment. Appropriately challenging work coupled with pupils' excellent attitudes greatly contribute to successful learning. The department has an excellent scheme of work, which is both detailed and helpful, for all classes. This is supported by good texts and other resources. Collectively these make a significant contribution to the steady rise in pupils' standards.

107. The head of department is an effective manager who leads a committed team of teachers, each taking some responsibility for the smooth running of the department. He sets a very good example both in his own teaching and also in the way he is managing change. A great deal has been accomplished in a very short time. For example, National Curriculum 2000 has necessitated the revision of the scheme of work. The new Framework for Mathematics in Year 7, AS courses in the sixth form and the provision of information and communications technology aspects within the mathematics curriculum have required the purchase of additional resources. Task and assessment sheets have had to be rewritten. Teachers' professional development is enhanced by its link to curriculum change and is supported by classroom monitoring and subsequent feedback. Two particularly important aspects help to raise standards. These are the careful monitoring of pupils' academic progress and the use of the detailed analysis of examination and test results to identify areas of concern.

SCIENCE

108. In the end of Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 1999 two-thirds of pupils achieved levels in line with the national average, with a quarter beyond that level. This was above averages both for schools with pupils of similar backgrounds and for all schools nationally. Girls' performance was ahead of that of the boys. Attainment in science is below that in English and mathematics within the school. In 2000 the percentage of those reaching the national average fell slightly, being just in line with the averages nationally and for similar schools. Over the last three years there has been a decline in attainment which mirrors the national trend.
109. At GCSE, the percentage gaining A*-C grades improved in 2000 from 1999 with attainment in line with the national average. Since the last inspection the percentage achieving the national average has fallen. Nationally one-tenth of candidates gained A*-A grades in 1999. The school was well below that figure but the boys gained a third more of these high grades than the girls. In relation to the levels achieved by the same pupils at the end of Year 9, this cohort has made satisfactory progress.
110. Biology, chemistry, physics and psychology are offered at A level. In 1999 the results showed attainment to be below national averages (there are no national comparisons for psychology). In 2000 attainment had improved significantly in chemistry and physics but worsened in psychology. The proportion of candidates achieving A-B grades in each subject is below the national averages but is improving in chemistry, physics and psychology.
111. Current standards of attainment are in line with national expectations at all key stages. Written work in each year group shows extensive and thorough coverage of the curriculum. The large majority of pupils can make appropriate notes and diagrams as well as record and describe their experimental work well. Higher-attaining pupils and many of those studying A levels use study and research skills effectively in producing individual pieces of work rather than simply copying from given sources. At Key Stages 3 and 4, improvements in learning and understanding are limited by some over-use of detailed note-copying, particularly amongst middle and lower attainers. At these key stages there is no clear indication of any significant differences in attainment between the physical, material or life sciences.
112. Skills in investigative science have improved since the last inspection, although there is no clear procedure for assessment of this at Key Stage 3. The introduction of material from the Cognitive Acceleration through Science Education scheme is helping to promote

laboratory skills. At Key Stage 4, for example, there are high levels of attainment in this aspect, including very good use of scientific knowledge to plan a study on enzymes and analyse and explain outcomes. However, pupils' evaluation of outcomes and of investigations remains a relative weakness. Practical skills at A level are in line with expectations but there are examples of higher attainment too. A biology class working on electrophoresis of DNA fragments showed good, accurate techniques. This was linked with a high level of detailed written work, involving literature research, on the structures of DNA and RNA. High attainment was also evident in aspects of work in both Key Stages 3 and 4. In Year 7 a thorough study on energy resources looked at supply and demand and the environmental issues arising. Year 8 pupils, including a low-attaining set, tackled some high-level concepts in atomic structure and its relation to the Periodic Table. In Years 9 and 11 much of the work shows that satisfactory progress in developing understanding of scientific concepts is being made through both key stages. This results from consolidating key concepts through the effective review of earlier work before extending study through new work. Although attainment is broadly in line with expectations at Key Stages 3 and 4 there is a wide range in levels achieved. Very high standards of work were seen in Year 9 in an extensive study on photosynthesis which related the microscopic structures of a plant to the mechanisms in the process and in Year 11 where pupils showed very high levels of understanding in explaining and calculating energy changes in chemical reactions.

113. Attitudes to learning are mostly good. Behaviour is good. Pupils very largely stick to the tasks set and maintain at least satisfactory and sometimes good levels of concentration. Interest and enthusiasm are more evident at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form than at Key Stage 4. The nature of the lesson determines the degree of interest. In a significant number of lessons pupils are too passive and not actively engaged. They often show little initiative or inquisitiveness. Levels of effort and productivity and the quality of learning rise when teachers lead with enthusiasm and interest to challenge their class. A Year 11 class gained a much clearer insight into the mechanism of a nervous impulse by having the theory imaginatively related to the practical experience of the whole class forming a chain to represent a reflex arc. A similarly imaginative approach enlivened a lower set in Year 8 in a lesson on sampling populations where seeds in a bag represented fish in a lake. Pupils were thus led to the application of a formula to estimate a population. The cycle of teaching, assessing, through homework or classwork, and then reviewing areas pupils have found difficult is not sufficiently used. Where it is adopted, there is clear progress in learning. By the end of such a process, the pupils in a Year 9 class were able to tackle confidently a range of problems on pyramids of number and biomass. A lack of confidence in responding to direct questions, evident in some Year 12 students in a lesson on enzymes, was successfully overcome by allowing small groups to pool their knowledge and understanding and then present it to the class. Learning is restricted by insufficient integrated use of information technology. Pupils with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 and good progress at Key Stage 4. Almost all gained a pass grade or better at GCSE or in the Certificate of Achievement linked to the Science Plus course.
114. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. One-quarter of the teaching is good or better. Two unsatisfactory lessons were observed, both at Key Stage 4. The teaching in the sixth form is good, an improvement since the last inspection. The broad planning of the curriculum is good but the schemes of work are not readily adaptable to preparing specific lesson plans. Lesson plans do not always include precise learning objectives nor means of assessment that will ascertain whether or not the pupils have gained their learning. Homework is set regularly but, similarly, its purpose with regard to the consolidation, extension and assessment of pupils' learning is not always clearly indicated. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are good and used effectively in

teaching basic skills through a range of activities. The use of questions, particularly at the beginning of a lesson, is noticeably more successful when the teacher is confident in the material. It improves learning most effectively when used to review pupils' recall and understanding of key ideas. In some classes the content of the lesson is too ambitious for the time available, which results in teachers not being able adequately to summarise the main learning points at the end of the lesson. Practical activities and demonstrations are well managed and support learning. Unsatisfactory teaching is characterised by inadequate planning, activities which are unchallenging and a lack of direction and intervention from the teacher. Pupils become desultory and unreceptive when left to do unfulfilling and irrelevant tasks such as routine note-taking, particularly in lower-attaining sets. Management of classes is largely good and teachers create a good rapport with their classes and so establish an effective atmosphere for learning. There are comprehensive records of the assessment of pupils that are used to track progress over the longer term and to review and plan the curriculum. However, the low correlation between teachers' assessment scores and the National Curriculum test results at the end of Key Stage 3 suggest that the accuracy of this assessment needs to be reviewed.

115. Standards of attainment are broadly in line with those at the time of the last inspection. The head of faculty shows good skills in leadership and management in seeking to raise these standards. There is a clear commitment to this in the department's Improvement Plan, the current review of Key Stage 3 schemes of work and the plans to monitor teaching in relation to its impact on learning. Integration of information technology into the curriculum, indicated in the last inspection, has improved but is underdeveloped and the faculty is not meeting its statutory requirements in its contribution to teaching information technology skills. Accommodation is much improved but shortcomings in the number and size of existing laboratories are having a negative impact on learning.

ART

116. GCSE results for 2000 were well below the national average for pupils attaining five or more A*-C grades and for average points score. Results overall since 1997 have shown a steady improvement, although there are still few A* or A grades. Pass rates at A level have been better than the national average, although numbers are so small as to be statistically insignificant. Nonetheless, group sizes have been viable over the past four years, and remain so in the current Years 12 and 13. Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 are above the national average. In lessons observed at Key Stage 3 attainment was at the national average, with some excellence seen. Good work appropriate for the stage of the course was seen at Key Stage 4. There is some very good A-level work with students showing technical skill as well as artistic expression. In some classes in Years 8 and 9, pupils were refining their work, using sketch books to develop their ideas and aiming at the best, and in one Year 9 class complex images were created in paintings based very effectively on observed drawing of plants involving line, tone and texture. Pupils with special needs make good progress. High-attaining pupils in art take advantage of after-school clubs: in 1999 three Year 9 pupils were involved in the local education authority's trip to Normandy for able young artists. Display is very good both in the department and around the school – celebrating pupils' attainment and inspiring others. The school has exhibited in the local library.
117. Both teaching and learning are very good at Key Stage 3, and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. In the best lessons, teachers are thoroughly secure in their subject and in teaching techniques. All lessons start with a clear review of the work involved, followed by a sharing of targets and the criteria for success. The overall targets become individual pupil targets with clear feedback from the teacher in lessons. Class organisation and management are good, and preparation, planning and target setting are strengths. Pupils

know exactly what is expected of them and what criteria will be used to measure their success. In one Year 8 and another Year 9 class targets were set for two stages of working - the immediate work in progress as well as looking forward to subsequent work, allowing pupils to know how to improve their work over a period.

118. Most teaching is based on direct observation and analysis. Sketch books are well used in homework and in research for projects; in the best, marking helps pupils to develop their skills and shows teachers' very good use of the merit system. Teaching is generally lively and enthusiastic, and a sense of purpose and urgency is instilled into most lessons. However, pupils are not always encouraged to do their best through self-reflection and the setting of personal goals to improve their skills. This prevents pupils attaining the higher grades at Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. In the best lessons there is a sense of fun and excitement. In one Year 7 lesson to produce self-portraits, the computer was used to modify images; pupils were encouraged to observe very carefully but with a sense of fun. In a Year 9 class, pupils were inspired by African masks and carvings, which had a major impact on their subsequent work.
119. Pupils respond openly and positively and there is a good working ethos in lessons. Many groups are very lively and keen to succeed. Pupils are well-motivated at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form where there is a calm and orderly atmosphere.
120. The curriculum is broad and balanced at all levels, based on direct observation and skill development. Information technology is used well, encouraging pupils to use it as a tool to express themselves and their talents artistically. There is full access to the curriculum for pupils of all abilities and higher-attaining pupils have opportunities to extend their work appropriately. The option system offers limited choice for pupils to study art at Key Stage 4. Time allocation is adequate at Key Stage 3, though the single lessons sometimes inhibit the extent to which pupils can develop their skills to attain high standards. Assessment in art is good. There is an efficient and effective system, including pupils' self-assessment, closely linked to individual target-setting. The organization of classes by ability is not always appropriate for art since prior attainment measures relate to other subjects. There is a good programme of gallery visits, and very good use of visiting artists, such as a professional 'digital artist' linking art and information technology. The school also plays a part in local community art initiatives such as the *King of Hedon* Festival. This included the 'Design a tie' competition judged by Richard Whiteley.
121. Since the last inspection all issues in art have been addressed: A-level take-up is now consistently at a viable level; GCSE and A-level results show significant improvements in first-hand observation and drawing skills; expectations have been raised effectively; and, the use of appropriate language for description and evaluating the visual arts is built into lessons at all stages.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

122. The overall 2000 GCSE results were in line with national averages for A*-C and A*-G grades when compared to all maintained secondary schools. Food Technology, resistant materials and textiles performed particularly well at A*-C grades with an improvement shown in electronics and graphics from 1999. Low entries at A level make comparisons difficult but all candidates entered in Design and Graphics in 2000 were successful with over half at A and B grades. This is an improvement over the 1999 results when only one out of six candidates gained a higher grade. Results have improved overall since the last inspection, although individual specialisms vary. End of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments in 2000 show that results for Level 5 and over were above the national average.
123. Current attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is at the level expected overall for pupils achieving Level 5+. A proportion of pupils achieve at the higher levels, with a minority at the lower levels. Girls perform better than boys, particularly at the higher grades. Progress through the key stage is good. Design skills show a range of presentational techniques with good work seen in all areas. Weaker work is often due to limited research or underdeveloped graphical skills. Practical work is usually of a good standard.
124. Current attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is broadly in line with the national average overall with work reflecting the improved results seen in 2000, particularly in food technology and textiles. Levels of achievement are usually good in all areas, with design folders showing good presentational and graphical skills, including the use of commercial material, colour, freehand sketching, photographs and information and communications technology to illustrate the work. Research skills are usually well developed with sound analysis and evaluation. Weaker work usually lacks depth of research, a more limited range of graphical skills and where information and communications technology has not been fully utilised. Practical outcomes, including modeling of design solutions, are usually of a good standard.
125. Current attainment in the sixth form is up to course expectation with students work reflecting a range of standards. Some good work is evident in AS and A-level Design Courses including graphics where students use a broad range of skills and techniques including the digital camera and Pro-Desk top to produce good quality work. Research and investigational skills are well developed and include use of the Internet. Students are very confident in discussing their work and can express their ideas fluently.
126. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall at Key Stage 3 with some good and very good teaching. At Key Stage 4, there is an almost equal proportion of good and satisfactory teaching. In the sixth form, the teaching is always good. The better lessons are well planned, have good pace, use appropriate teaching strategies to keep pupils on task, with subject knowledge used well to develop or expand ideas. This was illustrated in a lesson on the importance of fibre in a diet; where pupils were analysing a design brief for a candle holder; in a lesson on special diets and nutritional values; and, whilst pupils were combining colour, shape and material choice in project work. Good lessons in the sixth form were observed where students were using information and communications technology skills to advance the quality of the work, and in developing some interesting solutions to design problems such as sports aids for a disabled person, an adjustable guitar stand and a mini-fitness centre. Satisfactory lessons have many good features but sometimes lack pace, clear lesson objectives or explicit expectations. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress overall. Literacy support is good with key words on display to support learning.

127. Pupil attitudes are always good or very good. There are only rare instances of pupils' inattention and pupils being off task. Relationships are always good and pupils work together willingly.
128. Assessment procedures are in place and referenced to national curriculum levels or examination grades. However, there is a need to ensure that pupils understand fully the process and that targets set are realistic, particularly at Key Stage 4. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, with a good range of courses offered at Key Stage 4. Courses are offered at AS level and A level but take-up is usually small. At Key Stage 3 the control module is not implemented in Years 7 and 8 and curriculum time is limited to cover the full programme of work.
129. The department is efficiently led and documentation is well prepared. Delegation of responsibilities to other staff in the department is a positive feature and professional development encouraged and supported. Monitoring of pupils' work and progress, however, is not thorough across the department. A full-time technician supports all areas of the department and helps to maintain standards achieved.
130. Accommodation is good overall with most rooms providing a purposeful learning environment. Displays of key words support pupils' language development. Good use is made of available resources including information and communications technology. Safety lines are not marked around machinery in workshops.
131. Since the last inspection improvements have been made in a number of areas including GCSE and A-level results; assessment and target-setting approaches; additional resources to support information and communications technology; and a full-time technician is now in post. A food technology room seen as unacceptable is now not used.

GEOGRAPHY

132. Standards are above national expectations at the end of Year 9. End of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments show that results for Level 5 and over have been above the national average for the last two years. The improving trend can be attributed to introduction of enquiry learning styles. GCSE results overall for grades A*-C in 2000 were below the national average and for grades A*-G they were just below averages. Girls' results, however, were in line with averages nationally. Results in 2000 show a notable improvement after a change in syllabus and, as in Key Stage 3, changes in styles of teaching and learning. In both key stages girls' attainment is consistently better than boys'. Standards are in line with expectations at the end of the sixth form. A-level results have fluctuated but the numbers in the groups have been too small for statistical comparison with national figures.
133. Current standards of work are sound in both key stages and in the sixth form. By the end of Year 7, pupils can read maps and understand the features affecting the location of settlements. By the end of Year 8, pupils can write good extended explanations and have an understanding of the economic purposes of the European Union. By the end of Year 9, higher-achieving pupils can compare and contrast information about different places, such as the north and south of Italy, and present their own conclusions. Lower-achieving pupils have weaker analytical skills and their written work is shorter. In Year 7 and Year 8 all the pupils are aware of their National Curriculum levels of attainment and of what they have to do to move to a higher level. Year 10 pupils are making progress in learning about the ecology of the tropical rainforest and its relationship with world climate but cannot yet select evidence and draw their own conclusions. Year 11 pupils have a good understanding of the environmental implications of pollution and the moral responsibility

that economically developed nations bear. The higher achievers write their opinions with supporting reasons. Lower achievers can describe what they observe and can précis information but they do not develop their ideas well. Sixth-form students have well-developed map-reading and observational skills and show personal background reading. They are confident in interpreting evidence but need guidance in the synthesis of ideas from a number of sources. Pupils with special educational needs achieve a satisfactory standard of work due to good management, such as group organisation where they can learn from their classmates, individual work where they can benefit from extra help from the teacher, or special worksheets and texts tailored to their needs. Gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress where special provision is made for them, as in the top stream classes, but they are often given a greater quantity of work to complete rather than more complex tasks. The standard of literacy is good. All pupils can read texts for information at various levels but some reading opportunities are missed. Numeracy skills are used, such as in completing graphs and statistics, but are not taught.

134. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. There has been an improvement in GCSE results. Enquiry learning has been developed in Key Stages 3 and 4 which is raising standards of attainment. Management responsibilities have been clarified between the head of department and the new head of faculty. However, there is still a need to further develop fieldwork opportunities, particularly in Year 8. Although there has been an improvement in planning for the use of information and communications technology through the schemes of work, there is at present no evidence that this planning has been carried through into practice.
135. The quality of teaching overall is good in Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good in the sixth form. No lesson observed was less than satisfactory: a number were good and two excellent lessons were seen with associated excellent learning because of the way the pupils' interest was stimulated and developed. In one of these, sixth-form students were required to interpret the evidence. In the other, a Year 11 lesson about the causes and effects of acid rain, pupils were faced with the reality of pollution through judicious use of a video and lively interaction between teacher and pupils. Particular strengths are teachers' knowledge and understanding which enables them to respond well to pupils' observations and questions. Their management of pupils results in good relationships and a secure environment so that pupils are not afraid to express their views and develop ideas. There is some good planning for pupils with special educational needs working at group tasks. In many lessons the organisation into group or individual enquiry allows pupils of all abilities to work at their own pace and gain a sense of achievement. In a very good Year 7 lesson, the teacher returned assessed work to pupils, sharing with them how to improve National Curriculum levels; the pupils were interested by this and it led to a mature understanding of what is expected. There is a small proportion of didactic and teacher-dominated lessons which results in a slower rate of learning because pupils are not given the opportunity to ask and answer their own questions. In many lessons, detailed planning is a weakness. Lessons had aims but no indication of the strategies to be used to achieve those aims, restricting pace or having a negative impact on timing which prevented closing summaries and consolidation.
136. The management and leadership of the department are good. Progress is being made in the introduction of new curriculum arrangements in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form. The introduction of new teaching styles is clearly raising standards because the best lessons seen were those that employed enquiry methods. Monitoring and assessment of pupils' progress are very good; assessment units are built into the scheme of work in Key Stage 3 and results are used to help pupils to achieve better and to guide future planning. Steps are being taken to improve the performance of boys. Teaching is monitored annually by senior staff through lesson observations that form the basis of review and discussion.

HISTORY

137. Teachers' assessments of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 indicated that the majority was attaining in line with the national expectation for their age; this represents an improvement from 1999. In GCSE examinations over the period 1997 to 1999, the proportion of pupils obtaining grades A* to C was in line with the national average and the proportion of pupils obtaining grades A* to G was above it. In 2000 GCSE examinations, more than half of pupils entered obtained grades A* to C, just under the national average. All pupils obtained grades in the range A* to G, just above the national average. Girls performed significantly better than boys. In the 1999 A-level examinations, the proportion of students gaining grades A to E was below the national average, with seven out of ten entered obtaining pass grades. In the A-level examinations over the period 1997 to 1999, the proportion of students gaining grades A to E was below the national average. In 2000, all nine candidates obtained pass grades.
138. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with those expected for pupils of the same age nationally. Pupils of all attainment levels have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the aspects of history they are studying. In a lesson on the Gunpowder Plot, Year 8 lower-attaining pupils successfully described the differences between the Protestant and Catholic faiths and how they influenced events leading up to the incident. Higher-attaining pupils, such as those in Year 9 examining the conditions of life in factories from the perspectives of owners and employers, use their knowledge and understanding to identify and evaluate sources of information in order to draw and support conclusions.
139. Currently, pupils' standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 are in line with those expected for pupils of the same age nationally. Pupils of all attainment levels show a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the course content. In a lesson on the welfare state, Year 11 higher-attaining pupils showed an understanding of complex issues such as nationalisation and were able to write sound analytical answers to questions. A wide range of historical source material is used competently; in a lesson on reactions to the liberal reforms, lower-attaining Year 11 pupils accurately analysed contemporary source material such as posters and cartoons as a stimulus to discussion and evaluated the reliability of such evidence.
140. In work seen, students' standards of attainment at the end of the sixth form are in line with those expected nationally. Students can formulate complex views that are clearly expressed orally and supported by appropriate evidence; Year 13 students gave successful and convincing presentations, following research, on the structure of society and religion in the 17th century.
141. The quality of teaching and learning in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form is good. In all lessons observed, good teaching enhances pupils' understanding of the subject and enables pupils with special educational needs to make progress in line with other pupils in the group. The main strengths are good lesson preparation based on confident knowledge of the subject, good classroom control and management and effective pupil questioning techniques. In the best lessons, a variety of teaching methods is used to stimulate interest and maximise learning opportunities; here the quality of teaching challenges and enthuses pupils, allowing them to learn effectively. In a Year 9 lesson on the Luddites, skillful questioning by the teacher at the start of the lesson successfully captured the enthusiasm of higher-attaining pupils and gave them the confidence to successfully draw comparisons between economic conditions today and during the industrial revolution. High-quality relationships with pupils and the effective use of deserved praise and encouragement

ensure that pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Pupils arrive at lessons with positive attitudes, quickly settle to work and listen to teachers' introductions and explanations attentively. They collaborate well when working, demonstrating their willingness to listen to the views of others.

142. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of history ably leads a committed and experienced team of staff. Good use is made of teachers' subject-specialisms and teachers are effectively deployed. There is appropriate and detailed documentation, including good schemes of work, within a useful departmental handbook together with an indication of appropriate teaching methods. Most lessons are taught in specialist classrooms where attractive displays bring the subject to life.
143. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved, employing a wider range of teaching approaches and historical artefacts, together with the provision of appropriate visits to places of historical interest. The quality of leadership and management of the department has improved. There has been some development in the application of information and communications technology, but further work is necessary. The department is working to ensure greater consistency in the application of its assessment policy and greater use of assessment information to improve lesson planning.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

144. Attainment at the end of Year 9 has been inconsistent in recent years. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2000 indicate that standards were slightly below the national average. Currently, standards are below the national expectation at Key Stage 3.
145. During the inspection, discussions with pupils, scrutiny of more recently completed work and observations of pupils using computers show attainment at national standards in the general skills of using computers but the range of work is too limited. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not gain sufficiently wide experience or develop sufficient skills, knowledge and skills in using information technology (IT). In the large majority of lessons, pupils develop word-processing skills. By the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils are able to type fairly quickly and accurately and work confidently in a 'window' operating system environment. However, their skills are rarely far advanced: many pupils delete text back to an error and do not use highlight to delete; no more than half can confidently and correctly use cut and paste techniques; few can edit a document fully effectively; and very few can explain how to produce and modify a document to meet the needs of different types of reader. Whilst pupils use information technology in some other subjects, most notably in developing their understanding of control in mathematics and design and technology, and key-boarding in music, these experiences are insufficient to meet the National Curriculum requirements as a whole.
146. The department does not offer a GCSE course in information technology. Standards in Years 10 and 11 were in line with expectations in the work observed but, as in Key Stage 3, too narrow a range of skills is taught. Consequently, attainment overall is below the national average. This is partly because the number of lessons provided in Years 10 and 11 is fewer than at Key Stage 3 and in the very few IT-specific lessons there is still a concentration on word-processing. The statutory requirements are not met, except in mathematics, where there is quite wide use of special teaching software. As pupils do not gain the expected range of information technology experiences at either key stage, the school does not meet the National Curriculum requirements and there is a lack of breadth in what is provided.

147. In the sixth form, information technology is one of the more popular A-level courses. Though the numbers and the male/female ratio have varied greatly, the proportion of students gaining a pass has increased over recent years and is now much the same as the national figure. In this course the students gain a wide experience and are skilled at developing effective data-processing systems to meet specified needs. They discuss with confidence and fluency the details of the use of IT in a wide range of contexts. The school has recently begun to offer a small number of short IT key-skills lessons for students not following A-level IT courses. While it is too early to assess overall attainment, participating students are competent in using information technology.
148. The quality of learning is generally satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and often good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. However, although Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils learn information technology skills well in specific IT lessons, they have too little opportunity to apply their skills and learning in other subjects. In all the lessons seen, teaching was never less than satisfactory. It was sometimes good or very good in Key Stages 3 and 4. In the sixth form, where lessons are taught by experienced staff, it was usually good or very good because teachers plan with care and appropriate challenge, are enthusiastic and show good understanding of the subject and how to ensure students understand and learn. Here, appropriate resources are used effectively. In the best lessons across the school there is a clear sense of purpose, good relationships between pupils and teachers from which teacher assess learning continuously to support pupils in developing appropriate levels of skills, knowledge and understanding. Even in the information technology lessons at Key Stage 3, where many of the teachers are less confident or experienced in teaching information technology, the quality of assessment, the relationships between pupils and teachers and the management of classes, some of which are large and in poorly designed rooms, is good.
149. Information technology is currently taught as a separate subject for one period a week in Years 7 and 8. The department does not influence the work of other subjects and, therefore, the time for information and communications technology is insufficient to cover all aspects of the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3. The situation is worse at Key Stage 4 where no formal information technology lessons are timetabled and the links between the information technology department and others remain too weak to co-ordinate information and communications technology-related work across subjects or to support pupils in using computers out of lesson time.

150. Since the last inspection in 1995 the school has made great progress in developing its information technology resources, in its success in the Advanced course, and in the quality of some aspects of learning at Key Stage 3. However, the weaknesses noted in the 1995 report have not fully been overcome: improvement overall is less than satisfactory.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

FRENCH AND SPANISH

151. Standards in French at Key Stage 3 matched the national average in 2000. Two-thirds of all pupils reached the expected levels. The proportion of girls who reached the expected levels was higher than the national average, while that of boys was lower. In 1999, GCSE standards at A*-C and at A*-G grades in both French and Spanish were higher than the national average. The proportion of candidates who attained the higher grades (A*-A) exceeded the national average in French, but was lower in Spanish. All candidates in both languages gained at least a grade G. Results in 2000 indicate a marked decline in the standards attained in French and a slight decline in Spanish. Standards at "A" level in 1999 in both languages were satisfactory, although the proportion of candidates who gained A-B grades was small. Results for the 2000 examinations indicate a significant improvement in standards in "A" level Spanish and maintenance of standards in French. In both languages the proportion of students gaining the higher A-B grades increased substantially. The overall trend in GCSE standards in both French and Spanish is one of improvement. Relative to other subjects, girls perform well in both languages, while boys perform well in Spanish but less well in French.
152. Standards of work seen are satisfactory in both key stages and in the sixth form. In Key Stage 3, higher-attaining pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the past tenses, have a sound knowledge of grammar and are able to produce some extended writing using past tenses. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. In some lessons, where the teacher matches the work carefully to their needs, their progress is good and they are able to engage in short, controlled dialogues and to repeat and copy accurately. In Key Stage 4, higher-attaining pupils understand their foreign language well in both the spoken and written forms. Again, pupils with special educational needs make good progress in some lessons where the teacher provides appropriate tasks and enables pupils to learn in carefully graded steps. In the sixth form, standards match the expectations of the course that students are following. Throughout the school, speaking skills are unsatisfactory. Routine use of the foreign language in the classroom is not the normal practice. As at the time of the previous inspection, pupils do not have enough opportunities to work on oral skills and, consequently, lack confidence in these skills.
153. Since the previous inspection, there has been a substantial increase in the number of pupils who study Spanish and standards have improved to the point where they exceed national averages. The teaching of sixth-form students has improved and students take opportunities to assume some responsibility for their own learning through the use of the Internet for research purposes.

154. The quality of teaching throughout the school is satisfactory and in one-third of the lessons observed it was good. The teaching in one Key Stage 3 lesson, where the activities provided by the teacher were pitched below the abilities of the pupils, was unsatisfactory. Many good features were observed in lessons. A lively pace ensures that the interest of pupils is sustained. Most lessons provide a variety of activities that enables pupils to practise different language skills. Some teachers of pupils with special educational needs make good use of support staff to help these pupils to make good progress in their learning. In some lessons, high expectations were emphasized through the teacher's use of the foreign language. In a Year 11 lesson, French was accepted as the normal means of communication and there were examples of independent use of the language by pupils. An insistence on accurate use of the language contributed to the good understanding of grammar demonstrated by some higher-attaining pupils in French in Key Stage 3 and in Spanish in Key Stage 4. However, across the department there is an inconsistency of practice and expectations, which leads to an unevenness of standards. In particular, insufficient use of French or Spanish or the use of English when the foreign language could be understood reduces the challenge offered to pupils. Failure to insist on the use of the foreign language by pupils at appropriate times ensures that oral skills remain underdeveloped.
155. The administration of this large department is good. Documentation is good. There is a policy of parity of status and provision with regard to Spanish and German, but the co-ordination of Spanish is inconsistent with that policy. Schemes of work for both languages lack direction with regard to teaching strategies. Procedures for assessing the progress and work of pupils are good but pupils do not always know what they need to do to improve. There is a common commitment to raising standards. The management of the department has not secured effective sharing of the existing pockets of good classroom practice among all teachers in order to realise that commitment.

GERMAN

156. In 1999, GCSE results at grades A*-C were in line with the national average. Pupils performed significantly better than in the other subjects they took. There was, however, a wider gap between the performance of boys and of girls than is the case nationally. In 2000, the results dipped below the national average and pupils performed worse in German than in their other subjects. Teachers' report that the main reason for this decline was a period of instability in staffing, combined with inadequate examination preparation. The number of students taking German at A level has been relatively low over the last three years, making comparisons with national averages invalid. In 1999, of eight students taking German, seven passed, with two students gaining B grades. In 2000, out of four students, all passed, with two gaining a B grade; these were similar to the same students' results in other subjects.
157. Currently, the subject is not timetabled for Year 7 but, in Year 8, half the year group has been studying German as a first foreign language since Year 7. In Year 9, four single-sex groups of mainly higher attainers study German as their second foreign language. In Year 10, half the year group continues German as their first foreign language and in Year 11, a group of higher-attaining pupils study both German and French.
158. At the end of Key Stage 3, current standards are below national expectations. Pupils have not yet had sufficient time in this, their second foreign language, to reach the standards expected of pupils at this stage, the majority of whom have studied the language from Year 7. Pupils studying German in Year 9, though, are higher attainers, and where the teaching is of high quality, they achieve well and make good progress. In one lesson, the whole

group of boys was very keen on learning about shopping in Germany and showed great interest and involvement. They responded very well to the teacher's firm management. They were developing good accents and their written work was careful and accurate. By contrast, another group of girls in the same year made far less progress. Many girls lacked confidence in their speaking skills, because the teacher did not use the foreign language sufficiently to engage them orally. In Year 8, a significant number of lower attainers achieve well.

159. At Key Stage 4, the oldest pupils, who are all higher attainers and studying two languages, are achieving above national expectations. They speak about themselves, their school and families without hesitation and most can use the past tense with familiarity and understanding. They write accurate and detailed descriptions and accounts and tackle complex reading passages with confidence. In one lesson, pupils extracted information effectively from an authentic tourist article about 'Rothenbourg ob der Tauber'. In Year 10, where pupils at all attainment levels take German, standards are, overall, in line with national expectations.
160. The majority of pupils behave very well in Key Stage 4 and make satisfactory progress. A few boys, including a significant number of higher attainers, show little interest in languages and, in the absence of firm teacher control, are noisy and make little effort. With careful and supportive teaching, the lower attainers in small groups achieve well, making at least satisfactory and mostly good progress. As in Key Stage 3, pupils with special educational needs make progress as good as other pupils in these groups.
161. In the sixth form, students have a relatively wide range of previous attainment, but they all receive good support and individual help from their teachers. The most talented are able to express their opinions and ideas well and they write with considerable flair about, for example, the consequences of destruction on life in post-war Germany. They have taken full advantage of the excellent input of the language they hear and several are taking responsibility for their own learning. A few are much less confident and are hesitant in improving their speaking skills and slow to gain accuracy in their written work.
162. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. A third of the lessons were good, including a small number of very good or excellent lessons. Most of the other lessons were satisfactory. In one unsatisfactory lesson, the teacher's explanations were not clear enough, English was used unnecessarily and the teacher did not maintain firm enough control to assist learning. Teachers' knowledge of the foreign language ranges from native-speaker level to satisfactory but adequate in Key Stage 3. However, several teachers do not use the language enough in chorus-work and pronunciation practice to involve all pupils in improving their speaking skills. Teachers generally plan their lessons well to cover speaking, reading and writing but the tasks involved are not always appropriate. In some cases, they are not clearly explained at the outset of the lesson. Good, sustained practice of new vocabulary and direct and forceful repetition of key vocabulary in different activities are used in a few good and very good lessons. Most teachers use overhead transparencies to provide clear and stimulating support to their teaching and to pupils' learning, but this good practice is not always present. Teachers generally manage their pupils well, so that pupils concentrate and make an effort to learn, but in a minority of lessons control is not firm enough and pupils lose interest. Teachers generally assess and check on pupils' performance well in class, giving pupils immediate feedback on how they are doing. However, the marking of pupils' written work is variable, both in its amount and in its regularity.
163. The day-to-day management of German in the modern languages department is satisfactory, but the development of several important areas to raise standards of teaching

and learning overall is unfinished; schemes of work are not sufficiently well matched to pupils' attainments, and the monitoring of teaching and exercise books has not resulted in the exchange and sharing of best practice among all teachers. Some essential classroom equipment, including textbooks and display, is unsatisfactory. Since the last inspection and up until 2000, results had improved consistently.

MUSIC

164. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average. The standards achieved by pupils at Key Stage 3 are good overall when compared with their attainment on entry, which is near average. Achievement by pupils with special educational needs is also good. At the end of Key Stage 3 pupils are able to use computers, keyboards and classroom instruments with competence, for both performance and composition. Pupils build on their vocal and instrumental skills. Singing is used well. For example, in Year 7 pupils sing an imaginative song devised by a member of staff to remind them of the key technical words in music. Achievement in singing is often at least average. Appraising skills are variable. However, pupils are able to develop and use a musical vocabulary with which to describe and appraise the music they hear.
165. GCSE music results at the end of Key Stage 4 were below the comparable national averages in 1999 with ten out of 18 pupils gaining grade C or above. However, all pupils attained at least grade G. Pupils' achievement in composing and performing was, overall, better than in appraising. The 2000 results were well below the national average. There were no A* passes in either year. The achievement in aural work of pupils of relatively low attainment is good. This is due in part to the consistent emphasis placed on basic skills, particularly literacy. Such emphasis helps pupils to develop their ability to use technical terms and descriptive language and thereby increases their musical understanding. Whilst most pupils make sound progress in building on their attainment at Key Stage 3, it is not always sufficient to enable them to reach the highest standards at GCSE. Most pupils at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form successfully produce computer-generated composition and they are conversant with a range of musical techniques. Individual instrumental skills are often strong, but not always fully used in supporting composition.
166. At A level, Music and Music Technology results in 2000 and Music results in 1999 were broadly average. However, the small number of A-level candidates, together with the low number of candidates from year to year, invalidates statistical comparisons. The small number of pupils opting for A-level music was referred to in the previous inspection. Standards are variable in appraisal work and some aspects of extended writing. In comparison, standards in performing are often high. Overall standards in sixth-form music compare well with pupils' general attainment.

167. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is good, and sometimes very good. Teachers successfully build on Year 7 attainment. In Key Stage 4 the teaching is good, with elements of excellence. For example, in a lesson on Alberti Bass, elements of composition were used to improve pupils' performance and aural skills. Sixth-form teaching is also good. There are significant elements of good practice at all key stages. Work is usually matched well to pupils' abilities. Teachers' vocal, keyboard and other musical skills are used well in the classroom and in extra-curricular activities. Teaching embodies good preparation, suitable teaching styles, interesting work, good pace and thorough organisation. Pupils have opportunities to explore their own culture and value the opportunity to explore world music. Such work helps pupils to broaden their understanding of other cultures. Pupils are also helped to consolidate their word skills; teachers routinely refer to spelling, technical terms and basic literacy. Music teachers support special needs pupils well, which has a positive effect on the progress of such pupils. Skillful teaching, together with good resources and planning, ensure that many pupils make progress across Key Stage 3. Computer work is well used at Key Stage 3 for improving keyboard proficiency and for composition. Both teachers and pupils at Key Stage 4 and in A-level work display strong expertise in the use of information and computer technology. Sixth-form teaching stresses the need to develop critical argument and analytical thinking, though pupils sometimes find such skills hard to develop and tend to focus on factual elements in learning. The department has identified listening and appraisal, together with opportunities for pupils to develop composition through their own instrumental skills and interests, as areas for development.
168. Instrumental teaching is sound and often good. The percentage of pupils taking lessons in school is a little below average. About 146 pupils have instrumental lessons each week. The eight visiting instrumental teachers make a valuable contribution to the curriculum and their work is carefully managed and integrated into the work of the department. Pupils have the opportunity to take instrumental grade examinations on a variety of instruments and have a good record of success to Grade 8.
169. Pupils' attitudes in music lessons are good. They respond well to challenging work. They respond with appropriate levels of interest, co-operation and good behaviour. Pupils work well individually and with enthusiasm in instrumental groups. At Key Stage 3 they are enthusiastic in performing tasks. Pupils enjoy playing their compositions and respond by listening attentively to the compositions of others. Pupils at all stages respond well to most classroom tasks and are co-operative. Pupils in Key Stage 4 enter into discussion in a forthright way and have a solid approach to learning. Sixth formers are hard working and diligent.
170. The department has sound organisation. Schemes of work are detailed. Some effective use is made of target setting and there is awareness of pupils' potential. The long-term monitoring, assessing and recording of pupils' work are good. Day-to-day assessment is used to develop the work offered to pupils. There is some analysis of results by component at A Level and GCSE, though this is not always available within the department. The overall use of assessment is directed towards the introduction of new strategies to develop pupils' learning. Management of the rooms is good. The department has good instrumental stocks and excellent information technology resources. The departmental computer suite easily accommodates a full class. Accommodation is good and suitable for all musical activities.

171. Leadership of the department has a positive impact on performance and extra-curricular work. There is a variety of extra-curricular activity in music. The total number of pupils taking part is not large in relation to the size of the school, and there is no single 'flagship' group currently, but many committed pupils are regularly involved across a range of music-making. Pupils enthusiastically commit time and effort to the choir and other groups. The performing and composing work of pupils is appropriately celebrated within a regular calendar of musical events in the school and in the community. Such opportunities for performance have a strong impact on the cultural and social development of pupils; they also contribute to the prevailing ethos of the school.
172. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, except in relation to the number of pupils involved in some aspects of the subject, including the number of pupils opting to participate in A-level music, instrumental lessons and extra-curricular activities.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

173. In September 1998, the school offered pupils the opportunity to take GCSE in physical education. Results of this first GCSE cohort in 2000, showed that the number of pupils achieving A*-C grades was well above national averages and all pupils achieved A*-G grades. There is no GCE A-level course. A small group of Year 12 students successfully gained the British Sports Trust accreditation for the Community Sports Leaders Award; there is national accreditation from governing bodies for both life saving and first aid. By the ages of 14 and 16, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations, although teacher assessments of pupils aged 14 indicate that pupil attainment is higher. At both 14 and 16 years of age, there is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
174. By the age of 14, most pupils attain standards in line with national levels. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, show competence in a range of games and begin to understand concepts of attack and defence. Year 9 pupils, for example, have a good understanding of a defensive and attacking line in rugby. Low-attaining pupils understand the need to keep close when passing and receiving the ball to be successful. High-attaining pupils demonstrate expertise in passing and receiving a ball from both the left and right hand sides. Gifted pupils successfully execute reverse passes within a game of rugby in order to change the direction of attack. Standards in gymnastics and dance are at the level expected; this is well illustrated by groups of Year 7 boys and girls. Planning and performing skills are developing satisfactorily in most lessons and many pupils evaluate their work and the work of their peers effectively. Pupils have a good understanding of the effects of exercise on the body and the reasons for a thorough warm-up prior to physical exercise.
175. The overall level of attainment at the end of Year 11 continues to be in line with national expectations, with some pupils, particularly those taking GCSE physical education, achieving higher standards. Pupils have good levels of skill development in many sports, for example, football and swimming. They apply their skills and knowledge in a variety of activities, enabling their understanding of the rules and tactics in games like volleyball and football to improve. High-attaining pupils successfully transfer the skills into fully competitive games. Pupils demonstrate a very clear understanding of aerobic and anaerobic fitness; they know the reasons for exercising in different ways and its impact. Pupils studying GCSE develop their understanding and expertise in both the theoretical and practical aspects of the subject, for example, the working of muscle groups in a range of games and sports. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are well integrated into lessons and receive good and appropriate support by teachers and their peers.

176. There are two lessons each week of physical education for the sixth form; one of these lessons was observed. These sessions are recreational and optional. Seven students with a wide range of ability took part in a basketball lesson. In 2000 a small cohort of ten Year 12 students successfully gained accreditation as community sports leaders, first-aiders and lifesavers. A similar group of 14 students are following a similar course. This accreditation enables sixth-form students to assist teachers in earlier years.
177. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7, 8 and 9 and in the sixth form; it is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. The quality of teaching has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Teachers show good and, at times, very good knowledge, understanding and application. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, very good knowledge of rugby linked with good diagnosis and fault correction challenges pupils and consequently extends their skills. Teachers know their pupils well and relationships are good and at times very good; this helps to foster a positive learning atmosphere. Teachers usually have high expectations of the efforts and behaviour of their students. As a result, behaviour and attitudes are positive and pupils respond to the impact of good teaching by producing their best efforts. They generally work hard and maintain their efforts and concentration and persevere to produce their best results. For example, Year 10 pupils playing football are challenged to evaluate different ways of outwitting a defender using width and depth. However, on several occasions, low expectations, insufficient challenge and pace constrain progress, for instance, in Years 9 and 11 volleyball lessons. Teachers make effective use of question and answer techniques to recapitulate and reinforce pupils' knowledge and understanding. For example, during a Year 10 football lesson the teacher probes and challenges pupils' understanding of depth and width in attacking play. Overall, units of work, long-term planning and organisation are good, ensuring that skill-development builds on previous learning from year to year. However, lesson plans do not always include sufficiently clear learning objectives: this constrains progress. Good relationships, good subject knowledge and effective evaluation of pupils' learning help to ensure that all pupils, including those with learning difficulties, make good progress in their learning in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4. Teachers are sufficiently flexible in their teaching to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. This was well demonstrated when a change of programme required a netball lesson to be taught in the hall and not on the outside courts. In Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils make good progress. They show a good acquisition of skills and knowledge in swimming, dance, football, rugby, netball and hockey; these are consolidated and developed further in Years 10 and 11. Pupils in these two years make satisfactory progress. Pupils start to improve their skills under pressure within a range of games situations and learn simple tactics to ensure that skills are put to best effect.
178. The head of department shows very good leadership and management; teachers work successfully together as a team. The department has a clear educational direction. Curriculum, assessment and policy documents are clear. However, the development plan is not fully costed and pupils' outcomes are insufficiently used to measure success. There is a good physical education curriculum which embraces the changes of Curriculum 2000 but, at Key Stage 3, there is insufficient time to ensure depth of coverage, which constrains the physical education programme. Information and communications technology is insufficiently developed within the GCSE course. The department offers a good and varied programme of seasonal extra-curricular activities; the range of activities offered effectively helps to extend pupils' skills. The department's new physical education assessment procedures are good and very clear. They relate to the different levels across a range of activities and support teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 3. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Changing facilities are insufficient for the large numbers participating; they are also unhygienic and in need of repair. Large half-year

groups of up to 160 pupils are concurrently timetabled for physical education. There is insufficient specialist accommodation to accommodate pupils successfully. The department compensates by modifying group size and rotating groups. These remedial measures are unsatisfactory as this inhibits the depth of the programme. The monitoring of teaching by the head of department is irregular and unsystematic. It does not allow good practice to be shared with a focus on improving pupil standards.

179. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection. The majority of the issues have been addressed successfully. Assessment has been developed and is currently being developed further. Time has been allocated for department discussions relating to subject improvement. The extra-curricular programme has been extended both at lunchtime and after school. The development of the GCSE course has been the major improvement. There has been development of certification for Year 12 students. The department remains committed to the raising of standards within physical education.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

180. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus, largely because the time allocation for the subject at this stage is below the level recommended by the agreed syllabus. In work seen, pupils make links between the Bible's account of creation and environmental issues in the modern world. They understand the dilemma facing Abraham when told by God to sacrifice his son and they understand the consequences of alternative courses of action when considering moral issues. In such work there is a breadth of attainment, with pupils displaying strengths in knowledge and understanding and in personal reflection and response. In other work, attainment is stronger in knowledge and understanding. Pupils discuss the principal features and beliefs of different world religions. In their study of Judaism they explain why certain foods are kosher, and in their study of Islam they describe the origins and importance of the Qur'an. They select information from pictorial sources to identify the similarities and differences between synagogues in the orthodox and reform traditions. They describe the differences between the Old and New Testaments. In some work pupils give personal responses. They write play dialogues about choosing to be confirmed and they give opinions about ethical choices concerning medical treatment. Pupils' attainment is stronger in gaining knowledge and understanding than in developing skills in personal reflection and response.
181. At Key Stage 4 the units of study within the general studies programme are not well matched to the requirements of the agreed syllabus and there is insufficient time devoted to them. Standards of attainment are, therefore, well below expectations.
182. Teaching is good. The most effective teaching is characterised by secure knowledge enabling pupils' responses in class discussion to be appropriately challenged so that learning is enhanced during discussion. In one lesson, secure knowledge enabled pupils to consolidate their understanding of different religious beliefs during a wide-ranging discussion. In a minority of lessons there is a lack of challenge in discussion work where knowledge is less secure. A combination of pace and variety is another feature of the most effective teaching, with discussion and writing alternated so that ideas developed in discussion can be consolidated through a written activity. In a minority of lessons pupils undertake different individual activities but without sufficient time allowed for assessment through discussion to consolidate understanding. In the majority of lessons pupils' responses are used well during discussion, although in some lessons there is too much reliance on the contributions of pupil volunteers, with lost opportunities to involve other pupils. Resources are well used to enhance learning with, for example, the use of photographs enabling pupils to develop skills in investigation. Information sheets are

combined with writing frames to enable pupils to select relevant information and develop their own responses in depth including writing about their feelings, choices and the consequences of decisions. Grouping pupils of different levels of attainment together is an effective means of enabling pupils with special educational needs to make good progress during investigation work. Written work is assessed thoroughly and pupils are given helpful feedback, including the setting of targets. Homework is well used as an integral part of lesson planning.

183. Pupils' attitudes are good and some are very good. In group work, pupils collaborate well to produce and present ideas in dramatic form and to examine sources and record information. They participate in discussion and take account of each other's views. They show good concentration when undertaking individual work. They are attentive and sustain concentration when lessons involve moving from one activity to another. They respond thoughtfully to challenging work with, for example, one pupil distinguishing between fear of punishment and morality as reasons for courses of action.
184. Leadership of the department is effective. The department has well-established assessment procedures which enable pupils to identify strengths and weaknesses in their learning. Resources have been developed to enhance learning to aid investigation and to structure ideas in extended writing. The department has responded positively to the requirements of the new agreed syllabus, although schemes of work have not been revised and a clear link has not been established between assessment procedures and attainment targets. The time allocation for the subject at Key Stage 3 is below the level recommended by the agreed syllabus and this has an impact on attainment with insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop the breadth of study required. Provision for the subject at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form does not meet the requirements of the agreed syllabus. The units of study within sixth form general studies are well matched to the requirements of the agreed syllabus, but there is insufficient time devoted to them.
185. Since the last inspection there have been improvements in both the standard of teaching and in the resources available to aid learning. The lack of curriculum provision at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form was reported at the last inspection. There has been poor progress in this issue overall since the previous inspection.

SIXTH FORM

186. Standards at the end of Year 13 are in line with national expectations. The average A- and AS-level point score for students entered for two or more A or AS equivalent qualifications is in line with the national average. This has improved over the past three years as a result of strategies by the sixth-form teachers and tutors, which include target grading, more individual tracking of students and focusing on particular groups of students at critical times in the academic year. Standards of work seen are also in line with expectations overall. In most subjects the students are developing the skills of analysis and research and learning to study independently.
187. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory in terms of attainment but not in relation to the curriculum overall. No vocational education is provided but the school works with local colleges to support students who wish to study these courses. Time is limited for teaching the key skills in Year 12 and standards suffer as a result. Religious education is not provided separately and, whilst the general studies programme has a lot of common ground with the locally agreed syllabus for religious education, the time allocated to this subject is insufficient to meet requirements. Entry to the sixth form is mainly restricted to students who have gained four GCSE passes at grade C and above.

188. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good overall. The best lessons focus on discussion and questioning, as in a geography lesson investigating the location of volcanic activity, and a history lesson where good questioning gave students the confidence to contribute their own views based on previous reading. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and most lessons are well planned, which provides a sound structure for learning, illustrated by a French lesson where a variety of activities enabled the students to become familiar with the future tense. The weaker lessons are overly dominated by teachers: for example, in an English lesson, students were allowed to be too passive and fed information instead of learning by their own intellectual efforts, which restricts their personal development. In some lessons, for example chemistry, poor presentation of subject matter means that sound foundations are not laid for future learning and the students lack confidence. Relationships between teachers and students are good, which encourages confidence and develops discussion skills in the best lessons.
189. The curriculum provided is satisfactory overall despite some weaknesses. Twenty-one A-level subjects and 23 AS-level subjects are available, together with an OCR Certificate in business language competence. Three A-level courses - sociology, law and electronics - are taught through a distance-learning course from an outside agency. On these courses, teaching takes place via ISDN line, combined with support via timetabled study time with school staff, and pupil progress is satisfactory. There is very good careers education and tutorial guidance to help students to prepare for when they leave the school.
190. The weaknesses in the curriculum lie in religious education, vocational studies and in the provision of key skills for Year 12. There is no formal religious education course and the units provided in the general studies course do not meet the requirements of the agreed syllabus for time allocation. There is no provision of General National Vocational Qualification or Advanced Certificate of Vocational Education courses, or any other kind of vocational education. Provision does not, therefore, meet the full comprehensive entry range. This denies the opportunity for further education for some students not wishing to take these courses at local colleges. Current provision for the teaching of Year 12 key skills through tutorial time is inadequate. There are plans to teach such skills through other curriculum subjects but these have not yet been implemented. There are shortcomings in the sixth form library as it is inadequate for the needs of such a large group of students and is, therefore, rarely used by them. Although there is a dedicated room available for much of the time, computer facilities are not fully used by sixth-form students.
191. Opportunities for extra-curricular activities are good. As well as a range of sporting activities, students can help with Key Stage 3 tutor groups, assist in a local primary school, and offer support in the school bank. These activities keep them integrated into the rest of the school. They produce an annual pantomime and they have a well-conducted sixth-form council.
192. Students are positive about their experiences in the sixth form. There is a well-managed transfer programme from Key Stage 4 to make sure that they are making the right choice. They sign a contract on entry and their performance is closely monitored. Students who fall behind with work are counselled by a tutor. The drop-out rate is comparatively low but is not monitored to identify weaknesses in the transfer procedures or mis-matches in the courses provided. Management of the students is positive and directed towards providing a secure base in which they can work. Curriculum managers are currently concerned about and seeking solutions to the problems outlined above.