

INSPECTION REPORT

KINGSTONE HIGH SCHOOL

Kingstone, Hereford

LEA area: Herefordshire

Unique reference number: 116939

Headteacher: Mr. J. Goodchild

Reporting inspector: Mr. D. Driscoll
11933

Dates of inspection: 6th – 9th November 2000

Inspection number: 223915

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs. I. Williams
Date of previous inspection:	27 th November 1995

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			The school's results and pupils' achievements
			Teaching and learning
			Leadership and management
			Key Issues for action
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			Pupils' welfare, health and safety
			Partnership with parents and carers
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Mr I. Kirby 19905	Team inspector	Music	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
Mr F. C. Martin 21864	Team inspector	Provision for pupils with special educational needs and special educational needs unit	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Kingstone High School is a small comprehensive school educating boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 16. There are more boys than girls among the 634 pupils at the school, none of whom are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school has improved over the last two years and the pupils currently in Year 7 joined the school with above average levels of attainment. In the past, however, attainment on entry to the school has been much lower, so that the pupils currently in Year 11 for example joined the school with levels of attainment that were below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is around the national average, although one in twenty has a Statement of Special Educational Needs; a proportion that is well above the national average. The school serves as a base for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, all of whom are fully integrated into the life of the school. The socio economic circumstances of the pupils are broadly average, although there are extremes of both advantaged and deprived areas from which the school draws its pupils. The school is part of an Education Action Zone set up to combat issues of rural isolation and social deprivation.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school where pupils of all levels of attainment achieve well as a result of the good teaching that they receive. The school achieved average GCSE results in 1999, but standards are rising rapidly. The school is very well led and managed and provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards across the school, and results at GCSE, are now rising rapidly as a result of the very good leadership of the headteacher and senior staff.
- Results in the national tests for 14 year olds were well above average in English and above average in mathematics and science in 2000.
- Pupils of all levels of attainment achieve well as a result of the consistently good teaching that they receive.
- Pupils' attitudes are good and improving, resulting in above average attendance, good behaviour and low levels of exclusion.

What could be improved

- Weaknesses in the curriculum lead to some underachievement in design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education.
- Pupils are not achieving high enough standards in religious education because the teaching is unsatisfactory.
- The assessment in some subjects is insufficiently accurate and is not being used effectively to encourage pupils to make good, rather than satisfactory, progress.
- There is too much variation in the attention paid to the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills, so that standards of literacy and numeracy are only average rather than good.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good progress since the previous inspection in November 1995 when there were serious weaknesses in teaching and in standards. The decline in standards has been reversed since the appointment of the headteacher and almost all of the underachievement has been dealt with; boys are no longer underachieving. Concentrating on improving teaching has brought this about; only 6 per cent of lessons failed to reach a

satisfactory standard during this inspection compared with 25 per cent at the last inspection. The school was placed in the top 100 most improved schools nationally in 2000.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	D	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

Pupils' performances in the 1999 national tests for 14 year olds were close to the national average in English and mathematics and above average in science. Results in 2000 rose significantly; results in English were well above average and results in mathematics and science were above average. The results of the GCSE examinations were average in 1999 and improved significantly in 2000. The results in 2000 represent good levels of achievement for pupils of all levels of prior attainment. Results, using the average GCSE points score per pupil, were falling until the arrival of the new headteacher and since then have risen at a rate that is faster than that found nationally.

The work seen during the inspection generally confirms the results of tests and examinations in 2000. By the end of Year 11, standards of attainment are above average in mathematics, science, French, German and history and broadly average in all other subjects except religious education where they are below average. Pupils achieve well in most subjects, but there is a degree of underachievement in design and technology, ICT and physical education caused by problems within the curriculum. Pupils are underachieving in religious education as a result of unsatisfactory teaching. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school.

The school's management sets appropriately high targets for examination performance.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils demonstrate a willingness to learn and play an active part in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils are self disciplined and considerate. Permanent exclusion is very rare and the rate of other exclusions is low.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils are confident and respond well to opportunities to take responsibility. There is a good deal of mutual respect evident at the school.
Attendance	Good. Attendance is above average and improving.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Teaching is at least satisfactory in 94 per cent of lessons and is good or better in 64 per cent. Teaching is very good or better in 22 per cent of lessons, but unsatisfactory in 6 per cent. The proportions of lessons reaching these standards were similar in all years. The consistency of good teaching is a strength of the school and leads to pupils of all abilities acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding at a good rate. Teaching is good in English, mathematics, science and most other subjects. Teaching is unsatisfactory in religious education. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught to a satisfactory standard, but there is significant variation in the attention paid to such skills by individual teachers. Teaching is effective in meeting the needs of all pupils including both the highest and lowest attainers.

The strengths of the teaching lie in the teachers' knowledge of their subjects; the way in which they plan interesting lessons that challenge pupils of all levels of attainment; the use of homework to extend the time available and the way that they manage their pupils in class. Such teaching leads to pupils being interested in their work and showing a good level of concentration throughout the school.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Unsatisfactory. There are weaknesses in design and technology, ICT and physical education which lead to a degree of underachievement.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils are very well integrated into the life of the school and make good progress. They are taught well both by subject specialists and those with specific expertise with such pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The school makes satisfactory provision for spiritual development; good provision for moral and social development and very good provision for cultural development. The school makes a good contribution to the Education Action Zone aim of overcoming social isolation.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. There are good procedures for promoting good attendance and behaviour and good personal support for pupils. Procedures for assessing attainment in Years 7 to 9 are unsatisfactory.
Partnership with parents and carers	The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. There is a very clear focus on raising standards. The headteacher and senior staff lead by example.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governing body has a good knowledge of the school but fails to meet some statutory requirements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. The monitoring of teaching has resulted in actions that have dramatically improved the quality of education provided.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school targets its spending effectively and makes good use of grants to raise standards. The principles of best value are applied appropriately.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The good quality of the teaching. • The progress made by pupils. • The standards expected of the pupils. • The improvement in the school's performance since the arrival of the current headteacher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The variation in the amount of homework that is set. • The partnership that the school has with parents. • There is not enough information provided on pupils' progress.

The inspection team agrees with most of the parents' views. However, the school does have a satisfactory partnership with parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Pupils of all ages and abilities achieve well at the school. The pupils who took their GCSE examinations last year entered the school with levels of attainment that were below average and left the school with average levels of attainment.

2. Attainment in the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in 1999 was close to the national average. The proportions of pupils reaching level five or above were close to the national averages in English and science and below average in mathematics. The proportions reaching level six or above were above average in science and below average in English and mathematics. Overall, results were average in English and mathematics and above average in science. At the time of the previous inspection, boys were underachieving in the national tests. The school has addressed this issue and there is no longer a significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Results overall had been average, and rising at a rate that is similar to that found nationally, since 1996. In 2000, however, there were dramatic improvements in all three core subjects and in the results overall. Results in mathematics and science were above the national average and results in English were well above average.

3. Overall, results in 1999 were below those of schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. However, this is based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and the school has recently carried out a survey, the results of which show that the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is now much higher than in 1999. The results in 2000, compared with similar schools, were above average in science and well above average in mathematics. The results in English placed the school in the top five percent of schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds.

4. The standards of work seen during the inspection confirm the results of the 2000 national tests in mathematics and science, in that pupils are attaining above average standards. Standards in English are also above average, which is slightly below the level suggested by the results in 2000. These standards represent a good level of achievement for pupils in all three subjects.

5. In the work seen, standards are at the levels expected nationally for 14 year olds in all other subjects except religious education, where standards are below average. Pupils achieve well, compared to their attainment on entry to the school, in art and design and music. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, given their attainment on entry to the school, in all other subjects except design and technology, physical education and religious education where pupils are not achieving standards that are high enough. In design and technology and physical education the standards observed during the inspection were appropriately high but pupils are not being taught the full National Curriculum. In religious education the teaching is unsatisfactory resulting in standards that are below average. Overall, therefore, taking account of the strengths in the core subjects and the areas of underachievement, pupils are making satisfactory progress between the ages of 11 and 14.

6. Standards have improved considerably since the last inspection. Standards in English, mathematics and science were described as average and they are now above average in all three subjects. The underachievement of boys has been addressed successfully and they now achieve standards similar to those of the girls.

7. In the GCSE examinations in 1999, the proportions of pupils gaining five or more passes at grades A* to C and A* to G were broadly average. The proportion gaining one or more passes at grades A* to G was above the national average. The average points score per pupil in 1999 was close to the national average. The results in 2000 were an improvement upon those in 1999, but there are no national statistics yet available against which to compare the 2000 results. The results represent a good level of achievement given the pupils' attainment when they joined the school and their results in the national tests when they were 14.

8. Results since 1994, using the average GCSE points score per pupil, have improved at a rate that is below the national average. However, the trend can be split into two parts. The average points score actually declined from 37.9 in 1994 to 32.6 in 1997, whilst the national trend was one of improvement. Since 1997, when the current headteacher was appointed, results have risen at a rate that is far above the national average so that in 2000 the average points score was 40. Girls had performed significantly better than the boys did since 1995. In 2000, however, the results of the school's efforts to improve the attainment of boys proved successful with a significant improvement in their results, so that there was no significant difference between the results of boys and girls. The results placed the school in the top 100 most improved schools nationally in 2000.

9. Results in the 1999 GCSE examinations compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds were below average. However, this is based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and does not take into account the high proportion of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs at the school. Results in 1999 were well above average in English literature and above average in history and science. Results were average in all other subjects except art and design and English, where results were below average and in mathematics and religious education where they were well below average. The results in 2000 continued the general trend of rapid improvement, with significant improvements in the results of all subjects except design and technology and history where results fell. Results in religious education remained well below average and results in English literature well above average. The results in history were for a particularly low attaining group of pupils and standards among the pupils currently in Year 11 are much higher. The fall in results in design and technology was a result of unsatisfactory management of the subject, which the school has now addressed.

10. In 1999, pupils performed particularly well in science and poorly in religious education, compared to their performance in the other subjects that they studied. No information is available for 2000 at present.

11. In the work seen during the inspection, attainment is at the level expected nationally at the age of 16 in all subjects except French, German, history, mathematics and science, where attainment is above average, and information technology and religious education where attainment is below the level expected nationally. The standards of work seen during the inspection generally reflect the standards suggested by the 2000 GCSE results. However, there are some differences. The standards in mathematics are rising quickly as a result of the very good leadership provided by the head of department. One whole class sat their GCSE examination in mathematics a year early and all passed at grade C or above. This class is now studying for a GCSE in additional mathematics. In some subjects, the standards vary according to the prior attainments of the particular group of pupils studying the

subject. The work seen in geography and modern foreign languages, for example, is not quite up to the high standards of last year's GCSE results, whilst in history the standards are now much higher. In design and technology, the standards of the work seen during the inspection are average, but the pupils are not studying all the requirements of the National Curriculum. The judgement of average attainment in physical education reflects the standards attained by the whole year group, whereas only a relatively small number study for GCSE in the subject.

12. Pupils achieve better standards than would usually be expected, given their levels of attainment at the start of the course, in all subjects except geography and physical education, where achievement is satisfactory, and in design and technology, ICT and religious education where some pupils do not achieve standards that are high enough. Some pupils are not taught ICT, whilst in design and technology the weaknesses in the curriculum in earlier years leave pupils with a weak basis on which to build. There is too little challenge for some pupils in religious education.

13. Since the previous inspection there have been significant improvements in standards. The underachievement previously identified in drama, French, geography, German and science has been overcome, although there is still some underachievement in design and technology and ICT.

14. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs is good overall and results in the above average proportion of pupils achieving one or more passes at grades A* to G in the GCSE examinations. Such good progress has been brought about by the school's very successful approach to integrating pupils into mainstream classes. They are taught well, both by specialist teachers of pupils with special educational needs and by other teachers who target the work to their specific needs. Higher attaining pupils are now also making good progress as a result of the specific provision that is being made for them, such as taking GCSE in art and design two years earlier than usual and the summer school for the most able pupils in Year 7.

15. In the previous report pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs were described as underachieving in the special unit. Since that time, the management has changed and the pupils have been integrated into the life of the school. These pupils now make good progress and achieve well. The improvements in the quality of education provided for them are observed in the results of tests and examinations. Pupils make good advances in basic literacy and numeracy, moving from an entry level well below the national average to most pupils attaining level 4 by the age of 14. Some pupils even reach level 5, the level expected for their age. A much higher proportion of pupils now also achieve GCSE grades at the age of 16.

16. Standards of literacy are satisfactory. Most pupils are competent readers. There are weaknesses in writing, with poor spelling being noted particularly in geography and history. All subjects except for design and technology have written policies for improving literacy but in many cases these have not yet been fully implemented. For example, in project work in religious education pupils do too much copying from works of reference. There is not yet a fully co-ordinated policy across all subjects so that the good practice in some areas can be spread throughout the school. For example, other subjects could learn from art and design where worksheets are carefully matched to pupils' reading abilities. The newly appointed

literacy co-ordinator has sensible plans to conduct an audit to find out what good practice already exists in school, so that a school-wide policy can be established.

17. Levels of numeracy are satisfactory. However, there is no strategy in place for improving standards by developing and co-ordinating numeracy across the school. Pupils demonstrate sound numeracy skills in science. Graphs are usually drawn well although the axes are not always labelled. Higher and middle attainers can calculate speed, but the lower attaining pupils find this difficult. Pupils can apply their understanding of spatial concepts to geometric shapes and proportion. In business education, high and middle-attaining pupils draw graphs of product output and show profit/loss break-even points. They use calculations to obtain net profit, but need to be reminded of how to calculate percentages. In physical education, pupils in Years 10 to 11 use graphs of different types and present information well. In the Worklink programme, lower attaining pupils measure lengths accurately to make three-dimensional models and they measure time precisely. The same pupils budget for their holidays, adding and subtracting to 2 decimal places.

18. The rate at which pupils make progress is usually a result of the quality of teaching that they receive, so that where teaching is good, the standards achieved by pupils are higher than expected. However, there are some notable exceptions to this rule. Teaching is now very good in art and design but the standards achieved by the pupils are only good as the teachers are relatively new and have not yet had time for their teaching to have a full impact on pupils' overall levels of achievement. There are problems with the curriculum in design and technology, ICT and physical education, which are compounded by poor accommodation in physical education, that lead to pupils achieving at a lower standard than the quality of teaching would merit.

19. The school has set appropriately high targets for its performance, based on the attainment of the pupils when they join the school and the raising of standards, and has been successful in meeting its targets.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

20. The last inspection said that the school was a happy and disciplined community that provided a secure and friendly learning environment. Pupils were described as motivated and eager to learn. These high standards have been maintained and are characteristic of the school today. Behaviour and personal development are good. Pupils respond well to opportunities for learning, and their attitudes have a positive impact on attainment and progress.

21. Pupils like coming to the school and are very loyal to it. They have good attitudes to learning. They come to the classroom eager to learn and to play an active part in lessons. They are interested in their work, sustain their concentration and settle down to tasks quickly. They enjoy taking part in discussions and answering questions, particularly where they are offered a good choice of activities, as was the case in a number of French lessons observed during the inspection. A minority of pupils are disorganised and ill-prepared for lessons. They forget to bring their homework diaries or essential equipment to school, and sometimes fail to complete their homework properly. Pupils' geography books, for example, contained several examples of unfinished tasks. However, the majority of pupils have pride in their work, as many examples of well presented written work show, and have a mature approach to their learning. They are able to work independently and are prepared to persevere with tasks that they find difficult. They are not over reliant on their teachers.

22. Parents think that standards of behaviour are high, and the inspection findings support their views. The school is an orderly place in which, with a few exceptions, pupils behave well

and abide by the code of conduct. This is reflected in the number of exclusions. Only one pupil was permanently excluded in the year 1999/00. Two pupils have been excluded for fixed periods so far during the current academic year.

23. The quality of behaviour in lessons is good. It is satisfactory or better across all subjects and all age groups, giving the majority of pupils the chance to learn without being distracted. There is some unsatisfactory behaviour in occasional science lessons in Year 8, which, although involving only a few individuals, adversely affects the progress of the class in which they occur. Pupils behave well out of class. In general they are self-disciplined and considerate when moving around the site. They are polite and helpful to visitors, and socialise well with each other during breaks and lunch hours. There is a friendly, good humoured atmosphere in school. Pupils show a good degree of respect for the school rules and property. There are very few instances of graffiti or vandalism, and the site is generally tidy and free of litter. Pupils themselves feel that behaviour is good overall, but say that there is a minority who behave badly. They report that there is some bullying, although they stress that it is not common.

24. Relations between pupils and members of staff, and between pupils themselves, are good. They create a harmonious, supportive environment and in consequence make a positive contribution to learning and progress. Pupils respect their teachers, follow their instructions in lessons and accept their advice. They listen to one another in class and co-operate well with each other in group tasks; for example they work successfully in pairs or groups in drama lessons. The majority are sensitive to other people's feelings and show respect for values and beliefs which are different from their own.

25. Pupils make good progress with their personal development. They become increasingly confident and articulate during their time in school, and respond well to opportunities to become independent learners. Where the programme of personal and social education is well thought out and well taught, they enjoy discussing issues that are relevant to life outside school, such as health, careers and the environment. A number of pupils take on significant responsibilities outside the classroom, becoming prefects, form captains and representatives to the school council. Some also become "CHIPS" mediators, that is volunteers who are specially trained as listeners and confidants to pupils with problems. For example, they will listen to pupils' problems and where appropriate pass information to members of staff. They carry out these duties very effectively, and their work is appreciated by other pupils.

26. Pupils' attendance is good and gives them the opportunity to make the most of what the school offers. The whole school rate of attendance has been above the national average for secondary schools for several years, and continues at a high level in the current year. The figure for the first half of the autumn term 2000 is 94%. The incidence of unauthorised absence is low. Punctuality for morning school is to some extent dependent on the efficiency of the bus services. It is good overall, as is pupils' time keeping in respect of lessons.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

27. The quality of teaching, and of the learning that such teaching promotes, is good in all years. Teaching is at least satisfactory in 94 per cent lessons and is good or better in 64 per cent of lessons. Teaching is very good or better in 22 per cent of lessons, but unsatisfactory in 6 per cent. The proportions of lessons reaching these standards were similar in all years. The very good teaching is spread around the school; half the staff, and in particular those with posts of responsibility, taught lessons that were either of a very good or excellent quality.

28. At Key Stage 3, teaching is good in all subjects except design and technology,

geography, history, ICT and physical education, where it is satisfactory, and in religious education where teaching is unsatisfactory. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is good in all subjects except design and technology, geography, ICT and physical education, where it is satisfactory; religious education where teaching is unsatisfactory and art and design where teaching is very good. The quality of learning matches the quality of teaching in all subjects.

29. Most teachers have high expectations of their pupils in terms of what they are able to achieve and a high proportion of parents appreciate this. The raising of teachers' awareness as to the capabilities of their pupils was one of the first targets for the school when the headteacher took over and the target has been met most successfully. In history, expectations are very high in Years 10 and 11, where tasks such as interpreting and evaluating a mass of evidence about Germany in the 1920's are common. In religious education on the other hand, too little is expected of the pupils in many lessons and they are often spoon fed in Years 7 to 9 with the result that they do not have to think for themselves. The best example of high expectations is on the vocational course in Years 10 and 11. Here tasks are very demanding and pupils are expected to produce records that would grace any commercial business plan. As a result, many of the pupils on the course are achieving well above the level that would usually be expected given their levels of attainment on starting the course. The high expectations result in pupils learning at a good pace and making better than expected progress during their time at school.

30. These high expectations also manifest themselves in the amount of homework that is set. The good use that is made of homework is playing an important part in the attainment of high standards and in bringing about pupils' good levels of independence in activities such as research. A significant proportion of parents are concerned that the amount of homework varies too much each evening and the inspection team agrees with them. Many subjects set good quality homework, but not all stick to the timetable. The problem is further compounded by some pupils saving homework until the last minute or spending a lot longer on the work than was originally planned.

31. Teachers manage their pupils well in almost all subjects. The management of the lower attaining classes, including those with special educational needs, is often very good. Teachers quietly but firmly insist on respect for others in the class and the pupils respond well to this by showing good levels of concentration and interest in their work. This is particularly the case in English and mathematics where classes are taught by specialists in special educational needs. In art and design too, pupils are managed very well. Here, the teachers are overwhelmingly jolly and enthusiastic, and pupils are caught up in the sense of enjoyment to the extent that they make greater efforts, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Pupils throughout the school respond well to such expectations and make consistently good efforts to improve their standards of attainment.

32. Teachers have a good command of their subjects that allows them to broaden pupils' horizons. In religious education for example, the teacher in Years 7 to 9 has a very wide knowledge of different religions so that the curriculum is particularly broad. Teachers in the special educational needs team give good advice on the different special needs of pupils to class teachers in the individual education plans and provide training and in-class support. The learning support assistants play an important role in the literacy work and in in-class support. They are working very effectively with individual pupils and more widely with the whole class. They keep good records of the pupils' progress which helps in the planning of lessons. Good use is made of resources, including such innovations as interactive white boards and computer projectors, although teachers need to make more use of computers in their everyday teaching.

33. The planning of lessons is generally satisfactory and the effectiveness of the methods

used is usually good. The accurate placing of pupils in groups according to their levels of attainment makes lesson planning easier and teachers are good at choosing activities that motivate the pupils. In French and German for example, very good use is made of games, whilst in English the language of Shakespeare was enlivened by pupils hurling insults at each other. There are weaknesses in planning in some subjects. In physical education, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to evaluate performance whilst in geography, history and religious education the teacher sometimes spends too long talking, rather than allowing the pupils to be active. This leads to pupils' independence being only satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, rather than the good level lower down the school. In art and design, the planning and methods are very good in GCSE courses. For example, one group was carrying out a mock GCSE examination and the teacher took the opportunity to make specific points related to the exam criteria with every pupil. Where a point arose more than once, the whole class was stopped so that all pupils could benefit from the input.

34. Appropriate attention is paid to developing literacy and numeracy skills throughout the school, but varies between subjects and teachers. In one ICT lesson, for example, the teacher asked pupils to read aloud from a worksheet. He deliberately stopped and said that he would like to read a section, as he enjoyed reading. This was important, not just to support pupils' skills in reading but also to send a message to the boys that reading is not "uncool". In physical education, on the other hand, little thought has been given to addressing literacy skills although good work is carried out in developing numeracy skills. The variation in approach throughout the school is a result of a lack of whole school policy in this area.

35. The marking of work is satisfactory overall. There are some subjects, such as art and design, where it is of a very good standard. Here, the pupils are told exactly what they need to do in order to improve so that they understand their own level of attainment and how to achieve better standards. In subjects such as French and German, the assessments that are carried out are inaccurate and lead to pupils having an inflated idea of their own achievement. This is true to a lesser or greater extent in several subjects and pupils' knowledge of their own levels of attainment is unsatisfactory. In religious education the marking of books is unacceptably poor for some GCSE classes, who have barely had their books marked this term.

36. There have been significant improvements in teaching since the previous inspection when one lesson in four failed to reach a satisfactory standard. This serious weakness has been addressed most successfully and teaching is now a strength of the school.

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

37. The quality and range of the curriculum is unsatisfactory and results in underachievement in a number of subjects.

38. In Years 7 to 9, pupils study the subjects of the National Curriculum as well as religious education and personal, social and health education. However, design and technology, ICT and physical education do not meet statutory requirements. The curriculum for design and technology gives very limited access to electronics and no access to the mechanisms areas of the National Curriculum. In physical education, pupils cover only three areas of activity and not the required four. In addition there is not an equal access to the curriculum in that girls cannot study gymnastics, boys cannot study dance and those pupils with special education needs follow an entirely different curriculum. There is not enough use of ICT in subjects across the curriculum to meet requirements. The time allocation to the subjects is appropriate, although the second foreign language is taught in only one lesson each week in Year 9 and this reduces progress for the higher attainers in German. The curriculum is otherwise appropriately broad and balanced. Pupils are taught in ability groups for all subjects and this makes it easier for teachers to meet the needs of all pupils. Good provision is made for the most able, including the gifted and talented pupils. Pupils may enter GCSE in art and design in Year 9; there is a summer school in mathematics for the most able in Year 7, which Year 6 pupils also attend, and there is very good provision for talented musicians and sports men and women throughout the school.

39. At Key Stage 4, all pupils follow a core curriculum, with a range of further subjects from which to choose. However, not all pupils study ICT and the use of computers in other subjects is insufficient both to compensate and to meet statutory requirements. The range of opportunities in design and technology is very limited as pupils cannot study graphics, electronics or metalwork. However, in mathematics, higher attainers are able to enter GCSE in Year 10 and then go on to study additional mathematics to GCSE level. There is a good variety of courses for lower attainers, including Certificates of Achievement, Worklink (where pupils follow a Key Skills course and an ASDAN award scheme) and a National Vocational Qualification in agriculture.

40. The opportunity for pupils to study for a National Vocational Qualification in agriculture is of particular note. The course involves study at a local college in addition to lessons in school and practical work on the school's small farm. The course provides a valuable opportunity for pupils to gain practical skills in farming and gives a good basis for future employment in agriculture or associated industries. However the course brings much wider benefits to pupils than simply improving their chances of employment. Many of the pupils who choose this course have special educational needs; some have learning difficulties and others have problems with behaviour. A significant number of these pupils are in danger of becoming disaffected. The teaching on the course is excellent and the teacher's care and respect for pupils ensures that their response is wholehearted. Pupils work very hard and develop confidence and self-esteem. The course provides a chance for pupils to take responsibility for the welfare of animals, notably to care for the flock of 15 sheep through lambing time. They also work on the farm buildings and fencing and experience real success. However the course is also used most effectively by the teacher to develop pupils' basic skills. For example, pupils practise and improve their ICT skills by using spreadsheets to analyse the income and expenditure for the farm's poultry unit of 24 speckled hens.

41. The failure to teach all the requirements of the National Curriculum means that the equality of access to the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

42. The school offers a good range of extra-curricular opportunities for pupils. Extensive activities take place in music and sport. Across the school, departments offer curricular clubs, activities and educational visits. The physical education department offers a wide range of activities for all abilities and these are well supported by almost half of the pupils, with a total of six members of the department's staff assisted by outside helpers contributing to the organisation, delivery and supervision of these activities.

43. There has been very good progress made since the last inspection in the provision for pupils with special educational needs. All pupils with special educational needs are now integrated into the life of the school rather than being taught in a separate centre. The early placement of pupils into classes of similar levels of attainment now gives all pupils access to a broad and balanced curriculum. Subject specialists teach the lower attaining groups for all subjects with the exception of English, mathematics and some art and design, which are taught by teachers with specific expertise with pupils who have special educational needs. There is an expectation that all teachers will accept responsibility for pupils of all levels of attainment; an expectation that is met by almost all teachers, although there are one or two who still feel that the place for such pupils is in a separate centre.

44. The provision for developing numeracy and literacy skills is satisfactory. Good additional literacy lessons are carried out during assembly time with an additional lesson every week for Year 7 pupils. However, in the subjects of the curriculum, there is too much variation in the attention paid to the teaching of basic skills. The lack of whole school policies in these areas means that teachers do not have sufficient guidance to be able to ensure a consistently good provision.

45. A satisfactory moral, personal and social education programme is provided for pupils throughout their school life, and is proving effective in preparing them for future education, the work place and adult life. All issues of health and sex education and the negative effects of bullying and drug misuse are covered. The school's provision for careers education and guidance is good and includes the opportunity for pupils in Year 10 to have one week's work experience which is well prepared, monitored and reviewed.

46. The school has effective links with the community to support and enhance the pupils' learning. There are links with the Education Business Partnership to allow pupils the chance to experience life in business and the work place and the school uses the local Careers Service to assist in careers guidance. Links with feeder schools and tertiary education providers are good and effectively arranged so that the pupils feel confident and happy in the transition into, and out of Kingstone School.

47. The criticisms in the last inspection report with regard to the curriculum in art and design, music and personal and social education have been addressed. There is now a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. Other weaknesses, however, have developed.

48. The school makes good provision for the personal development of its pupils in terms of their moral and social education, and cultivates their spiritual development satisfactorily. The provision for cultural development is very good. The school is making a good contribution to overcoming the problems of social isolation identified in the Education Action Zone bid.

49. Provision for religious education is taken seriously in all years and all pupils are able to achieve an appropriate qualification in the subject at the end of Year 11. There are opportunities for spiritual reflection, such as Year 8 pupils drawing on the Islamic pillars of faith to consider their own goals in life, or Year 11 pupils appreciating the mystery and poetry of the Genesis account of creation. Instances of aesthetic appreciation were also observed in art and design and music but the absence of a school policy for promoting spiritual

development across the curriculum means that it is neglected in most subjects. The week's assemblies were not acts of collective worship, except for the whole school assembly conducted by the headteacher on the topical theme of 'being tested'. Most tutors do not hold form assemblies on the one morning when pupils are not involved in school assemblies.

50. Assemblies make a good contribution to the moral development of the pupils, expressing the school's values of care and respect for individuals and encouraging high standards of work. The school is committed to the policy of inclusion, making it possible for pupils with moderate learning difficulties to be integrated and taught in mainstream classes. Respect for others is the cornerstone of the personal and social education programme, with its recurring theme of social justice to combat prejudice and discrimination. Thirty pupils have trained as listeners on a partnership programme with Childline, to strengthen the school's anti-bullying strategies. Moral issues are discussed in a number of subjects, ranging from the moral effects of culture clash in Miller's 'A View from the Bridge', to the abortion debate in religious education and environmental concerns in science, religious education and geography. Responsibility for animals is a feature of a vocational course in Years 10 and 11.

51. The school has made a big investment in new programmes for personal and social education, which have strengthened its provision for pupils' social development, and they are being taught well. A common approach is teamwork in small groups, taking on challenges and working together to achieve their aims. Similar opportunities for collaboration exist in art and design, music, design and technology, modern foreign languages and physical education. In addition, there are many opportunities for social interaction in a wide range of extra-curricular activities provided by the school, such as Young Enterprise, the Technology Challenge and public speaking competitions. The well-established Duke of Edinburgh award scheme is very active in the school and led by a dedicated teacher, with some forty pupils preparing for the bronze and silver awards, which include community service. Senior pupils take responsibility as school prefects and help with the literacy project, by hearing pupils read on a regular basis. There is a School Council but representatives are selected by staff rather than their peers. Pupils have the opportunity to express their social concern through charitable fund-raising, which they do generously. The Millennium Concert was highly successful in this respect.

52. Music makes a very significant contribution to the cultural life of the school, which is vibrant. Many pupils are learning instruments and playing in bands. The school has three choirs, one of them a popular boys' choir, Dazzle, which composed its own signature tune in a music workshop. Pupils' appreciation of drama is developed well in the curriculum and through residential visits to London to see the sights and the shows. Two drama workshop productions are staged each year. In all the expressive arts, there is an international flavour to the curriculum, ranging from Greek theatre in English, to work on a Mexican festival, 'The Day of the Dead' in art and design and making hats from different cultures in textiles. Pupils have an impressive knowledge of world artists from the broad education they receive in the art of other cultures. The school seeks to promote pupils' understanding of European culture through the study of modern foreign languages, school trips and sports tours. In history, geography and religious education there are units of work that give pupils insights into the culture and beliefs of societies different from their own.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

53. The standard of pastoral care is good, and the quality of educational support for pupils is satisfactory. There is good provision for pupils' physical welfare and personal guidance. Procedures for child protection meet legal requirements. The school has a written policy on the issue and the designated child protection officer provides training and advice for other members of staff. Arrangements to promote health and safety are thorough. Formal whole

school policies provide clear and detailed guidance on off-site visits and the welfare of pupils with asthma. There is good first aid cover and proper arrangements for checks of equipment. The school has carried out extensive risk assessments in all areas of its work. High risk departments have special responsibilities for assessing their activities and drawing up appropriate procedures, which they fulfil conscientiously. The science department, for example, has a good awareness of health and safety issues and a very good departmental health and safety policy.

54. There are good procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance. The school has recently introduced a policy of first day contact with the family of any pupil who is absent without explanation. This is proving very effective in practice and is helping to keep down the number of absentees. Pupils are very much aware of the policy and have no doubt that it will uncover any attempted truancy. The school's attendance procedures meet legal requirements. Registers are called and completed at the beginning of every school session, and accurate records of attendance, absence and punctuality are compiled on the school's computer system. Form tutors, heads of year and senior staff continually monitor the performance of individuals and groups of pupils. They follow up all instances of unexplained absence and take action where pupils have poor rates of attendance, sending home letters and in serious cases bringing in the education welfare officer. Good attendance is encouraged through inter-form competition, with the form with the best attendance in the year group being commended in the weekly whole school assembly.

55. The school has good systems for maintaining discipline and promoting good behaviour. It has high expectations, which it communicates to pupils via its code of conduct. This is prominently displayed in every classroom. The system of sanctions and rewards is clear and reasonable, giving due recognition to good behaviour, hard work and pupils' achievements. The type of rewards which the school uses are appropriate to its younger pupils, but are not as well suited to the requirements of 15 and 16 year olds. There are some inconsistencies between teachers in the use of sanctions and in their management of behaviour in class. However, pupils think that members of staff are, for the most part, fair and consistent. A minority feel that detentions are an ineffective punishment. They believe that the "on report" system has a greater effect and significantly improves the behaviour of those who have incurred this sanction.

56. There are very effective arrangements for dealing with the most difficult and disaffected pupils. For example, the "Worklink" curriculum takes their needs into account and is having some success in preventing them from dropping out of education altogether. The "Pastoral Support Programme" also plays an important part in keeping them in school. Pupils whose behaviour gives rise to serious concern, and are in danger of being excluded, are put on the programme and through it are helped to modify their attitudes and conduct. The vocational agriculture programme in Years 10 and 11 is especially effective in motivating pupils who are in danger of becoming disaffected.

57. The school's measures for dealing with bullying are good. The school has a formal anti-bullying policy and includes an anti-bullying statement in the home/school contract. Preventative work is included in the programme of personal and social education, and good levels of supervision at lunch time limit opportunities for aggression and bullying to occur. Nevertheless, the school's efforts have not been entirely successful. Pupils quote cases where bullying has not been dealt with effectively. It is also apparent that the "no snitching" code still exists, and as a result some incidents go unreported.

58. As at the time of the previous inspection, pupils feel happy and secure in school and value the help that they receive from members of staff. The school has a welcoming atmosphere and makes good arrangements for the induction of newcomers so that they quickly settle down and feel at home. There is a sound pastoral structure, based on a system of form tutors and heads of year who remain with the same pupil groups during the latter's time in school. The tutor's role includes teaching the weekly lessons in personal and social education. This gives form tutors the opportunity to build stable relationships with the pupils in their care. They get to know them well as individuals and have genuine concern for their welfare and progress. Pupils for their part have confidence in their tutors, and therefore feel free to seek help from them, but if they wish they can obtain advice from other sources. For example, they have access to heads of year and the school nurse. Those who feel more at ease with fellow pupils can talk to the "CHIPS" mediators, who have been specially trained to be good listeners.

59. There are good formal procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development. The school makes effective arrangements for recording and tracking pupils' attitudes, behaviour and progress across all subjects. It has a programme of pupil reviews which provides for each pupil to have two interviews per year with his or her form tutor. These sessions are used for discussions on progress and problems, and for individual target setting.

60. The last inspection identified registration sessions as a weakness in the pastoral system, saying that their usefulness for pupils was variable. The situation is largely unchanged. The quality of the extended registration sessions that were observed during the inspection was uneven. Some were primarily administration periods for teachers, combined with social time for pupils, whilst others were immensely useful in extending the formal lesson in personal and social education.

61. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are unsatisfactory because there are several subjects that have important weaknesses in their assessment arrangements.

62. Assessment procedures are good in mathematics, science, art and design and music. In both mathematics and science, regular testing throughout Years 7 to 9 provides good indications of pupils' attainment in terms of National Curriculum levels and, in mathematics, pupils are informed of these levels so that they are aware of the progress they are making. This good practice continues in Years 10 and 11 using GCSE grades. Teachers in art and design use the findings from assessment particularly effectively to inform pupils of what they need to do to improve and hence to encourage and support progress. There are good assessment schemes in music; the department has introduced testing of pupils' attainment in music when they enter the school so that it will be possible to measure their progress and compare the progress of different groups. The progress made by pupils is consistently good in these subjects because teachers have a clear idea of pupils' attainment and so can plan their future lessons to maximise the pupils' potential.

63. In several subjects, including modern foreign languages, geography and history, assessment is more effective in Years 10 and 11 than it is in Years 7 to 9. In the GCSE

courses in Years 10 and 11, pupils are tested regularly and given clear indications of how well they are doing in relation to GCSE grades. In Years 7 to 9, pupils are tested but the tests are conducted against the department's own standards and not in comparison with national expectations. All subjects, where appropriate, assess pupils against national standards at the end of Year 9 as they are required to do. However these assessments are insecure in design and technology, geography, history, ICT, modern foreign languages and physical education, because they are arrived at only on the basis of an assessment in Year 9 rather than being built up over a period of time using the outcomes from regular testing against National Curriculum criteria. In these subjects, the progress made by pupils tends to be satisfactory, rather than the good progress that they make in other subjects.

64. In design and technology, ICT and physical education, assessment procedures are unsatisfactory for pupils in all year groups. In design and technology the department has only just begun to plan assessments that meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum. In ICT there is satisfactory assessment for pupils following the GCSE and 'Worklink' courses in Years 10 and 11. However, the assessment of other pupils' attainment in the subject has been planned but not yet put into practice. In physical education, the assessment on the GCSE course is satisfactory but there has been little progress towards the assessment required by the new National Curriculum.

65. The school makes satisfactory use of assessment data to inform planning. It now receives good assessment data from the primary schools and uses that data to raise teachers' awareness of pupils' capabilities. Assessment information is used well to place pupils in bands or sets and these groupings are generally effective in enabling pupils of all levels of attainment to make good progress overall. Assessment data is also used to set GCSE targets for pupils and to identify pupils who are under-achieving in Year 11 so that they can be given extra support and encouragement. Within individual subjects, the use which departments make of their assessment information is broadly satisfactory but inevitably varies according to the effectiveness of their procedures and the reliability of the data.

66. The assessment of pupils with special educational needs is good, with accurate records being kept on all pupils. Pupils are placed on the appropriate stage of the register and move up or down the stages according to their progress. Good use is made of advisory and support services for specialist assessment and advice about individual pupils. The reviews of statements and individual education plans are carried out efficiently and regularly.

67. The monitoring of pupils' academic progress is satisfactory. Teachers in all subjects supply information for regular form tutor reviews which provide an appropriate means of identifying, for example, pupils who are not working as hard as they should. However these reviews have, until recently, tended to concentrate on pupils' attitude, effort and behaviour rather than on their academic attainment. The school is aware that there is scope for using these reviews more effectively to record pupils' attainment across all subjects and hence identify any areas where pupils are doing particularly well or where they need additional support.

68. The school has made unsatisfactory progress in improving assessment since the previous inspection. There is now a satisfactory assessment policy for the school and there is efficient transfer of assessment data from the primary schools. The school has introduced annual reviews of the individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs. However the inconsistency in the quality of assessment procedures in the various subjects remains a weakness for the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

69. The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents. The part that they play in their children's learning has a positive impact on attainment and progress. The position is broadly unchanged from the last inspection.

70. Parents have good opinions of the school. There is a very high level of approval for its expectations of pupils, the progress which children make, and the quality of teaching. 92% of parents who completed the inspection's questionnaire also said that they would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems. Only relatively small minorities expressed dissatisfaction with any area of the school's work. 17% felt that the school did not work closely with parents. 16% were unhappy with the amount of homework, and 15% thought that they were not well informed about their children's progress. Over a quarter of the questionnaires that were sent out were returned, indicating a good level of interest in and support for the school.

71. The quality of information for parents is satisfactory. They are adequately informed of the school's aims and objectives via the school prospectus. In addition, the school also produces a useful "Parents' Handbook". Parents receive a basic outline of the curriculum from the same sources. Parents also receive good information on field courses in geography, and the English department provides details of setting arrangements and coursework for all years. The quality and amount of curricular information is not consistent across all departments and parents are not automatically provided with details of the topics to be covered in each subject. Provision of curricular information is not extensive at whole school level either, and there are some minor statutory breaches. The governors' annual report to parents does not include the sections required by law on the school's sporting aims and achievements and development of links with the community. Staff and governors are aware of the need to improve information on the curriculum and have identified improving parents' understanding of curricular matters as a key issue in the school development plan for the year 2000/01.

72. Information on pupils' progress is satisfactory. Arrangements for parents' consultation evenings are good, and give parents good opportunities to discuss with members of staff the two written reports which they receive each year. The quality of these reports is satisfactory overall, but uneven across subjects. The sections on art and design are good, whilst the reports on progress in several other subjects are weak. Generally, subject reports are not diagnostic, focus on attitudes and effort rather than standards, and lack comparative information. The targets for improvement which are included in the reports are usually generic rather than specific to subjects.

73. The provision of day-to-day information on the life of the school and on pupils' learning is good. The headteacher sends out regular newsletters, and special letters inform parents of events in school and trips. Pupils use homework diaries to record homework, merits and other useful information. The diaries provide an adequate day-to-day line of communication between home and school. At times parents and teachers use them to enter into a dialogue. Their effectiveness depends on them being properly used by pupils and regularly checked by tutors. Younger pupils usually write them up methodically, but older pupils, particularly those in Year 11, are less conscientious. Their entries are sometimes

irregular and brief. When this is the case it seriously impairs the value of homework diaries as a source of information for parents.

74. The parental contribution to pupils' learning at home and at school is satisfactory. Nearly all parents are interested in their children's progress. They read and sign homework diaries and the majority attend consultation evenings. The level of support for these evenings is variable, but in general has improved since the last inspection. The most recent consultation evening for parents of pupils in Year 7 was extremely well attended. There are good links between pupils' families and pastoral staff. Parents will get in touch with form tutors and heads of year if they have concerns over their children's progress or general well-being. There is comparatively little parental involvement with the work of subject departments of the school. However the physical education department has strong links with a number of parents who assist with teams and fixtures, and in some cases act as coaches in extra-curricular sports. The majority of parents contribute indirectly to their children's learning. There is an active parent teacher association, the "Friends of Kingstone School", which raises funds to provide extra resources. All but a few parents are strongly supportive of the school's aims, objectives and ethos. They accept both the letter and spirit of the home/school agreement by ensuring that their children attend school regularly and by co-operating with staff over behaviour and discipline. This form of parental support makes a significant contribution to pupils' attainment and progress.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

75. The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher and senior staff. The very good leadership provided by the headteacher has led to a rapid rise in standards since his appointment. He has provided a clear direction that has led to a very strong commitment to improve among all staff. Many staff responded positively to even the most minor criticisms of their teaching during the inspection and had improved their practice by the end of the week. Even the site manager takes some responsibility for improving standards in the way that he regularly reminds pupils about tucking shirts in or behaving sensibly. He has been successful in turning around a school that was in decline and that had serious weaknesses identified at the time of the previous inspection to the extent that the school is now particularly effective in meeting its aim of providing a good education for all its pupils. All members of the senior management team lead by example, particularly in the classroom. One, for example, takes responsibility for a vocational course in Years 10 and 11 for pupils in danger of becoming disaffected whilst the headteacher now teaches religious education in order to improve the standard of teaching in the subject.

76. At the heart of the school's improvement have been the excellent systems that the school has for monitoring and evaluating its performance, particularly teaching. The senior staff monitor eight lessons each week, which has allowed them to build up a comprehensive picture of the strengths and weaknesses of individual members of staff. Targets are set for all teachers and their progress towards these targets is carefully monitored and evaluated. Where teaching is found to be unsatisfactory, teachers are monitored and supported more closely. They are, for example, provided with extra non-teaching time to observe teaching of a higher quality and are monitored three times each week. In many cases this strategy proves to be highly successful, not just in improving unsatisfactory teaching but also in raising the standard of satisfactory teaching to a good or very good level. Where the standards cannot be raised the headteacher does not shirk from taking disciplinary action, which has been partly responsible for the high turnover of staff since his arrival. The overall effects of these approaches are observed in the dramatic improvement in teaching since the last inspection, when one lesson in four failed to reach a satisfactory standard, and the high proportion of teachers who taught lessons that were either of very good or outstanding quality during this inspection.

77. The other important strand to the monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance is the reviews of departments that take place three times each year. These reviews each have a specific focus, such as examination results and progress towards the targets identified in the departmental development plans. The reviews are rigorous and searching, leading to carefully constructed plans for improvement.

78. Each year the management team reviews the progress that has been made by the school, draws up priorities for the next year's work and initiates plans to address them. The priorities are very well thought through and are always firmly rooted in raising standards. Even standards that are above average, such as the attendance rate, are targeted for improvement and the success of the very good initiatives that have been put into place are clear in the improvement of standards in all aspects of the life of the school. Responsibilities are delegated to staff in posts of responsibility who respond well to their tasks. The pastoral system and many subjects are managed well, although there is a clear link between the quality of management of a subject and the standards achieved. There is, for example, very good management in art and design and mathematics where standards are rising rapidly, whereas in design and technology and religious education the quality of the management has been unsatisfactory and has resulted in underachievement. The leadership and management of special educational needs is very good and has had immense impact on the school in encouraging a positive approach to inclusion of pupils with special educational needs.

79. The financial planning in the school is good. The school receives a budget that is broadly average when the grant allocation from the Education Action Zone is included. The spending of the grant has been targeted well and has helped to raise standards in areas such as the achievement of boys and the most able. The deputy headteacher and bursar keep a very tight rein on finance and all spending over a given amount must be carefully justified. The school applies appropriately the principles of best value. It compares its performance with the highest attaining schools in the authority and evaluates its spending against its outcomes. There is, however, little consultation with parents to gain their views on the school. The school runs smoothly and efficiently on a day to day basis, making appropriate use of new technology. Overall, the school makes good use of its resources and is providing good value for money.

80. The one weakness in the school's management is the failure of the governing body to fulfil its statutory duties. The pupils are not receiving their entitlement to be taught the full National Curriculum in design and technology, ICT or physical education. The governors have not set targets for the performance of the headteacher or other members of the senior management team, which is both their wish and entitlement. The frequency of acts of collective worship does not meet requirements and there is some information missing from the annual report of the governing body. However, governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and can discuss knowledgeably aspects such as examination results and finance. They play a satisfactory part in shaping the school's future, keeping a watchful eye on performance and are willing to challenge any perceived weaknesses. Overall, the governing body discharges its responsibilities in a satisfactory manner.

81. The school has sufficient teachers to meet its requirements and they are matched well to the demands of the curriculum. The arrangements for the professional development of teachers are very good. The monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching has been conducted according to teacher appraisal regulations. Additionally, several departments are involved in a self-review and evaluation pilot scheme that involves observation of lessons and evaluative feedback to teachers. These experiences mean that the school is well poised for the introduction of performance management regulations. Training of teachers is well planned and is linked to school and departmental development plans and individual needs. Good support is provided for newly qualified teachers and other staff new to the school and it is well planned through the school's induction programme. The provision is strong within departments and also offers newly qualified teachers a 'buddy' contact with a more established teacher, as well as appropriate contact with members of the school's senior management team. The work of education support assistants is well organised and monitored by the special educational needs co-ordinator and they receive good quality professional training.

82. Most subjects have sufficient resources, although there are problems for some subjects such as music caused by insufficient access to computers. This is leading to a failure to ensure that computers are used appropriately in all subjects. It also results in some underachievement in ICT in Years 10 and 11, where there is not enough use of computers in other subjects for those pupils who do not study information technology to GCSE level.

83. The accommodation at the school is unsatisfactory. The arrangements for indoor activities in physical education are poor with no proper gymnasium or sports hall. The small school hall is unsuitable for some activities such as basketball and badminton and is taken out of use completely when examinations are taking place. This leads to a very restricted curriculum and, in part, is responsible for National Curriculum requirements not being met resulting in some underachievement. The hall is also shared with drama lessons, which restricts the amount of drama that can be offered to pupils. There is a clear difference in the progress made by pupils who are taught their science in classrooms as opposed to laboratories, but the new laboratories have been built and will be in use shortly.

84. The management of the school has improved significantly at all levels since the time of the previous inspection. The weakness in financial planning, identified as a key issue, has been addressed most successfully.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

85. In order to raise standards and the improve the quality of education still further, the school should:

- (1) Improve the teaching in religious education so that all pupils are being appropriately challenged. (Paragraph: 29)
- (2) Ensure that a suitable curriculum is taught in design and technology and physical education and that all subjects make appropriate use of ICT. (Paragraph: 38)
- (3) Ensure that assessments made of pupils' attainment in Years 7 to 9 are accurate. (Paragraph: 64)
- (4) Implement a whole school policy for the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills. (Paragraph: 44)

The school is already taking action on all of the above issues.

In addition, the following minor weaknesses exist:

- The governing body has not set targets for the performance of the headteacher and senior management team. (Paragraph: 80)
- There is not enough information about progress on pupils' reports. (Paragraph: 72)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	175
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	58

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	19	42	30	6	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	634
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	60

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	29
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	128

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	22
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	19

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.4
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	54	54	108

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	25	29	32
	Girls	38	30	31
	Total	63	59	63
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	59 (56)	55 (66)	58 (63)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	16 (22)	30 (33)	25 (34)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	31	30	39
	Girls	44	33	39
	Total	75	63	78
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70 (64)	58 (56)	74 (68)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	36 (34)	35 (18)	38 (36)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	1999	60	50	110

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	20	56	59
	Girls	30	45	49
	Total	50	101	108
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	45 (43)	92 (91)	98 (97)
	National	46.6 (43.3)	90.9 (88.5)	95.8 (94.0)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	37 (36)
	National	38 (36.8)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	634
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	1	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	21	2
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	37
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	161

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24
Key Stage 4	21

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1 399 357
Total expenditure	1 370 675
Expenditure per pupil	2 266
Balance brought forward from previous year	41 925
Balance carried forward to next year	70 607

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	634
Number of questionnaires returned	168

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	33	57	0	7	2
My child is making good progress in school.	39	56	3	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	57	6	5	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	55	2	14	3
The teaching is good.	43	49	4	2	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	48	2	13	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	35	1	5	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	31	0	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	36	44	4	13	4
The school is well led and managed.	52	35	7	5	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	50	5	4	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	42	41	7	8	2

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

ENGLISH

86. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests the proportion of pupils at the age of 14 achieving level 5 and above was in line with the national average. The proportion achieving the higher levels of 6 and above, however, was below the national average. The average points score which pupils achieved was close to the national average but below average for schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. Results in English were similar to those in mathematics but worse than those in science. In each of the past four years girls have performed significantly better than boys with the difference generally being greater than in most schools. Test results in English dropped in 1997 but then rose steadily in the next two years to return to the level of 1996. Test results in 2000 show a very significant improvement on the 1999 figures to a level that is well above the national average. The 2000 results place the school in the top five percent of schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. Girls are still performing better than boys.

87. In the 1999 GCSE examination in English, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C was below the national average. A lower proportion of pupils than in most schools was entered for the examination and the average points score per pupil was below the national average. Girls achieved better results than boys, but the results of both boys and girls were poorer in English than in their other subjects. There has been no consistent pattern to results since 1996, with 1998 being the best year. Results in 2000 show a significant improvement on those in 1999. This improvement has been mainly due to the improved performance of boys.

88. In the 1999 GCSE examination in English literature the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C was well above the national average. Only the higher attaining classes were entered, however, and the average points score per pupil at the school was well below the national average. Both boys and girls achieved similar results and did better in English literature than in their other subjects. Results have shown good improvement since 1997. Results in 2000 have maintained the same level as those in 1999 with a slightly higher percentage of pupils being entered.

89. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are better than those expected for pupils of the same age nationally. They reflect the most recent test results and represent a good level of achievement. High attaining pupils express complex ideas clearly in speech and have a wide vocabulary. They have a very good understanding of literature. For example, in a study of "The Crucible" they are aware of the parallels between McCarthyism and the Salem witch-hunts. Many enjoy reading. They write in well-controlled sentences and their spelling and punctuation are largely accurate. Low attaining pupils confine their speech mainly to short phrases but their speaking and listening skills are adequate for most purposes. They read straightforward texts with enough understanding to explain the main facts about what they have read. In their writing they make many basic mistakes but the reader can understand what they mean.

90. Standards of attainment in the work of 16 year olds as seen during the inspection are in line with the national average. These standards show an improvement on the 1999 results and reflect the results from 2000. Pupils are achieving well. High attaining pupils speak effectively. They express ideas in a relatively sophisticated way. They are highly competent readers. They understand the way writers use literary devices such as ambiguity. For example, they see the two layers of meaning in Owen's poem about soldiers in the first world war who "sang their way to the siding-shed". They support their comments on literature by

close reference to the texts. They write for a wide range of purposes with good control of language. Low attaining pupils are competent enough in their speech to explain their work in simple terms. They draw straightforward inferences from what they read. For example, they understand the feelings of Romeo and Juliet in the early scenes of the play. Their writing is brief and mechanically weak. They often leave out full stops and misspell common words, but they make good use of drafting in order to improve what they have written.

91. Standards of literacy are satisfactory. Most pupils are competent readers. There are weaknesses in writing, with poor spelling being noted particularly in geography and history. All subjects except for design and technology have written policies for improving literacy but in many cases these have not yet been fully implemented. For example, in project work in religious education pupils do too much copying from works of reference. There is not yet a fully co-ordinated policy across all subjects so that the good practice in some areas can be spread throughout the school. For example, other subjects could learn from art and design where worksheets are carefully matched to pupils' reading abilities. The newly appointed literacy co-ordinator has sensible plans to conduct an audit to find out what good practice already exists in school, so that a school-wide policy can be established.

92. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress at both key stages. They benefit greatly from the setting system where they receive lessons designed to suit their ability. In most lessons teachers are aware of pupils' specific needs as expressed in their individual education plans. However, at the time of the inspection some of these were in the stage of being reviewed and teachers were uncertain about their precise needs. The support given to pupils with special educational needs by learning support assistants is effective. The literacy group sessions are of good quality and benefit those pupils who attend.

93. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good. The standard of teaching is not adversely affected by the fact that a significant proportion of lessons is taught by non-specialists. Subject specialists teach effectively where good subject knowledge is most required, as in the study of literature at Key Stage 4. Many of the lowest ability sets are very well taught by teachers from the special needs department, who have the necessary expertise in teaching basic literacy skills. Lessons are well-planned. The attention of pupils is often held by lessons being divided into a number of short activities. In others the interest of pupils is captured by the exciting nature of the task. An example was seen in a Year 8 lesson in which pupils enjoyed using the language of Shakespeare in order to hurl insults at each other. In other lessons judicious use is made of video recordings and computers. Pupils do not, however, receive enough opportunity to use their own initiative. In the best lessons teachers have high expectations of pupils. Thus a Year 9 class was expected to realise the symbolic importance of the building of the church door in "The Crucible". In a Year 7 lesson with pupils on the register of special educational needs, the teacher insisted on the highest standards of listening, speaking, reading and writing at all times along with constant encouragement. In other lessons, however, expectations are not as high. Pupils respond accordingly, although their concentration, effort and pace of work are rarely less than good. Teachers' management of pupils is very good. They do not confront pupils aggressively and classrooms are generally ordered places where relationships between teacher and pupils are good. In the few unsatisfactory lessons, however, teachers do not have adequate techniques to deal with restless pupils, who therefore dominate the lesson.

and prevent others from learning. Teachers mark work conscientiously. Their comments on books show pupils what they need to do to improve.

94. Management of the English department is good. The emphasis on the raising of pupils' standards has met with clear success, mainly so far at Key Stage 3. The department's development plan supports the drive for higher standards. Appropriate schemes of work have been written to meet the needs of pupils of differing abilities. Teaching is monitored so that teachers are made aware of their strengths and weaknesses. However, the work of pupils is not monitored in order to check that all teachers are succeeding in raising pupils' standards. The department does not use the statistical data available to track the progress of individual pupils in order to set targets and provide support where necessary.

95. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. Pupils' attainment has improved, particularly at Key Stage 3. The standard of teaching and learning has improved at both key stages and is now good. The higher attaining pupils are now given work at an appropriate level of challenge. The curriculum has been reviewed and all classes are now given enough chance to study literature.

96. In the 1999 GCSE examination in drama the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C was below the national average. All pupils gained grades A* to G. Girls achieved better results than boys. Results in the examination in 2000 are similar to those in 1999 overall but there is little difference between the results of girls and boys. Results have been much the same over the last four years except for 1998, when they were significantly better. In the work seen during the inspection pupils' standards of attainment at the age of 16 are in line with the national average. The subject is becoming a more popular choice than in previous years and is attracting pupils across the whole ability range. Performance skills on average are satisfactory and the more able make good and confident use of voice, gesture, facial expression and body movement. They respond well to the need to consider other actors in both scripted and unscripted performances. Teaching is satisfactory. Pupils respond well and steady progress is seen during lessons. Pupils are not, however, given sufficient opportunity to develop the skills of constructive criticism either of their own performance or that of others. Standards in drama are also affected adversely by the fact that neither of the two teaching areas is totally suitable. Standards of attainment have shown satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

MATHEMATICS

97. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests at age 14 the proportions of pupils attaining Level 5 and above and level 6 and above were below to the national average. The average points score in 1999 was broadly in line with the national average for all schools. When compared with schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, the results were well below average. The attainment of girls was broadly in line with that of boys and the results in mathematics were in line with those in English but below those in science. There was dramatic improvement in results in 2000 to a level that is above the national average and well above the average for similar schools.

98. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to C was well below the national average. Girls attained higher results than the boys did. Pupils attained results in mathematics that were significantly lower than in the other subjects that they studied. There has been an improvement in results over the past three years in line with the national trend. There was an outstanding improvement in results in 2000. In 2000, higher attaining pupils were entered for GCSE mathematics in Year 10 and all achieved grades A* to C.

99. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards at the age of 14 are above the level expected of 14 year olds nationally. Pupils of all levels of attainment are achieving well. They present their work well in tables so that they can describe the results of their analyses of investigations. The numeracy skills of the low attaining pupils are good for their level of ability. They confidently add and subtract large numbers and they multiply numbers by single digit numbers accurately. High attainers demonstrate good understanding of shapes when they calculate volumes of prisms. They calculate, for example, the areas of circles, triangles and trapezium cross sections and use these measurements to calculate volumes. Middle attainers progress from plotting bar and pie charts from frequency tables to plotting graphs from grouped frequency charts.

100. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards that pupils are attaining at the age of 16 are above the level expected of pupils of the same age nationally. This represents a good level of achievement for pupils of all levels of attainment and reflects the rising trend in standards. In completing coursework, lower attaining pupils identify and obtain the necessary information to solve the problems in the 'Hidden Faces' problem. They present data in an organised way and analyse their results. The high attainers apply the mathematics they have learnt to problems such as investigating the gradient function. A very high standard of work was seen by pupils who have already achieved grades A* to C in GCSE. They confidently simplify linear algebraic fractions and go on to simplify quadratic fractions. Their understanding of calculus is well developed and they differentiate expressions to calculate the gradient of curves. They have a good understanding of maximum and minimum points on a curve. Low attainers plot graphs from frequency tables, presenting them well. The middle attainers demonstrate a good understanding of data handling. They calculate the probability of combined events using tree diagrams and use their answers to solve problems.

101. Levels of numeracy across the curriculum are in line with the standard expected nationally. However, there is no strategy in place for improving standards by developing and co-ordinating numeracy across the school. Pupils demonstrate sound skills in numeracy in science. Graphs are usually drawn well although the axes are not always labelled. Higher and middle attainers can calculate speed, but the lower attaining pupils find this difficult. Pupils apply their understanding of spatial concepts with reference to geometric shapes and proportion. In business education, high and middle-attaining pupils draw graphs of product output and show profit/loss break-even points. They use basic calculations to obtain net profit, but need to be reminded of how to calculate percentages. In physical education, pupils in Years 10 to 11 use graphs of different types and present information well. In the Worklink programme, lower attaining pupils measure lengths accurately and, in order to analyse the time taken to take 3 basketball shots, they time their colleagues precisely. Their budget for their holidays, adding and subtracting to 2 decimal places.

102. The overall quality of teaching is good throughout the school resulting in good learning. There are many good features of the teaching and teachers demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of their subject. This is illustrated by very clear explanation of tasks and the confident and appropriate use of mathematical terms. This promotes the respect of the pupils. The very good relationships between pupils and teachers promote an eagerness to learn. The teaching of basic literacy is sound and the teaching of numeracy skills is good. There are good displays around the classrooms of key words and these are introduced in lessons. Teachers plan lessons well; there are clear learning objectives within effective structures. Teachers generally set a brisk pace that motivates pupils and sustains their concentration. There is good effort and concentration by pupils and a good pace of working and amount of work achieved in lessons. This has a positive effect on their acquisition and consolidation of skills and understanding. Teachers generally assess pupils' knowledge effectively, but they do occasionally miss opportunities to assess pupils'

understanding by using questions and answers. Teachers' expectations are high, leading to pupils being challenged. For example, the teacher quickly moves from the operation of working out the formulae for a sequence using first differences to using second differences for quadratic formulae. Teaching methods are generally good. Teachers use an effective combination of explanation, discussion, and individual work. The structure of the lesson is particularly good where the lesson is broken down into a variety of activities that maintains the pupils' interest and motivation. The management of pupils is very good and as a result pupils' behaviour is very good enabling them to make the best progress. They listen attentively to their teachers and are polite and courteous. The very good relationship between teachers and pupils promotes a good working atmosphere in the classroom. Consequently, pupils are keen to progress and they make gains in understanding and experiencing new mathematics. Teachers work well with educational support assistants to ensure that pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Teachers plan homework well so that it consolidates and extends learning. Marking is thorough, some teachers write constructive comments that help pupils to see where they have made mistakes. However this is not consistently practised.

103. The subject is very well managed and the quality of leadership is very good. The staff work very well together and the whole department places a high emphasis on raising achievement. They are a dedicated and committed team. There is a good action plan that reflects the school's priorities for raising achievement. There are good procedures for assessing pupils' performance in mathematics and their progress is tracked well as they progress through the school. Teachers work well with the primary schools to ensure good continuity, whilst the Numeracy Summer School for the high attainers from both Years 6 and 7 was successful in motivating and improving pupils' achievement.

104. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. Pupils' standards of achievement have improved. Higher proportions of pupils are entered for GCSE. The quality of teaching and learning has improved. This is the effect of better leadership of the department and the improved management of pupils.

SCIENCE

105. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests for pupils at the age of 14, the average points score which pupils gained was above both the national average and the average for schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. The proportion of pupils gaining levels 5 and above matched the national average and the proportion gaining levels 6 and above was above average. Boys and girls gained similar results in 1999 and on average over the period 1996 to 1999. Results in science in 1999 were better than those in English and mathematics. The results for 2000 were similar to those in 1999 except that the proportion of pupils gaining level 5 increased, indicating an improvement in results for middle attaining pupils. Test results have been consistently above the national average since 1996 and are now further above average than they were at that time.

106. In the 1999 GCSE double award science examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C was above both the national average and the average for similar schools. Girls gained better results than boys in 1999 but the attainment of boys and girls was similar in 2000. Pupils gained better results in science in 1999 than in most other subjects in the school. The proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades A and A* improved significantly between 1999 and 2000.

107. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment at the ages of 14 and 16 is above the national average and reflects that indicated by recent test and examination results. Most pupils have secure basic knowledge and understanding of the topics they have studied recently. Their skills in investigations are similar to those in other aspects of their work in science. Higher attaining pupils often achieve standards that are well above those expected for their age, particularly in the separate science courses in Years 10 and 11. For example, pupils' books show that they have successfully studied the details of cell division and can construct ionic equations. Higher attainers in Year 9 link the organ systems in animals and plants to life processes such as respiration and photosynthesis. Lower attaining pupils, although understanding the main ideas, often lack detail and precision in their spoken and written answers. Pupils' numeracy skills are broadly average for their age; they have good skills in drawing graphs. Although the department does emphasise the importance of 'key words', some middle and lower attaining pupils have difficulty in spelling both 'everyday' words and specialist terms.

108. Pupils enter the school with attainment that matches the national average. They respond well to the good teaching they receive and generally achieve better test and examination results than might be expected at the ages of 14 and 16. The department provides good opportunities for pupils of all levels of attainment to achieve well. In Years 10 and 11, gifted and talented pupils, along with other higher attainers, make good progress in the more challenging GCSE separate science courses. Lower attainers follow a Certificate of Achievement course which is successful in motivating and encouraging them. These pupils are making good progress and many are to be entered for the single award GCSE examination so that they have the chance to achieve their best possible examination results. Pupils with special educational needs are taught in the group that is most appropriate in relation to their attainment in science. They receive sensitive and effective support from teachers and support assistants and make similar progress to other pupils in the group.

109. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. All teachers have good, detailed subject knowledge and plan their lessons carefully. They give clear instructions and explanations and provide notes and worksheets of good quality so that pupils have ready access to reliable information and learn effectively. Most activities are appropriate for the particular groups. However there is a shortage of variety in the activities which pupils experience over time and teachers make little use of, for example, discussion activities, role play or pupils finding information for themselves and presenting it to the class. Teachers do make occasional use of computers in lessons, sometimes for simulations or demonstrations involving sensors and datalogging. However, the department does not yet make sufficient use of information technology to support learning in science.

110. There are a few lessons in which teaching is excellent or very good. For example, a group of lower attainers in Year 9 responded enthusiastically to the very high expectations of their teacher. The task had been skillfully broken down into small and manageable steps and, by the end of the lesson, all pupils had succeeded in constructing several chemical formulae for themselves. In a Year 7 lesson, pupils worked sensibly and enthusiastically when they were given considerable independence in carrying out and writing up their investigation into solubility. In the occasional unsatisfactory lesson, the pace of the early part of the lesson was slow, some pupils became restless and the teacher's management of their behaviour was

insufficient to maintain satisfactory learning for the class.

111. In most lessons, pupils show good attitudes to their work in science; they concentrate well and apply themselves willingly to the tasks they are set. There has, however, been an inequality in the allocation of accommodation to various groups during the unexpectedly long period before the new laboratories are ready for occupation. Attitudes among those pupils who have been taught predominantly in cramped classrooms, where practical work is almost impossible, are not as good as they should be and their progress is slower than that of pupils in other classes. The learning in these groups has been significantly restricted by the poor accommodation.

112. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The department is well organised and functions effectively on a day-to-day basis. There is some monitoring of teaching and learning but it is not being used sufficiently to identify and overcome inconsistencies in the quality of teaching that pupils receive. Similarly, there are many teaching skills within the department but they are not being shared in order to ensure consistently good or very good teaching for all groups. The forthcoming move into three new laboratories provides an ideal opportunity to establish more of a team approach to the work of the department.

113. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. Since that time, the attainment in science at the age of 14 and the GCSE results have both improved from average to above average. Pupils in middle and higher attaining groups no longer under-achieve. Teaching has also improved; there is now more teaching which is good or better and there are fewer unsatisfactory lessons. However, the use of information technology remains a weakness for the department.

ART AND DESIGN

114. In 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C was below the national average. Pupils' performance in art and design was similar to that in the other subjects that they studied. The gap between boys' performance and that of girls was greater than found nationally and remained so in 2000, although overall results showed a significant improvement.

115. In work seen during the inspection, attainment by the age of 14 is in line with standards expected for average pupils of the same age nationally. Pupils are achieving well in a variety of two and three-dimensional media. Drawing from observation develops progressively from Year 7 through exercises that concentrate on shape and pattern using line. By the end of Year 9 most pupils record with reasonable accuracy. Good use is made of pattern and colour. Pupils have a good knowledge of the work of artists and their characteristic styles. This is reflected in their work, for example in applying the style of a chosen artist to the design of a shoe. Sketchbooks show that most pupils research projects, evaluate their work and try to improve it. A good example is the work on the theme of 'self' in which pupils develop their ideas through a number of stages to produce a construction based on their personal interests. Pupils are able to realise their intentions effectively over a wide range of imaginative subjects because basic art skills are well developed. A small group of gifted and talented pupils, whose work is of a high standard for their age, is on course to achieve GCSE grades at the end of Year 9.

116. In work seen during the inspection attainment by the age of 16 is broadly average. Pupils are achieving well, given their levels of attainment when they started the course. Standards in the current Year 10 are higher reflecting the benefits of improvements in the quality of teaching and learning over the last year. The majority of pupils research their work

diligently. They are aware of themselves as artists and many are capable of working with considerable independence. Skills of working with ceramics are developed well through a process of modelling. Macquettes are used to plan work and to refine ideas. Effective use is made of ICT both for research and to produce and alter images.

117. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. The staff are relatively new to the school and the quality of their teaching has not yet had time to show through in terms of pupils achievement. Standards are, however, rising quickly. Staff have a good range of complementary skills and the gift of imparting their love and enthusiasm for the subject to their pupils. This is leading to an improvement in standards because pupils are motivated to be creative and because the pace of lessons ensures that no time is wasted. A high level of support is provided to enable pupils to succeed in tasks that are well planned to appeal and to challenge. Methods are well adapted to pupils' needs. For example, a very effective lesson on observational drawing for a group of pupils with special educational needs was presented as a dramatic performance using a model skeleton as a prop. Pupils' interest was captured and retained. Almost without noticing, they learned the proportions of the human body. The enthusiasm stimulated by the teacher resulted in expressive drawings, many of which had a good level of accuracy. All lessons begin with the objectives being explained. Learning is consolidated by references to previous work and teachers check for understanding by skilful questioning. Pupils understand that high standards are expected of them and know what they need to do to improve because commentary on their work emphasises where they have been successful and explains clearly what needs to be done.

118. On entry to the school, pupils have a very wide range of previous experience and standards are below average. The emphasis on the teaching of basic skills in the early years and the excitement and enthusiasm for art and design that teachers generate leads to good progress. Pupils' acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding, and their intellectual and creative effort are of a high order. Pupils with special educational needs do very well because of the emphasis that is placed upon teaching basic skills.

119. Since the last report, a new head of department has been appointed and good progress has been made. Management of the department is very good and there is a shared commitment to raising standards. The head of department provides clear educational direction. She understands where the department ought to be going and provides a very strong lead. Monitoring of teaching and pupils' performance are strong features in an improving picture. The department is self-critical; reviews of performance lead to modification of the ways in which work is organised and presented. Results are improving rapidly. The quality of teaching and quality of learning have improved significantly.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

120. In 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C was close to the national average. Pupils' performance in design and technology was similar to that in the other subjects that they studied. Results declined in 2000 and the senior management responded by appointing an acting head of department.

121. By the age of 14, pupils' overall level of attainment is average. Most pupils understand the technology process which underpins their work in the different aspects of the subject, but their self-knowledge of what they need to do to achieve higher levels of knowledge, understanding and skill development is lower than might be expected. The majority can read the worksheets or written instructions provided, although pupils with special educational needs are less successful, particularly when the text is too small or complex, or the teacher's writing on the white board is in colour and less easy to see. Pupils with special educational needs have low literacy levels, design and study skills, and this has an adverse effect on the development and presentation of their ideas. The higher attainers, in food technology, can prioritise tasks, organise equipment, estimate quantities and make good pizza dough. They think about the process and ask sensible and pertinent questions. Their folders of work show good levels of understanding. Pupils in lower attaining groups achieve better standards in practical tasks in food, textiles and resistant materials but are often too reliant upon the teacher for design ideas, spellings and written work. Pupils are disadvantaged, however, not only by the single period timetable and carousel arrangements, but also by the lack of opportunities to study structures, experience mechanisms, work with metal, and develop control technology and electronics in any depth. All of these factors are leading to significant underachievement.

122. By the age of 16, pupils' overall level of attainment is average. Higher attaining pupils show good levels of understanding when planning diets or food for special occasions, building well on experiences gained in the previous key stage. They can access computer programmes and analyse, for example, the vitamin content of the planned dish. These pupils understand the relevance and importance of their food studies, for life outside the school. However, the restricted curriculum in Years 7 to 9 continues to cause problems in Years 10 and 11 and pupils continue to underachieve. For example in the Year 11 cam project, attainment is lower than might be expected because pupils have had no previous experience of mechanisms. A similar problem occurs when pupils try to design textile artefacts that can be reproduced commercially for a museum shop, having neither visited such an outlet nor having any understanding of mass production techniques.

123. The quality of teaching throughout the school is now satisfactory and results in satisfactory learning within individual lessons. All teachers share aims and objectives with their pupils and work hard to promote learning; this results in pupils acquiring new skills and increased understanding at a satisfactory rate. The majority of pupils behave well, work at a good pace and show interest, particularly in practical activities. There is, however, a lack of consistency of approach to the teaching of design, and the development of literacy and assessment procedures within technology. Progress in Year 7 is unsatisfactory for example, because teachers have limited knowledge of pupils' previous design and technology attainment. For example, pupils from one feeder school have very good knowledge and understanding of electrical circuits, but this is not taken into account when planning lessons. In all years this adversely impacts on study skills as well as pupils' awareness of their own learning needs. Teachers in Years 10 and 11 are starting to consider the use of classroom assessment to raise pupil awareness of what they need to do to gain higher grades, but this has yet to be implemented in practice. Where numbers of pupils with special educational needs are high and there is no classroom assistant, this adversely impacts on the teacher's ability to cope well and the pace of the lesson and learning slows.

124. The leadership and management of the subject is unsatisfactory. The previous subject manager had not been able to keep up with recent changes within technology. As a result a number of weaknesses have arisen regarding the breadth and balance of the curriculum at in Years 7 to 9, assessment procedures and the delivery of ICT within design and technology. The temporary subject leader has made a good start in identifying weaknesses and developing a good assessment sheet for food technology. Whilst much

needs to be done to raise standards, prevent underachievement and raise the profile of the subject within the school, the department have the commitment to improve and the will to succeed. In the absence of a permanent subject leader the senior management of the school have done a good job in monitoring teaching and learning and taking appropriate actions to improve the quality of teaching. The dust extractor is currently not working, because of water damage, thus posing a health and safety concern in the resistant materials workshop.

125. Progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Pupils are still underachieving in the subject.

GEOGRAPHY

126. The proportion of pupils attaining grades A* to C in the GCSE examination in 1999 was close to the national average. Girls achieved better results than boys did. Pupils achieved less well in geography than in the other subjects that they studied. There was an improvement in the GCSE results in 2000, particularly at grades A* and A.

127. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards pupils achieve at the ages of 14 and 16 are at the level expected of pupils of the same ages nationally. The majority of pupils in Years 7 to 9 are achieving appropriate standards although some higher attaining pupils are not achieving high enough. Pupils achieve appropriate standards in Years 10 to 11, particularly in GCSE coursework where standards of work are good.

128. At the age of 14, most pupils are competent in a range of geographical skills. They make good use of the atlas and are able to locate places with reference to latitude and longitude. Most pupils have appropriate knowledge of major regions and understand the links between the physical and human aspects of the subject. They understand about major socio-economic issues such as the growth of China's population and discuss ethical issues about population control. Many show numerical competence in drawing graphs and population 'pyramids' and describing patterns that they observe. The quality of written work for many pupils however, is reduced by insufficient analysis and reasoning. Pupils with special educational needs are given close support in lessons and are achieving appropriate standards.

129. At the age of 16 pupils have an appropriate knowledge of places and link theoretical studies to real places, such as the physical characteristics of the Gwynne valley in the Black Mountains of South Wales. Gifted and talented pupils show high attainment in extending the study to compare their findings with a contrasting river, and their written work is detailed and well illustrated. Pupils gain knowledge of a range of physical features such as arches and sea stacks. Most can identify and describe their appearance, but many pupils of average attainment are insecure in explaining the processes of formation. The written work of the minority of pupils shows confused thinking and there is insufficient development of answers in oral work.

130. The quality of teaching and learning of pupils aged 11 to 14 is satisfactory. The aims of lessons are shared with pupils and planning incorporates consolidation of earlier learning that enables the teacher to assess the pupils' understanding of work already covered. The use of marked tests in a Year 7 lesson enabled pupils to identify their strengths and weaknesses and how to improve future assignments. In many lessons however, learning is very teacher directed with few opportunities for pupils to show initiative and self-reliance. Consequently, pupils are not consistently challenged to research and develop ideas about topics and written work lacks individuality and depth. The pupils with special educational need make satisfactory progress. Teachers' planning of lessons gives appropriate focus to improving their literacy competence and lessons incorporate many opportunities to read,

discuss and develop writing skills.

131. The quality of teaching and learning of pupils aged 14 to 16 is satisfactory. Teachers are appropriately qualified and skilful questioning ensures that pupils improve their understanding of the topics covered. Good use is made of resources to support learning objectives. Pupils' learning is enhanced, for example through computer-linked white-board illustrations, which enables pupils to link theoretical concepts to images of places. Opportunities are regularly taken to extend learning through homework and are well supported by good quality books and reprographic materials. Occasionally learning is unsatisfactory when the minority, mostly boys, disrupt the smooth progression of the lesson, control is not effective and the progress of learning slows. The marking of pupils' work is good, and pupils are made aware of the qualities of assignments through helpful comments and marks linked to GCSE criteria. Teachers make good use of computers in all years.

132. The management of the department is good with clear forward development planning and support given to new teachers. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are unsatisfactory. The department is not monitoring progress against National Curriculum levels and in the absence of such agreed criteria consistency of standards across the subject and between teachers is not assured.

133. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection. Results at GCSE level have improved. Assessment of pupils' attainment continues to be a weakness.

HISTORY

134. The proportion of pupils attaining grades A* to C in the 1999 GCSE examination was above the national average, but few gained the higher grades A* and A. Girls achieved better results than boys did. Pupils achieved similar results in history to the other subjects that they studied. There has been a progressive improvement in the GCSE results to 1999 but results declined in 2000 as the group of pupils taking the examination were of generally low attainment when they started the course. However, the boys performed well in 2000.

135. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that standards at the age of 14 are at the level expected of pupils of the same age nationally, and at the age of 16 standards are above the national expectation for pupils of the same age. The majority of pupils in Years 7 to 9 are achieving satisfactory standards whilst pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve well.

136. At the age of 14, most pupils understand chronology and sequence events in time. They can for example, describe the pictorial images in the Bayeux tapestry that shows the Norman invasion of Britain. Pupils possess appropriate skills in using sources of evidence such as pictures and text to interpret past events and gain knowledge of historical periods studied. They know about the relations between the Catholic Church and state in the early 16th century leading to the gunpowder plot. Pupils understand the changing social conditions in England in the early part of the 19th century, and the need for electoral reform as a result of the growth of towns such as Manchester. Pupils with special educational needs read well in a lesson about the growth of railways in Britain and are able to carry out research about the contributions of George Stephenson to railway development. The quality of written work however, is limited by a lack of detail and many show poor literacy skills. Some lower attaining pupils find difficulty in completing written tasks, whilst others show weakness in expression with frequent spelling errors.

137. At the age of 16 pupils show a good level of knowledge and understanding of GCSE topics such as the political developments in Germany leading to the rise of the Nazi party. They consolidate their understanding of chronological developments such as the significance

of the death of President Stressmann in 1929 in the rise of Hitler in Germany. Gifted and talented pupils are competent in discussion when evaluating sources of evidence and are able to interpret historical events. Many pupils acquire good essay writing skills. In Year 11 for example, pupils were able to write structured, reasoned responses as to why America failed to achieve its objectives in the Vietnam War.

138. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, whilst in Years 10 and 11 it is good. In Years 7 to 9 the aims of lessons are shared with pupils and lesson planning ensures that learning is focused on their achievement. Teachers explain work clearly and make effective use of questioning. Work is regularly marked and attention is given to securing grammatical accuracy. In the more successful lessons, teachers set appropriate challenges for pupils such as evaluating sources of evidence and simulated letter writing about the imposition of taxes in the 11th century. In many lessons however, teaching is very prescriptive and pupils are given limited opportunity to show initiative and independence through research and enquiry approaches to learning. The grouping of classes by ability meets the different learning needs of the majority of pupils, but there are insufficient strategies to support the writing needs of lower attaining pupils. In Years 10 and 11 pupils benefit from specialist teaching where clear, developmental questioning ensures that good progress is made in lessons. Year 10 pupils rose to the challenges set for them to interpret and evaluate evidence about whether Germany was an undemocratic state in the 1920's, engaging well in the subsequent class discussion. Occasionally however, too few opportunities are taken to promote inter-pupil discussion and self-reliance in learning.

139. The management of the department is good with development planning linked to the school's improvement objectives. There is considerable monitoring of teaching performance and this is leading to the raising of standards in the subject. Curricular planning incorporates key questions and content to be covered but not where opportunities are to be taken for developing pupils' competence with ICT. The day-to-day marking is good but the procedures for the assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress to the National Curriculum levels are unsatisfactory leading to considerable variations in Teacher Assessments.

140. Progress since the previous inspection has been good. Since the last inspection GCSE results have improved significantly. Boys' achievements at the higher grades have improved. The quality of teaching has improved for pupils aged 14 to 16 and this is now good and making a significant contribution to the improving examination results.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

141. The school did not enter pupils for GCSE in 1999 or 2000.

142. In the work seen during the inspection standards at the age of 14 are broadly in line with the level expected of pupils of the same age nationally. This represents a satisfactory level of achievement. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 have discrete lessons in ICT and they are developing sound skills in the use of computers. Pupils log on to the network and handle hardware and software effectively. The majority enter data into a pre-structured file and amend information. High attaining pupils create a questionnaire using the appropriate software and use it to create a database from the data they have collected. They choose the database they are going to use and give reasons for their choice. They develop good practise in annotating their work to explain the procedures. They combine text and graphics effectively to create brochures using desktop publishing techniques. Pupils use computers to control a set of traffic lights but there is little evidence that they use sensors to measure data to an appropriate depth. However, in geography, pupils use a computerised station to study the changes in weather and they use the Internet to research about Italy. In English, pupils use the computers to present information and to use the Internet for research. However in art and

design, this use is limited, as pupils tend to download information, but do not use it effectively for research. In Years 7 to 9, pupils' use of modelling is limited to the occasional use of simulation.

143. In the work seen during the inspection standards at the age of 16 are below the level expected of pupils of the same age nationally. The majority of pupils have insufficient access to ICT and are underachieving. A small group of higher attaining pupils now follow a GCSE course and these pupils are achieving satisfactory standards. These pupils understand and use mail merge when producing a standard letter. They produce leaflets that demonstrate a good understanding and application of the facilities of a desktop publishing package. Pupils design and set up a fan model to control the temperature of a room, recognising the need to use feedback to control devices. Pupils can access programmes and use search facilities. They work with charts and tables, manipulate text, and import images into the text. When completing coursework for their GCSE examination, they choose the appropriate software for their needs. Pupils who are following the Worklink programme, use skills effectively at a lower level. They combine text and graphics when creating a plan for their holiday project. Word-processing skills are sound when typing letters. The majority of pupils, however, have insufficient opportunity to develop and practise their skills so that their levels of attainment remain at a similar level to those when they were 14. Consequently, their attainment at the age of 16 is below the level expected of pupils of the same age. There are isolated examples of satisfactory application. In modern languages, low attaining pupils can import pictures into text. They can change their size and rotate them. However, in English, although some pupils are confident to draft their diaries of Romeo and Juliet on the computer, others prefer to write them out by hand and only use the word processor when they are happy their reports are correct.

144. The quality of teaching and learning in the discrete lessons is satisfactory. Teachers have a good command of the subject. Lessons are generally well structured and resources are organised well. The discipline and management of pupils is good with a friendly approach. The result is that pupils behave very well in lessons and their attitudes to work are generally good. They listen attentively to their teachers and work well together when they are sharing work on the computers. Teachers give appropriately clear explanation of tasks and they insist on correct vocabulary. In the better lessons pace is brisk and questioning is used effectively to reinforce new skills and elicit information from the pupils ensuring that pupils understand the concepts. Assessment is unsatisfactory. An assessment scheme for Years 7 to 9 is being developed but is not yet in place. The school has plans to improve the monitoring of achievement of these pupils by regular tests at the end of each module and self-assessment by pupils together with a record of classroom observations.

145. The school meets the National Curriculum requirements in Years 7 to 9 through the discrete lessons; it does not meet statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11 as many pupils are not taught the subject. Although there is a curriculum map for delivering the subject through the other subjects of the curriculum, this is not monitored rigorously enough to ensure that it is observed. The use of ICT to support the delivery of other subjects is also unsatisfactory and inconsistent across the curriculum. This lack of use of ICT in other subjects is the main reason for pupils' unsatisfactory achievement in Years 10 and 11.

146. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Many more computers are now available and this, together with the discreet lessons in Years 7 to 9, is raising standards. The school is planning to extend the use of ICT into other subjects.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

147. The proportions of pupils attaining grades A* to C in the 1999 GCSE examinations in

both French and German was around the national average, although the percentage of pupils achieving the very highest grades was below the national average. Girls achieved better results than boys did. Pupils achieved better results in French than the other subjects that they studied, but worse results in German. Over the past three years, results have improved steadily and results in 2000 were significantly better than those in 1999 in both languages.

148. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils are attaining around the standard expected nationally by the age of 14. This is a satisfactory level of achievement. Most pupils can hold conversations on a range of topics such as their family or their school life with reasonable pronunciation and fluency. The majority understands at least two tenses. Pupils improve their speaking and writing skills but make slightly less progress in their ability to understand tapes and longer texts. Higher attaining pupils make slightly less progress, especially in German as they only have one lesson per week during Years 8 and 9. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as their needs are clearly identified and met.

149. Pupils are attaining above the standard expected nationally for French and German by the age of 16 and are achieving well. Pupils work on a range of topics and frequently write at length using a variety of tenses for coursework purposes. The drive to improve speaking through increased emphasis on this element in coursework has improved the standards pupils achieve but pupils are less confident when they have not had time to prepare and need to reply spontaneously. The writing and speaking of the highest attaining pupils is accurate, includes opinions and sometimes includes complex language and vocabulary, especially in German. Lower attaining pupils perform well overall but they continue to find listening to tapes and reading longer texts more difficult.

150. The quality of the teaching is good and ensures that pupils learn well. Teachers plan lessons effectively so that there is a variety of activities including games which motivate the pupils. This results in a good pace. Work is mostly matched well to the needs of the pupils, especially those with special educational needs. Teachers have good strategies for managing behaviour and good use is made of the merit system, consequently pupils work well and generally listen carefully to the teacher and to each other. Pupils are given many writing activities to do, both at home and during lessons, and make good progress in this area but when speaking they get less practice at asking than answering questions and at responding spontaneously. An exception to this was seen when pupils were encouraged to use phrases such as 'it's my turn' and 'you are cheating' when playing a game, which they did with great enthusiasm. In the minority of lessons where pupils are less motivated the teacher spends too long running one activity from the front of the classroom and pupils do not get the opportunity to practise what they have learnt individually. There is an inadequate variety of listening and reading materials and pupils are not given many opportunities to work independently of the teacher, for example when listening to tapes or choosing reading materials.

151. Pupils occasionally use computers to produce well presented work or for redrafting but the use of software specifically designed to improve pupils' knowledge of French or German is limited and is not consistent across the department. Marking in books tells pupils where they have gone wrong but does not often identify how they might improve their work in terms of length or style, although there was evidence of pupils redrafting work to improve accuracy in preparation for the GCSE coursework. Pupils are usually able refer to work they have done previously because they have filed their work carefully and many take pride in the way that their work is presented. Homework is always relevant to the lesson and enables pupils to consolidate their learning. Pupils are given much helpful feedback during tasks in lessons and there is a strong emphasis on accuracy in spoken work. Pupils in Years 7 to 9, however, are not aware of how they are performing overall and need more

precise information about how they might improve. The opposite is true in Years 10 and 11, where pupils are clearly motivated by the deadlines set by coursework and are very aware of how they are performing. Teachers organise the work so that it carefully matches the requirements of the modular examination and they provide pupils with appropriate support to enable them to complete the modules well. This benefits all pupils, but especially those with special educational needs.

152. The department is very well led. Issues that arise, such as the need to improve the number of GCSE grades A* to C, or more detailed matters such as improving pupils' pronunciation, are addressed systematically and have resulted in a continuous rise in performance. All staff are committed to working hard to improve still further and the joint initiatives such as the introduction of coursework which is assessed at regular intervals have been very successful. The departmental documentation in Years 7 to 9 does not focus sufficiently on the levels that pupils might achieve and thus does not identify how they might progress.

153. There has been very good progress since the last inspection. Results at GCSE have risen considerably, pupils have good attitudes to learning languages and the teaching is now good.

MUSIC

154. There were no entries for music in the 1999 GCSE examinations. In the 2000 examinations, 71 per cent of the candidates gained an A* to C grade.

155. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are in-line with those expected nationally. This represents a good level of achievement given the pupils' attainment in music when they join the school. Pupils can perform on keyboards with awareness of the needs of being both soloist and accompanist. They improvise and compose in different styles, melodically and rhythmically as individuals and in groups. The higher attainers realise and use the potential of various musical resources, styles and traditions. Pupils with special education needs are integrated well and make similar progress to other pupils.

156. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards of attainment at the age of 16 are in line with those expected nationally. The number of pupils studying music has tended to be small but these numbers are now increasing. Overall, pupils are achieving well given the wide variations in the level of attainment of the pupils when they start the course. In analysis and listening pupils easily recognise geographic sources for music of other cultures. They can describe and discriminate well in this work, whilst placing it in an historical context, using a range of appropriate vocabulary. They compose music for various occasions using a range of instruments and voices. They perform on their chosen instruments with confidence and control.

157. Throughout the school, the attainment of a large number of pupils is enhanced and supported very well by the range of good quality peripatetic teaching and extra-curricular opportunities offered by the department.

158. Teaching and the quality of learning that it promotes are good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which leads to confident teaching with clear and lively expositions and demonstrations. In a Year 11 lesson for example, the confident explanation of the task and the subsequent individual support offered by the teacher created very constructive relationships which enabled pupils to feel confident and able to challenge themselves further. Teachers make good use of clear targets, which have the effect of motivating pupils to good

levels of effort, and they then work with enthusiasm, both individually and in groups. In a Year 7 lower attaining class, this allowed the pupils to make very good progress through the lesson in developing their aural skills and in then using these with confidence on keyboards. Lessons are planned well, with clear objectives that pupils understand and this leads to good pace and progress. This was clearly demonstrated in a Year 11 lesson where the understanding of the pupils, and the clear guidelines from the teacher, enabled them to work independently. They were able to modify, refine and for some pupils, finish, in the lesson, their work to a high standard. Throughout Years 10 and 11, teachers use homework to consolidate and extend learning effectively.

159. The department is well led and managed. There are good arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress and the data gathered is used well to make appropriate changes to the curriculum. However, there is insufficient use of computers in Years 7 to 9, although the department is fully aware of this and plans to address it. There is a commitment to strive continually for improvement and success throughout the department.

160. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards of teaching have improved. The accommodation which was criticised in the last report, is now good and standards of attainment at the age of 14 are improving with an increasing number of pupils opting to take music at GCSE.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

161. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C in the 1999 GCSE examinations was in line with the national average. Pupils' results in physical education were similar to those in other subjects that they studied. Results improved dramatically in 2000.

162. In the work seen during the inspection pupils' attainment in physical activities at ages 14 and 16 is in line with the levels expected nationally, with a significant number of high attaining pupils achieving above average standards in games. The work seen represented a satisfactory level of achievement, given pupils' prior attainment. However, pupils are underachieving at the age of 14 because they are not taught the full National Curriculum.

163. By the time they have reached the age of 14, most pupils attain standards in line with the level expected in games, and some pupils are performing at a higher level. This is well illustrated by the under 13 girls' football team which won the Herefordshire Schools' Football Championships and represented the county in the Birmingham Millennium Games, and the under 12 boys' rugby team, which reached the semi-finals of the National Daily Telegraph Cup competition. Most pupils perform skilfully and demonstrate a secure understanding of the principles of play in football and hockey. Many pupils have good ball control, pass accurately, use space well and develop their skills, effectively, through strategic play in small sided games. Pupils achieve particularly well in soccer. Although very good opportunities are provided for high attaining pupils in the extra-curricular programme, they still under achieve in some games lessons, when they are insufficiently challenged by the task, as reported in the last inspection. Low attaining pupils, many of whom have special educational needs, make good individual progress in trampolining, where they show sound body tension and control as they master the basic skills. Most pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the effects of exercise on the body. They know how to warm up before the lesson and can perform the appropriate exercises correctly. Planning and performance skills develop satisfactorily in most lessons, but pupils' skills of evaluating their own and others' work are weak because there is a lack of opportunity for pupils to observe, analyse and comment on performance against specific criteria.

164. By the age of 16 improvement in games continues. Standards are in line with those expected nationally and pupils who do not follow the GCSE course are achieving satisfactorily. In netball and football, for example, pupils apply their knowledge, skills and understanding of rules and tactics, effectively, in the full version of the games, and officiate competently. There is above average achievement by pupils following the GCSE course. Year 10 pupils show a very good understanding of the principles of training to increase fitness, and the types of training, as they devise their own practical training programmes. In Year 11, pupils draw, successfully, on their knowledge of the causes of injury in sport, as they discuss the effects of environmental factors on the body, and consider the balance between safety and risk in different sporting activities.

165. Good standards are achieved in extra curricular sport, and nearly half the school population participates in the extensive programme of special events, clubs, inter-form and inter-school fixtures. School teams in netball, rugby, football, rounders, cross-country and athletics have a good record of success in the district and county competitions. This year the under 15 rugby team has reached the semi-finals of the Herefordshire Schools' Rugby Championships, and the football teams from every year group reached the semi-finals or final of their respective Herefordshire Championships. Individual pupils gain representative honours at county, regional and, sometimes, national level. The school currently has 33 pupils representing the county in ten different sports, including a member of the North West Midlands Regional Rugby Squad and seven members of the under 16 County Netball Squad.

166. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory throughout the school. Teaching and learning are good in the examination classes. The management of pupils and organisation of lessons are of a high order, and this contributes significantly, to the pupils' good behaviour, smart appearance and high levels of participation in lessons. Pupils have good attitudes to the subject evident in their promptness to lessons and support for extra-curricular activities. Clear explanations and demonstrations reflect the teachers' good subject knowledge, and pupils know what they have to do, and how to improve their work. Well selected tasks build successfully on pupils' previous learning, and give opportunities for the practice and consolidation of new skills. However, as identified in the previous inspection, tasks do not always address the abilities of all pupils, and, on occasion, high attainers are insufficiently challenged. Pupils with special educational needs receive a good learning experience, through a programme tailored to fit individual needs, and they make good

progress.

167. When teaching is most effective, teachers have high expectations of their pupils, lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and a variety of teaching strategies involves pupils in their own learning. This leads to very good learning, particularly evident in a GCSE theory lesson where searching questioning extended the depth and breadth of pupils' learning on the principles of fitness training. A weakness in some lessons is that teachers take too much responsibility for pupils' learning and provide insufficient opportunities for pupils to find out for themselves, observe and evaluate performance, take responsibility and gain independence. Although satisfactory, more emphasis could be given to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills; more opportunities for pupils to learn and use the technical language of the subject through key words, and to explain, describe and discuss their work, in the appropriate context, are needed. There are inconsistencies in the marking of GCSE course work. Pupils are not always given advice on how to improve their work, and there is little indication of the progress they are making. This results in no evidence of improvements made by pupils in response to teachers' comments.

168. Good leadership by the head of department has contributed significantly to raising standards of attainment and raising the profile of the subject throughout the school. There is clear educational direction, reflecting the school's aims and values. The able and effective departmental team shares this sense of purpose, and the staff create an ethos that promotes an expectation of high standards.

169. Improvement since the last inspection dates from the appointment of the present head of department two years ago. An innovative approach to broadening the curriculum in Years 10 and 11, to compensate for the lack of indoor provision for traditional games, has been successfully adopted. Strong community links with external clubs and sporting agencies have been established and the extra curricular programme has been widely extended to good effect in increasing participation, and standards of attainment, particularly by boys. However, there are aspects which need attention to improve pupils' achievement. The indoor accommodation for the subject is poor, as identified by the previous inspection, and it is a major constraint on the curriculum and pupils' attainment and progress. There is no adequate provision for playing indoor games, such as basketball, badminton and volleyball, normally expected to be part of the curriculum in all years. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 does not meet statutory requirements, as only three of the four required areas of activity are being provided. Additionally, boys and girls do not have equal access to the curriculum up to the age of 14; for example, girls cannot do gymnastics. The subject has made slow progress in implementing Curriculum 2000, particularly in developing an assessment system based on the new levels of attainment, which is central to lesson planning and the revision of schemes of work.

170. Progress has been satisfactory since the last inspection. Standards of attainment in games have improved throughout the school. GCSE results have improved significantly. The quality of teaching has also improved. However, pupils are not being taught the full National Curriculum in Years 7 to 9.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

171. The school enters pupils for both the full and short courses in religious education at GCSE, despite only receiving a third of the time usually allowed for GCSE courses. In the 1999 examinations, the year group was split evenly between the two courses and the results came out well below the national average at both levels. As it was, pupils who sat the full GCSE examination did worse than the average of their results in other subjects. This year the standard has fallen, particularly on the short course.

172. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment at the age of 14 is below the level expected nationally and they are underachieving. This is mainly because the work expected of them in class is not sufficiently challenging; a lot of it being copied notes and diagrams. Pupils are able to find information for homework projects, many of them using the Internet, but they tend to download information without being selective about what to include or how to organise it for their purpose. They have a sound knowledge of Christianity and three other religions but they are not learning from religion so are weak at comparing beliefs and practices and reflecting on their relevance for their own lives. When they are given the opportunity to think for themselves, higher attaining pupils achieve appropriate standards. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, pupils were able to draw upon ideas from Islam to express their own beliefs, resolutions and ambitions in life. Pupils have a good relationship with their teacher but their interest in the subject wanes in some lessons. The academic study of scripture in Year 9 does not engage pupils' interest and their written work is brief. Lower attaining pupils understand the importance for believers of religious practices such as pilgrimage and baptism but not the significance of the rituals used in them. The teaching does not allow enough variety of learning activities for them to be able to deepen their understanding.

173. At age 16 attainment is in line with national expectations on the short course at GCSE, which is studied by the majority, but below on the full course. The headteacher now teaches classes in Years 10 and 11 and the quality of teaching has improved significantly for these classes. Pupils on the short course have a positive attitude to their work and are achieving the required standard in those groups where the work is well structured and the teacher's expectations are high. Year 10 pupils showed good understanding of the moral issues surrounding abortion and Christian views on the subject. They were able to argue their own views on the point at which life begins. Year 11 pupils studying the Genesis account of creation appreciated the mystery and poetry of the passage and were able to draw out its main messages. There is not the same rigour to the teaching in all three classes and this affects the standard of notes that some pupils make. Lack of sufficient structure to their studies is also affecting attainment by pupils on the full course. Their personal note record of topics covered in lessons is negligible, relying mainly on information handouts. They are not doing enough exercises to develop their examination technique. Their coursework is up to the required standard but lesson time is not being used efficiently to make the necessary progress through the syllabus. Consequently, they are underachieving. Lower attaining pupils working towards a certificate of achievement in the subject are achieving appropriate standards through activities such as small group discussion of moral issues.

174. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory overall because there is too much unsatisfactory teaching in all years. The main problems arise from weak planning that does not focus on lesson objectives and suitable learning activities to achieve them. Instead there is too much teacher exposition, keeping pupils passive for too long and not setting them challenging tasks. By contrast, in the best lesson observed, pupils' imagination was captured in a meditative exercise and produced a stream of ideas in class discussion. In Years 10 and 11 the teaching was very good in half the lessons, characterised by detailed planning, making maximum use of lesson time, with an effective balance of individual exercises and class

discussion. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, few demands were being made of higher attaining pupils. Some of the marking is detailed, offering constructive criticism to help pupils improve, but a lot of work is hardly marked at all or pupils have to wait too long for feedback. Some pupils have not had their work marked at all this term. With only one lesson a week on the GCSE courses, the quality of pupils' learning depends on how well teachers structure their use of time and the pace they set. Some lessons lack the necessary rigour.

175. The management of the subject is poor and progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. There has been little in the way of leadership. Weaknesses in teaching identified at the previous inspection remain the same and pupils are not given enough challenging work to do in lessons. Schemes of work have been put in place for all courses but their format is that of a syllabus, listing content, rather than focusing on intended learning, by highlighting objectives, learning activities and assessment opportunities. Overall, standards have fallen.