

INSPECTION REPORT

RIPON GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Ripon

LEA area: North Yorkshire

Unique Reference Number: 121694

Headteacher: Mr A M Jones

Reporting inspector: Dr D A W Biltcliffe
1025

Dates of inspection: 11th – 14th September 2000

Inspection number: 223938

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar (Selective)
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Clotherholme Road Ripon North Yorkshire HG4 2DG
Telephone number:	(01765) 602647
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Judge S P Grenfell
Dates of previous inspections:	13 th – 17 th November 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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Mrs J W Biltcliffe	Lay Inspector		Attendance
Mr H Meggitt	Lay Inspector		Partnership with parents
Mr H Heller	Team inspector	Special educational needs; English as an additional language	Pupils' attitudes and values; school's care for pupils; leadership and management; boarding
Mr D Klemm	Team inspector	English; drama	
Mr R Heath	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Mrs C Harrison	Team inspector	Science	
Mrs W Burke	Team inspector	Art	
Mrs S M Mansell	Team inspector	Design and technology Information technology	
Mr B M Greasley	Team inspector	Geography	Curriculum; sixth form
Ms C Evers	Team inspector	History	Efficiency/ staffing, accommodation and resources
Mrs M Woodhouse	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
Dr J D Ward	Team inspector	Music	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; assessment
Mr R D Gaunt	Team inspector	Physical education	
Miss M A Warner	Team inspector	Religious education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This selective grammar school caters for 761 boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 18. Sixty-three of these also board at the school. The social and economic background of pupils and their attainment on entry are well above average overall. The school has five pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and no pupils with statements of special educational need. After a prolonged period of uncertainty, from the legislation allowing a ballot of parents' preferences about the school's admissions policy, the school's selective status has been confirmed.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Ripon Grammar is a very good school. It provides a high standard of education as a result of good teaching and keen, hard-working pupils. It is calmly led and well managed. It provides good value for money. Overall, the school has many significant strengths and few weaknesses. It is a very good place for children to learn and grow up in.

What the school does well

- It secures high academic performance throughout and usually does better than most grammar schools.
- Mathematics, science, design and technology and French are particularly strong.
- Pupils make good progress throughout the school in a climate of enthusiasm for learning.
- Pupils here are noticeably hard-working, sensible, mature, articulate and caring.
- Pupils' attendance and punctuality (within the large site's constraints) are first rate.
- Most teaching is good and a fifth very good. Weak lessons are rare. Teachers know their subjects very well.
- The school does what it claims to do - provides pupils with an all-round education of high quality.

What could be improved

- The detailed monitoring and evaluation of teaching and (in Years 7-9) of pupils' progress.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is not sufficiently taught or well enough equipped.
- The school's links with parents - not enough information... a minority lack a "warm glow" about these links.
- Pupils have virtually no secure storage for their belongings... the school has been slow to remedy this.
- A sharper vigilance on matters of health and safety, especially on those identified during the inspection.

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 satisfactory progress overall since 1995. It has maintained a high standard of education. On the very few issues identified in 1995 for improvement, it has advanced most of its work satisfactorily, but there is more to do. For example:

- its development plan now clearly specifies the school's aims and systems of monitoring progress;

- reasonable time is provided on the timetable for music and drama, and extracurricular opportunities are extensive;
- firm lines of accountability have been drawn up for managers at all levels (although not fully implemented).

The following weaknesses from 1995, however, require further improvement:

- standards in ICT remain lower than they should be. The school has not moved fast enough to improve the amount of teaching, hardware and software.
- the core programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) is sound, but the overall quality of teaching it is lower than for other subjects.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	A*	A*	A*	B
A-levels/AS-levels	A*	A*	A*	

Key	
<i>Very high</i>	A*
<i>Well above average</i>	A
<i>Above average</i>	B
<i>Average</i>	C
<i>Below average</i>	D
<i>Well below average</i>	E

The school's results in the national tests for 14 year olds are very high in all of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. A smaller proportion of pupils reached the higher Level 6 in English in 2000, however, than in the other two subjects. The 1999 results were above the average for selective grammar schools nationally and were in the highest five per cent nationally in all the core subjects. Standards have been sustained at a high level over the 1996-1999 period, broadly in line with the national trend. By the end of Year 9, standards in most subjects are well above average, but are only average in ICT. Pupils make good progress from Year 7 to Year 9.

Results in GCSE were also very high over the 1997-2000 period by all national measures and in 1999 were above the average for grammar schools. The strongest subjects in GCSE in 1998 and 1999 were mathematics, science, design and technology, geography and French. English and art were, relatively, weaker subjects. Pupils generally make good progress over Years 10 to 11. The school's target in 2001 for pupils' GCSE average points' score is, however, on the low side. In the sixth form, overall performance is commendably good: achievement has been consistently high over the 1994-2000 period, for both the quality of grades obtained and the pass rate. The vast majority of pupils make good progress and do well.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Exemplary attitudes towards school life: high interest, enthusiasm, effort and maturity. A great strength of the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Commendably high. A very calm, civilised and orderly community. Misbehaviour rare.
Personal development and relationships	Outstanding - a high, successful emphasis on pupils' all-round development: pupils are responsible, alert, helpful, trusting and caring.
Attendance	Very good. Punctuality as good as the site allows.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
In the lessons seen overall	Good	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.

A good picture. Teaching was at least satisfactory overall in 99 per cent of lessons, good in 56 per cent and very good (or better) in 22 per cent of those seen. Only one per cent of lessons had unsatisfactory teaching. In the well-taught lessons pupils make good progress in their studies through teachers' deep knowledge and high expectations coupled to their own enthusiasm and hard work. Unsatisfactory teaching and learning are characterised by little discussion and slow pace. Teachers put appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Teaching in the sixth form is often very strong. The teaching of ICT is satisfactory in quality, but the weakest overall.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Broad, with a clear academic focus. Not enough time for ICT or religious education. A wide range of extracurricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	No statemented pupils, but sensitive and effective handling of a range of less pronounced educational needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Strong. Spiritual provision good. The school is a very good social community both in and outside lessons. Pupils' moral education is very well promoted: high standards of behaviour, courtesy, fairness and concern. Sound cultural provision.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school generally provides a high level of care and supervision. Pupils feel valued and appreciated.

Teaching time comfortably exceeds the minimum nationally recommended. The curriculum has such distinctive features as Greek and Latin, the availability of both economics and business studies at GCE A-level and universal entry for A-level general studies. The teaching of

information and communication technology (ICT), however, does not meet statutory requirements. The school's standard of care for pupils is high, apart from on some issues of health and safety. The experience of boarders is generally positive. Parents hold the school in high regard for the education it offers their children, but a minority would like more information and closer ties.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Generally good. The headteacher provides calm, authoritative vision and leadership. Other managers are good overall - they have an appropriately clear focus on academic achievement, but do not take enough initiative to share and compare their judgements.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Governing body is able and supportive, has an appropriate structure and the capacity to oversee the school's work effectively, but is too light on performance management.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Much improved over the last two years. Clear, effective systems in Years 10-13, but insufficient robust data and structure in Years 7-9.
The strategic use of resources	Educational priorities are well supported through sound financial management and planning. Spending is carefully monitored.

The school's governors and senior management have moved steadily to sustain existing high standards and anticipate future needs. The school's central work is carried out very well, but faster progress is required on the few weaknesses identified. Most lessons are effectively taught by well-qualified specialists. Technical support is, however, insufficient in design and technology and in ICT. The school's very attractive site is a great asset, but there are pressures on accommodation, particularly in art, design and technology and the library. Most resources are sufficient, but there are shortages of computers and of textbooks in design and technology. The principles of "best value" are applied, but not comprehensively.

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 high level of pupils' achievements and progress. • Expectation that pupils will work hard. • Cultivation of pupils' all-round development. • Good behaviour throughout the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A closer partnership with parents of both day-pupils and boarders. • A greater range of extracurricular activities. • More information about courses of study.

Inspectors' judgements support the positive views parents express. The school has high standards of academic attainment and compares well with similar selective schools. Pupils make good progress. The school's ethos appropriately emphasises hard work, thoughtful self-discipline and acquiring wide interests. Its extracurricular provision is extensive - contrary to the view of a minority of parents. In contrast, inspectors agree that the school does not provide enough detailed information about the content of the curriculum. The school has a limited range of information services for parents and lacks a comprehensive policy on "customer care". Overall, however, parents and the wider community rightly have a very favourable view of the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The overall standard of attainment of pupils at all stages in the school is – not surprisingly in view of the school's selective intake – well above that normally found amongst pupils nationally. Pupils' overall attainment is also well above average in the national tests taken in Year 9 and in both GCSE and GCE Advanced (A) level examinations. The standard of attainment has been maintained at a consistently high level since the school's last inspection in 1995.
2. The school does not have comprehensive data about pupils' attainment on entry in Year 7 for the last few years. This currently contributes to preventing it from assessing pupils' progress with full accuracy as they move through Years 7 to 11 and particularly over Years 7-9. The evidence available suggests that, although pupils' prior attainment in primary schooling is well above average overall, it ranges from very high to (in the case of a minority) being close to average. Results of national tests for eleven year olds present a similar picture: virtually all pupils reach at least the basic Level 4 in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Additionally, about half the school's pupils in 1997 and 1998 reached at least the higher Level 5; this proportion rose to nearly three-quarters in 1999 – a rising trend over the three years that was greater than the rise nationally.
3. In the national tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 the proportions of pupils who achieved the national standard of at least Level 5 or Level 6 were very high in all the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. This repeated the pattern of 1997 and 1998. In 1996, 1997 and (especially in) 2000, however, the proportion of pupils attaining at least Level 6 in English, although still very high by national standards, was noticeably lower than in either mathematics or science. The trend of the school's results over the 1996-1999 period was broadly in line with the national trend.
4. Girls and boys achieve equally well overall in the Key Stage 3 national tests. In English, especially at the higher levels, girls tend to do a little better than boys by the end of Year 9, whereas the reverse is true in mathematics and science. The differences in attainment between the sexes in this school are, however, minor - although boys perform relatively better than girls, when judged by how the respective sexes perform nationally.
5. Teachers' assessments of pupils over the 1995-2000 period have usually been similar to the test results pupils achieved. Their assessments of the proportion of pupils achieving Level 6+ in English have, however, been consistently a little lower than those in mathematics and science; the school has not researched thoroughly the reason for this difference. Pupils generally make good progress as they move through the school from Year 7 to the end of Year 9.
6. When the school's Key Stage 3 results (based on average points scored) are compared with those in other selective schools nationally, pupils in this school performed at an average level in 1998. In 1999, however (the latest year for which such full national comparisons are possible), pupils in this school performed very well – above average in English and mathematics, and very well in science. The proportion achieving the highest levels in science was particularly noticeable.
7. In the five other (non-core) subjects formally assessed at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, teachers judged the overall attainment of pupils currently in Year 11 as well above average in design and technology, geography, history and modern foreign languages, but appreciably lower (and slightly below average) in information and communication technology (ICT).

Inspectors concur with these judgements. Pupils' lower attainment in ICT is largely the result of inadequate teaching time and equipment.

8. In GCSE examinations in 1999 pupils' overall performance was high on all measures - for their average points scores, for example, and for the proportion gaining at least five grades A*-C. Over the period 1994-1999 results have been sustained at a high level, comfortably above what is usually found nationally: the proportion of pupils gaining five or more of the higher (A*-C) grades over the 1994-1999 period, for instance, was 94-100 per cent against a national average of 41-46 per cent. The proportion of pupils gaining at least nine grades A*-C has risen slightly from 81 per cent in 1997 to 85 per cent in 1999. The results in 2000 were at a similarly high level. Taking into account their achievements in the national tests two years earlier, pupils make good progress as they move through the school from Year 9 to Year 11, broadly in line with the rate of progress of pupils in similar kinds of schools.
9. In all three core subjects pupils' achievement in GCSE in 1999 was well above the national average, continuing the pattern of previous years. The proportion gaining grades A*-C in all of English, mathematics and science has risen progressively and significantly from 83 per cent in 1997 to 94 per cent in 1999. When pupils' performances in the various subjects they took in 1998 and 1999 are compared with one another, pupils did significantly better in both years in mathematics, design and technology, geography and French, but worse in English (both language and literature) and art. Nearly half the entries were commendably high at A* or A grade level. Almost a third of pupils achieved the highest A* grade in 1999 in French, a quarter did so in mathematics and over a fifth reached this grade in German. In contrast, only one pupil, an unacceptably low proportion, gained an A* grade in English language (although 14 did so in 2000), and none did so in music, religious education (RE), electronics or food technology.
10. Based upon pupils' average points scores at GCSE, both boys' and girls' results have been similarly well above national averages in the last few years. Boys in this school do noticeably better in GCSE than boys do nationally. Although girls' overall performance was a little higher than that of boys over the 1996-1998 period and in 2000, boys did a little better than girls in 1995 and 1999.
11. When the school's average points scores at GCSE are compared with those in other selective grammar schools, this school's performance was above most others in both 1998 and 1999. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-C was also well above the group average in both years. By the same measure, pupils' overall performance was above average in science and well above average in both English and mathematics. The school's target for an average points score of 60 in GCSE in 2001 is a little low - and is lower than the school has achieved in each of the last three years. Overall, pupils make good progress towards GCSE in Years 10 and 11.
12. Pupils' performance is very good in the sixth form. Overall results at GCE A-level have been consistently very high over the 1994-1999 period. Pupils' average total points scores over this time have been in the range 23-29 (lowest in 1994 and highest in 1997), compared with a national average range of 15-18. The pass rate over the last five years has been consistently high at 96 per cent - about ten percentage points higher than the national average. The quality of grades obtained during this time has been very good: the proportion of top (A) grades is usually at least double the national average and the proportions gaining either A-B or A-C grades are broadly 20 percentage points above the national average. The quality of grades obtained does, however, show a slightly declining trend and in 2000, though still above average, was the lowest for the last five years.
13. All pupils who took the GCE A-level examination in 1999 and 2000 passed in English literature, mathematics, art, classics and economics. Only one pupil failed in history and music. In no subject was the pass rate below two-thirds. A high proportion of pupils taking English, mathematics, art and history achieved the top grades of A or B. In general studies, taken by all pupils, only three pupils out of the 100 who took the examination in 1999 failed to

gain a pass grade, and just one failed in 2000 – a very commendable achievement. The level of success achieved by the school's sixth form is significant: most pupils make good progress and do well. The main reasons for this high performance are the high quality of most sixth-form teaching (especially teachers' considerable subject knowledge and expectations) and sixth-formers' strong commitment to hard work and a desire to do well.

14. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' overall standard of attainment was well above the average level expected nationally for pupils of similar ages. It was commensurate with assessments of pupils' ability and in line with their earlier attainments. The level of attainment is fairly similar throughout the school, but relatively higher by the end of Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than at the end of Key Stage 3. It is also higher than the overall level of attainment in Year 7, indicating the good progress that pupils make in this school over Years 7-11.
15. In English the overall attainment of pupils is well above average at all stages of the school. Pupils are very fluent in reading: all have advanced levels of such reading skills as skimming and scanning texts accurately. They read considerably more fiction (and this applies especially to boys) than in most schools. Standards of writing are above average, with particularly high standards in spelling, punctuation and note-taking. The range of writing is, however, somewhat limited and there is little sustained writing in Years 7-9. Pupils listen very carefully and learn much from one another. They speak fluently, have a wide range of vocabulary and many readily speculate and form hypotheses. Both boys and girls are unusually fluent in sustaining a line of argument.
16. In subjects other than English, pupils' standard of reading is well above average. Pupils are accurate, expressive readers and very readily and thoroughly understand a wide variety of written material. They use this high capability well - as, for example, in research tasks in design and technology, geography, history and ICT. In mathematics only a few pupils have any difficulty in translating simply worded problems into mathematical symbols. Reading for pleasure is also a strong feature of the school's life.
17. Pupils' standard of writing is universally high. Pupils plan, draft and produce finished pieces of writing very well. There is much extended writing - in science, for example, on such topics as malnutrition and over-eating; in design and technology and in ICT to produce reports of high quality; and in geography and history, where pupils' narrative and analytical writing shows keen attention to technical terminology and detail. Most pupils are eager to improve the quality of their writing and many spare no efforts to do so. Skill in note-taking is well above average - as, for example, in science, modern foreign languages and economics. Standards of presentation are generally high: work in mathematics, for instance, is neatly and logically set out and is symbolically accurate.
18. The vast majority of pupils listen very carefully to what their teachers and classmates say. They follow instructions carefully. Pupils in this school are noticeably good at speaking clearly and at appropriate length. They value and assimilate one another's points of view and offer appropriately constructive comments on other pupils' conclusions or reasoning. They are confident, courteous and capable in arguing a point of view with their teachers and readily ask questions. In specialist language fields such as mathematics, modern foreign languages or economics many express their answers well in appropriate technical terminology.
19. In mathematics and in numeracy across the curriculum pupils handle numbers very competently and confidently both orally and in written form. They use calculators sensibly and appropriately in such subjects as mathematics, science, and design and technology. They are adept at collating, assimilating and interpreting data in a variety of forms.
20. Attainment in science is well above average at all stages in the school as a result of good teaching and a relatively generous amount of teaching time. Pupils' overall attainment in ICT is average at best, largely because the subject is taught too little, either separately or by incorporation into normal subject work, and insufficient up-to-date equipment is readily available within departments. Many pupils, however, are fortunate to be able to supplement

the school's ICT provision with personal equipment at home.

21. In most other subjects, the overall attainment of pupils is well above what pupils achieve nationally. Their attainments are, however, average in RE by the end of Year 9 (largely because of limited teaching time) and, in the sixth form, in geography, ICT and RE. Attainment is above average in RE by the end of Year 11; in art, music and PE by the end of both Years 9 and 11; and in design and technology and in PE in the sixth form. Overall, standards in this school are high and well above those found in most schools.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

22. Pupils show commendably high standards of behaviour and exemplary attitudes towards their school life. They are extremely positive about their work. They come to lessons with a mature enthusiasm and sustain strong interest and attention throughout the day. They respond readily to the lead given by their teachers and often intervene themselves to raise questions, in order to clarify or increase their learning. They are very sensible and cooperative when working in pairs or groups and adapt readily to the requirements of different kinds of learning tasks - such as detailed investigations, complex problem-solving or forming hypotheses.
23. In more than nine out of every ten lessons seen pupils' behaviour was good (and usually very good); unsatisfactory attitudes were observed in only one per cent of lessons and are associated with unsatisfactory aspects in teaching. The school is a very calm and orderly community. Pupils have a very high sense of personal responsibility: this contributes, in large measure, to creating the very civilised and tranquil environment of the school. Pupils show mature respect for the building, its contents and other people's property. There is a striking degree of trust demonstrated amongst pupils as well as with teachers and other adults.
24. There is little evidence of any significant bullying or harassment amongst pupils. Boys and girls relate very well to one another. They show respect for other people and their views and appreciate their achievements. This very positive atmosphere is marked by a climate of mutual support: pupils take responsibility for one another, showing care and concern for those who may be experiencing difficulties. Members of the sixth form play a particularly prominent and effective role in giving support to younger pupils.
25. Pupils show high levels of responsibility in their roles as prefects, as library assistants, in recreational and sports groups, and in a variety of charitable and community activities. Apart from the sixth form committee, however, there is no formal mechanism (such as year or school councils) through which pupils' views about school life can be expressed.
26. The number of pupils excluded from the school is very low: there were, for example, only three, fixed-term exclusions in the last academic year. In these rare cases the school operates the formal procedures for exclusion with great care.
27. The attendance level of pupils is very good and has been sustained at a high level since the last inspection. In the 1998-1999 academic year pupils' overall attendance was 94.9 per cent, well above the national average of 91.0 per cent. The levels of both authorised absence (5.1 per cent) and unauthorised absence (0.0 per cent) were much better than the national averages. Attendance records indicate that most authorised absence is for medical reasons.
28. Pupils' punctuality for school and (generally) for lessons is very good. A few lessons (especially following lessons in foreign languages and PE), however, start a little late because of the long walk necessary across the school's site or because pupils have showered after doing PE.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

29. Pupils in this school want to learn. This very positive climate for learning enables teachers to give of their best. The quality of teaching in the school is good overall, ranging from outstanding to (in rare instances) unsatisfactory. It is at least satisfactory in virtually all lessons - satisfactory in about one fifth and good in over half of them. Additionally, over one fifth of the school's teaching is very good and is occasionally outstanding. Only three lessons out of the 236 inspected had teaching that was unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching is of a similar high standard throughout the school and has been sustained at this level - and slightly improved - since the last inspection.
30. Teachers know their subjects very well. This partly accounts for teachers' thorough planning, careful choice of motivating topics and resources and for the depth of questions asked of pupils. In particular, it gives many teachers the confidence and capability to sharpen and extend pupils' thinking by means of searching questions and enriching commentary. It also sometimes encourages pupils themselves to join in discussion, with enjoyment, and to pose their own supplementary questions. Teachers generally insist on the correct and frequent use of technical and subject-specific vocabulary and pupils respond readily and accurately. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are usually thoroughly taught and appropriate importance is placed on careful spelling, punctuation and handwriting.
31. Most lessons are well planned. Teachers normally quickly revise those topics studied previously. In the best lessons they do this clearly and logically by a mixture of pointed questions, answers from pupils and their own commentary. They explain clearly to pupils the content and sequence of activities in the lessons, apportion appropriate timescales to the various activities (and keep to them) and achieve a suitable balance between whole-class teaching and pupils' studying in small groups. Many teachers provide very helpful notes or worksheets to give shape to pupils' own work and to act as revision aids. They draw pupils together for corporate discussion, explanation or reporting back, and round off lessons with crisp but comprehensive summaries of "what we have learned".
32. In the few unsatisfactory lessons - and often in others which are broadly satisfactory - only a handful of pupils is involved in questioning or discussion. In some others too much time is spent on one theme or, for example, a video-recording is shown for longer than is warranted by the subject being studied. The result is that pupils do not learn as quickly or securely as they could, because time is wasted or a reinforcing summary or new direction is left too late. In a few cases lessons end abruptly without an adequate synopsis or with insufficient time to explain fully the purpose of homework.
33. The majority of teachers are very thorough. They set high standards for pupils, who respond with considerable interest and with enjoyment in what they are studying. In many classes teachers sustain a brisk pace and pose searching questions. They make pupils think carefully and challenge sloppy ideas. They ask pupils to explain their reasoning or to predict likely outcomes (as, for example, in a bromine experiment in science) and are adept at asking follow-up questions. In some lessons teachers provide clarity and security through their explanations for all pupils, whilst expecting even more from the most able pupils. The result is that pupils learn well how to research and discuss issues amongst themselves, deepen their understanding, and show a high degree of confidence and maturity in expressing their opinions and conclusions in class.
34. In a minority of lessons pupils have insufficient opportunity for interactive discussion or for making other kinds of contributions. This is sometimes because the teacher talks too much or is too fond of providing complete explanations, so discouraging pupils from thinking or being able to explore ideas with others. On other occasions teachers do not conclude lessons by summarising or listing key points (for instance, on the black/white board) or by encouraging pupils to make notes. In this school, however, pupils are unusually adept and mature at

expressing their points of view - a considerable strength on which the majority of teachers capitalise well.

35. Teachers use a satisfactory range of effective teaching methods. For example, they are good at setting the scene for lessons and at explaining their purpose and importance. Many lessons exploit appropriately the use of interactive class exposition and discussion, where pupils often join in the cut and thrust of debate with obvious pleasure. A minority of lessons underuse pupils' high capability for articulate debate, because teachers in these classes do not sufficiently recognise the value for learning that discussion provides. A few teachers use brainstorming profitably. Many provide suitably designed worksheets or notes that combine well-structured information, guided or open questions and space for personal notes for future use or revision. Good use is generally made of the formulation of ideas in small groups and subsequent feedback to the whole class.
36. Lessons are nearly always well managed. Indiscipline is not a problem. Most pupils display a commendable good-naturedness and commitment and interest in their studies. Relationships amongst the pupils themselves and with staff are friendly, supportive and purposeful. Many teachers show respect for pupils' ideas and experience, create a climate of trust and try to make learning enjoyable. In the best lessons the occasional pupil who strays off task is quickly and unobtrusively brought back into line.
37. Time is normally used very well. Pupils generally arrive on time and settle down to work with the minimum of fuss. The pace of most lessons is appropriately brisk, but in some it is not fast enough. Most teachers frequently record key points on whiteboard or blackboard. In a mathematics lesson in Year 11 the teacher made imaginative use of an overhead projector by linking a graphic calculator to it with the result that pupils learned very effectively about such basic operations as entering and editing data and using menus. Pupils taking art A-level are hampered by not having dedicated work-spaces. Books and other resource materials are chosen with care. Teachers' assessments of pupils' work are usually thorough and constructive. Homework is generally set appropriately to reinforce or extend what has been learnt in school.
38. Overwhelmingly, teaching is good throughout the school. It is, however, very good in PE throughout Years 7-9; in mathematics in Years 10-11; and in English, mathematics, art, history, modern foreign languages and classics in the sixth form. It is satisfactory (though often good) in English in Years 7-9, in PE in the sixth form and in ICT throughout the school. The quality of teaching on matters of personal, social and health education (PSHE) is satisfactory, but is not as good as for subjects overall, because many teachers of it are non-specialists and the time available is short. In all other subjects and key stages teaching is good. Virtually all subjects have at least some teaching that is very good. Over a quarter of the teaching in Years 7-9 and almost half of it in PE is of this high quality.
39. Most pupils learn very well and make good progress in their studies both in lessons and as they move through the school. Boys and girls learn equally well and make similar progress. There are many reasons for this high quality of learning. Teaching is good. Pupils come to the school with high expectations, a clear determination to work hard and behave very well. The school is a friendly place: pupils' relationships are warm, caring and encouraging. Parents value highly what the school offers their children and provide strong support at home. This is a very good school in which to learn and grow up.

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

40. The curriculum in Years 7-11 offers a good range of opportunities for learning. It has a clear, academic focus that well meets the needs of all pupils at the school. The breadth and balance of the curriculum are good overall. In Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9) each subject of the National Curriculum (including the separate science subjects of biology, chemistry and physics) and RE are appropriately covered. Pupils study one modern foreign language.

After studying ancient history in Year 7, pupils study Latin in Years 8 and 9. All pupils study personal, social and health education (PSHE) throughout Years 7-9 and ICT in Year 9 for one lesson each fortnight. The introduction of drama in Year 9 and lively after-school activities in both music and drama represent an improvement since the previous inspection in the range of opportunities for pupils to pursue activities in the performing arts.

41. A good range of curricular provision is offered in Years 10-11. All pupils study the core subjects, design and technology, and French, in addition to ICT, PE, RE and PSHE as non-examination subjects. Pupils choose two further subjects from an appropriate list of eight subjects that includes German, Greek and Latin.
42. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, except in ICT in Years 7-11. The lack of teaching time and facilities for ICT were reported at the time of the last inspection. There is no timetabled provision of ICT in Years 7 and 8, and the provision for Year 9-11 is insufficient. The school has insufficient computers of high enough specification to teach the national curriculum requirement for computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture (CAD/CAM). In other subjects ICT provision is inconsistent and insufficient to enable pupils to develop the full range of skills to meet national requirements, although initial development has taken place in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and music.
43. All pupils can study the full range of subjects provided by the school. Pupils are normally taught in mixed-ability groups, but are taught in sets of like-attainment in mathematics in Years 8-11 and in French in Years 9-11. These arrangements are generally effective. The school has considered strategies for raising standards in literacy still further as part of the National Literacy Strategy, but there is little coordination of this across all subjects. An initiative, as part of the National Numeracy Strategy, to raise standards of numeracy still further has begun, but only in mathematics in Year 7. Insufficient teaching time is allowed for PSHE and RE. The total teaching time each week, however, comfortably exceeds the minimum recommended by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE).
44. The procedures for curricular planning and for monitoring the effectiveness of the curriculum are generally satisfactory. Links between the senior management team and subject departments have recently been initiated, but do not focus hard enough on quality assurance procedures. Schemes of work are excellent in art, very good in design and technology and modern foreign languages and of generally good quality elsewhere.
45. A very good range of extracurricular activities enhances the curriculum. Out-of-school residential visits include a successful Outdoor Pursuits Week for pupils in Year 9 and exchange visits to France and Germany. A lively range of drama and musical events takes place. This includes inter-house competitions, regular club meetings, concerts and annual junior and senior dramatic productions. There is a wide range of other activities that take place at lunchtimes and after school, in addition to a regular programme of visits to theatres and art galleries and for fieldwork in the local area. The school successfully entered the Mathematics Association competition, winning graphic calculators for the school and for the participants. Sports teams take part in a full range of inter-school and inter-house matches and events. Over half the pupils are involved in competitive sports and there is a strong and willing commitment to these from eight members of staff.
46. The provision for careers education and guidance is sound. An appropriate scheme for careers education is organised by the careers coordinator and is taught within the PSHE course by form tutors. The extent and depth of the programme at Key Stages 3 and 4 are restricted by the lack of time available. The coordinator neither teaches the course nor has the opportunity to monitor it systematically. Impartial careers advice is given by the careers service. Its help is appropriately focused on a small number of pupils in greatest need and is only available to others on request. The school has a well-organised careers library, which is accessible throughout the day. Further information is available on computer in the adjacent, main school library.

47. All pupils in Year 10 participate for at least one week in well-organised work experience. Pupils are prepared effectively for their placement, but opportunities are missed to strengthen their knowledge of job applications, selection and workplace procedures. During the placement pupils are visited by a member of staff and complete a diary. Immediately after the placement employers and staff support pupils appropriately in a short programme of follow-up work.
48. There are satisfactory links with the local community. All pupils attend the school's Commemoration Service in Ripon Cathedral, for instance, an electronic link has been established with one local library and links with local employers have been established through the work experience programme. Curricular links with contributory primary schools are poor, limiting continuity between Key Stages 2 and 3. A formal partnership has been established with the neighbouring secondary school, which has recently gained Technology College status, to participate in joint curricular projects in ICT. Good relationships exist with institutions of higher education. The school participates successfully with several universities in initial teacher training.
49. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Pupils' experience of spirituality is rooted in the secure, orderly and caring ethos of the school. This comes in large part from the high expectations of courtesy and respect amongst adults and pupils in and around the school. The regular assemblies, to which the school chaplain and sometimes the dean of Ripon Cathedral make significant contributions, are also central to the school's spiritual provision. Pupils study the major world faiths in RE and have good opportunities to reflect on a variety of issues connected with beliefs, rituals and traditions.
50. Within the daily curriculum also - as, for example, in modern foreign languages - pupils discuss matters of faith. In mathematics, art, design and technology and music, pupils experience spirituality through their studies of elegant pattern and form and through the broad aesthetic experiences that arts subjects provide. In music, for example, pupils analyse composition as they rehearse an anthem by Handel. In contrast, the curricular time available for RE is low throughout the school. Many features of the school's site, particularly its grounds, provide an uplifting experience.
51. Pupils' moral education is very well promoted. The school has a clear code of conduct that is prominently displayed. Staff insist on high standards of behaviour and courtesy, both in lessons and as pupils move about the school. Pupils have many opportunities to win commendations for good work and effort. If they misbehave, a clear system of sanctions is applied appropriately and sparingly. Admonishments are almost always carried out in a way that encourages pupils to reflect rationally on their actions.
52. The well-established prefect system provides pupils with a clear perception of the connection of maturity with good manners and behaviour. Prefects are empowered to apply minor sanctions. Aggressive incidents in school are extremely rare. Moral issues are presented in assemblies, in PSHE programmes and by visiting individuals and groups - as, for instance, by a recent theatre-in-education project which dealt with drinking and driving. Across the whole curriculum moral conduct is strongly reinforced: in PE, for example, pupils have regular experience of rules, teamwork and the notion of fair play.
53. Provision for pupils' social development is good. Whilst the school operates a range of strict rules about conduct and movement around the campus, pupils are given sufficient time and reasonable spaces for social encounters. A very orderly and pleasant atmosphere has been created for breaks and lunchtimes to enable pupils to enjoy civilised conversation and interaction with one another. A very good range of extracurricular activities and school visits provides further opportunities for pupils to enjoy a variety of friendship groups. These involve large numbers of pupils: around 50 pupils, for example, attend the junior drama club. At least half the school takes part in extracurricular sports activities. The residential

week for pupils in Year 9 is especially beneficial in providing opportunities for social development in unfamiliar and sometimes challenging surroundings.

54. The prefect and house systems also provide good social occasions for pupils to interact with those of a different age, notably through competitions and through events that raise funds for charities. These activities provide pupils with a good sense of responsibility, particularly towards people less fortunate than themselves. A sense of responsibility is reinforced by work experience, all of which is negotiated and arranged by the school. The presence of weekly and termly boarders has social advantages for all pupils - as, for example, in the recognition of the need for good organisation, clear routines and respect for individual privacy.
55. Good, and often very good, opportunities for collaborative work are provided in daily lessons, notably in science, art, design and technology, modern foreign languages, music and PE. In music, for example, pupils produce compositions in pairs and groups in almost every lesson. In PE pupils enjoy regular meetings with pupils from other schools through competitive sports. The school's site has a strong aesthetic appeal and is welcoming for pupils, staff and visitors.
56. In contrast, the school makes no provision of lockers for pupils (except for girls' PE), with the result that they experience significant difficulties through carrying full school bags around all day or leaving them in inconvenient places. Additionally, although the school allocates some indoor spaces for pupils to use at breaks and lunchtimes, they do not always have access to them in cold weather. These weaknesses detract a little from what is otherwise a very good social experience and provision for pupils.
57. Pupils' cultural development is well promoted. The school maintains a strong link with Ripon Cathedral, not only through seasonal and annual celebrations, but also as a place for historical and social study: pupils were involved, for instance, in the installation of a time-capsule to mark the new millennium. Through its links with the cathedral the school is about to provide hospitality for two Buddhist nuns from Tibet. Links with other cultures are typified by pupils' experience of an Indian dance performance and workshop and of a Caribbean steel band. In connection with their modern foreign language studies pupils take part in exchange visits and are encouraged to reflect rationally on the various routines and traditions of other families and communities. The art department arranges a valuable visit to London art galleries. In music pupils study a very wide range of both European and wider world music.
58. The school has whole-school assemblies on four days each week and these always include an act of worship. It falls slightly short, however, of meeting the legal requirement to provide a daily act of worship for all pupils, since there is no element of worship in most tutorial sessions held on the remaining day (Wednesday).

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

59. The school offers a generally high quality of care and supervision for its pupils. There are very positive relationships between pupils and staff. The overwhelming majority of pupils feel valued and appreciated in the school. There are, however, a few areas where the quality of care does not reach this high level.
60. The school has an agreed policy for ensuring the health and safety of pupils; this is overseen by one of the deputy headteachers. The detailed implementation of the policy is left to individual heads of departments, who are charged with conducting regular assessments of risk and with day-to-day monitoring. Some serious hazards were, however, observed during the inspection: unguarded woodworking machines were accessible to pupils; some overcrowding was evident in practical areas of design and technology; and science laboratories (with, for example, access to chemicals) were left unlocked over lunchtimes. A serious issue was also identified in respect of the overall security of the site.

61. Policies and procedures for child protection are good and well known to staff. Arrangements for the pastoral care of pupils are sound. The different sections of the school are well led and organised. Form tutors have clear responsibilities for the tutorial and academic supervision of all pupils and generally discharge them effectively. Systems to ensure good attendance and behaviour are very effective. The policy to eliminate bullying is clear and well known to staff and pupils.
62. Programmes of study for personal, social and health education (PSHE) are thorough and comprehensive. They include good programmes of education about sex and the dangers of drugs and other hazardous substances. These courses are largely taught by form tutors; additional specific activities are provided in other subjects across the timetable. Although there has been some improvement in the provision for PSHE since the time of the last inspection, only a small amount of time is available for these programmes and there is no regular monitoring of the quality of tutorial work and its teaching.
63. Pupils' academic progress is monitored by form tutors and suitable remedial action is taken where concerns about progress become evident. The monitoring of progress in Years 10-11 is sound. Pupils' progress in the sixth form is regularly and effectively monitored across the whole curriculum. The monitoring of academic progress in Years 7-9, however, is not effective enough, because the school has insufficient, robust data by which to form reliable judgements.
64. In some aspects of the school's life, practices are in place that do not offer the full range of opportunity to pupils: whilst there are dedicated social areas for pupils in Year 11 and the sixth form to use out of class time, other pupils only have access to the school's accommodation in wet weather; the school's uniform code is restrictive to girls by forbidding the wearing of trousers; and in assemblies boys and girls are seated separately – in contrast to the very natural and mutually supportive way they study and share recreation together at all other times.
65. The school has a sound assessment policy that gives suitable guidance on the assessment, marking, recording and reporting of pupils' work. Within most subject departments the quality of day-to-day assessment of individual pupils' work is at least satisfactory. Assessment is excellent in design and technology, but unsatisfactory in ICT and RE. Overall, subject departments assess work to a common grading system, but do not have a reliable method of ensuring that grades given in different subjects are of equal worth; this was a weakness reported in the previous inspection. In those subjects which require assessment to national criteria the day-to-day evaluations of pupils' work relate to those levels satisfactorily; this represents an improvement since the previous inspection. In Years 10-11 assessments relate firmly to the requirements of external examinations and, as a consequence, give both good indications of the progress of pupils and provide clear targets for improvement.
66. Procedures for assessing, recording and monitoring pupils' attainment and progress across the school are satisfactory overall. The analysis of the progress of individuals and groups as they move through Years 10-11 and into the sixth form is very thorough. It provides reliable information for tracking individual pupils' progress and for monitoring overall standards. In Years 7-9, however, there is a significant weakness, because the school has neither a comprehensive baseline of information about pupils' attainments on entry nor a reliable common criterion for judging their subsequent attainment across all subjects.
67. Interim and annual reports to parents are presented in a common format. This gives a fair representation of children's current attainment and progress and advises how improvement might be made. The mixture of letter grades, percentage marks, class averages and national curriculum levels shown on the reports is, however, potentially confusing to parents and pupils, especially as there is a lack of equivalence amongst the different subjects. Written comments about pupils' work are generally informative, although some reports have

insufficient clarity and detail about what pupils have actually attained. A significant minority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed dissatisfaction with the information they receive, particularly in relation to their children's progress.

68. Pupils' Records of Achievement to mark the end of compulsory education are of high quality. They represent a clear, cumulative picture of pupils' broad achievements and final levels of attainment, including evaluations written both by the school and by pupils themselves. Assessment provision and practice are good for those pupils identified by the school as having a degree of special educational need.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

69. The school is held in high regard by parents. They are generally very satisfied with the progress, standards and academic results achieved by their children. They are very pleased, too, with the way that the school promotes the all-round development of their children.
70. In contrast, a significant minority of parents indicated in the pre-inspection questionnaire that they were not happy with the effectiveness of the school's links with them. In particular, they expressed dissatisfaction with the reporting of pupils' progress, the provision of extracurricular activities, and (in a few cases) with the school's approachability.
71. The school's prospectus informs parents, in the usual outline detail, about the activities and aims of the school. The school also provides other booklets about joining the school in Year 7, GCSE options and the sixth form. All are well presented, informative and clearly written. There are, additionally, a *Student Planner* and termly *Diary Card* which supply further detail of events, pupils' workload and progress. The *Home-School Agreement* is in place. Parents receive two written reports each academic year as well as being invited to attend Information Evenings for each year group.
72. The Parents' Association is an active body and organises a range of functions throughout the year to sustain a high level of fund-raising for the school. They keep close contact with the school and regularly offer the opportunity of their own newsletter to the school to communicate information to parents. The parents of children who board at the school have an additional open evening with staff regarding the specific aspects of boarding life.
73. The school therefore has a range of ways to form good links with parents, but does not embrace these opportunities to best effect. It does not produce, for example, a regular newsletter for parents informing them about its life, activities and successes or reinforcing the formal and informal methods of communication. It does not provide comprehensive information to parents about the curriculum in Years 7-9 nor encourage them to express any comments or concerns they may have on such documents as the annual academic reports. Some of the school's very good work is therefore under-publicised. Positive, recent outreach activities have included the school band playing at the summer barbeque and a curriculum evening organised by the Parents' Association.
74. Parents are involved in the work of the school by activities such as helping in the library, arranging placements for work experience and helping with supervision on school trips and games. There is good evidence that many parents strongly support their children's learning in school by the careful monitoring of homework and by making computers available at home for their children to obtain information and complete projects.
75. The school offers a wide and comprehensive range of extracurricular activities that are supported enthusiastically by staff. There is particularly good provision for sport and some outdoor activities in addition to many opportunities in music and drama. Participation is greatly encouraged with the provision of special tickets to enable pupils to "fast-track" the lunch queues. Some pupils also take part in national events such as a mathematics

competition. The inspection team's view is that the perception of a minority of parents that the school's extracurricular provision is meagre is not well founded.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

76. The school has clear aims and values. These centre on a strong commitment to excellence in all aspects of school life, to positive relationships and to equality of opportunity. These aspirations are virtually always very well reflected in the day-to-day life of the school. The school's central aim of providing a high standard of education for pupils is achieved exceptionally well.
77. The leadership and management of the school are generally good. Leaders have worked hard and effectively to maintain high standards during a prolonged period of uncertainty and concern over the school's future (now resolved) as a result of the national legislation allowing a parental ballot to be held over the continuation of selective education. There are, however, several aspects of the school's life where greater leadership is required in order to sustain and improve further its generally high effectiveness.
78. The headteacher provides calm, authoritative leadership and clear vision. He shows appropriate concern that change should not impair the school's traditional and substantial strengths. He has, however, taken some key initiatives to anticipate future needs. Measures have been launched, for example, to carry out an internal evaluation and monitoring of the school's performance, and dialogue and partnership have been started with the neighbouring technology college.
79. The senior management team is sound in quality, offering largely effective support to the headteacher. The roles of deputy headteachers have been modified within the last year, so that they now have appropriate managerial responsibility for the performance of the range of professional teams in the school. This assumption of clear line-management responsibility is an improvement since the last inspection, but requires enhanced training to ensure that the implementation of these extended roles is comprehensive and fully effective.
80. The quality of leadership of subject departments and pastoral areas ranges from very good to unsatisfactory, but is good overall. Many leaders have begun since January 2000 to evaluate the quality of their own and their colleagues' teaching, although the programme does not operate systematically across the school. Training and development in leadership for this tier of staff have been introduced since the last inspection. Lines of communication and consultation procedures have also been improved. There is, however, still too little coordination or assumption of initiative at this level of leadership.
81. There is a strong commitment by the school's leadership to maintain the school's high standards and to continue to ensure appropriate improvement. Most aspects of the school's life work very effectively and there is clear evidence of the capacity to drive forward appropriate change. In some areas of management, however, thorough systems are not in place to ensure that procedures are robust and followed up systematically to satisfactory completion. For example, the management of health and safety issues has potentially serious weaknesses and the management of relationships with parents and the wider community, although regarded by the school as a very important priority, has important gaps.
82. The governing body comprises an able and committed group of governors. It has a structure of appropriate working groups and committees that are well led. It provides encouraging support to the school. The recent uncertainties and challenges over the future of the school have occupied considerable time and energy. In some aspects, however, the governing body does not achieve sufficient impact in its constructive support for the school's management - as, for example, in the setting of targets, the attainment of "best

value”, in assuring the consistent quality of operational procedures or in meeting National Curriculum requirements for ICT.

83. Senior management has begun to act on evaluating the school’s performance comprehensively. A systematic approach is being established to ensure the regular monitoring and recording of the overall quality of teaching. The headteacher was proactively effective in producing a draft policy for performance management, as required by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) and ensuring its discussion by the staff of the school. The processes for developmental planning have improved significantly since the last inspection. Plans now have clear priorities that are appropriately costed and contain specified outcomes. The school development plan is now a relevant and practical document.
84. The school's educational priorities are well supported through sound financial management and planning. The governing body is well informed about the school's spending patterns and monitors expenditure carefully, although infrequently taking the initiative on financial issues. It has, however, identified the need to investigate additional means of fund-raising. The school carries forward a small surplus to allow for contingencies. As at the time of the last inspection, there is effective financial control and administration. The school does not, however, have precise information about the proportion of its income from, and expenditure on, the sixth form, a section that comprises nearly a quarter of the school's pupils. A fairly recent external financial audit raised only one major weakness and that has been dealt with satisfactorily.
85. Spending by heads of departments is carefully monitored. The school has made appropriate use of funds for staff development and has clear plans for future spending. The school does not make sufficiently effective use of new technologies such as e-mail, CD-ROMs and the Internet, although there are plans in hand to use the National Grid for Learning. The school’s electronic link with the British Library is, however, a good example of the use of new technology. Spending on services such as water and electricity is monitored, but the school does not have precise information about the relative costs of such services in the boarding houses and the main school respectively.
86. The proportion of the school's budget spent on teaching staff is below average, but this provision is generally good. There are, however, insufficient staff to teach ICT, so restricting the curriculum available to pupils. The majority of lessons are taught by specialists. Technical support is insufficient in design and technology and in ICT. There is sufficient administrative support. The ratio of teachers to pupils is better than average. The total teaching time of 26.5 hours per week comfortably exceeds the minimum recommended nationally. The distance which pupils have to walk between some classrooms on the school’s large site inevitably leads to some inefficiency in the use of time during the school day.
87. There is an effective programme of induction to the work of the school for teachers new to teaching. Opportunities for the professional development of staff are used appropriately. The school is working effectively, in partnership with a nearby school, to provide training in ICT for all staff. The good overall standard of teaching and very high level of learning in the school indicate that the school has the potential to be an effective provider of initial teacher training.
88. The school is situated on a very attractive site, with a mixture of old and relatively new buildings. There has been some improvement in the provision of accommodation since the time of the last inspection. Additional provision has been made for design and technology, ICT, music and business education. The newly-acquired mobile classrooms provide accommodation of good quality. Despite these improvements, some parts of the buildings are rather drab and lacking in stimulation. The accommodation for art is poor, although the plans in hand to create a sixth-form art studio promise to remedy part of the problem. The library is stimulating and welcoming, although not sufficiently large for a school of this size

and type; there are plans to extend the library's accommodation. The majority of pupils do not have secure storage for their belongings during the school day - a problem raised by parents. Access to any of the upper floors of the school is extremely difficult for people with physical disabilities. The school has no toilet provision for disabled people, a serious weakness.

89. The school's spending on resources is close to the national average. There are sufficient resources overall. There are, however, shortages of books in design and technology and of equipment in art, design and technology and in ICT. Several departments, including English, modern foreign languages, geography and history, do not have any ICT hardware or up-to-date software within their teaching areas. This severely restricts cross-curricular work in ICT. Although the number of computers in the school is close to average, much of the hardware provided centrally is old and leads to problems of incompatibility across the school. The library provides good facilities for pupils to work independently. It has a good stock of fiction, non-fiction and reference books, quality newspapers and periodicals. Well-qualified, full-time assistance of high quality is provided in the library, but access to the Internet is limited. Overall, taking into account the high quality and range of education provided for pupils, set against the amount of money the school receives for its work, the school gives good value for money.

THE SIXTH FORM

90. The overall attainment of pupils in the sixth form is well above average. In 1999 A-level results were well above the national average, with almost all students gaining a pass grade and those gaining the highest grade (A) at least double the national average in the subjects taken. In general studies, a subject taken by all students, almost all gained at least a pass grade, with over half gaining the highest grades (A or B). In 2000 a similar standard of results was achieved.
91. The overall quality of sixth-form teaching is good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and use this knowledge effectively to plan lessons that are well sequenced and carefully structured to meet clear objectives. They have high expectations and regularly challenge sixth formers to use their very good learning skill to reach high targets.
92. Pupils have a very positive and mature attitude to their work and are purposeful and well organised. They arrive at lessons on time prepared to make a prompt start. They are keen to learn, work hard and are well motivated. Private-study time is used effectively and pupils generally come well prepared for each lesson. Their response to teaching is very good. They are willing to be involved in the work and make strong contributions to lessons. Relationships are very good: pupils cooperate effectively with one other to carry out investigations or solve problems.
93. A broad and balanced curriculum is provided in the sixth form. There is a good range of 19 academic subject-courses leading to GCE A-Level examinations; these include design and technology, business education and economics. All pupils study general studies for A-level examination. In addition, all take ICT or PE and in Year 12 take part in a range of general activities that includes life-saving, first aid, craft and voluntary community work. There is no separate timetabled provision for RE, but it is included for all as part of general studies. A good range of extracurricular activities is available to sixth formers. There have recently been visits to Zimbabwe, a ski trip to Vermont in the USA, an art trip to London galleries and a French exchange visit.
94. The provision for careers education and guidance is good. An appropriately structured programme of careers education, which mainly focuses on choices for higher education, is taught effectively by form tutors during general studies and tutorial periods; it includes visits to several universities. Guidance is sound, with the opportunity of a formal careers interview with the head of the sixth form, the careers coordinator or a careers officer. There is a well-stocked careers library that contains appropriate information about university

courses and opportunities for employment. It is easily accessible. Further useful information is held on computer in the school library. All pupils who leave the sixth form to enter direct employment receive a formal interview and support from the careers service and the opportunity to participate in work experience.

95. The pastoral support for pupils is good. This is mainly provided by form tutors and the head of the sixth form. There is a well-organised and appropriate procedure for application and induction to the sixth form. Pupils who come to the school from other schools are quickly assimilated into the life of the school. Academic progress is effectively and regularly monitored: all pupils meet with their form tutor twice each year for a formal review of their work. Satisfactory social areas are provided. The library's provision for private study is sound, but space is limited.
96. Pupils have good opportunities for personal development. The prefect system is viewed positively by pupils and the responsibilities of office are taken seriously. Sixth formers are involved in helping pupils elsewhere in the school: two of them are attached to each form to support sporting and charity work. They are largely responsible for organising a range of inter-house events such as sports and dramatic and musical competitions. The activities that contribute to the successful Charity Week are also organised by sixth-form pupils. The Sixth Form Committee provides a useful forum for formal discussion between staff and pupils.

BOARDING

97. The experience of boys and girls who live in the boarding houses is generally positive. Most value greatly the opportunity to live in a community close to the day provision they enjoy. Of the 63 pupils in residence about one third are termly boarders, whilst the majority board from Monday to Friday each week. No significant difference in attainment is detectable between boarders and day pupils.
98. The quality of care in both houses is good. Staff are accessible and keen to provide a full range of social and domestic experiences for pupils. They are generally alert and sensitive to pupils' personal and emotional needs. Pupils generally get on well together and there is no evidence of any significant bullying or harassment.
99. The physical conditions of the two boarding houses differ. Johnson House (for girls) is a relatively modern, bright facility, but with limitations of space that sometimes restrict pupils' activities. School House (for boys) is spacious and offers opportunities for a varied range of activities. It is, however, drab in places and requires continuing investment to keep its facilities up to date.
100. Each house has its own procedures and rules, some of which are dictated by the nature of the respective buildings. Some differences, however, carry no compelling justification: the right, for example, to bring personal electronic equipment into residence is, unhelpfully, interpreted differently for boys and girls. Boys have much easier access than girls to the library's resources in private study time.
101. A full formal inspection of the school's boarding provision was carried out by Social Services inspectors in November 1999. The seven recommendations arising from that inspection have been considered carefully by the school and are either in process of implementation or firmly planned. As part of this follow-up action, plans are in hand to establish forums, clearly needed, through which pupils will be able to have an influence on decision-making about their lives as boarders.
102. The number and range of evening and weekend activities have recently been reviewed and a suitably enlarged programme of social, recreational and sporting opportunities is now offered.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

103. The school has many significant strengths and few weaknesses. To improve the high quality of education that pupils already receive, the senior management of the school, in conjunction with the governing body, should:
- (a) regularly monitor and evaluate the quality of all teaching, in order to reinforce what is good and remove the weaknesses observed in a minority of lessons [## 32 34-35 38 44 80 112 117 132 146 148 172-173 199];
 - (b) measure pupils' progress accurately in Years 7-9 by establishing a comprehensive baseline of information about pupils' attainments when they join the school in Year 7 and by subsequently assessing their attainments in all subjects and years to the same valid yardstick [## 2 63 65 82 148];
 - (c) rapidly ensure that all pupils in Years 7-11 receive their statutory entitlement of information and communication technology (ICT) and reach appropriately high standards in the subject. (The lack of teaching time and facilities in ICT was also identified as a major weakness at the last inspection five years ago) [## 21 42 82 86 89 113 134 147 155-156 158 161-162 166 178 189 190-192 194-197 200-201];
 - (d) enhance the ways that the school links with parents: in particular, improve the amount of curricular and other information provided to parents about the school and its activities and achievements, in order to help to remove the lack of involvement in the school felt by a significant minority of parents [## 67 70 73 81];
 - (e) provide secure storage facilities for books, materials and equipment for all pupils [## 56 88]; and
 - (f) ensure that the deficiencies in matters of health and safety that were drawn to the attention of the governors and senior management are thoroughly assessed and addressed [## 60 81 158 166].

In addition to the key issues above, other less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the school's future plan of action. These are indicated in paragraphs 25 43 46-48 56 58 62 64 67 84-85 88-89 99-101 and in subject sections.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	236
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	106

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	21	56	20	1	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	761
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	10

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Y7 - Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	31

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	5.1
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for 1998-1999.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	47	67	114

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	47	47	47
	Girls	66	66	67
	Total	113	113	114
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	99 (94)	99 (97)	100 (97)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	94 (91)	98 (95)	97 (92)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	47	47	47
	Girls	67	67	67
	Total	114	114	114
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (98)	100 (100)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	91 (88)	100 (96)	97 (98)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

Percentages in brackets refer to 1998.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	54	54	108

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	54	54	54
	Girls	54	54	54
	Total	108	108	108
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	100 (98)	100 (99)	100 (99)
	National	47 (45)	91 (90)	96 (95)

Percentages in brackets refer to 1998.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	62.1 (61.3)
	National	38.0 (36.8)

Figures in brackets refer to 1998.

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	45	55	100

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	27.3	27.6	27.5 (26.9)	/	/	/
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

Figures in brackets refer to 1998.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	748
Any other minority ethnic group	5

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	3	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	50.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.0
Average class size (YY7-11)	23.8

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	8.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	206

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
	£
Total income	2,205,532
Total expenditure	2,253,411
Expenditure per pupil	2,954
Balance brought forward from previous year	169,212
Balance carried forward to next year	121,333

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	901
Number of questionnaires returned	230

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strong-ly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strong-ly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	47	4	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	54	39	6	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	41	50	5	2	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	48	14	0	7
The teaching is good.	33	53	6	3	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	21	54	17	6	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	35	50	13	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	33	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	18	44	23	11	4
The school is well led and managed.	33	55	2	4	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	37	45	11	3	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	37	20	5	5

Other issues raised by parents

There were additional comments from parents on 59 of the 230 questionnaires returned.

Amongst the many positive points mentioned were:

- the high standards and good progress achieved by pupils;
- the high standard, commitment and enthusiasm of most teachers; and
- the school's successful emphasis on the all-round development of its pupils.

Amongst the concerns expressed in a few questionnaires were:

- a perception that links with parents are not close enough;
- disappointment at the range of competitive sports available;
- the school's limited provision of teaching and equipment for information and communication technology; and
- the lack of lockers for pupils' books and equipment during the school day.

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

ENGLISH

104. On entry to the school in Year 7 pupils' overall standard of attainment is above the national average. Results in the national tests in English at the end of Year 9 over the 1997-1999 period have been well above the national average and above the average for grammar schools. The picture was similar in 2000. Girls' attainment in 1997 and 1998 was higher than boys', but there was no significant difference in attainment between the sexes in 1999.
105. By the end of Year 9 almost all pupils read aloud confidently and most have such advanced skills as scanning books quickly to gain the information they need. The most able pupils read and understand increasingly complex books, both fiction and non-fiction, and discuss with maturity and fluency the ideas and styles of different writers and types of books. Pupils in a Year 8 lesson, for example, enjoyed developing a deep understanding of the structure and imagery of a contemporary poem and were confident in expressing their ideas. Both boys and girls listen very carefully and use sophisticated vocabulary in class discussions. Their accuracy in grammar, spelling and the punctuation of written work is well above average. The most able pupils write confidently on a range of topics, including personal responses to a range of literary texts.
106. Pupils generally make good progress in their learning in Years 7-9. They improve their spelling and punctuation and the content and style of their written work are often unusually mature. They read widely and use the library sensibly to find information from a range of sources, including some use of the Internet. High-attaining pupils develop an excellent understanding of literary texts: they relate issues in *Macbeth*, for example, to events in contemporary life and use technical language carefully to enhance their appreciation of Shakespeare's language and verse. All pupils develop good note-taking skills. Pupils are weaker at writing longer essays for a variety of purposes than in other aspects of the subject, although the development of their written vocabulary is good. Unusually, the presentation of written work is not as strong as its content.
107. Over the period 1997-1999 results in GCSE in both English Language and English Literature have been well above national averages. The proportion of pupils achieving A*/A grades in 1999 was, however, significantly lower than both pupils' performance in most other subjects in the school and their previous attainment at the end of Key Stage 3. Results in 1997- 1998 and 2000 were stronger, but still below those in most other subjects. There was no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
108. In lessons in Years 10-11, pupils demonstrate reading skills of a high order and make insightful deductions from literary texts. Their knowledge and understanding of these texts is considerable and high-attaining pupils write accomplished essays of literary criticism. They enjoy discussing new ideas and make valid comparisons between, for example, the writings of Shakespeare and William Golding. All pupils consider theme and style in some depth. Written work is generally fluent, technically accurate and adequately presented. Lack of sufficient experience of writing a wide range of essays, including non-literary essays, prevents some pupils from obtaining A/A* grades.
109. Pupils make sound progress in their studies in Years 10-11 and high-attaining pupils produce some outstanding writing. All pupils make suitable progress in developing their own written styles and gain confidence in using a wider vocabulary to express their ideas. They continue to read widely and are very skilled in speaking to convince, persuade and speculate.
110. The overall standard of work in the sixth form is very high. At the end of their English Literature course pupils are well prepared for courses in higher education. From 1997-1999 all pupils

passed the A-level examination and in 1999 16 out of the 19 entries achieved an A or B grade. In literature classes pupils display a knowledge and appreciation of literary texts more normally seen at university level. They make very good progress, demonstrating analytical skills of a high order and are particularly strong in textual analysis. They read widely and express themselves articulately both in conversation and writing. In a lesson on Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, for example, pupils in Year 12 made intelligent use of evidence from the text to substantiate the points they made and in a Year 13 lesson on a poem by Philip Larkin pupils made significant connections with other literary works. They read widely and the majority are very accomplished writers.

111. Literacy is well supported across the whole curriculum. In design and technology, for instance, pupils thoroughly understand their written tasks and comment perceptively on the views of other pupils, and in science they listen attentively and use appropriate technical language in discussion. In all subjects effective learning is facilitated through the accuracy and quality of pupils' writing, their skills in learning from reading and the fluency of their oral work.
112. Teaching is satisfactory overall in Key Stage 3, good in Key Stage 4 and very good in the sixth form. Major strengths of the department include teachers' deep knowledge of the subject and the high expectations they have of pupils. The pace and challenge of most lessons are demanding and extend pupils' learning. The planning of individual lessons is good overall. In Years 7-9, however, teachers' medium- and long-term planning does not sufficiently encourage pupils to write essays of sustained length or sufficient variety. Literature is taught well throughout the school, but there is insufficient use of non-literary texts, so restricting models for writing.
113. The majority of staff are experienced teachers who show great commitment and enthusiasm, but use a limited range of methods and approaches. Pupils have, for example, insufficient opportunities to explore ideas in groups. The limited use of computers impedes not only the presentation of written work, but also the drafting and redrafting of essays. Teachers give good feedback to pupils in lessons and mark written work conscientiously. Homework is set regularly and is used both to prepare for lessons and to extend or consolidate learning in class. Many pupils are given limited experience of evaluating their own work or setting targets for improvement. A further raising of standards in Key Stage 3 requires pupils being taught more systematically how to write different types of essays.
114. Teaching in the sixth form is very good. Lessons are planned carefully and pupils respond well to the relaxed yet intellectually challenging climate of learning. Teachers are sensitive to the needs of pupils, but are not prepared to accept inferior work. Their knowledge of literary texts and enthusiasm for the subject promote high commitment and interest in the subject from pupils.
115. Pupils' attitudes are very positive. Pupils enjoy the subject and most use the facilities of the library to read a wide range of literary and non-literary texts. In lessons they work hard, concentrate well and, when given the opportunity, learn well from one other in groups. They complete their homework tasks thoroughly and are well assisted by their parents. They support one other sensitively and are confident in their relationships with adults. Behaviour in lessons is very good and boys and girls work well together.
116. The department contributes effectively to the moral and social development of pupils. In literature lessons, for example, pupils are encouraged to discuss the nature of evil in *Lord of the Flies* and, particularly in drama, are encouraged to work cooperatively and share ideas. The range of multicultural literary texts in Key Stage 3 is light. The department arranges a good programme of theatre and other cultural visits and the drama club is very popular with pupils.
117. Staff in the department are experienced, but many (including the head of department) have other whole-school responsibilities. The department runs efficiently on a day-to-day basis

and departmental documentation is sound. In Key Stage 4 there is more detailed monitoring of pupils' work than in Key Stage 3. The limited monitoring of teaching does not sufficiently enable members of the department to share their expertise and build on their strengths. Planning for the future is satisfactory overall, but staff training does not concentrate enough on extending teachers' use of a range of teaching means and methods, including ICT. Accommodation is satisfactory except for the small size and poor state of repair of one mobile classroom. Resources for teaching literature are adequate, but those for language work are slim.

118. Drama has been introduced in the current academic year into the school curriculum in Year 9 and has the potential to improve further pupils' confidence in expressing their ideas both orally and in movement. Learning and attainment vary: they were good in one lesson, but unsatisfactory in another because the teacher lacked confidence and expertise in using the techniques of drama. The success of this innovation depends on further staff training and improved resources in the drama space. Since the last inspection the department has made steady progress; the introduction of drama and slowly increasing use of ICT are important improvements.

MATHEMATICS

119. The proportion of pupils who achieved the standard expected of 14 year olds in the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 was very high. The proportion achieving the higher levels of attainment (Level 6 and above) was also very high. Based upon the average points scored by all pupils, the school's results were very high compared with the average for all schools and were above average when compared with those of other grammar schools. The results during previous years have consistently been very high. The overall level of attainment of boys and girls is similar, but boys' achievements were better than those of the girls at the highest levels, contrary to national trends. The test results in 2000 were at a similar high level of success.
120. The proportion of pupils who achieved grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations in 1999 was very high; indeed all pupils achieved one of these grades. Well over half the pupils achieved the highest grades (A* or A) and 94 per cent of pupils achieved grades A*-B, compared with a national average of 25 per cent. The attainments of boys and girls reveal no discernible difference, contrary to national trends. The results over recent years have remained consistently very high. Compared with other grammar schools, the results are very high. Based upon the average grade achieved by all the pupils in the school who were entered for the examination, pupils made significantly better progress in mathematics than in many of their other subjects. The high standards of previous years were maintained in 2000, albeit with a slight dip.
121. Examination results at A-level in 1999 were also exceptionally good. Just over half the candidates achieved grade A, compared to a national average of 23 per cent. Three-quarters of candidates achieved grades A or B, where nationally about 40 per cent usually do so. The number of candidates entered was double those of earlier years and all achieved a pass grade. Other than a small dip in the proportion of the top grades in 1998, results have been consistently high over the last few years. Occasionally a few pupils are entered for special (more challenging) papers or for further mathematics; they do exceptionally well. Although there were fewer mathematics candidates in 2000, a larger proportion of them achieved the highest grade.
122. By the end of Key Stage 3 the standard of work of all pupils is generally well above that expected of 14 year olds. Many pupils consistently reach high levels in the quality of their work. They are taught to present their work in ways that are mathematically correct and this helps them to achieve high standards, for example, in solving routine problems, algebraic manipulation and generalising about the patterns and relationships they find in extended

investigations. Many pupils remember earlier work well and build up their knowledge, skills and understanding of the subject in a systematic manner.

123. The high-attaining pupils in the top sets of Key Stage 3 make fast progress. They ask many perceptive questions which often lead down fruitful avenues of discovery. For example, in learning how to express decimal numbers in standard form, one girl asked what the value of a number raised to the power of zero might be. Pupils were able to deduce the answer from the patterns of numbers the teacher wrote on the whiteboard. Some of the work done by most pupils in Year 9 reaches a level normally expected of 16 year olds. This explains why about three-quarters of them achieve Level 7 or better in their Key Stage 3 assessments. In response to thorough and systematic teaching, pupils who learn at a slower pace achieve at least the standard expected of this age group. They learn the appropriate skills and routines of number notations and how these are used in calculations, of algebraic manipulation and of basic geometry.
124. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 make good progress in response to the thorough teaching they receive. In each year, for example, they improve their skills in solving appropriate equations and learn to present their answers logically and neatly. Basic numeracy is effectively honed during these two years and pupils generally gain confidence in speeding up their recall of basic facts. A class of pupils in Year 8, for instance, greatly enjoyed, and significantly improved their understanding of, the equivalence of numbers written as decimals, fractions or percentages, by playing a game in two teams which required them to put numbers in order, using these three forms of notation.
125. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is well above average. All pupils are entered for GCSE and almost all prepare for the higher tier of the examinations, the remainder preparing for the intermediate tier. Each year about half the pupils achieve the highest grades A* or A and the majority of the remainder achieve a grade B.
126. Most pupils demonstrate a very thorough understanding of the skills and routines of arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry and data-handling. For example, after much practice they confidently manipulate algebraic expressions to help them to solve complicated equations, although too many then instinctively reach for a calculator at the final stage to find the square root of, for instance, $36/25$. Their pace of learning is systematic and productive. Many show creativity and high intelligence in formulating their own questions, and providing proofs for their hypotheses, in their mathematical investigations. Gifted and talented pupils excel in such activities and produce extended work of exceptional rigour.
127. Pupils' progress in Year 10 is very good. Most pupils put commendable effort into their lessons. They work systematically and carefully through examples in textbooks or duplicated sheets and gain confidence through their success. For example, pupils in one of the lower sets revised their knowledge of how to find the approximate value of circumference, area or radius, given the value of one of these and taking π to be 3. After an initial discussion, during which they listened carefully and offered answers tentatively, they worked carefully at the tasks set and improved their skills of estimation and approximation.
128. Relatively large numbers of pupils study A-level mathematics and a few take the course in further mathematics. In response to very thorough and rigorous teaching, pupils make good gains in knowledge and understanding. Their attainment is well above average. The further mathematics group in Year 13, for example, had derived series expansions of several of the common mathematical functions. They then went on to deduce from these the series expansions of other functions. They developed well their insight into the subtleties of the subject and focused correctly on the range of values of the variable for which the series were valid. They are mathematicians in the making. In contrast, one group of pupils just beginning their A-level course in mathematics explored tentatively the

laws of indices and began to appreciate how further results may be deduced from these basic rules.

129. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good. They make a positive response to the teaching they receive and are very cooperative in undertaking the tasks set for them. They persevere well when they encounter difficulties and are willing to ask their teachers for help. Many pupils offer oral answers to questions willingly; equally, many are tentative on such occasions, but respond well to encouragement. They work hard and productively at practising the standard skills and procedures. Great pride is taken in the logical presentation of written work that conveys clearly the methods of their solutions to problems. A significant proportion of pupils is encouraged to enter national competitions such as those organised by the Mathematical Association. Their success further enhances attitudes and interest in the subject.
130. The behaviour of pupils is very good. Classrooms are orderly and calm. Pupils respect their teachers and respond positively to the occasional admonition. Most form constructive relationships with their peers and their teachers and enjoy humour. They frequently help one another to clarify misunderstandings.
131. The quality of teaching is good overall in Years 7-9 and very good in the rest of the school: overall, two lessons in every three are good and one in six is very good. The good teaching identified in the last inspection report has been maintained and even improved. Teachers are well qualified and have a good range of experience. Their very good subject knowledge and high expectations of what pupils can do ensure that lessons are well planned, with clear objectives, and lead to very thorough and systematic teaching. These features are particularly evident in the teaching of pupils in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form and, together with pupils' very good attitudes, are the main reasons why examination results are as high as they are.
132. A good range of teaching methods is employed. Clear explanations and well-managed discussions are a strong feature of most lessons. Pupils are not, however, required to explain their reasons for answers often enough as a means of clarifying their understanding still further. Occasionally, teachers tell pupils too much and make them passive learners, in the absence of well-framed questions designed to engage pupils actively in lessons. Pupils practise skills and techniques thoroughly and are taught carefully how to use them to tackle problems described in everyday settings. Practical work is used effectively to help pupils to understand new ideas. For example, pupils in a lower set in Year 10 used squared paper to establish Pythagoras's Theorem. A good, short description of the life and times of Pythagoras was an additional feature of this lesson that held pupils' interest.
133. Very good opportunities are provided for pupils to investigate mathematical problems that require them to decide upon lines of enquiry, justify their thinking and hypotheses and to reach general conclusions from their working. The majority of pupils show considerable insight and tenacity in pursuing such activities. A few very talented pupils combine creativity with rigour to produce work of very high quality. Occasionally, when the whole class is studying the same topic, teachers set different work for some pupils, in order to meet their needs. Pupils in Year 7, for instance, were introduced to spreadsheets through two different activities, depending upon their knowledge. Similarly, two girls in a lower set in Year 11 had progressed further than their classmates and were provided with suitable work better suited to their needs.
134. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and ensure a calm climate for learning. Pupils' behaviour is well managed, usually by a well-targeted question. The pace of lessons is sound, but on occasions pupils could make faster progress by, for example, having tasks to complete in a specified time. Resources are used well, but the use of computers to enhance pupils' learning is too limited to be effective. In contrast, graphic calculators are used well in the sixth form to explore, for instance, the effect of changing the

values of parameters in the equations for the trajectory of a projectile. Equally, pupils in Year 11 are taught well to use this type of calculator in statistics.

135. During lessons teachers make good, on-going assessment of pupils' understanding; many misunderstandings are quickly clarified with individual pupils. Formal written assessments are made with sufficient regularity. The marking of pupils' work is generally regular; brief, encouraging or challenging comments are occasionally added. Homework is set regularly and pupils usually make a good and successful attempt at it. The subject is very well organised and enthusiastically led. Morale is high and teachers have the interest and will to continue to develop and improve their teaching of the subject.
136. The general standard of numeracy is good. Steps are being taken to implement the national initiative for improving numeracy in Key Stage 3 and this is beginning to raise further pupils' facility to perform quick, accurate, mental calculations and to improve their ready recall of basic number facts. It also alleviates pupils' over-reliance upon calculators.
137. Pupils nevertheless use calculators appropriately and sensibly in mathematics lessons and in other subjects, especially in science and in design and technology. Pupils are taught well to approximate and estimate in mathematics and these concepts are used effectively in other subjects. They have a good working knowledge of units of measurement and know the correct abbreviations. They have a good understanding of graphical methods and represent and interpret data in suitable graphs. They use their graphs, in appropriate cases, to determine the relationship between the variables. Knowledge of common shapes and their properties supports well their work in other subjects such as in art and in design and technology.

SCIENCE

138. In the 1999 national tests the proportions of pupils at the age of 14 achieving Level 5 and above or Level 6 and above were very high compared with the national average and well above the average of other grammar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining Level 7 was particularly high. Boys did slightly better than girls in 1999, but boys and girls have gained similar results on average over the last four years. Results in these tests improved faster than the national average between 1996 and 1999, but fell slightly in 2000.
139. In the 1999 GCSE examinations in biology, chemistry and physics the proportions of pupils gaining grades A*-C and the average points scored were above the national averages for these subjects. The results were broadly average in relation to selective schools nationally. This school, however, enters around three-quarters of its pupils for separate science subjects compared with an average of one third for selective schools and four per cent for all schools. Nationally, pupils entered for the separate science subjects are usually the highest-attaining pupils. The results for this school therefore represent attainment that is very high in relation to all schools and above average for grammar schools. Pupils who have not followed GCSE courses in the separate sciences have, until recently, taken the single award science course: the 1999 results in single award science were far above the national average. Boys and girls achieved similar results in all the GCSE science subjects.
140. The chemistry and physics results in 2000 were similar to those in 1999, but biology results were slightly lower. The results in chemistry have been consistently better than those in biology and physics over the past four years. The proportion of higher-attaining pupils gaining grades A and A* in science subjects in 1999 and 2000 was broadly similar to that in English and mathematics. In 1999 a small number of pupils did not gain grades A*-C in all three science subjects. The science departments have adjusted their curricula accordingly and now offer a double-award course as an alternative for pupils.
141. Results in the 1999 A-level examinations in chemistry and physics were well above average. Pupils' average point scores in biology, though not as high as in previous years,

were nevertheless above the national average. The A-level results fell slightly in 2000 in physics and chemistry, but rose in biology after their dip in 1999.

142. In the work seen during the inspection pupils' overall standard of attainment was well above average at the ages of 14 and 16 and in the sixth form. Pupils have detailed knowledge and understanding that is well beyond the level normally found for their ages. For example, pupils in Year 9 are very knowledgeable about chemical formulae and their books reveal a detailed study of the way in which plants transpire. Pupils in Year 11 can suggest, before it has been explained by the teacher, how speed-time graphs might be used to calculate acceleration and distance. Pupils' attainment is consistently very good across all three science subjects and in their investigational work. Pupils usually present their work very carefully, but in physics some pupils do not set down their calculations as carefully as they should and do not always state appropriate units with their answers or on graph axes.
143. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment in the subject that are well above the national average. They make good progress as they move through the school and achieve even better results in science at all stages than might be expected from their previous attainments. The major factors that enable pupils to achieve well are the consistently good quality of teaching they receive and their own very positive response and enthusiasm for learning. The large number of pupils choosing to take up A-level science courses indicates the positive attitudes to the subjects being developed through Years 7-11. Pupils' very good attainment in the sixth form is thoroughly underpinned by the separate science courses in Years 10-11. The depth of knowledge that pupils acquire in these courses ensures that their attainment, even in the early stages in Year 12, is well above the level normally found at that point.
144. The quality of teaching and learning in science is good throughout the school. The high proportions of teaching that are good or very good are the major strength of these departments. In response to this good teaching, pupils take an active part in lessons and often pose questions of their own to confirm and extend their understanding. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They provide particularly clear instructions and explanations, so that pupils understand exactly what they need to do and build up secure and detailed understanding of the topics they study. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils' effort, behaviour and attainment; in most lessons these expectations are fully realised. Teachers' questioning is often very effective, particularly when they follow up their basic questions with further enquiries that encourage pupils to consider ideas in more detail.
145. In the best lessons there is often a high level of challenge and teachers successfully introduce pupils to topics that are more demanding than those normally taught to pupils of that age. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, pupils are asked to predict, and then explain, the difference in behaviour between dilute and concentrated sulphuric acid when they react with magnesium. In these very good lessons teachers successfully share their enthusiasm for the subject with pupils. Pupils in Year 8 thoroughly enjoyed discovering and drawing the different parts of a flower and made rapid progress in developing their practical and drawing skills and their understanding of specialist terms.
146. There are, however, minor weaknesses in some lessons, particularly in the few lessons which are satisfactory rather than good. The most common weakness is a slightly slow pace: pupils maintain good concentration and behaviour, but do not learn as quickly as they should. Within each lesson teachers provide a satisfactory variety of learning activities of good quality. Across all the science subjects, however, lessons often contain the same elements of teachers' questioning and explanation, practical work and making notes. There are few examples in lessons of pupils reading, discussing, finding out information for themselves or presenting information to the rest of the class. The departments therefore miss the opportunity to use a greater variety of tasks to provide additional stimulus and interest for pupils. The departments make good use of homework to extend pupils'

learning. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, but marking often does not indicate clearly where pupils have gone wrong and what they need to do to improve.

147. The departments have introduced some interesting applications of ICT into their teaching. The physics department has developed an independent learning package on the school's computer network to develop pupils' skills in seeking and using information. The biology department has produced its own presentations that make use of computer graphics to simulate various biological processes. Nevertheless, pupils report that they use computers only very occasionally in science lessons. The departments have a limited access to the school's main computer facilities, but they do not have sufficient computers and associated equipment in the laboratories to use ICT routinely to support learning within lessons.
148. The three separate science departments are all well led and managed. A very good atmosphere for learning is well established in all three and all members of the teams, both teachers and technicians, are committed to providing high quality science education for pupils. The departments cooperate well, for example, in the arrangements for the single and double award GCSE courses. They do not, however, work sufficiently closely together to make the best use of the different strengths that exist in the three subject areas. In particular, they do not share a common procedure for recording and analysing assessment data, nor is there any system of lesson observation extending across all three subjects to encourage the sharing of good teaching methods.
149. The science departments have made good progress since the previous inspection and attainment in the subject is now well above the national average at all stages. The shortage of ICT equipment, however, remains a weakness for the departments. Science education is a substantial strength of the school.

ART

150. Over the period 1997-1999 the proportion of pupils gaining grades in the range A*-C or A*-G in GCSE was well above the national average. More girls than boys achieve the highest grades. Pupils' performance in the subject in 1999 was below what they achieved in most of their other subjects. At A-level, over the 1997-1999 period, the proportion of pupils gaining the highest A-B grades or passing the subject was well above the national average.
151. By the age of 14, pupils' overall level of attainment is above average. Pupils have a good store of knowledge from which to develop new ideas. Their artistic skills and techniques are above average – as shown, for example, in their approach to their study of the sculptor Calder. Pupils have a good art vocabulary and use it carefully to enhance their understanding. Sketchbooks are used well for both homework and class studies. Pupils have high skill in speaking and listening and invariably ask pertinent questions. Written work is very legible and spelling generally accurate. Pupils' competence in handling ICT, however, is below average.
152. By the age of 16, pupils' attainment is above average overall. Drawing, painting and three-dimensional skills are well developed, but ICT is mainly used for research and word processing purposes. Pupils have an above average ability to carry out research, as is shown, for example, in their special studies inspired by a visit to Leeds Art Gallery. Pupils use experimental techniques well, as they develop new approaches to painting, graphics and sculpture work.
153. By the age of 18, pupils' attainment is well above average. Pupils show good understanding of the importance of art as a vehicle for creativity and self-expression. They produce innovative work on a wide variety of scales. The new photography element has added exciting possibilities to work in progress. Some pupils use computers well to design posters. The residential trip to London, linked with visits to art galleries, has significantly increased pupils' knowledge and understanding, as well as directly benefiting their personal

studies. One pupil's first-hand experience of living in the Peruvian Rain Forest has added a deep and fresh dimension to his painting. In contrast, the standard of life-drawing is only average, partly because pupils do not take advantage of local classes on this aspect.

154. The quality of teaching is always at least good and often very good (particularly in the sixth form). Teachers have very good subject knowledge and high credibility as artists. They work well as a team, despite the poor accommodation and resources. They are supported efficiently by a knowledgeable technician. Teachers track pupils' progress effectively. Written comments on pupils' work in sketchbooks particularly give clear guidance for improvement.
155. Teachers offer open access for all pupils to the art rooms at lunchtimes and after school. They enrich the subject and work being studied for older pupils by programmed visits, but there is currently no similar provision for younger pupils. There are limited opportunities for communicating information and for involving pupils actively in whole-class discussions. This is partly owing to the lack of whiteboards or flipcharts in either art room, although one teacher uses the back of a door as a surface for demonstrating two-point perspective. There is little use of ICT within the department, partly because staff have insufficient training in this aspect.
156. Pupils enter the school at the age of 11 with average artistic knowledge and skill. They make good progress in the traditional areas of painting, drawing and three-dimensional studies. Gifted and talented pupils and those in the sixth form make very good progress. In the case of the sixth form, this is in spite of the lack of a dedicated workspace and largely owing to the calibre of the pupils and staff and their will to succeed. Pupils with identified special educational needs are well supported. Pupils' progress in using ICT is poor because of the inadequate hardware available within both the art and ICT rooms. Pupils read worksheets easily and think logically. Not all, however, easily make connections with other subjects: some pupils in Year 10, for example, did not appreciate the mathematical structure behind the work of Escher, the Dutch graphic artist, even when they had been provided with relevant, written information.
157. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally good in the main school and are very good in the sixth form. Pupils support one another very well both within and outside of lessons. Very few pupils come to lessons without equipment or the relevant resources. Their sense of personal responsibility is of a high order.
158. The leadership and management of the subject are good, with the potential to be very good. The department has, however, several major problems. The present level of ICT hardware and software is inadequate to meet the requirements of the art curriculum. Art displays within the department are good. The amount of dust in the one art room is unacceptable because of inadequate cleaning. The height of this room also poses problems for the display of work and for storage; the need to use ladders is a cause for concern. Vibration from the heating system, coupled with the noise of chairs and feet from the room above, disturbs the concentration and discussions of teachers and pupils. The extractor fan in the kiln room is broken.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

159. At the end of Key Stage 3 the attainment of pupils is significantly above what is normally expected for their age. The results of the 1998 and 1999 teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average for Level 5 and above and for Level 6 and above. The picture was similar in 2000. The performance of girls was better than that of boys. Standards in graphics have improved by the end of Key Stage 3 since the last inspection through engaging pupils in a wider range of drawing and presentation techniques.
160. By the end of Year 9 all pupils have well above average competence in producing individual designs of a high standard. They develop detailed criteria for their designs and use these

to explore design proposals. Pupils in Year 9, for example, designed and created an electronic game and used computers to produce accompanying instructions up to a commercial standard. They take careful account of the working characteristics and properties of materials and components in producing their designs. The standard of presentation of written work is high. The detailed and systematic records of work that pupils keep are both carefully done and effective for later revision. Numeracy skills are very good. Standards of oral work are high: the frequent opportunities for discussion of work ensure that pupils have good practice in using technical terms with accuracy and understanding.

161. The overall results in the GCSE examinations in 1999 and 2000 were well above the recent national average for pupils' point scores. They were consistently high in all aspects of the subject - resistant materials, electronic products, graphic products and food technology. Standards are also above the average national level for pupils in selective schools. The performance of boys and girls is similar. There has been a steady improvement in GCSE results in the last three years and a high standard of work has been maintained since the last inspection. Standards in computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) are severely restricted by the poor resources available. In the sixth form the pupils entered for the new Advanced Supplementary (AS) level examination in Product Design attain the level of work required.
162. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils select a wide range of appropriate sources of information with discrimination. They use these well to develop their ideas for robust designs of high quality that are linked to their own interests or modern industrial practice. Their plans and decisions take full account of the physical properties of materials and make best use of resources. Standards of graphics are high and pupils work to a considerable degree of precision. Practical skills are often of near professional standard. Attainment is weakest in CAD/CAM because of a lack of suitable resources. Pupils use computers effectively (often at home) to communicate information and handle data to support their work and present it to a high standard - as, for example, by presenting the results of research surveys in graphs and charts.
163. Pupils make very good progress in learning in Years 7-11 and good progress in the sixth form. They consistently practise and extend their knowledge and skills as they design and make products, making very secure gains in knowledge and understanding. They communicate well their ideas for their product designs, working to increasing levels of accuracy and complexity. By the end of Year 9 they understand the structure and function of familiar products, when designing, and have a good knowledge of basic electronics. In Years 10-11 and in the sixth form pupils work with appropriate levels of independence. They manage their time effectively, employing a wide range of knowledge and skills to reach the highest grades.
164. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are excellent. Their behaviour is very good in all lessons. They listen effectively, concentrate hard and learn quickly. Personal development and relationships are good. Pupils put pressure on themselves in all years to perform to the high level that they set themselves: folders of work show their determination to achieve very high results and work is frequently revised to secure improvement. They share work spaces efficiently, but on occasions work less productively in electronics, graphics and food, because the work areas are crowded.
165. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school with examples of very good teaching in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of their subjects and are well organised. The department benefits from a new and very enthusiastic team of specialist teachers who operate very well together in ensuring coherent teaching towards high standards. Their high expectations enhance the rate of progress of pupils. Teachers continually review work undertaken by pupils, make learning objectives explicit and ensure that all pupils are fully challenged. Lesson time is used well: a brisk pace is maintained by making good use of appropriate resources and setting time-limits for different activities. The notes of guidance that are produced to provide pupils with clarity

and rigour in each stage of work are above the standard normally encountered. Teachers' assessment of work is very good and is used effectively to guide curricular planning and to raise pupils' standards. Homework is set regularly and extends the work set in lessons.

166. The department is very well led and managed. The day-to-day working of the department is very good. Consistently high standards are achieved, because the planning and approaches to teaching are coordinated, thoughtfully supported and thoroughly monitored. The strong and growing links with industry and the local technology college enhance resources. The requirements of the National Curriculum are met. The lack of provision of textiles at Key Stage 3 restricts pupils' opportunities in designing, a weakness that was recorded at the last inspection. The very poor resources for CAD/CAM are a major deficiency and priority for action. The department has some accommodation that is significantly smaller than that usually seen, resulting in cramped work areas for practical activities. Matters of health and safety about wood-working machinery were drawn to the attention of the school. The low level of technical support reduces the efficiency of the department.

GEOGRAPHY

167. Pupils' overall level of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is well above the national expectation. Teachers also assessed pupils' work in 1999 at the end of Year 9 at the same high level: there was little difference overall between the levels achieved by boys and girls, although more girls achieved the higher levels. A similar level of attainment was reached in 2000. During the inspection pupils worked above, and sometimes well above, the national expectation.
168. At the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' overall level of attainment is very high. In 1999 GCSE results were well above the national average, with half the pupils gaining the highest A* or A grades. Pupils' performance at GCSE was above what they achieved in most of their other subjects in the school. Boys and girls achieved similar results. In 2000 these high overall standards were maintained in GCSE, although girls gained more higher grades than boys. Similar standards have been maintained during the last four years.
169. At A-level, pupils' overall level of attainment is in line with the national norm. In 1999 the results achieved were below the national average at all levels, representing a considerable decline since the previous year. In 2000 results improved (but not to the levels achieved before 1999), with over one third of pupils gaining the highest grades (A and B). There has been a slight decline in attainment during the last four years. Girls consistently gain higher grades than boys. The department analyses the examination results carefully and has decided on appropriate strategies for improvement, putting greater emphasis in future on revision and practice in answering examination questions.
170. Pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. They have good knowledge of the way of life of people in a wide range of places around the world, understand how features of a landscape such as volcanoes are formed, and how and why the geographical features of cities have developed. In Year 11, for example, pupils worked in groups (with information from a textbook, the teacher's notes and a video) to evaluate and compare very effectively different ways of planning for the growth of the city of Rio de Janeiro and ended by reporting their findings to the whole class. Pupils have good understanding of the relationship between people and the environment in which they live and make sound connections between theory and the real world around them. They understand clearly the meaning of geographical terms and use them accurately and fluently in both written and oral work.
171. Pupils rapidly select and collect information from resource materials. Pupils in Year 9, for example, used an atlas very effectively to describe accurately the main features of the climate of Europe. In Years 10-11 and in the sixth form, pupils have good understanding of the methods of geographical enquiry, collecting and analysing information, and reaching

valid conclusions. As part of their GCSE coursework, for instance, pupils in Year 10 visit Malham in the Yorkshire Dales and collect information about the landscape and the changes taking place in the area. On their return they analyse this information carefully, often using a computer, and proceed to produce studies of a high standard. The majority of pupils write fluently and accurately. The higher-attaining pupils complete detailed written work of a very good standard making good use of geographical terms. All pupils have good numerical skills, but they use a narrow range of techniques and types of graphs to analyse statistics. Pupils speak clearly and confidently and listen with understanding.

172. The quality of teaching is good overall throughout the school and about one fifth of it is very good. Teachers have a very wide knowledge of the subject, enabling them to present well-structured and clear explanations and to maintain a brisk pace. They ask appropriate and relevant questions to ensure that all pupils gain a clear understanding of the topic, but often the highest-attaining pupils are not challenged with sufficiently rigorous questioning to explain their answers. In discussion teachers make good use of geographical terms, presenting good role models for the pupils.
173. Lessons are well prepared and organised with clear objectives. The result is that teachers start lessons promptly, maintain a good pace throughout and move smoothly from one activity to another. The resources used are of good quality and generally used well. The use of video-recorded material is less effective, however, as it is often shown without the teacher offering comment and explanation. Expectations and challenge are otherwise high. Pupils are expected to work hard, think carefully and use previously learned knowledge to solve geographical problems, resulting in rapid gains in understanding.
174. Lessons are planned carefully. They contain a variety of well-structured activities to enable pupils to gain sound knowledge and to use what they know in a new context, so gaining deeper understanding. In Year 10, for example, pupils made very good progress in understanding how a landscape is formed and changed. The teacher briskly reviewed the previous lesson's work with a lively discussion, subsequently providing an information sheet for pupils to read and use to complete a diagram showing the theory of landscape formation. The pupils in pairs then used their knowledge to complete a mapwork exercise to explain the formation of a landscape in North Yorkshire.
175. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good: the positive working atmosphere in class enables pupils to work effectively. Marking is, however, sometimes incomplete and often superficial, with few comments to help pupils to improve or gain deeper understanding. Lessons are generally planned to have a concluding review of work completed. Homework is set regularly and is relevant and worthwhile.
176. Pupils work well and make good progress in lessons throughout the school. In the majority of classes pupils are encouraged to be involved and to make good use of the knowledge they have. Teachers harness pupils' natural curiosity and interest very effectively. Pupils listen with understanding and are quick to share their ideas. Progress is generally swift, as lessons move at a good pace and contain a variety of activities that reinforce previous learning. Pupils have a good level of skill in recording information and taking notes, and are quick to question what they do not understand.
177. Pupils have a very positive attitude to the subject. They are keen and well motivated, and always work hard. They cooperate very effectively in groups, value one another's opinions and play a full part in group discussion. They behave responsibly, arrive promptly for lessons, are well organised and settle to work quickly. Books are maintained in good order. Work is generally presented neatly, with tasks completed and questions fully answered.
178. The scheme of work is sound and meets national requirements. The introduction of a programme of fieldwork in Key Stage 3 is an improvement since the last inspection and provides a sound basis for future work. All staff are competent at teaching ICT. Occasional lessons in Key Stage 3 use computers and many pupils use them for their GCSE

coursework, but this does not represent a coherent and effective programme for the use of ICT in the subject. The system of assessing pupils' standards of work is good and attainment is recorded effectively. It is not, however, used systematically to support individual pupils or to review the curriculum.

179. The leadership of the department is sound. There is a commitment to maintaining high standards and the organisation of the department is good. The departmental development plan has appropriate targets, but lacks details of time-scales, costs, responsibility for action or criteria to evaluate success. Procedures for monitoring the work of the department are thin. The subject is taught by four well-qualified and experienced members of staff. The fact that all have major responsibilities elsewhere in the school reduces opportunities for corporate involvement in the department.
180. The teaching accommodation (in two good-sized rooms, separated by a flight of stairs and in other rooms some distance away) makes departmental identity difficult and often results in an inefficient use of resources. The department responded satisfactorily to the last report and has the capacity for further improvement.

HISTORY

181. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is well above that expected nationally, a similar standard to that reported at the time of the last inspection. Teachers assessed their pupils as being well above the national average in 1998 and 1999, and the standards reached in 2000 were higher than those of the previous two years. A large proportion of pupils, both boys and girls, reach the highest levels of attainment. The overall standard of work seen during the inspection was well above that seen nationally: pupils reach standards that are good for their ability.
182. Pupils in Years 7-9 explain and link historical causes and effects clearly. They use a range of sources very effectively to extend their knowledge and understanding about the past. Many successfully evaluate the reliability and usefulness of different types of sources. The highest attainers produce extended writing of very good quality. In class discussion on the period from 1500 to 1750, for example, many pupils put forward very articulate reasons for their choice of an event from the period that had long-term significance.
183. Pupils taking the GCSE course in Key Stage 4 reach an overall standard that is well above the national average, a similar standard to that reported at the time of the last inspection. The percentage of both boys and girls achieving grades in the range A*-C in 1998 and 1999 was well above the overall national average and was also above the average for selective schools. The results in 2000 were similar to those of 1999. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A and A* in 1998 and 1999 (although lower in 1999 than the previous year) was well above the national average and also above the average for selective schools.
184. The overall standard of work seen in Key Stage 4 during the inspection was well above that expected nationally. Pupils taking GCSE see and explain very competently the causes of past events and the motives for actions taken. Pupils in Year 10, for instance, had a good understanding of the complex relationships between nations at the outbreak of World War 1. They use a range of source material (including statistics) effectively to extract information and make deductions about the past. Pupils in Year 11, for example, interpreted graphs confidently as part of their work on the impact of Marshall Aid on Europe after World War 2. The higher attainers posed perceptive questions about the validity and reliability of some of the statistics available to them.
185. Examination results at A-level were well above the national average in 1998 and 1999. The pass rate was above average and similar results were obtained in 2000. The proportion of

pupils gaining the highest A or B grades in 1998 and 1999 was significantly above the national average and above the average for selective schools. This proportion declined in 2000, but was still in line with both the 1999 average for selective schools and pupils' earlier attainments. Pupils currently taking the A-level course in Year 13 demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the past. They use evidence effectively to form their own views and are very articulate in class discussion in defending them. Pupils beginning the course in Year 12 show very good understanding of the problems of working with different views of the past.

186. The quality of teaching is good overall, occasionally very good, and never less than satisfactory. It is particularly good in the sixth form. The standard of teaching is similar to that seen at the last inspection. Teachers know their subject well at all levels and communicate their knowledge with enthusiasm. As a result, pupils acquire good knowledge and understanding about the past. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils and set work that is appropriately demanding. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, pupils were asked to consider what changes they might have expected to occur in Britain between 1750 and 1825 and to use sources to check their ideas and amend their conclusions. Pupils in Year 13 were asked to work in pairs to research a range of problems facing the British government in the period 1905-1911 and to formulate their views on the extent to which the problems posed a potential threat to the country.
187. An appropriate variety of teaching methods, including individual study, work in pairs and whole-class discussion, ensures that pupils have helpful opportunities to learn in a range of different ways. For the Year 13 pupils the whole-class discussion that followed their research was managed effectively by the teacher and helped to clarify and deepen the pupils' understanding. Teachers use an appropriate mixture of exposition and questioning very successfully in most lessons. Relationships are good. There is clear, mutual respect between teachers and their pupils, who respond by working hard. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace.
188. Pupils bring great enthusiasm and commitment to their work at all levels. As a result they make very good progress in acquiring new knowledge and understanding. Pupils want to learn, know more and to improve the standard of their work. They are prepared to work very hard in order to do so. Very occasionally, enthusiasm becomes over-enthusiasm, but behaviour is always good. Paired work is done with good cooperation and tolerance.
189. The subject meets the statutory teaching requirements for Key Stage 3. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department is aware of aspects where the department can improve still further and is working on ways of securing such improvement. There is a clear commitment to maintaining, and if possible raising still further, the high attainment in public examinations. The assessment of pupils' progress is sound. The provision of resources is good overall, but there is no ICT hardware or software within the department. Although the department has access to centrally provided ICT, it is not always available at appropriate times. As a result the department does not make sufficient use of ICT. Insufficient use is made of off-site resources. The experienced and dedicated teachers are an asset to the department.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

190. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below average overall, but above the standard normally found nationally in the elements of handling information and data; coverage of other areas of National Curriculum programmes is restricted by a lack of teaching time and resources.
191. In the 1999 national curriculum assessments at the end of Year 9 the proportion of pupils achieving at least Level 5 was put by teachers at a point slightly below the national average.

The assessment of this level in 2000 was noticeably higher. Similar proportions of boys and girls achieved Level 5 in 2000, in contrast to the national trend, but very few boys (and no girls) reached Level 6. No pupils achieved higher levels because of the lack of opportunity for them to develop such skills in lessons. Over the last three years fewer pupils than might be expected have reached the higher national levels of 6 or 7, when compared with the level of attainment in their other subjects or the typical performance of pupils in other schools.

192. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils explore and use a range of information as they consider its characteristics, structure, organisation and purposes: for example, they use desktop publishing to present their work, a simple graphics program to draw shapes and use databases and spreadsheets to manage the finances of a tuck shop. Overall, pupils' standard of attainment in ICT is low, because they are not taught enough throughout Years 7-9. Pupils have no separate lessons in the subject in Years 7 and 8. They also have too little time in the short course in Year 9 to acquire and develop the concepts and skills required to reach the higher levels of attainment. Pupils have little experience in using ICT to measure, record, respond to and control events by planning, testing and modifying sequences of instructions - as, for example, by data-logging in experiments or fieldwork, or in computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture (CAD/CAM) - because of sparse resources.
193. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils achieve near average standards, mainly in handling information and data. In the sixth form the level of attainment is broadly average. No GCSE or A-level courses are taken in ICT. In the taught lessons for all pupils in Years 10 and 11, pupils show good skill at analysing information. Their level of understanding and their competence in calculations and the presentation of data are well above average. Pupils in Year 10 use a wide range of applications to communicate information efficiently and to explore and solve problems in such aspects as research work and business practice. In Year 11, pupils display confidence in the analysis of techniques and software required for tasks such as the running of a hotel. They give clear oral explanations when describing their work and show good understanding of ICT systems to suit different needs. Pupils are familiar with the Internet for research and are confident in using ICT to enhance the quality of their work - often through work at home.
194. Over Key Stage 3 the majority of pupils make slow and insufficient progress. Pupils come from a large number of contributory primary schools: their experience and attainment in ICT on entry is very varied, but usually above the national average. Pupils' high standards in literacy and mathematics are shown by the very good standard of their written work and their analytical skills when handling data. Their progress towards the higher levels in ICT at the end of Key Stage 3, however, is restricted by the small amount of lessons in the subject and insufficient coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study in other subjects. These factors contribute to the relatively low overall level attained by pupils by Year 9.
195. Over Key Stage 4 the majority of pupils continue to have a narrow experience of ICT in many other subjects because of the shortage of suitable teaching and resources. In the ICT lessons taken by all pupils in Years 10 and 11 they generally make satisfactory progress in gaining knowledge and understanding owing to the teacher's clear explanations, a variety of well-structured units of work and a good pace. Pupils are encouraged to work independently and to assess their own work critically in order to improve and develop it. Many pupils diligently apply and extend their skills by working independently at home. The limited teaching provision and lack of formal qualifications in ICT in Key Stage 4 are justifiably reflected in parental concerns.
196. No formal courses are offered in the sixth form and pupils lack opportunities to study ICT at advanced levels. They generally maintain their skills and make satisfactory progress, however, in using ICT to enhance the quality and appearance of their work. They work independently and use available resources such as the Internet efficiently, in order to

support the research demands of other courses. They often present their findings to a near professional standard by desktop publishing.

197. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are good throughout the school. They enjoy the subject and are well motivated. They take work very seriously, setting themselves high standards and working hard to succeed. They display high standards of behaviour and social skills, when working in small groups or sharing equipment, and show respect for one another's views. They participate well in lessons. The slow running of some computers lowers pupils' enthusiasm, particularly of those with up-to-date equipment at home.
198. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall throughout the school. This has improved a little since the last inspection through the growing use of ICT in other subjects. The new acting head of department has a high level of technical skill and is used to extending pupils' experience in lessons. She continually discusses pupils' work with them to raise their standards. The scheme of work in Year 9 has been rewritten to reflect the recent changes of National Curriculum 2000.
199. Teaching does not always give sufficient opportunities to pupils in Years 10-11 to resolve their own problems by, for example, using equipment independently. On rare occasions teaching is too slow and unchallenging. The acting head of department is the sole specialist in the department and additionally carries a very high volume of work as the manager of the school's computer systems. There are insufficient specialist teachers and technical support to ensure consistency of high standards.
200. Teachers across the school provide pupils with some opportunities to use ICT by means of better access to central resources, although this process is not advanced enough. Some aspects of ICT are well used in music and broadly satisfactory use in modern foreign languages. There is insufficient use in other subjects, partly because of inadequate access to suitable resources. There is insufficient control, modelling and measurement in mathematics, science and in design and technology. Many teachers do not have the confidence or expertise to assess accurately what pupils achieve in ICT.
201. Statutory curricular requirements are not met. The current structure of the timetable in Years 7-9 does not provide all pupils with their entitlement of ICT. Pupils' attainment and progress in Years 7 and 8 in ICT are not mentioned, as they should be, in reports to parents. In Years 10-11 the coverage of National Curriculum programmes is inadequate. Some, but insufficient, progress has been made since the last inspection in 1995 in remedying weaknesses through the provision of an additional classroom and the upgrading of all central equipment in 1998. The school has firm plans, with the support of the 1999-2002 National Grid for Learning (NGfL) grant, to continue to improve its ICT provision throughout the school. There is much ground to make up in staffing, curricular time, resources and management of the subject.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

202. Pupils' overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is well above average: all pupils in 1999 achieved at least the national yardstick of Level 4, virtually all achieved Level 5 (or above) and over one third achieved Level 6. Standards have increased steadily over the last three years and results for 2000 indicate a continuing rise in performance. Girls outperform boys, but boys' performance is very good compared to the national average for boys.
203. Pupils' receptive skills by the end of Year 9 are of a very high order. Pupils follow detailed instructions very carefully and deduce meaning from extended extracts of French that are spoken at normal speed. They speak accurately, have good pronunciation and intonation, and take part in conversations by both seeking and conveying information. They refer well to past experience and are beginning to apply the grammar they have learned in new

contexts. Most pupils write accurately, expressing ideas and opinions about a wide range of topics.

204. By the end of Year 11 the overall level of attainment is very high. Results in GCSE in French are outstanding: 96 per cent of pupils gained at least a grade C in 1999 and 69 per cent of them were at A/A* level. This result is well above the national average and above average for similar schools. Examination performance in 2000 has maintained these very high standards. French is consistently one of the highest performing subjects in the school.
205. Pupils speak accurately and at length. They are proficient in using past, present and future tenses and express and justify opinions very well. They deduce meaning from a wide range of taped material and participate closely in lessons conducted almost entirely in French. German is offered as an optional second language in Years 10-11: pupils make very rapid progress and results at GCSE are well above average.
206. The take-up of the two languages in the sixth form is good. Examination results are above the national average in both languages. Pupils write fluently and make articulate and perceptive contributions to class debate as, for example, when discussing the advantages and disadvantages of various jobs.
207. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive, with girls and boys responding equally well. Pupils listen carefully, are keen to learn and make effective contributions both orally and in writing. Relationships amongst pupils are always warm and supportive and are often very good, particularly in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Pupils are eager to get involved in lessons, work very well together, respect the views of others and show care and consideration towards one another. Relationships between teachers and pupils are always at least satisfactory and are often very good. Behaviour is of a high order in the majority of lessons. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour are very rare and have minimal impact on the rest of the group.
208. Teaching is good (or better) in seven out of every ten lessons and very good (especially in the sixth form) in a fifth of them. There was one instance of unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers are very proficient speakers of the foreign languages. They have high expectations of pupils' effort and concentration, and manage classroom behaviour very well. In most lessons their use of questioning is very effective. Pupils are encouraged to answer fully and justify their answers when, for example, discussing summer holiday activities. Teachers are always well prepared, select their materials appropriately and provide a well-linked series of activities to reinforce and extend pupils' learning.
209. There were some good examples of pupils taking a lead-part in lessons. In one French lesson in the sixth form, for instance, pupils presented their versions of national stereotypes, using an overhead projector, and were then asked to justify their views to the rest of the class. In a small number of cases the teacher dominates the lesson and pupils are given insufficient opportunity to participate. Teachers use assessment data satisfactorily to check pupils' progress and modify their teaching. The clear marking policy is used by all staff, but is not routinely cross-referenced to the National Curriculum. Teachers in the department have made a recent start on a formal programme of observing one another's lessons, recognising it as an important opportunity for disseminating the very good practice within the department and securing further improvement.
210. Statutory requirements are met. All pupils study French throughout Years 7-11 and about one quarter take up German in Years 10-11. The department provides very good opportunities for pupils to consolidate and extend their learning of languages through educational visits: there is an annual French exchange with a partner school in Sainte, involving 30-40 pupils; an annual cultural holiday to Normandy, involving 100 pupils; and regular exchange visits to a school in Germany.

211. The department has well-qualified and experienced staff and is very effectively led by the experienced head of department. There is a good team spirit and a shared commitment to maintaining and improving standards. The departmental development plan reflects the school's aims and is evaluated regularly. The well-written scheme of work provides sound practical guidance and support for all staff.
212. Some of the accommodation is cramped, but staff create a stimulating learning environment for their pupils by means of lively and informative displays. Learning resources are good: all pupils have suitable access to textbooks and each room is equipped with appropriate audio-visual equipment. Since the last inspection the department has made good progress in improving its ICT resources and integrating these into its scheme of work. This is a high-performing department. It was very strong at the time of the last inspection and has continued to build on its success.

MUSIC

213. By the end of Key Stage 3 the overall attainment of pupils is above the national average. Pupils perform and compose well on electronic keyboards where, for example, they learn how to put together a sequence of chords based on the 12-bar blues. Almost all pupils hear, understand and coordinate fingers and controls on the keyboards to produce correct versions of the blues. They also learn how a blues scale works and understand how the minor third and seventh steps give the music its particular character.
214. At this stage, pupils use the computer with confidence to select drum and other rhythmic patterns, in order to create musical sequences. High-attaining pupils readily take opportunities to perform and improvise at more advanced levels on the keyboards - as, for example, by playing chords with all fingers, over which they add interesting improvised phrases, or by transposing into new keys. Pupils also know about common musical scales, key signatures, how chords are formed and how music is commonly structured. They acquire a broad understanding of the main musical periods, especially music of the Romantic period and the twentieth century.
215. Pupils' overall attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is above the national average. In the 1997-1999 GCSE results, taken together, 24 out of 28 pupils gained grades in the range A*-C. Of these, however, only one gained an A* grade. Results in the year 2000 were stronger, with 19 out of 22 pupils gaining grades in the range A*-C; two pupils in this cohort gained A* grades. These results suggest a slightly improved rate of success since the previous inspection.
216. Most of the pupils currently on the GCSE course play instruments at an acceptable level. A minority play at levels commensurate with the higher Associated Board grades: some play very well – as, for example, a pianist at Grade VIII level and a clarinetist who performs in an impressive folk idiom. Pupils compose music in a wide range of styles and listen intelligently as they identify musical features, styles, historical periods and well-known composers. Pupils at the end of this key stage acquire a good ear for music that enables them to sight-sing, with reasonable confidence, compositions such as a Handelian five-part chorus.
217. At the previous inspection standards in composition were reported as being below average at the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4. Composition has now been given appropriate importance in the schemes of work and planning, and 15 electronic work-stations have been installed. The standard of composition is now above average.
218. During the 1997-1999 period only a very small number of pupils opted for the A-level course and there is currently only one sixth former in Year 13 following the course. It is therefore inappropriate to make generalised comments on attainment at this phase.

219. The quality of learning in Key Stage 3 is good. Pupils enter the school with above-average overall attainment, although their attainments and previous experience of music education are variable. Most pupils, however, are quick learners and respond rapidly to the well-focused teaching they receive. They acquire new knowledge with relative ease and mostly quickly recall facts from previous lessons and from their primary schools. Over the key stage most pupils achieve well and make good progress in learning to read simple notation, to understand chords and harmonic sequences, and to locate notes on a music keyboard in order to play tunes. They also produce simple compositions and improvisations. Pupils learn well about musical instruments, how to categorise them and how sound is produced. They also acquire good rhythmic skills and understanding, especially through group work in which they simulate polyrhythms heard in African and Latin American examples of music.
220. In Key Stage 4 pupils also learn well. Lessons are always very practical. Early in Year 10 pupils are strongly encouraged to play before their peers in order to build up their confidence. They also develop good knowledge and understanding of music by studying scales, intervals, chords and harmonisation in appropriate detail. All pupils in Years 10-11 apply themselves well to learning tasks and gain confidence in using their knowledge and creative energy. They learn especially well how to listen carefully to performances and quickly acquire confidence in judging standards of playing. In one lesson, for instance, they accurately judged pieces played by their classmates and gave marks according to examination criteria. In all lessons at this stage pupils show a genuine interest in the subject, take responsibility for their own learning and apply themselves well to the challenges of the coursework.
221. Pupils in Year 12 also learn well. By this stage they have cultivated a mature approach to all their work and are accustomed to the kind of sharp criticism that helps them to improve. Learning is well reinforced, mainly through practical activity. Performance, composition and analysis are frequently integrated within class lessons. For example, pupils score arrangements of pieces for their own ensembles. Later on, they direct and rehearse these arrangements under the critical guidance of their teacher. This activity entails their learning about the range and characteristics of instruments, transposition, musical form, interpretation and style, and conducting. At this stage pupils are especially committed to their musical studies and devote sustained interest and concentration to them. They are challenged to evaluate their work at every stage. By doing this, they are especially realistic about their own attainments and clear about what they need to do to improve further.
222. Overall, in both key stages and in the sixth form, pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive. Pupils are very interested not only in their class lessons, but also in improving their instrumental skill and playing in the various extracurricular music activities. They behave very well in lessons and around the school and show great respect for property, equipment and teaching spaces. They are especially kind towards one another, particularly in activities where they are required to be critical of performances and compositions. Pupils deal very sensitively with the strengths and weaknesses of their peers and are increasingly keen to promote the notion of shared enjoyment of music in the department and the whole school. Pupils with a degree of special educational needs achieve well in music.
223. In Years 7-11 and in the sixth form, teaching is good overall and was very good in about one quarter of the lessons seen. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers know their subject well and are good all-round practitioners. They are well equipped to teach advanced material at sixth-form level. They have good awareness of the need to teach pupils how to write well and, especially, how to use the technical language of music with precision. Teachers work closely together: whilst they have complementary strengths, they agree about effective teaching approaches. With Year 7 classes, for example, they very effectively use games to encourage communication and impart knowledge.
224. Lessons are planned effectively and well prepared. The organisation of activities and direction of pupils' tasks are very good, discipline is firm and fair, and all lessons proceed at a good pace. Teachers make good use of musical instruments and equipment, especially

the newly installed electronic work-stations. Work is assessed well and the criteria for higher grades are made clear to pupils. Homework is applied satisfactorily in Years 7-9 and well at the later stages. A team of highly skilled instrumental teachers makes a very good contribution to the overall work of the department. Where necessary, good arrangements are made to provide suitable challenges for any pupils with a special educational need. A few of these pupils gain greatly from opportunities to shine in music by, for example, taking solo parts in ensembles.

225. The department is well led and managed by a teacher who has recently joined the staff. In a very short time he has greatly increased the number of opportunities for pupils to learn instruments and has also given extracurricular music a position of central importance. At present about 100 pupils take instrumental lessons and 180 take part in extracurricular musical activities. Since the previous inspection, when limited resources were reported, work-stations to accommodate 30 pupils have been installed in the main music room and additional teaching spaces for visiting teachers have been made available, together with a small electronic studio for advanced composition and recording. New schemes of work have been produced and are already under review.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

226. At the end of both key stages and in the sixth form pupils' overall standard is higher than is often found. The highest standards are attained in games and swimming. In the former many pupils execute the basic skills to a good standard and, by the end of Year 9, use them confidently in games. In a rugby football lesson for higher-attaining boys in Year 8, for example, many ran, passed and evaded tackles consistently well. The standards attained by girls are such that, by the end of Year 9, nearly all swim at least two recognised strokes with above average technique and speed. The standard attained by boys in gymnastics, although a little above average by the end of Year 9, is sound.
227. When boys first arrive in Year 7, a significant minority find even simple agilities difficult to perform. Good teaching and the boys' strong enthusiasm and commitment ensure quick progress, as the boys not only learn to perform the agilities, but also link them together in skilful and interesting sequences of movement.
228. In Years 10-11 many girls attain good standards in hockey and netball and boys continue to develop their competence in rugby and the other options open to them. Before the end of Key Stage 4 nearly all pupils play at least one major team game competently and have sufficient confidence and knowledge to officiate.
229. In the sixth form, pupils continue to develop their skills in one or more chosen activities. Girls taking the swimming option display a level of fitness and technique well above average and boys perform at an increasingly high level on the games field. A significant minority of pupils attain standards that enable them to perform at district, county or regional level. The last inspection report stated that pupils did not observe and evaluate one another's work systematically. They do now. In many lessons pupils help one another to identify and remedy faults in technique and tactical strategies. Pupils of all ages speak confidently and clearly and use appropriate technical terms.
230. Pupils make good progress in lessons and over longer periods of time. Key factors in this success are demanding teaching and the pupils' desire to improve. Very good examples of this were seen in a basketball lesson for boys in Year 9 and in a swimming lesson for girls in Year 7. In the former, boys improved their jump shots and in the latter girls improved their breathing whilst swimming the front crawl. This good progress is maintained into and beyond Key Stage 4 in all areas of study. Pupils are enthusiastic and committed to improving their knowledge and skills. They change quickly, listen carefully and observe demonstrations perceptively. Pupils work well with partners, in groups and in teams. They compete strongly but fairly and have respect for opponents and rules. The positive responses of pupils enable much work to be covered at a good pace.

231. In Key Stage 3 the majority of teaching is very good overall and never less than good. In Key Stage 4 it is good and very good in equal measure. On occasions, where pupils make only moderate progress, it is satisfactory. Teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory overall: much of it is good, although in a few instances pupils are insufficiently involved in planning or leading aspects of lessons. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject. They expect, and get, much from pupils. They use appropriate and progressive practices that make strong but appropriate demands on the pupils. In nearly all lessons teachers make very good use of demonstrations and enhance pupils' understanding through effective and appropriately brief question and answer sessions. In the best lessons pupils are grouped according to their ability and prior level of attainment and are therefore appropriately challenged as they practise and play in adapted games. Teachers ensure that older pupils have ample opportunities to play in the full adult version of games.
232. The 1995 inspection report indicated that the curriculum for boys lacked breadth and balance and was affected adversely by the use of non-specialist staff. These issues have been addressed satisfactorily, although the time available for striking and fielding games is minimal. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. A number of non-specialist and unqualified staff continue to be used. Many have undertaken recent and relevant professional development to equip themselves to teach aspects of the subject. They make a valuable contribution in their areas of competence.
233. Teachers assess and record pupils' attainments and effort carefully and regularly. Insufficient use, however, is made of assessment data and opportunities to address issues such as the rigour of assessment between girls and boys are missed. Accommodation and resources for the subject are adequate. They are maintained largely to a good standard, although the cricket square requires scarifying. The playing fields are good and drain well, but weeds are now taking hold. Overall, the management of the subject is good.
234. A number of parents raised concerns about the quality of extracurricular sport and, in particular, about the number of fixtures cancelled at short notice. The heads of department have maintained detailed evidence of fixtures, including reasons for cancellation. The vast majority of cancellations in the 1999-2000 academic year were both reasonable and unavoidable. Inclement weather and late withdrawal by opponents were significant reasons. The school provides pupils with many very good opportunities for extracurricular sport. Teachers' records show that about half the pupils regularly participate in one or more of these activities and, in so doing, significantly enhance their skills and their personal and social development. Eleven teachers give up much time to coach, supervise and officiate at these activities.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

235. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is in line with the expectations of the Local Agreed Syllabus. In lessons pupils' work is above average in standard. It covers the range of work required, but lacks depth: lessons are short and, although homework is set regularly, the overall time spent on the subject is below that recommended. As a result, and because some pupils come to the school with limited knowledge of the subject, pupils' achievement is below their capability.
236. Assessment on entry shows that pupils come with a wide range of religious knowledge: some pupils have studied a wide range of religions, whilst others know little about them. In Year 7, pupils make good progress from the start and make close links with other subjects such as geography and history. They gain a good understanding in Years 7-9 of the similarities and differences between a range of religions - such as the commonality of Judaism, Christianity and Islam in their belief in the same God. They know such tenets as the four Noble Truths of Buddhism. Pupils' work shows that they not only record factual information, but also put forward their own ideas and views about what is being taught.

Their writing shows a good degree of empathy for those about whom they learn. During the inspection, Year 8 were introduced to computer software in the subject: one class showed considerable confidence in using ICT and made very good progress.

237. In Key Stage 4 a non-examination course is provided for all pupils. Pupils have, however, no opportunity to study for a GCSE short course, as insufficient time is allocated for teaching the subject. No pupil in Year 10 currently studies for the full GCSE course in RE. In the lessons that take place little written work is expected of pupils, as the subject is based around discussion. No homework is set. The standard of discussion in class, however, is above average.
238. Pupils are highly motivated and work enthusiastically on their own, with a partner or (even if sometimes too noisily) in groups. They discuss and debate well - as, for example, when preparing a play about the *Golden Rule* - and use positively the different knowledge each brings to the questions being discussed. Groups put forward their arguments well, sometimes giving more than one viewpoint, and are sympathetically challenged by others. Pupils quickly see the conflict between, for example, the morality of development and the self-interest of preventing competition. Pupils work at high speed and grasp concepts quickly. The boys are slightly more confident in putting forward ideas than the girls.
239. Pupils' attitudes in Years 7-9 are very good and in two lessons were excellent, particularly when learning is related to their own interests and when the pace of lessons retains their motivation. Pupils work quickly and conscientiously and take a pride in their well-presented written work.
240. Pupils' attitudes are usually very good in Years 10-11. The pupils find the discussion-based lessons stimulating and interesting. They rarely, however, use notes or bullet-points to summarise the content of lessons and a few pupils produce only scruffy work in jotters. The majority, however, produce a considerable amount of work in a short time. Where discipline is less tight, pupils become noisy, although they produce a satisfactory amount of work.
241. The quality of teaching in Years 7-9 ranges from satisfactory to excellent and is good overall. Both non-specialist and specialist teachers teach the subject. Pupils are taught well in Year 7 by non-specialist teachers who match the work well to pupils' capabilities. Lessons move on at a good pace and teachers use assessment procedures particularly well to find out what pupils already know. They bring to RE their own specialist knowledge in an incidental way, thereby enriching the breadth of the subject. Good use is made of a teacher's computer expertise for Year 8. The specialist RE knowledge of the teacher for Year 9 ensures that the subject is studied in greater depth in that year.
242. Lesson planning is satisfactory. The 40-minute length of the lessons, often shortened because of the distance pupils have to travel between lessons, makes it difficult for teachers to provide both depth and a variety of teaching and learning styles within a lesson. In the limited time available teachers base their teaching on discussion, ensuring that a depth of understanding is achieved rather than a superficial coverage of content recorded in writing. Despite the restriction of time, the range of ways used for written recording includes diagrams, illustrations, grids, tables and written opinions. The lack of extended writing is, however, a weakness. The management of pupils is mainly very good, but an occasional lack of firmness results in too much noise.
243. Teaching is good overall in Years 10-11. Time is mainly used well in these short lessons (often only 35 minutes) with a concentration on discussions in depth and the teacher's adding information of high quality to pupils' existing knowledge. The fact that pupils have no ongoing written record of what has been discussed is, however, a weakness. In a small minority of lessons time is not used well. By the end of the key stage, the pace of lessons is usually very good and appropriate objectives are clearly met. Learning is generally good, because pupils recall past information and viewpoints very well and teachers are knowledgeable.

244. In 1999 only one pupil out of the 11 entered for GCSE gained a grade in the range A*-C - a very low proportion, partly reflecting the lack of time given to the subject. In 2000 63 per cent of pupils attained A-C grades in GCSE. Pupils tended to attain a lower grade for RE than they did for most of the other subjects they took. This again reflects, in part, the lack of time allocated to the subject. In the small GCSE examination group of four the standard of work is well above average, because of the clarity of teaching and the very good participation of two of the pupils in discussions. Pupils question and probe for answers, to ensure that they understand what is taught. They argue to a high level. The debate between the teacher and pupils is lively and promotes a real depth of understanding.
245. Pupils are able to apply what they learn - as, for example, about Peter's denial - to their own lives and the need to "stand by one's friends". They respond both intellectually and emotionally to what they are taught. The teacher has excellent subject knowledge and is keen that the pupils not only know, but also understand, what is being taught. Pupils have, for example, a very good grasp of the historical background to biblical stories and learn about the double meaning behind many of the words and phrases used.
246. In the sixth form no specific lessons are provided in the subject for pupils not studying for A-level. There is, however, some religious content in the general studies course taken by all sixth formers. Two out of the five pupils on the A-level course in the last four years have attained A grades and one a B grade. The attainment of pupils at present in the second year of the A-level course is average overall: the pupils are highly motivated and reach an above average standard in their knowledge and understanding in class, but a lower, average standard in their written work. They have very good historical background knowledge and confidently answer challenging questions about the Biblical texts. Information and communication technology is not used to enhance pupils' coursework and to help them to edit and improve on their first drafts.
247. The quality of teaching of the A-level course is good overall and informed by exceptional specialist knowledge. Scholarship is constantly promoted and pupils are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the work of well-known scholars. Debate typifies these lessons. The most able pupils respond very well to this teaching - challenging, questioning, putting forward alternative views and often writing up notes after the lesson has finished. Those new to such a way of learning find it difficult to assimilate the scholars mentioned and find the philosophy of religion beyond their understanding.
248. The management of the subject is unsatisfactory because of the lack of time given to it on the timetable and the conflicting duties of the head of department: one lesson during the inspection, for example, began ten minutes late, because the head of department was dealing with an emergency in his pastoral role. Effective action has not been taken since the last inspection to increase teaching time for the subject in Years 7-11. As a result, teaching time is below that recommended nationally and pupils' achievement is below their capabilities.
249. The majority of lessons are taught in one room, but this room is also used for teaching other subjects, and other RE lessons are taken in different rooms across the school. This results in the lack of a departmental identity. Minuted departmental meetings are held only once each term, as teachers give priority to their other roles and subjects. Minutes of meetings are not shared with the senior management team and do not, therefore, keep them informed of the department's thinking. The department has no long-term action plan.
250. Resources are adequate for the present timetable. The school has been dependent in the past on a local college of higher education to supplement its artefacts and books, but this source is no longer available locally. Textbook provision for A-level work both in class and in the library is very good, but inadequate for any GCSE short course at Key Stage 4. Library resources of ICT for the subject are minimal and not linked to the work pupils do in

class. Progress has, however, been made in developing a discussion-based curriculum for Years 10-11 and in linking it to the PSHE programme and citizenship.