

INSPECTION REPORT

HOLSWORTHY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Holsworthy

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113511

Headteacher: Mr A Gray

Reporting inspector: W J Powell
3174

Dates of inspection: 11-15 September 2000

Inspection number: 223943

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Victoria Hill Holsworthy Devon
Postcode:	EX22 6JD
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs B Marshall
Date of previous inspection:	9 - 12 March 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
W J Powell 3174	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? ; The school's results and achievements; How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? The adequacy of staffing resources
G Anderson 19639	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; how well the school cares for its pupils; partnership with parents.
M Gibbon 23434	Team inspector	English; English as an additional language	The adequacy of learning resources
P Metcalf 27719	Team inspector	Mathematics	
T Holgate 27595	Team inspector	Science	The adequacy of accommodation
T Davies 8336	Team inspector	Design & technology; information and communication technology	
A Looney 12867	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	Assessment and monitoring of pupils' performance
B Barnes 30982	Team inspector	History; special educational needs	
I Stuart 19298	Team inspector	Geography; religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
D Gwinnett 16548	Team inspector	Art & design; music; equal opportunities	
A Henderson 2941	Team inspector	Physical education	The pupils' personal development

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Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
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Terms used in this report

*Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are at **Key Stage 3**, having transferred in most cases from their primary schools at the end of **Key Stage 2** after Year 6. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are at **Key Stage 4** of their education. Those students who remain at school after the compulsory period of education are in the **sixth form**, in Years 12 and 13. Pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for pupils and students of all ages at school.*

*At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the pupils know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**). Others may follow courses leading to the award of the General National Qualification (**GNVQ**) or the National Vocational Qualification (**NVQ**). Sixth form students may take further courses leading to these awards, including Vocational A-levels, or to those of the General Certificate of Education at Advanced level (**A-level**).*

*Inspectors judge the **standards** reached by pupils by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for pupils of the same age nationally. The pupils' **achievements** reflect the standards that they reach in relation to their earlier performances, and thus the **progress** that has occurred. These judgements take account of the educational **value added** over time. In this report, **similar schools** are defined as those with a comparable proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.*

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Holsworthy Community College is a small comprehensive school with 568 boys and girls aged 11 to 16. Only four pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds; one pupil has English as an additional language. There are 129 pupils on the school's special needs register, of whom 23 have a Statement of Special Educational Need; both these figures are above average for a school of this size. The attainments of pupils when they enter the school are broadly average, and reflect the full ability range. There are marked differences in ability at entry from year to year, particularly in terms of the boys' literary skills and the numeracy abilities of girls. Key features which affect the work of the school include its geographical position away from large centres of population and further/higher education, the deeply rural and often isolated nature of its catchment community and the significant economic hardships being experienced by the predominantly agricultural industry in the area.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is now an effective school, committed to raising standards still further. Test and examination results have shown a marked improvement, particularly in 2000, and almost all subjects now show at least average attainments at both key stages. Pupils are achieving results that are above what would be expected from their earlier attainments. Teaching is good at both key stages; very few lessons are unsatisfactory. The quality of management is good overall, and the school makes effective use of data to set clear targets for further improvement. Value for money is good.

What the school does well

- Standards have risen considerably since the last inspection; recent test and examination results are better than would have been expected from the pupils' earlier attainments.
- Analyses of pupils' progress are proving effective in raising standards.
- Teaching is good at all levels, and results in good learning.
- Pupils behave well, and show respect for other members of the school community.
- The new headteacher is providing very good leadership and direction for the school; leadership and management overall are good.
- Most areas identified as weaknesses at the last inspection have been tackled successfully.

What could be improved

- Standards in information and communication technology at Key Stage 4 are not high enough, in spite of recent improvements in the subject at Key Stage 3.
- Many subjects could mark work more effectively, and make even more use of national figures on the progress that pupils make to plan their teaching. Reports could be improved.
- The overall standard of general numeracy is not high enough; pupils need better opportunities to develop this important area of their work.
- The partnership between parents, class teachers and the special educational needs team could be improved, and pupils' individual education plans could be better.
- The poor accommodation and shortages of learning resources in drama and music are major factors in the below average standards in these subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 1998, when it was judged to have serious weaknesses. Since then, the school has made good improvements, particularly in teaching quality and in the curriculum provided. Initially, progress was too slow, but since the appointment of the new headteacher in mid-1999, the school has responded energetically and effectively to almost all of the issues raised in the previous inspection report. Importantly, standards have risen markedly in all subjects except information and communication technology at Key Stage 4. There have been marked improvements to provision and standards in the subject at Key Stage 3, and a suitable planned programme is now in place at Key Stage 4. However, delivery of the latter is slow because many teachers across the curriculum need further training. The marking of the pupils' work is still capable of being improved further. The school has a good capacity to continue to improve.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	B	C	C	D

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

The table above shows the situation for 1999, the last year for which published national comparison data are available. There has been substantial improvement in 2000.

At the end of Key Stage 3, the school's overall results in national tests between 1996 and 1999 have been average, and rising in line with national patterns. In 1999, the overall test results are in line with the average for all schools, but below average when compared with those of schools having similar levels of free school meals. The 2000 tests show significant improvements on those of 1999, particularly in science for boys and girls alike, and by boys in English and mathematics. The proportion of pupils gaining at least the expected Level 5 in the 2000 tests shows far less variation between the three subjects than in earlier years. In 2000, the overall test results in English are well above the national average; they are above average in mathematics and science.

At the end of Key Stage 4, the trend in the school's overall GCSE results between 1997 and 1999 has been flat, against a rising national picture. In 1999, GCSE results are significantly above average in art and design, and in double award science. They are below average in drama, French and geography. In all other subjects, results in 1999 are average. However, there has been significant improvement in the 2000 GCSE results, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at grade C or better rising from 39 per cent in 1999 to 49 per cent. This rise surpassed, by a substantial margin, the target agreed between the school and the local education authority. The school has now set itself demanding but realistic targets for the next two years. The improvement in the boys' results overall in 2000 was particularly noteworthy; this was a key target of the school's work over the past year. In almost all subjects, the rise in the proportion of pupils achieving grade C or better at GCSE between 1999 and 2000 is a significant one. Only mathematics shows no overall improvement between the two years, although results are now average compared to the below average picture at the last inspection; the gains made in the subject at Key Stage 3 have yet to work through to Key Stage 4. In 1999, the last year for which national figures are available, the pupils' average GCSE grade overall is well above the level that would be expected from their Key Stage 3 test scores in 1997. On the same basis, the 1999 results in English and mathematics are above what would be expected; those in science are well above.

In work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainments, and their achievements over time, are above average in English and mathematics at Key Stage 3, and in design and technology, art and design, and in physical education at Key Stage 4. Standards and achievements are below average at both key stages in drama and music, primarily because the poor quality of accommodation and inadequate learning resources in these subjects limit considerably the learning that can take place. They are also below average at Key Stage 4 in information and communication technology, because there are too few planned opportunities to use computers across the curriculum. In all other areas, including science, standards and achievements are broadly average. Literacy levels are satisfactory, with reading and writing better than speaking and listening. Numeracy is not as well developed across the curriculum as it should be; there is, as yet, no agreed policy to guide this important area, although a draft now exists.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are very positive about the school and their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good, both in the classroom and around the school site. There are only isolated cases of unsatisfactory behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils show sensitivity towards others, and take responsibility where they have the chance to do so.
Attendance	Good. Attendance is average; unauthorised absence is below average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	N/A

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

Teaching is at least satisfactory in 97 per cent of lessons; it is very good or better in 13 per cent, but unsatisfactory in three per cent. Overall, learning is good at both key stages. Teaching is very good at both key stages in geography; it is good at both key stages in English, science, design and technology, art and design and in religious education. Teaching is good at Key Stage 3 in mathematics and physical education, but unsatisfactory at Key Stage 4 in information and communication technology. In all other areas, teaching is sound. Literacy is being well developed across the curriculum, but the lack of an agreed numeracy policy means that pupils have inadequate opportunities to develop this competence. Teachers have good knowledge of the subjects taught, and enthuse pupils to do better. However, many teachers across the curriculum still lack competence and confidence when working with computers. Teaching is now rooted firmly in careful analyses of what pupils should achieve and, as a result, pupils make good progress overall; they have a clear picture of what is required of them. Pupils with special educational needs are taught in a satisfactory manner, and make satisfactory progress, but teachers sometimes rely too much on learning support assistants.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The new curriculum, introduced in September 2000, has overcome most problems. Statutory requirements are met. Information and communication technology at Key Stage 4 needs more attention.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory overall, but specialist teaching is hampered by large groups and the wide range of needs seen. Education plans could be improved.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall. Spiritual and cultural development are sound; moral and social development are good. There could be greater strategic guidance in this area. Collective worship arrangements do not fully meet statutory requirements.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Pupils feel confident about the support that they receive. The monitoring of academic and personal progress is good.

The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents, but the quality of reports, and of information provided, especially about pupils with special needs, could be better.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The new headteacher is providing very good leadership, and is well supported by other subject staff. The management of subjects is good overall, but that for special educational needs could be improved.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governors now play a better role in planning for the school's development, and know the school's strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school makes effective use of data analysis to target its work.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Funds are targeted to needs appropriately. The principle of best value is applied satisfactorily in most areas, although the use of teaching staff in special educational needs could be improved.

The provisions for staffing, accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory overall. However, poor accommodation and insufficient equipment limit standards in music and drama, and many teachers still need better training when working with computers. Overall, the management of the school displays a clear ethos for improvement, backed by good development planning systems.

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 school's high expectations of work. • The progress that pupils make over time. • The behaviour of pupils. • The overall standard of teaching • Most children like the school • The approachability of staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The frequency of information provided on how well pupils are doing at school. • The partnership between the school and parents. • The consistency with which homework is set and marked.

The inspection team agrees with the strengths noted by parents. It feels that, overall, homework arrangements and the quality of information for parents, and the relations that they have with the school, are satisfactory, but agrees that information could be better for parents of pupils with special educational needs. Reports could be improved, as could some marking.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The attainments of the pupils when they enter the school are broadly average. However, there are considerable variations of strengths and weaknesses from year to year, for example in the literacy and numeracy of girls and boys respectively. This means that the school's strategies for raising attainments have to change focus from year to year.

2. At the end of Key Stage 3, the results in national tests taken in English, mathematics and science over the period 1996 to 1999 have shown a mean points score that was average overall, average in English and mathematics, but below average in science. The trend of the school's overall results was broadly in line with the national picture. On all of these measures, girls outperformed boys. In 1999 and 2000, there has been a sharp improvement in performance over earlier years. The mean points score in English has risen to well above average levels in both 1999 and 2000, compared to the average or below average picture up to 1998. This improvement reflected the growing work being undertaken by the department to raise standards through better targeting of learning. In 1999, the mean points score in mathematics is in line with the national average, but has risen to above average in 2000. Whilst the 1999 mean points score in science is below average, that for 2000 is above average. The overall 1999 result for all three subjects is below average when compared to schools having similar levels of free school meals entitlement, but this method of comparison has significant shortcomings at Holsworthy. There is, as yet, no equivalent figure published for 2000, but the gains made in mathematics and science would suggest that Holsworthy is now performing at least as well as similar schools. Over time, the overall 1999 figures suggest satisfactory progress by pupils. The improvement in results in 2000 has occurred because the targeting methods that were successful for English in 1999 have now been used more widely. The greatest improvement has occurred in science, where results, for boys and girls alike, are now comparable with the other two subjects. English and mathematics have been successful in raising the attainments of boys by a significant margin. The 2000 results now demonstrate good progress over time.

3. At the end of Key Stage 4, the pattern of GCSE results for boys and girls alike has been average over the period 1997 to 1999, but whereas the national trend has been one of a small but steady rise in results, the school trend has been flat. There were signs of some improvement in 1999, when the mean grade score of the boys' results was higher than the average for boys nationally; girls obtained average results compared to girls in the country as a whole. In 1999, GCSE results were significantly above the national average in art and design and in double award science. They were significantly below average in drama, French and geography; all other subjects were broadly average by national standards. When the pattern of individual pupils' results is examined for 1999, pupils tended to do significantly better in art and design, single award science and in design and technology than in the other subjects that they took. They tended to do significantly less well in double award science, drama, English language, French, geography and history. The overall GCSE results in 1999 are below the average for schools with similar levels of free school meals. However, when compared to the pupils' Key Stage 3 test scores in 1997, they are above expected levels in English and mathematics, and well above in science. The 2000 GCSE results have shown a sharp improvement over those of earlier years. For example, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at grade C or better has jumped from 39 per cent to 49 per cent; that for five grade G passes or better has moved from 93 per cent to 97 per cent. All subjects except mathematics have seen an improvement in the proportion of pupils gaining C grade or above; mathematics shows a similar result to 1999. The rise in GCSE results is particularly pronounced in design and technology, English language, French, geography and

history. The school has performed well against its targets for 2000; that for GCSE at grade C or above has been exceeded by a wide margin. Drawing upon the increasing amount of data held on the pupils' attainments, the school has set higher targets for the coming two years. Although demanding, they are realistic.

4. In work seen during the inspection, the overall standards of work across the school have risen since the last inspection, reflecting improvements to both teaching and the school's assessment arrangements. Overall, standards are broadly average at both key stages, with some areas at both key stages now showing above average work. Achievements overall are also broadly average in relation to the attainments of pupils when they entered the school, but again, are now good in some subjects.

5. Standards seen now in English, and the achievements of the pupils, are above average for the end of Key Stage 3 and average for the end of Key Stage 4. Good quality teaching and the careful use of assessment information have been at the forefront of raising standards in the subject. Reading standards are now above average at both key stages, as is writing at Key Stage 3; writing at Key Stage 4 is average. At both key stages, inaccuracies in spelling and punctuation continue to exist in the work of pupils of all abilities. Speaking and listening skills are average at both key stages. The school's provision for literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory. There is a suitable whole-school literacy policy, on which all departments have based their own plans. This has established a good foundation on which to develop further. Some successful programmes such as the paired reading scheme and the home spelling support programme are already being implemented and are having a positive effect on pupils' achievement. However departments are at very variable stages in the implementation of their literacy action plans. In drama, standards are below average. Learning and teaching opportunities in the subject are limited by the poor quality of accommodation and inadequate equipment; at present, the subject is taught in a scout hut near the school.

6. In mathematics, standards in work seen and the pupils' achievements are above average for the end of Key Stage 3 and average for the end of Key Stage 4. Whilst most areas of mathematics work are developed in a satisfactory manner, pupils have too few opportunities to use and apply mathematics in a wide range of contexts, for example through investigative assignments. Across the curriculum as a whole, the lack of a clear and agreed whole-school numeracy policy means that other subjects are not developing, or drawing upon, the pupils' mathematical abilities in a satisfactory and coherent manner. However, the school is aware of this and a draft policy has already been prepared.

7. Standards in science work seen are average for the ends of both key stages; the pupils' achievements are now good at both levels. Recent work to improve standards in the subject is having a positive effect. Pupils have a sound knowledge of principles, which is being developed well, particularly at Key Stage 4. Pupils work well in experimental situations, but they have insufficient opportunities to do so at present.

8. The standards now seen in information and communication technology are average at Key Stage 3; pupils show satisfactory achievements at this level following the introduction of a suitable core course in the subject, and recent improvements to the equipment available. At Key Stage 4, however, both standards and achievements are below expected levels. This is because, although there is now a suitable whole school plan to deliver experiences through work in other subjects, subjects have yet to develop suitable work. Moreover, many teachers still lack the competence and confidence to work with computers as a natural tool for learning. In religious education, pupils make satisfactory progress at all levels and attain average standards.

9. Elsewhere, the standards of work and achievements seen are above average at Key Stage 4 in design and technology, art and design and in physical education. Here, effective and well planned teaching over time results in good progress being made by most pupils. In drama and music, standards and achievements are below average at both key stages, and pupils do not progress as they should. In the main, this reflects the problems caused by poor accommodation for both subjects; drama is taught in a neighbouring scout hut, for example, with no specialist facilities, whilst music accommodation is cramped and lacks suitable practice facilities. In spite of the teachers' efforts, the accommodation limits learning opportunities considerably. In all other areas, standards and achievements are average, with pupils making satisfactory progress over time and in lessons. However, recent changes in geography are resulting in very good and demanding teaching which is raising standards sharply from the below average position seen in 1998; the pupils at both key stages are now making good progress.

10. Pupils with special educational needs, including talented pupils, make broadly satisfactory progress overall. Some, especially those with a formal Statement of Special Educational Need, make good progress because of good quality support by learning support assistants. Pupils receiving targeted support for reading and spelling make generally good progress. Across the curriculum, pupils on the register of special educational needs make good progress in art and design, English, mathematics, geography, and in design and technology. However, their progress in modern languages is sometimes unsatisfactory at Key Stage 4, mainly because of the negative attitudes of the pupils concerned towards the subject. In all other subjects, progress is satisfactory. Some pupils in lower sets make insufficient progress, either because teachers do not have sufficient expertise in how such children learn, or on account of too great a concentration of pupils with a wide range of difficulties, including behaviour problems. In view of the relatively generous resources available to and supplemented by the school, many pupils with special educational needs should be making better progress than they are at present.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. The pupils show a very positive response to the education that the school provides, and this has a beneficial effect on the learning climate. The level of disaffection noted at the time of the last inspection has fallen. The pupils recognise the increased focus on their progress as individuals that has marked recent work in the school. Attitudes and behaviour are at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons, good or better in 73 per cent, and very good or excellent in 16 per cent. The pupils' attitudes to school have continued to be good since the last inspection. They want to come to school and show a very positive attitude at the start of the school day. Their good enthusiasm for school is continued into lessons, particularly when teaching is successful, and on into the extra-curricular activities available at the end of the school day, when they are still keen to be involved. Pupils are happy to talk to visitors, and give a positive picture of the school.

12. Overall, the pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils continue to behave very well in and around the school and at break and lunchtime. The dining areas are pleasant places, and a hallmark of outside areas is the sight of groups of pupils chatting or playing well together. There is very little evidence of graffiti or litter about the school site. Pupils respect the rewards and sanctions system and, because of this, respond positively to behaviour management within the classroom. Within lessons, the widespread good behaviour of pupils produces an effective working atmosphere. There are only very isolated cases of behaviour having a negative effect on the progress of the class as a whole. In almost all cases, this involves a small number of lower attaining boys, and teaching which is not well matched to the needs and abilities of the pupils concerned, as in two lessons taught by temporary staff. More commonly, pupils ignore the attention-seeking behaviour of individuals, who then respond well to calm

control by the teacher. The rate of fixed term exclusion is in line with the national average; there were no permanent exclusions. The use of brief periods of exclusion rose last year; all cases were handled appropriately, and have resulted in positive outcomes. Following the development of the new inclusion procedures, the school plans to see a fall in the use of exclusion as a sanction. Bullying is not seen to be a problem by pupils, as they are confident about the way it is managed by the school.

13. The personal development and relationships of pupils are good. They have a good understanding of the impact of their actions on others. Pupils are sensitive to each other, and listen, showing good respect for each other's feelings and beliefs. In a lesson on the issues surrounding abortion, pupils listened and responded thoughtfully to the views of others on life and when it begins. Pupils are supportive of their peers who have special educational needs. This is evident in lessons and around the school. Where pupils have appropriate opportunities, they show satisfactory initiative and personal responsibility. For example, peer counsellors give good mutual support, whilst senior pupils who help with paired reading provide good role models for younger pupils, some of whom are as a result motivated to read for pleasure. However, in general, pupils could be given more responsibility for their own learning. For example, in information technology, pupils show limited initiative when exploring new software, whilst mathematics and science make less use of investigative assignments than is usually seen. Relationships are good, for example at lunchtime when some pupils make good use of the library to play board games amicably together. Pupils are courteous and show respect for adults.

14. Given the wide and rural nature of the catchment area and reliance on school transport, attendance is good at all levels. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average; the rate of unauthorised absence is half the national figure.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

15. Teaching is good at both key stages. The overall quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, but especially in the proportion of lessons rated as good or better. This reflects the school's focus on learning and teaching as the key to raising standards, and, in particular, the increased use of data analysis to target learning opportunities more carefully. Ninety-seven per cent of lessons now show at least satisfactory teaching; teaching is good or better in 60 per cent of lessons, and very good or excellent in 13 per cent of cases. Learning by pupils shows a similar pattern. There is no marked difference in the overall quality of teaching or learning by year group, except that three of the four cases of unsatisfactory teaching occurred in Year 9. Inadequate control of pupils and inappropriate levels of expectation for the pupils in question were the key features in the unsatisfactory lessons. Pupils of all ages show themselves to have a satisfactory interest in their learning. Their good behaviour and the effective quality of much of the teaching ensure that they apply themselves in a satisfactory manner.

16. Both teaching and learning are judged to be very good at both key stages in geography; no teaching in the subject is less than good. Teaching and learning are good at both key stages in English, science, design and technology, art, and religious education. Teaching and learning are also good at Key Stage 3 in mathematics and physical education. Elsewhere, teaching and learning are satisfactory, except at Key Stage 4 in information and communication technology. Here, teaching on the new specialist GCSE course is effective, with generally high expectations and suitable tasks. However, most pupils' experiences of working with computers at Key Stage 4 is intended to be through work in the other subjects of the curriculum; here, teaching is unsatisfactory or non-existent. The scrutiny of pupils' work in particular shows that many teachers lack the required competence to be able to set demanding exercises that challenge pupils and extend their understanding of computing as a learning

tool. Much of the work is at a level more appropriate to pupils of primary school age. However, where there are pockets of enthusiasm and expertise, as in English and design and technology, more appropriate work is being set.

17. For the most part, teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects that they teach, although, as noted above, non-specialist work in information and communication technology at Key Stage 4 limits progress at present. In mathematics, although the teachers' subject knowledge is satisfactory, there is sometimes a lack of confidence in the finer points that are needed to extend fully the most able pupils. Secure subject knowledge and an enthusiasm for the subject are particularly strong features of the teaching in English, geography and religious education. For example, a Year 10 geography lesson on coastal processes resulted in very good progress being made because the teacher's clear explanations, supported by clear visual aids, generated a real enthusiasm for the topic amongst the pupils. The wide ranging and complementary subject grasp of the art team allows pupils to progress well, because they learn about a good range of approaches to the subject. Careful matching of the teachers' skills and interests to classes is a key feature of the work of the English team, particularly at Key Stage 3.

18. The teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve was a relative weakness at the last inspection. This is no longer the case. Expectations are now good overall, both in terms of work and of behaviour. For example, high expectations, backed by a productive and animated learning atmosphere, lay at the heart of a successful Year 9 art lesson. Pupils were challenged through the use of precise language, given intellectual encouragement and provided with good opportunities for independent thinking as they developed commentaries on what they had seen. The quality and use of assessment are satisfactory. The careful analysis of assessment data and target setting at whole-school level have been key factors in the overall improvement in expectations, drawing upon national analyses of the overall progress that pupils should be capable of making in relation to their prior attainments. In general, however, most subject teams could still do more analysis of this type for themselves, for example drawing on subject-specific value added information, or analyses of their own assessments. The English team is already doing this, and the result can be seen in the careful matching of learning tasks to pupils' needs, and thus in the progress that the pupils are making. Inappropriate expectations of what pupils could do or how they should behave were features of the few cases of unsatisfactory teaching, although this sometimes stemmed from new or temporary teachers working with a group at an early stage of the year. Good and consistent management of the pupils' behaviour is a feature of most lessons. Potentially difficult pupils are handled calmly and sensitively, so that a positive learning atmosphere prevails. Only rarely do teachers fail to nip emerging problems at an early stage, for example when pupils start to chatter too much, resulting in growing disturbance to the learning of the class as a whole.

19. The methods that teachers employ are generally good, and allow pupils to apply themselves well and thus show good gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. The best lessons feature clear planning, with learning objectives that are shared from the outset with the pupils; they know what they are to learn, and why. For example, a Year 8 French lesson built well on the pupils' previous knowledge, starting with a brainstorming session to recall and use vocabulary from last year, and careful reference to the learning objectives of the lesson. The activity then switched to a more practical task, allowing pupils to visualise new vocabulary and to work co-operatively. The pupils were very clear about what they had learned during this lesson, and because of high expectations from the teacher, they made very good gains by the end of the session. A Year 8 mathematics lesson on number patterns also generated good learning because of the clear identification of learning objectives and the good mix of activities offered. As a result, pupils were attaining at well above average levels for this stage of the course and were learning to think for themselves. A particularly effective feature was that, at the end of the lesson, pupils had to identify clearly what they had learned. This exemplifies the school's focus on putting learning at the heart of teaching. Some lessons make good use of self-

assessment by the pupils, for example in gymnastics, so that they can monitor their own performances. Overall, the pupils have a good knowledge of their own learning.

20. The use made of time and resources is generally satisfactory. At the time of the inspection, many teachers and pupils were still getting used to the different lesson length this term, and in some cases, the pace of both teaching and learning dropped in the closing minutes. In others, too much was attempted; a 60 minute lesson was being crammed into 50. Overall, however, pupils demonstrate a satisfactory pace of learning. Good use of time was seen in a Year 11 science lesson, where the quick-fire nature of the opening session of question and answer work set the scene for what was to come. Pupils immediately focused on their work, and in the subsequent demonstration and activities, non-stop questioning from the teacher kept the pace of learning high, maintained interest and checked that the pupils were making the required gains in understanding. A good and brisk plenary session at the end of the period meant that important concepts were flagged, ready to be picked up again in the next lesson. A very good Year 11 geography lesson on volcanoes used well selected images and carefully prepared overhead transparencies to create interest and to promote understanding. However, in some lessons, for example in modern languages, basic tools such as the overhead projector could be used to better effect.

21. Teachers teach the basic skills of literacy in a generally sound manner, supported by the school's clear policy for promoting this important area. In the best cases, subject specific technical terms are displayed, and there is an insistence on the accurate use of technical terms. History provides a good example of how literacy is being developed in line with the whole-school policy, particularly in terms of writing, as a result of clear guidance on essay structure and conventions. In contrast, numeracy is less well developed. The lack of an agreed whole-school policy for numeracy means that pupils receive variable experiences. In subjects such as design and technology or geography, numerate methods are developed appropriately. A Year 7 English lesson used numerical methods to analyse the use of language within ballads. Overall, however, such opportunities are not planned into work as much as they should be, so that pupils do not consolidate and use mathematical skills in a variety of contexts.

22. Homework arrangements are satisfactory overall. However, there is no clear homework timetable, and the amounts set in subjects can vary, leading to overload, particularly amongst younger pupils. Homework is having a positive effect on work in some subjects, for example in art and design, where holiday work has helped to launch pupils into the new school year, and in music, where it is successfully integrated into classwork. However, homework is sometimes set right at the end of the lesson, as pupils are starting to leave the room, which is not good practice. Most work is marked and returned to pupils within a reasonable period, but some has not been marked for some time, or marked with little more than ticks, for example in some mathematics and science books. The best marking is seen in English, drama, history and religious education. Here, pupils receive detailed comments that give details of how well they have done, but also provide clear guidance on how they can improve in future. Although there is a whole-school policy on how work should be graded, not all subjects follow the guidelines set down. Some subjects use National Curriculum levels, others state marks out of a total; some marking gives no overall grading. This variation in practice is not helpful to pupils, who comment on the sometimes confusing messages that they are given.

23. Within this framework of generally good teaching overall, the standard of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, and contributes to the generally satisfactory progress that such pupils make. Learning amongst these pupils at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory; at Key Stage 4 it is good, the result of steady support over time. Some teaching and learning can be very good, as in a Year 11 life skills lesson, where very good lesson objectives and planning, an insistent but calm emphasis on basic literacy skills, and effective control led to very good learning taking place. All pupils concentrated well, and as a result, consolidated extra work and made considerable gains in

understanding of the role of the police in society. Subject teachers know which pupils have difficulties in learning and are supportive and encouraging. Some, however, are still confused about the nature of different pupils' difficulties and about the different stages on the Code of Practice. Many teachers do not, as yet, have sufficient expertise to meet the learning requirements of all pupils in their lessons. As a result, there is some over-reliance on the work of learning support assistants, some of whom are therefore undertaking work which should be done by teachers. Teaching in the learning support department is satisfactory, constrained by the number and diverse needs of the pupils. This prevents teachers from fully addressing the specific learning difficulties of individual pupils.

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

24. The previous inspection report presented a generally positive picture of the curriculum. There have been a number of improvements since then, and nearly all the weaknesses identified last time have been resolved. There are still problems, but, overall, the curriculum is judged to be good. There is now adequate time for religious education and physical education at Key Stage 4. Provision for information and communication technology has improved considerably, though providing everything that is planned across the other subjects of the curriculum is not yet certain at Key Stage 4. As a result, the overall standards in the subject at this level are below average. Geography, history and religious education, and the different elements of design and technology, continue to be taught on a rotational basis. Whilst this still causes problems of continuity, there are advantages in having concentrated periods of time in particular subject areas, including being able to cover topics in depth in a short time scale.

25. A new and improved curriculum structure has just been introduced in September 2000, based on a reorganised working day. Its breadth and balance, in terms of subject range and timetable time for subjects, are good at both key stages, and the curriculum offered meets statutory requirements. At Key Stage 4, all pupils follow a basic curriculum, plus a degree of choice appropriate to their ability, aptitude and preferences. New GCSE courses have been introduced in physical education and in information and communication technology, giving more choice of relevant courses to pupils and helping to raise standards in these areas. There is a good range of vocational subjects and opportunities, including GCSE courses in travel and tourism, and in business studies. Pupils taking GCSE physical education have the opportunity to take the Junior Sports Leader award. The Certificate of Achievement is available in some subjects for pupils for whom GCSE is inappropriate, and there is a valuable life skills course for pupils with special educational needs at Key Stage 4. There is also an opportunity for a small number of low achieving Key Stage 4 pupils to attend vocational courses at a further education college for one day a week. So, overall, there is sensible vocational provision for a small school. Provisions for the development of literacy are satisfactory overall, with a clear whole-school policy. Subject action plans to promote literacy are generally sound, but some require more work. Overall, general numeracy is not yet planned for in a sufficiently structured manner, although a draft policy has now been prepared. Whilst there are some examples of numeracy being developed effectively in subjects, the lack of clear whole-school guidance means that many opportunities are being missed.

26. There are some weaknesses in the timetabling of the curriculum provision; some of these reflect the limited flexibility possible in a small school. For example, some Year 10 pupils taking two modern foreign languages are taught outside normal times for some lessons. The progress of pupils in Year 8 in modern foreign languages will need careful monitoring, since the time required for experience of a second language is being taken from the first language. There are some anomalies in the timetable at Key Stage 4, with one option having one lesson fewer per fortnight less than others.

So, for example, one geography class has less time than the other. There are also problems in the way pupils are grouped for their lessons. Generally, when different subjects have to agree common groupings of pupils, for example, English and modern foreign languages, this is done without too many problems, and, usually, grouping arrangements represent a reasonable compromise between ideal setting arrangements and the limitations imposed by the small size of the school. However, there are particular difficulties in attempting to create small groups of low achievers or poorly motivated pupils. Sometimes, weaknesses in the timetable adversely affect standards. Subjects such as mathematics and modern foreign languages have an uneven distribution of time during the week in some years, and double periods can be too long, especially in the afternoons, as happens in Year 7 humanities subjects.

27. Although curriculum links with primary schools are less strong than the pastoral links, pupils are well prepared for their Key Stage 3 work with a thorough induction programme. There is a good programme for personal and social education, which includes appropriate coverage of health and sex education, and alcohol and drug misuse. There are also appropriate plans to include the new requirements for teaching citizenship. The new arrangements for a rolling timetable for personal and social education, so that it takes place at different times each week, is creating more time for other subjects. It also gives more flexibility to bring in members of the community to help; the programme is well regarded by pupils.

28. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Pupils who have difficulties in reading and spelling receive additional support, which is effective because of good organisation, dedicated support from learning support assistants and superb accommodation. However, the range of ability, and the nature of difficulties, within the larger than usual groups for specialist teaching are too wide and diverse, limiting the progress that could be made.

29. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular opportunities, which is valued by pupils and their parents. There is a wide range of activities in physical education and music. There is special funding for activities on Wednesday and Thursday evenings, with activities ranging from conga drumming to study clubs; late buses are provided to the surrounding area. There are also suitable opportunities for exchange visits abroad, educational visits locally, and a residential experience for Year 7 pupils. Linked with this extra-curricular provision are the very good links the school has with the community. The school is a community college in the fullest sense of the term. The principal and vice-principal have responsibility for youth and community work, and there is a deliberate blur between youth, community and school activities, with youth and community workers also working in school. There is excellent collaboration with local employers over work experience, which lasts for two weeks. The very good summer scheme is an exciting and imaginative programme for young people in the area during the summer holidays.

30. Links with employers and work experience form part of the school's good provision for work related education, as do the vocational courses. In addition, the careers programme and advice are of good quality, and are well regarded by pupils. The careers programme includes good links with further education colleges and other providers of post-16 education. There is very thorough preparation for post-16 transfer, starting in Year 10; the programme includes visits to colleges. All pupils with special educational needs take part in work experience. However, there is no special input into transition plans for pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Need from the careers service, as there should be. The school has suitable links with teacher training institutions.

31. The school has good arrangements for ensuring equality of opportunity for its pupils and staff. A policy states the college's commitment to equality of opportunity and provides a useful checklist to be used by staff. A recent pupil inclusion policy identifies detailed measures for ensuring that all pupils are given full access to the school's provisions irrespective of their academic, social or behavioural

needs. No pupils are denied access to the curriculum on grounds of prior attainment or other circumstances, although some pupils with special educational needs receive some teaching in German from non-specialists. In its development plan, the school has identified the need to support higher attainers more comprehensively, and is working hard to realise this.

The personal development of pupils

32. Provision for the personal development of pupils, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory overall. As at the previous inspection, the school has no strategic overview or policy to guide the personal development of pupils in all areas of the school's life and work. Nor has it undertaken an audit to identify what it does provide, and to strengthen and ensure coherent provision.

33. The school's provisions for spiritual development are satisfactory. Assemblies are positive experiences with strong moral and spiritual themes, and provide good opportunities for pupils to reflect and consider important issues. However, since pupils do not have an act of collective worship each day, statutory requirements are not being fully met. Religious education contributes strongly to the spiritual development of all pupils at Key Stage 3, especially through the study of Christianity and other religions. Other subjects contributing to spiritual development include art, science, geography and English.

34. Provisions for moral development are good. In addition to the strong moral themes in assemblies, pupils are taught right from wrong, and are expected to respect the feelings and values of others. There are well planned opportunities to consider moral issues in personal and social education, where issues such as prejudice, the misuse of drugs, and the duties and rights of citizenship are explored. Other subjects successfully contribute to pupils' moral development, notably religious education, music and drama, where work in Year 8 on bullying links effectively with the personal and social education programme.

35. Provision for social development is good and has considerable strengths. The relationships between pupils, and with staff, are good, and adults provide good role models, for example in matters of dress. The pupils respect each other's property and treat the school with care. Social issues are examined within the curriculum, notably in history and in GCSE leisure and tourism. The pupils' social development is well supported by opportunities to work together in pairs and small groups, for example, in physical education, art and drama. Pupils support charities, work in the local community, and take part in a good range of extra-curricular activities, including residential experiences. Older pupils exercise responsibility through schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award, peer counselling, paired reading and the Junior Sports Leader award, but overall, they have fewer opportunities than usual to display initiative.

36. The school's provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Visits are arranged to theatres, galleries and museums, and European culture is developed through French and German exchanges and e-mail links. The pupils' understanding of their own culture is developed effectively in history and English, whilst religious education provides opportunities to study other religions. Overall, however, there are few planned opportunities for multi-cultural experiences or to develop the pupils' understanding of an increasingly multi-cultural society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

37. Overall, the school's provision for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare is good, and has improved since the last inspection, particularly in terms of health and safety provisions. The recently introduced year head system is also strengthening provisions, as are the improved arrangements for monitoring the progress that the pupils make. These changes are having a positive effect on standards across the school. Each pupil is known well by staff and pupils are confident that they can turn to a teacher for support. This is strengthened by very good links between appropriate staff, as for example between year and department heads. The school does all it can to ensure that children and staff work in a safe environment.

38. Child protection arrangements comply with requirements. Staff with responsibility in this field have a very effective working partnership with each other and with supporting agencies. The youth information service targets pupils at risk very appropriately and supportively, for example through the virtual parenting course with pupil trainees. Trained peer mentors make a good contribution to relationships within the school. A good policy aims to protect pupils from exclusion, and now targets the raising of their self-esteem making a positive contribution to their personal development.

39. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. The rewards and sanctions system has been carefully structured to achieve consistency after comprehensive research between staff, pupils and outside agencies, and is highly valued even by older pupils. The aim is to support the school's learning aims, and it encourages a rational rapport between staff and pupils. Very good monitoring ensures that patterns of unsatisfactory behaviour can be identified and positive behaviour influenced. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour, including sexism or racism, are good, and bullying is not seen to be a significant issue by pupils.

40. Educational and personal support and guidance for pupils are good overall, as are procedures for monitoring and supporting their personal development. The transfer arrangements from the primary schools are recognised as a significant strength of the school by parents and pupils. Tutors, heads of year and department staff all cross refer very effectively in the monitoring of pupils, and where appropriate, pupils are given individual targets. Personal and social education is delivered through a well-structured tutorial programme, the objectives of which focus on personal development and relationships. There are good systems to monitor and improve attendance, with suitable support from the education welfare officer. The monitoring of registers enables the school to identify patterns of absence quickly, facilitating effective work to target pupils with low attendance and unauthorised absence.

41. The monitoring of the pupils' academic progress is good overall. Procedures for assessing the pupils' attainment are good. The lead given at senior management level is very good, and the co-ordination is clear-sighted and focused on monitoring pupil progress to achieve higher standards at the level of the individual. Extensive use is made of a range of data, including cognitive abilities test and Key Stage 2 and 3 test results to set overall academic targets for pupils. Departments are required to monitor these targets twice a year and identify pupils who are underachieving. There is effective use of appropriate software to manage the assessment process at whole school level, but this use has yet to extend at subject level to all departments. There are good centralised recording systems within departments. Many departments use National Curriculum levels to record attainments, and to give an indication to pupils of the progress that they are making. In addition, in history, pupils are given assessment criteria in advance of completing an assignment so that they know what they must do to gain a particular standard in their work. There is good use of self-evaluation by pupils in art, music and physical education. The assessment of pupils' attainments in information and communication technology is not being carried out consistently across all departments; English provides a good role model for this.

42. The use of data to set individual pupils' targets specific to subjects, for example using national value added subject charts, is less well developed, although there are good examples. For example, cognitive abilities test scores are used well by the English department to identify potential weaknesses of individual pupils, whilst the modern languages department uses them, together with their own assessments, to ensure that the setting of pupils is effective. There is an effective system of academic monitoring carried out by the tutors on the basis of the interim reports. Pupils felt to be underachieving in a number of subjects are put on report until progress has been made. For the last two years, the school has also successfully identified underachieving pupils in Year 10; these pupils have received regular mentoring by individual members of staff.

43. Procedures for the identification of pupils with special educational needs are good. There is effective liaison with primary schools and teachers know which pupils have special educational needs. There is a clear, workable and effective procedure for referrals by subject teachers of pupils for whom there is a concern about learning. In spite of this, most pupils are placed at the first stage on the school's special needs register. This may be an appropriate strategy for many pupils, but it delays additional help for some who may need it in order to make good progress. This is offset to some extent by good day-to-day monitoring of pupils by learning support staff, and effective, if not cost-efficient, weekly liaison between the special educational needs co-ordinator and each department.

44. The quality of individual education plans for pupils who require them remains unsatisfactory, as at the time of the last inspection, and in spite of subsequent revision. Targets are too general and too long-term, such as "to improve reading skills", and do not focus sufficiently on specifying and quantifying the shorter-term improvement that is sought for each pupil. Too much time is spent in producing such plans for each pupil in every subject when a single sharply focused plan would be sufficient, and would result in more coherent action. As a result, the reviews of progress of the pupils concerned lack precision, given that targets are so general.

45. In spite of these weaknesses, there is a high level of care for pupils with special educational needs from all staff at the school, but especially from the dedicated learning support team. This is a tremendous strength, which contributes significantly to the progress of many pupils with special educational needs. However, it sometimes results in subject teachers relying too much on support staff, and not planning sufficiently for themselves or developing strategies to deal with the learning needs of such pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

46. The parents see this as a small caring school which is particularly effective in pastoral transfer arrangements. A high proportion of parents feels that this is a school that expects pupils to work hard, and that as a result, pupils make good progress in their work and personal development. Good behaviour is also identified as a strong point by most parents; as a result, most of their sons and daughters like coming to the school. Most parents see teaching as being good, although a few comment on variability within and between subjects. The inspection team agrees with these strengths of the school. A significant minority of parents expressed concern about the school's homework arrangements. Inspectors feel that these are generally satisfactory, although the rushed way homework is set in some lessons does not always send the right signals to pupils about its importance.

47. The parents give mixed messages about how well the school works with them. On the one hand, most parents see Holsworthy as a school that is ready to listen to their concerns and to deal with their questions in an effective manner. On the other, a significant minority feels that the school could work more closely with parents, and, in particular, could provide them with more information about

how their children perform. Overall, the inspection team judges that links with parents, including the quality of information that they receive, are satisfactory overall. However, problems remain in working with the parents of pupils who have special educational needs. The school has identified the need to improve the quality of its partnership with parents as a key target in its next development plan. It has recently introduced homework diaries with space for parents to comment on any areas of concern; it is too early to judge whether this is proving effective, although initial evidence is promising. Reading logs in Year 7 are also proving a useful communication method between school and home.

48. Reporting arrangements are satisfactory and meet statutory requirements. All pupils receive a brief interim report as well as a full report during each academic year to ensure that parents are informed about each child's progress. The quality of the full reports, however, remains variable. Many of the comments made by subject teachers, whilst being detailed, tend to focus on attitudes towards work. Reports do not always focus clearly enough on the strengths and weaknesses of pupils in that subject; nor is there always sufficient guidance on how pupils might improve. Parents have suitable opportunities to meet with staff following the annual report, or to meet with teachers at other times, but some parents feel that the parents meetings could be better organised. Other meetings organised by the school, for example to give information on the new curriculum, are poorly attended. Whilst last year's prospectus did not fully meet requirements, the latest version does so. However, the most recent governors' report to parents omits certain information that is required, particularly that dealing with meeting the needs of those with disabilities, and details of the school's arrangements for pupils with special educational needs.

49. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is satisfactory overall, as is the contribution of parents to children's learning at school and at home. The home/school contracts are satisfactory but not all parents have signed them, although all have now agreed to the detention procedures. Parents are very supportive of extra-curricular activities, and there are very good arrangements to ensure that transport is not a problem for pupils who attend after school. The parents' association is a useful channel of communication and supplements funding; for example, it has provided fitness-training equipment.

50. One area of weakness is that the school does not involve all parents of pupils with special educational needs sufficiently in matters to do with their children. Parents of pupils who have a Statement of Special Educational Need are invited, as required, to attend annual reviews, and do so. Individual educational plans are sent home, although parents are not involved in target-setting. However, parents of pupils placed at the first stage of the register of special educational needs are not informed of this. As many pupils on the register are at this stage, this is an important omission, since parents are not in a position to provide help at home. Where parents are informed of their child's needs, they usually play an active part in their child's learning, sometimes leading to major gains; for example, one pupil has made very rapid progress in spelling.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

51. At the last inspection, serious weaknesses were identified in the quality of the strategic leadership and management of the school. Moreover, little progress had been made in resolving most of the key issues from the 1994 inspection of the school. The governors, who had taken only a limited role in directing the school's affairs, drew up a further action plan to tackle the weaknesses noted in the 1998 inspection. This plan lacked the required clarity to ensure an effective response to the weaknesses identified. Relatively little progress was made until the appointment of a new headteacher

in the summer of 1999. Since then, progress has been rapid, and the effectiveness of the measures taken, driven by a new and clear improvement plan, may be seen in the sharp improvement in the attainments of pupils at the school. At Key Stage 3, there has been a sharp rise on attainments in the national tests in English, mathematics and science taken by pupils at the end of Year 9. Attainments at Key Stage 4 in mathematics, science, modern languages and in art and design have risen, as have standards in information and communication technology at Key Stage 3. Although there have been improvements in information and communication technology at Key Stage 4, further work is required to ensure that standards are sufficiently high at this level. The attainments of boys have been targeted effectively, and have risen sharply. The development planning process now provides a firm platform for whole-school improvement. Changes to the school's assessment practices have been behind the many gains in attainment, although marking could still be better. The school now meets statutory requirements in religious education, and has tackled successfully the health and safety hazards noted in 1998. Staff development needs are now identified and evaluated effectively.

52. The governors now take a more active role in overseeing the school's affairs. Governors fulfil their responsibilities in a satisfactory manner. Overall, the governors are now effective in meeting their statutory duties, particularly for the curriculum, although the school still does not meet the requirement for a daily act of collective worship. Governors state that this is because of the very limited space available at the school for assemblies. The last governors' annual report to parents omitted certain required information about people with disabilities and special educational needs. An important change since the last inspection is that the governors now play a good role in planning the future direction of the school, for example through helping to frame the whole-school development plan. Governors have also set up a performance committee to monitor improvements, and to oversee target setting. The detailed information that they now receive means that governors have a satisfactory understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors are linked to departments, but their full time jobs make it difficult for most of them to make regular visits to see the work of the school at first hand.

53. The leadership and management of the headteacher and other staff with managerial responsibilities are now good overall. The new headteacher provides very good vision and leadership, particularly in tackling the many problems faced by the school at the time of his appointment. Central to this is the view that the school exists so that pupils might learn, and that all members of the school community, including parents and pupils, should raise their expectations of what the pupils can achieve. Although there is clearly a satisfactory implicit change to the school's aims and purpose, this has yet to be made explicit in a revised statement of the school's mission and objectives; this is to be included as part of the forthcoming development plan.

54. The fact that the many changes and improvements have taken place against a background of cost and staff reduction reflects well on the headteacher's open leadership style. The staff is supportive of the new direction of the school. The headteacher receives good support by the other members of the senior management team, who have worked well in responding to the many demands required to bring about improvement over a short period. At middle management level, pastoral management has been strengthened by the appointment of heads of year. The management of subjects is satisfactory overall, with particularly good subject leadership in English and design and technology. The changes in the management of mathematics are starting to produce positive results. However, the temporary staffing arrangements in music mean that the pace of improvement has slowed; there is also uncertainty over the longer-term management of geography for similar reasons. The management and administration of special educational needs could be improved, particularly through a more effective system of targeting pupils' needs in individual education plans, and in planning for future developments in a more strategic manner.

55. The school has become a more self-critical place since the last inspection; there is a good ethos that seeks continuing improvement. As a result, the monitoring of its work, and the evaluation of the pupils' performance, are now good. In addition to the effective whole-school systems for monitoring the work of subjects, middle managers are becoming more confident in assessing the work of their teams. Overall, arrangements for the monitoring of teaching are now satisfactory. Whilst heads of department are now making good use of data provided by senior managers on the performance of pupils, which make satisfactory use of computer technology, there is scope for a greater degree of subject-specific focus in most cases. The school's arrangements for development planning, criticised at the last inspection, are now good. The present development plan is, of necessity, a short term one, aimed at tackling the school's key weaknesses over a two year period. Progress towards meeting planned outcomes is proving effective; the development plan underpins the role of senior line managers when working with their delegated subject areas. The identification of key priorities by senior staff has been very good, as is the action taken to meet the targets set. There is close linkage between the whole school plan and those of subjects, which demonstrate clearly how teams will contribute to the key targets for the school as a whole.

Staffing

56. Staffing is satisfactory overall. The number of teachers is smaller than average for the size of the school, in part reflecting recent cutbacks to bring the budget into balance. Even so, staffing costs per pupil are above average, reflecting the mature age profile of the staff. Whilst the teachers' qualifications are generally well matched to the subjects that they teach, the small size of the staff and the new curriculum structure mean that some lessons are taught by non-specialists. For example, in physical education, this means that one area of the planned course cannot be covered at present. The newly introduced programme of two languages for all in Year 8 will need careful monitoring of pupils' progress because of the need to use teachers outside their main language specialism. There are satisfactory numbers of non-teaching staff to support the school's work. The adverse pupil to teacher ratio is offset, to some extent, by better than average provision of clerical assistance for teachers. There is adequate provision of teaching staff for special educational needs, but it is not well deployed so there is, as a result, insufficient specialist teaching. There is generous provision for learning support assistants, who provide valuable assistance for pupils with special educational needs.

57. The school has set up effective arrangements to review the performance of teachers on an annual basis. There are sound arrangements for the induction of new members of staff, whilst staff development arrangements, criticised at the last inspection, now link well with development planning priorities; most training is well targeted to need. However, although training is under way, too few teachers lack the competence and confidence needed to support the school's policy of delivering information and communication technology across all subjects at Key Stage 4.

Accommodation

58. The overall provision of accommodation is satisfactory; there has been considerable improvement since the last inspection. The school campus is a pleasant area in which to work, and new buildings and extensions effectively complement the older blocks; there is good access for people with visual or physical disabilities. There are few signs of graffiti or vandalism, and the school has a well-planned programme of redecoration and renewals which is continuing to improve the learning environment.

59. Teaching accommodation is satisfactory, and often good, for most subjects, and here, accommodation has a positive impact on teaching and learning. However, in science, mathematics and information and communication technology, some of the accommodation is cramped, and this restricts

learning opportunities with larger sets. Accommodation is poor in drama and music, and unsatisfactory in design and technology; accommodation has not improved in these areas since the last inspection, hampering effective teaching and learning in all three subjects, and limiting standards in drama and music. The school hall has been pleasantly refurbished, but is unsuitable for performances or ball games. Good use is made of the extensive grassed areas and the nearby pool and leisure centre.

Learning resources

60. The school's resources for learning are generally satisfactory. The school library provides good overall support for the curriculum; it has a good range of fiction for all levels of ability, including pupils with special educational needs. There is appropriate support for all the subjects of the curriculum and there is a good range of resources for history and geography. However, although there is a good range of dictionaries for modern foreign languages, the range of fiction books is outdated and inappropriate in language level. Provision for information and communication technology is generally satisfactory; there is a good range of new equipment in art, and good access to computers for history, English and special educational needs. Both English and modern foreign languages have a good range of videos, tape recorders and cassettes, and there is a good number of laptop computers for use by pupils with special educational needs. However, not all subjects are able to get adequate access to computers, particularly at Key Stage 4, because of the need to use them for specialist teaching in information and communication technology. There are good arrangements in religious education, English and geography to rotate resources to provide good curriculum coverage.

61. Book resources are generally satisfactory in both number and range in most subjects apart from geography, where there are insufficient atlases, and in mathematics, where there are too few textbooks in Key Stage 3 to allow pupils to use them for homework. Books for art and music show a wider than usual range of coverage; this promotes the development of research skills. However, overall, learning resources are unsatisfactory in music and drama; this results in lower standards. For example, there are insufficient keyboards to meet the requirements of the increased numbers of pupils now taking music at Key Stage 4. There is inadequate lighting and recording equipment to support work in drama, adding to the problems caused by poor accommodation.

Financial management

62. Since the last inspection, a key target has been to ensure that spending matches income; the school has been successful in eliminating a budget deficit. This has been achieved by reductions in staffing, but care has been taken to ensure that important spending on accommodation and learning resources has continued. The balance of funding between the key stages matches budget income. Overall, therefore, the school's financial planning has been generally successful in matching funds to educational priorities in a satisfactory manner, so that suitable best value is obtained in terms of the educational impact of spending decisions. An important focus here has been to improve both the number and quality of computers, software and associated equipment in order to deliver the key priority of improving standards in information and communication technology, especially at Key Stage 3. Further improvements are in hand to support the work of subjects, particularly at Key Stage 4, using recent funds allocated to the school.

63. Overall, the school receives more money per pupil than average, in part a reflection of the extra funds allocated to it as a small school, and the above average allowance for pupils with special educational needs. Apart from supply cover and general premises costs, spending per pupil in all areas of the school is also above average. The school's finances are well administered. The most recent audit report noted only minor points for action. Spending is monitored closely by senior managers and by the governors' finance committee at regular intervals. Special purpose funds are used and

accounted for properly, although spending on teaching support for pupils with special educational needs could be more effective. At present, much of the special educational needs co-ordinator's time is spent in administrative tasks, or in weekly review meetings with departments. The present system of providing individual education plans for all relevant pupils for all subjects is unnecessary, and often ineffective because they lack sharp targets for improvement.

64. Overall, the school is now producing average, but rising, outcomes from its pupils, who entered the school with broadly average attainments. In some areas, attainments are now above average, particularly at Key Stage 4. The most recent results show further significant improvements, and that above average educational value is being added. There is effective personal support for the pupils, who respond well to the school's provisions, although the area served is an isolated and dispersed one, and has many areas of deprivation. Teaching is good at both key stages. There have been substantial improvements to the learning environment. Whilst the school receives above average income per pupil, this is mainly a reflection of its small size and its above average proportion of pupils with special educational needs. A potentially damaging budget overspend has been brought under control in a way that has not affected standards. After a period of stagnation, there is now a strong sense of shared purpose, geared towards securing further improvements. Thus whilst some weaknesses remain, the school is now judged to be an effective one, and to offer good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

65. In drawing up an action plan to raise standards still further, the governors and managers at all levels should continue to focus on improving how pupils of all abilities learn and make progress. Within this overall strategy, which has been successful in raising standards to date, the action plan should bear the following points in mind. The numbers in brackets refer to the relevant paragraphs in the body of the report

- (1) Build on the good work now being done at Key Stage 3 in order to improve standards in information and communication technology at Key Stage 4 by:
 - ensuring that all subjects of the curriculum have identified suitable opportunities for information and communication technology within their courses at Key Stage 4;
 - ensuring that, taken together, these opportunities provide appropriate and increasing levels of challenge for pupils of all attainment levels;
 - ensuring that all teachers have the competence and confidence to work with computers in their own subjects (*);
 - ensuring that pupils have sufficient access to computers to support the school's policy; and
 - monitoring, frequently, the standards that result from this policy.(8, 16, 24, 51, 56, 60, 113-116, 118)

- (2) Build on the good work on assessment and target setting already being done at whole-school level within each subject by:
 - implementing consistently the policy on how work should be marked (*);
 - using available national data on value added at subject level to set targets for individual pupils within each department;
 - ensuring that all subjects maintain centralised records of their assessments of pupils' work, and analyse them in a rigorous manner to help to improve the match of teaching to learning needs; and
 - ensuring that subject reports to parents contain a clear picture of a pupils' strengths and weaknesses in each subject, and identify what they need to do to improve in future.(18, 22, 41, 42, 48, 55)

- (3) Improve the general standard of the pupils' numeracy by:
 - developing a whole-school policy and common practices to promote numeracy;
 - within this overall framework, providing suitable and challenging opportunities for numeracy in all subjects and areas of the curriculum; and
 - monitoring the appropriateness of this planned provision, its delivery, and evaluating its effectiveness.(6, 21, 25, 81)

- (4) Improve the effectiveness of the partnership of parents, subject teachers and the special educational needs team by:
 - ensuring that all parents and carers of pupils who are placed on the special needs register are informed of the decision, the reasons for it, and how parents can help;
 - writing a single education plan for those pupils who require one, to form the basis for support in all subjects, giving specific and preferably quantified targets;
 - improving the awareness of all teachers of the general strategies that they can employ to support all pupils who have special educational needs; and

- ensuring that all class teachers take responsibility for planning the provision for all pupils with special educational needs.
(10, 23, 28, 43-45, 50, 63, 138)

- (5) Raise standards in drama and music by providing accommodation and learning resources that reduce the present constraints on learning opportunities.
(5, 59, 61, 77, 126)

In addition to the key issues above, the governors and senior managers should also consider, as part of the action plan, providing a better strategic framework for the development of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across all areas of the life and work of the school.
(32-36)

Items marked (*) also formed part of the key issues of the previous inspection

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

139

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

62

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1.6	11.7	46.9	36.7	3.1	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	568	-
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	45	-

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	23	-
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	129	-

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	23
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	19

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	92.4
National comparative data	91.0

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	59	60	119
	(1999)	(41)	(61)	(102)

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	42 (23)	45 (20)	46 (16)
	Girls	53 (53)	49 (47)	41 (35)
	Total	95 (76)	94 (67)	87 (51)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	80 (75)	79 (66)	73 (50)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	45 (53)	52 (39)	31 (10)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	31 (24)	47 (22)	39 (20)
	Girls	47 (49)	50 (50)	41 (47)
	Total	78 (73)	97 (72)	80 (67)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	66 (72)	82 (71)	67 (66)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	28 (45)	31 (40)	26 (24)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

NOTE: National data for 2000 are not yet available.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	55	43	98
	(1999)	(72)	(51)	(123)

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	24 (24)	54 (67)	54 (72)
	Girls	24 (24)	41 (47)	43 (50)
	Total	48 (48)	95 (114)	97 (122)
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	49 (39)	97 (93)	99 (99)
	National	(47)	(91)	(96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	41.4 (38.0)
	National	(38.0)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	3
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	542
Any other minority ethnic group	1

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	28	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 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	30.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	430

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.9
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25.2
Key Stage 4	22.7

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1,372,011
Total expenditure	1,397,068
Expenditure per pupil	2,568
Balance brought forward from previous year	22,149
Balance carried forward to next year	(2,908)

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	557
Number of questionnaires returned	299

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	24	57	10	5	4
My child is making good progress in school.	27	58	5	1	8
Behaviour in the school is good.	24	58	5	2	12
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	12	58	12	5	13
The teaching is good.	19	62	7	1	11
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	16	45	26	3	10
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	31	50	12	1	6
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	44	46	4	0	5
The school works closely with parents.	16	46	23	3	11
The school is well led and managed.	24	52	7	2	15
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	23	55	7	2	12
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	51	10	3	13

The relatively high proportion of "Do not know" entries reflects the timing of the inspection; many parents of pupils in Year 7 felt that they had insufficient evidence to allow them to comment on many aspects.

Other issues raised by parents

The pattern of comments raised at the parents' meeting and in written submissions reflects that shown in the responses above.

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

ENGLISH

66. At entry, the girls' attainments are broadly average, but those of boys are below average. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, the school's results over the period 1996 to 1999 have been average, with girls performing better than boys. The 1999 and 2000 results show well above average scores, with the 2000 figures demonstrating a marked improvement by boys over earlier years. In 2000, the results in English are above average compared to schools with similar levels of entitlement to free school meals. At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils gaining at least grade C in English language in 1999 is broadly in line with the national average; that in English literature is also average. In relation to the grades obtained in their other subjects in 1999, the last year for which detailed national figures are available, boys tended to do less well in English language, whereas girls achieved similar grades. Results in English literature are similar to those in the other subjects that the pupils took. The 2000 GCSE English language results show a significant improvement in the proportion of pupils gaining at least grade C over the 1999 figure; those for English literature are comparable to 1999 levels. Pupils did better in the 1999 GCSE examinations than would have been expected from their Key Stage 3 test scores in 1997.

67. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards and achievements in work seen during the inspection are above average; those at the end of Key Stage 4 are average. Standards in speaking and listening are in line with expectations at the end of both key stages. A significant proportion of pupils at both key stages reach above average standards, and benefit from the good range of opportunities offered by the school. At Key Stage 3, these pupils are able to talk about their work in some detail and contribute ideas confidently in a range of situations. Older pupils in Key Stage 4 consider varying techniques, for example when they seek better ways of presenting a poem to the rest of the class. Pupils in the school are successful in public speaking competitions; last year, a group of Year 7 pupils represented North Devon and were the winners in the county final. There is, however, a minority of pupils at both key stages who need encouragement and support to develop answers in class, who use a mainly familiar range of vocabulary and who do not have a secure command of standard English.

68. Standards in reading are above average at the end of both key stages; this is the strongest feature of attainment and achievement at Key Stage 4. Most pupils, including lower attainers, read fluently and understand the meaning of texts used in class. The use of reading logs has had a significant impact on the quality of reading of younger pupils in Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, many pupils are developing good awareness of important aspects of literature and non-literary material. They analyse and comment in features such as structure, characterisation and language, with direct and relevant references to texts they have read. This is in direct response to effective teaching.

69. Standards in writing are above average at Key Stage 3 and average at the end of Key Stage 4. Information and communication technology is used well to promote higher standards, with challenging and interesting exercises being set, backed by careful assessment. In the best writing at Key Stage 3, pupils are developing good stamina as writers, and write for a good range of purposes. They use language thoughtfully and imaginatively, such as in their poetry writing and in units of work such as *Escape from Kraznir*. Many pupils are beginning to structure their writing effectively. In well planned units of work on different media, Year 9 pupils produced a professional looking and very effectively organised newspaper. As at Key Stage 3, there are some inaccuracies in spelling, basic punctuation and examples of awkward expression in even higher attaining pupils' work. At the end of

Key Stage 4, the best writing shows the ability to adapt and select language and structure effectively. There are some well constructed analyses of characters and themes in pupils' writing in response to literature. However, there remains a level of inaccuracy of spelling and punctuation which detracts from the quality of even some of the best writing. In the work of pupils' of average and below average ability, there is a narrower range of vocabulary which leads to repetition and a lack of precision. The school has recognised these factors and is developing a whole school systematic approach to the teaching of spelling. This year sees the start of work to support pupils' spelling and punctuation skills in English.

70. The contribution made by other subjects to the pupils' literacy skills is generally satisfactory. Many subjects are beginning to implement their recently formulated action plans and the contribution is developing appropriately. There is close liaison between English and modern language departments to develop pupils' language awareness, and there is evidence that history, geography and religious education are addressing literacy seriously and well. Good contributions to the pupils' understanding of subject specific vocabulary and specialist terms are made in art and design, modern languages, geography, history, religious education, science and in design and technology. Pupils' note-taking skills are well practised in science at Key Stage 4. There is good use of evaluative language in art, and in design and technology, whilst the pupils' speaking and listening skills are consciously developed in art and in some aspects of mathematics. However, not all departments are sufficiently consistent in their approach to spelling.

71. The quality of teaching and the pupils' learning are good at both key stages, with examples of very good teaching and achievement in some lessons. This good teaching is a major factor in the improving standards in the subject. The strengths of the teaching are reflected in the positive attitudes that pupils have to the subject, and their good behaviour. The best teaching in English is characterised by the teachers' enthusiastic expertise and love of the subject, which is infectious and which motivates pupils well. Very well chosen resources match pupils' abilities and curiosities, and involve and interest them in their work. This was seen to good effect in a Year 9 lesson, where pupils were discussing the theme of homelessness, after reading *Stone Cold* by Robert Swindells. Here, the teacher had organised activities and support materials which were interesting, and gave very good support for pupils' discussion and interaction with the text. These activities and the teacher's own response to the book enabled pupils to make thoughtful observations and to develop well their understanding of underlying themes. Very good lesson planning, crisp and well paced questioning, consistently high expectations and very clear explanations are hallmarks. These factors enabled a Year 11 group to develop very well their analytical skills in their study of poetry in the GCSE examination anthology. Teachers know their pupils well, and they use this knowledge to plan effectively for all ability levels, including pupils with special educational needs. In a Year 10 lesson, lower attaining pupils were very well involved in a discussion of the characters in *Our Day Out* by Willy Russell, and were able to refer to specific parts of the plot to support their responses. Pupils achieved well in this lesson because the teacher had chosen a very appropriate text. Through her effective questioning and encouragement, the pupils gained confidence in their own judgement and in their ability to communicate. Where teaching has weaker elements, these are related to the management of time to ensure that planned activities can be fully developed, and that pupils are given maximum opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge in the classroom. In some instances, but not all, these were the effects of recent timetable changes at this early stage of the new school year. There is careful, detailed and helpful marking of pupils' work, linked to National Curriculum levels or to GCSE grades in most cases. Pupils' self-assessment and target setting is often effectively linked to this marking, and this helps pupils to be active participants in their own learning. However, the practice is not yet consistently used by all members of the department, and this limits the rate at which pupils develop in some classes. The school is aware of this, and is working hard to improve the support given to non-specialist members of the team.

72. The department is fortunate in being led by an able and committed teacher, who ensures that good practice is shared. There is a very productive partnership with the other full time member of the department, whose skills and enthusiasms provide a good complement. This partnership ensures that well developed units of work provide good challenge for all ability levels and supports the improving rate of achievement well. Careful allocation of classes has led to the best use of the strengths of a varied department, and these factors have contributed to the good learning of pupils in Key Stage 3 and the improving achievements of pupils at Key Stage 4. The pupils' development is well supported by careful analysis of examination and test results, and the clear identification of relevant priorities for the development of pupils' skills and knowledge. Curriculum developments and course coverage are thoroughly monitored; the requirements of the revised National Curriculum are being successfully implemented and evaluated this year.

73. The subject has made good progress since the last inspection. There has been significant improvement in results at Key Stage 3 and, especially, in the achievements of boys. The difference between the attainments of girls and those of boys is now less than the national figure. Learning is now good at both key stages. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 has improved in terms of organisation and balance, and teachers make more effective use of explicit criteria. Assessment practices and procedures have improved, and these have had a substantial impact on the rate at which pupils learn. The department's use of statistical analysis has improved, and is used as an effective tool to promote learning. Since the last inspection, the department has laid a very strong foundation of good practice. Further improvements to an already very effective department are related to ensuring that pupils are given maximum opportunities to develop their skills in lessons. These improvements also include a sharper focus on specific learning targets to ensure that these are precisely linked to pupils' needs in all classes, and that their progress towards these targets is closely monitored.

Drama

74. At the end of Key Stage 3, the teachers' own assessments indicate that pupils achieve standards appropriate to their age in those areas of the course where the accommodation permits effective work. At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils gaining at least grade C in drama in 1999 is significantly below the national average, with no candidates achieving the higher grades. However, in relation to the grades obtained in their other subjects, pupils tend to do slightly better in drama; this reflects the popularity of the subject with lower attainers. The 2000 GCSE results show a slight improvement in the proportion of pupils achieving Grades C and above.

75. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards in work seen during the inspection are below average; standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are also below average. Whilst standards achieved during lessons are often at the expected levels, aspects of the curriculum relating to performance cannot be fully delivered as a result of limited space and resources. This directly affects the development of the pupils' skills and range of experiences, and is a major factor in the below average standards seen in the subject. Pupils at both key stages develop appropriate skills in simple improvisation techniques, including facial and body movements and their dramatic impact. In their evaluative comments on their work, pupils at Key Stage 3 make appropriate thoughtful comments about their group work and discuss personal responses to their lessons. Pupils' written work for their GCSE course at Key Stage 4 shows an appropriate awareness of basic skills and techniques, but there are limitations in their experiences of dramatic production because of limitations in the accommodation and the technical equipment. For example, there is no appropriate space in the school for public productions.

76. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at both key stages, with some good teaching seen at Key Stage 3. The strength of the teaching is in the well detailed planning which has good regard for

the subject elements and the very clear explanation and instructions given to pupils in lessons. The teacher manages the often large groups in a limited space effectively, and maintains consistent high expectations for their responses and behaviour.

77. The teacher in charge of drama is an experienced one, who has worked hard to produce a well organised curriculum, which meets requirements of the subject as far as possible within the severe limitations imposed by the poor accommodation within a scout hall. There are well planned links with the English curriculum, and with aspects of the personal and social education programme. The very unsatisfactory storage and display space in the present accommodation, and the lack of technical equipment, such as lighting and appropriate recording equipment place serious limitations on the delivery of most elements of the curriculum.

78. The subject has not made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The previous report identified the need to provide pupils with more opportunities for reflection and to provide them with word processed documentation. Both of these areas have been well addressed. However, the major shortcomings of poor accommodation and inadequate learning resources continue to limit, severely, what can be accomplished.

MATHEMATICS

79. The pupils' attainments when they enter the school are broadly average, although there are significant variations in the respective attainments of boys and girls from year to year. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, the school's results over the period 1996 to 1999 have been average, with girls performing better than boys. The 1999 results show average scores, with girls again performing better than boys. The 2000 results are significantly better, and are now above average, mainly because of a marked improvement by boys over earlier years. The proportion of pupils gaining the expected Level 5 in the tests in 2000 is above that of similar schools, and well above that of all schools nationally. At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils gaining at least grade C in mathematics in 1999 is broadly in line with the national average, an improvement on the well below average picture at the last inspection. In relation to the grades obtained in their other subjects in 1999, girls tended to do less well in mathematics, whereas boys achieved similar grades. The 2000 GCSE results were comparable with 1999 levels. Pupils did better in the 1999 GCSE examinations than would have been expected from their Key Stage 3 test scores in 1997.

80. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards in work and achievements seen during the inspection are above average; they are average for the end of Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3, pupils demonstrate a growing confidence in their number work and can substitute in expressions and solve equations. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, pupils calculated the perimeter of polygons drawn inside and outside of a circle in order to find an approximate value for the circumference of that circle. At Key Stage 4, pupils make good use of algebra, and their work on data handling and probability is well developed. They use Pythagoras' Theorem effectively to find the length of a missing side, whilst the most able pupils can work with trigonometry in three dimensions and have a good understanding of vector geometry. The pupils' work in using and applying mathematics remains a relative weakness; investigative skills are not sufficiently encouraged and developed. The pupils' literacy skills are satisfactory. Reading skills are well developed using the individualised workbooks, but opportunities to extend the pupils' technical vocabulary are not pursued sufficiently. Some work is marred by poor spelling, which is not always corrected by the teacher. The provision for information and communication technology is satisfactory, although opportunities to use the computer facilities are limited. All pupils undertake an extended project in Year 9, which makes good use of software to produce statistics and statistical representations. There is no other planned provision for developing

pupils' computing skills, especially at Key Stage 4, although the department does make use of a limited number of graphical calculators in Year 11 classes.

81. The contribution of other subjects to numeracy is unsatisfactory at present. There is no agreed whole school numeracy policy at present, although a draft version has now been prepared. This inhibits the further development of numeracy across the curriculum. Number work is developed in science, but some pupils have difficulty with mental calculations, such as dividing 2400 by 120. In a Year 11 travel and tourism lesson, pupils were unable to convert $31/50$ to a percentage or to calculate percentage change. However, numeracy is being developed in some subjects, although in an uncoordinated way. For example, algebraic skills are used in English at Key Stage 3 to consider the patterns of words in ballads; they are advanced in science through substitution in formulae. The pupils' spatial skills are developed in design and technology, where they make good use of set-squares and rulers. Data handling skills are used appropriately in geography for analysing data in their GCSE coursework, whilst in biology lessons, pupils make use of probability to explain genetic inheritance. The use of graphs is variable in science; for example, the scrutiny of work highlighted a block graph which had been ticked, even though there was no title and no labelling of the axes.

82. The quality of teaching and of learning is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. Teachers make good use of planning in terms of lesson structure, and the work gets off to a punctual start so that lesson time is maximised. There is a good balance of different activities, including whole class teaching and individual work. However, in a small number of lessons, too much teacher direction and an over emphasis on rules inhibit learning; here, pupils are not developing satisfactory levels of independence in their work. Common errors and misunderstandings are not always anticipated. For example, in a lesson on Pythagoras' theorem, $3^2 + 4^2 = 7^2$ was a common mistake made by the pupils, but which was not addressed by the teacher. Pupils with special education needs are well supported by teachers and the department's learning support assistants, so that their learning is good. The more able pupils in Key Stage 4 demonstrate high levels of independence in their work, but opportunities to further develop and extend their mathematical thinking are missed.

83. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, although the department's schemes of work are brief and provide no overview of the quality and range of learning opportunities on offer. Reports to parents are not sufficiently subject specific, and pupils have little idea of how well they are doing in relation to national expectations or what they must do to improve.

84. The leadership of the department is satisfactory. The department is administered well and the recently appointed head of department provides strong support for the department team. Internal and external monitoring of the department have been very thorough and, in a short period of time, many new initiatives have been introduced although it is too early to assess their lasting impact on the pupils' learning. Staffing is adequate, but further training is needed to develop their subject knowledge expertise and their confidence in improving and extending pupils' thinking skills.

85. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good, in spite of the problems that remain to be tackled. Results at Key Stage 3 have continued to improve and GCSE results are now average, compared to well below average at the last inspection. Standards of work in the classroom have now improved at both key stages. The significant weaknesses in teaching noted in 1998 have been addressed although work, especially for the most able pupils, lacks intellectual challenge and mathematical rigour. Support teaching for pupils with special educational needs is still well planned and of high quality. Classroom management is now good and pupils are eager to learn and do well. The pupils work well with one another and there was no evidence of disaffected boys causing disruption, as reported in the last inspection. Pupils now show good attitudes to the subject and behave well.

SCIENCE

86. In the national tests in science taken at the end of Key Stage 3, the school's trend in results over the period 1996 to 1999 has been below average, with girls performing better than boys. The 1999 results also show below average scores. The 2000 results are significantly better than those of 1999, particularly in the proportion of boys gaining at least the expected Level 5, and in the proportions of boys and girls gaining the higher Level 6. Overall, the test results in 2000 are above average; the proportion of pupils gaining the expected Level 5 in 2000 is well above the national average, and in line with that for similar schools. At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils gaining at least grade C in double award GCSE science in 1999 is significantly above the national average and shows a marked improvement over the previous year. The 1999 results in single award science are broadly average. Girls tended to perform less well in double award science than in their other subjects in 1999; boys tended to perform better in single award science than in their other subjects. The 2000 GCSE results show a small rise in the proportion of pupils gaining at least grade C compared with 1999. At the lower grade levels, the proportion of pupils gaining at least grade G in GCSE science is well above the national average in 1999, with a similar performance in 2000. Pupils performed better in the 1999 GCSE examinations than would have been predicted from their Key Stage 3 test scores in 1997.

87. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of both key stages are in line with national expectations; many pupils in all year groups display knowledge at a higher level. Achievements at both key stages are good. Standards of practical work and scientific investigation are satisfactory, although pupils at Key Stage 3 have fewer opportunities than expected to pursue open-ended practical tasks. However, Year 7 pupils are able to consider the factors affecting the swing of a pendulum, and the way in which a force extends the length of a spring. Year 9 pupils investigate the effect of pulleys on lifting different masses. At Key Stage 4, pupils are able to use scientific theory to back up their hypotheses, seen for example in the investigation of the factors affecting the rate of chemical reactions. However, lower attaining pupils have difficulty in making predictions and evaluating their results. Pupils have a sound knowledge of the natural world, showing the ability at Key Stage 3 to use the characteristics of different vertebrate animals as an aid to classifying them. They also make appropriate deductions about metallic and non-metallic substances by studying their physical properties. Higher attaining pupils are familiar with logic gates and methods of preparing a variety of salts. At Key Stage 4, pupils have a deeper understanding of scientific principles and can, for example, relate the brightness of a bulb to the voltage. Good examples are seen of their ability to build on and extend earlier work. For example, they use their knowledge of cell structure to explain the genetic basis for inheritance, and use the principles governing reflection at a plane surface to explain both reflection at curved mirrors and refraction through lenses. Pupils' numerical skills are adequate for the demands made of them, although skills of plotting and interpreting graphs are under-developed. Standards of literacy are satisfactory, and most pupils are articulate when questioned. Skills in information and communication technology are limited by the infrequent opportunities given to the pupils to use computers, but are satisfactory in the narrow range of skills seen. Pupils with special educational needs show achievements that are in line with their abilities, especially when provided with classroom support.

88. The quality of teaching and of learning in science is good at both key stages. The best lessons are characterised by precisely stated learning objectives and clear explanations of varied and challenging tasks. This enables pupils to be confident and well-motivated learners, showing interest and commitment, clear in the knowledge of what they are expected to learn. Good teaching also employs efficient use of time, achieves high standards of discipline and behaviour, and uses a stimulating range of illustrations and demonstrations. For example, a Year 11 class saw a convincing demonstration of

the way in which transformers modify the voltage in electricity power lines, while a Year 9 class were challenged to identify the energy transformations taking place in an unusual range of devices. Less successful teaching has a negative effect on pupils' learning. Such lessons often employ inappropriate organisation and size of groups, preventing rapid progress. They also tend to provide tasks that are either not challenging for higher attaining pupils, or closed and restricted in style, thus preventing pupils from extending their learning experience, and developing independence and initiative. Overall, however, the quality of teaching has a positive impact on the progress made by pupils. Good planning, effective questioning skills and a clear focus on what pupils are expected to learn enables pupils to cover and absorb new material effectively.

89. The improvement in standards has been greatly supported by the use of assessment information to set targets for pupils, who are thus helped to meet higher expectations. The management of the department is sound, although further work needs to be done on monitoring and developing teaching and learning techniques, particularly to meet the needs of the whole range of pupils.

90. The subject has made good progress since the last inspection, and nearly all the issues raised in the report have been addressed and dealt with effectively, especially the improvement in GCSE results and the more effective use of assessment information. Further discussion and sharing of classroom practice is still needed to ensure that the strengths in many lessons are found in all.

ART AND DESIGN

91. In the teachers' own assessments of the pupils' attainments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 and 2000, the proportions of pupils attaining or exceeding the national expectation are well above the national average. In the 1999 GCSE examination, the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades is well above the national average. This was the case for both boys and girls, who each generally did better in their art GCSE than in their other subjects. In 2000, the proportion gaining a grade C or above is higher than in the 1999 examination. Results have improved year by year over the last four years as a result of improving teaching and planning.

92. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards in work seen at the time of the inspection are already average; there is time throughout the remainder of the year for pupils to improve further. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards are above those expected of 16 year-olds. Achievements are good at both key stages. Pupils enter the school with a wide variety of prior attainments. Whilst most match national expectations, a significant minority show below expected standards for their age. The department works hard to improve the pupils' starting point. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress, for example completing interesting prints using symbolic motifs that represent aspects of their personality. In doing this, pupils appreciate how civilisations in different places and times use symbols to capture particular qualities. In one very good Year 9 lesson, pupils intelligently discussed how 'visual metaphors' occurred in the work of known artists. In doing this, they improved their literacy skills through using descriptive language in a focused way. Regular opportunities for pupils to engage in three-dimensional work results, for instance, in good quality clay sculptures of heads. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils successfully produce work in a variety of two- and three-dimensional styles. For instance, GCSE pupils have produced well-crafted clay designs on the theme of buildings and many observational drawings show close attention to detail. Pupils study the background facts to practical projects well. The written work of the higher attaining pupils is particularly well researched, often including a wealth of relevant details that help them to gain additional marks in the final examinations. However, not all pupils present their work neatly, and some rely too heavily on teachers' help rather than exercising their own imagination and enterprise. There is increasingly good use of computers, particularly in Key Stage 4. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good as a result of

close identification of their needs by teachers and sympathetic teaching. Higher attaining pupils are also identified and given support that helps them to progress well.

93. The quality of teaching in both key stages is good overall with frequent very good teaching. Learning is also good at all levels. All teachers are specialists. The complementary skills of the team enable them to communicate a wide range of skills in an assured way. As a result, pupils learn successfully about different approaches to art and design. The teachers' detailed planning ensures that pupils are clear about what is expected of them. As a result, learning takes place in a systematic and methodical manner that aids swift progress. For this reason, pupils make good progress in both key stages. The management of pupils is very secure. Pupils respect teachers, enjoy their work and learn in an atmosphere free from disruption. The rapid pace in lessons helps to maintain a positive learning atmosphere. This is so in both key stages, whereas at the time of the last inspection, some lessons in Key Stage 4 failed to keep pupils' fully motivated. The high levels of interest are a contributory factor to the above average standards of GCSE work that are improving year on year. Teachers ensure that pupils have sufficient materials for practical work and research. As a result, learning successfully integrates aspects of theory and practice. Marking includes praise where it is deserved, as well as clear comments that help pupils to improve. Homework is used successfully to support learning, whilst extra-curricular sessions provide pupils with opportunities to learn in a more relaxed manner beyond the school day. The pupils' attitudes to work are positive; they respond well to the teachers' efforts and apply themselves well in lessons. However, on occasions, there is too much chatter, although this stops when teachers ask for quiet.

94. There has been good progress since the last inspection. The issues for development from the previous inspection have been successfully tackled. A planned focus on pupils' drawing and painting skills has improved overall standards. Teachers spend less time on taught introductions so that the pupils have longer for practical activity. The greater variety of practical projects and schemes for both key stages are well thought out. The pupils' work is now successfully assessed using a variety of approaches, including a well-planned system for pupils to evaluate their own work. This is having a positive effect on standards. The new accommodation has had a major impact on morale and created significantly better working conditions that are having a positive impact on standards. The management of the department is good. Staff and pupils feel well valued and supported and good planning for current and future developments promotes a buoyant teaching and learning atmosphere. Teaching is closely monitored to ensure that standards remain high. The department recognises that there is insufficient use of artists from the community or visits to places of artistic interest in order to widen pupils' appreciation of art.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

95. At the end of Key Stage 3, the percentage of pupils reaching the expected Level 5 and the higher Level 6 in the 1999 teachers' assessments of pupils' attainments is above average. Girls' results exceeded those of boys; in 2000 however, they were comparable at both levels. Observed standards in the inspection suggest that these assessments, which are not subject to external moderation, are slightly optimistic. At the end of Key Stage 4, the 1999 GCSE results are above average. The boys' results exceeded those of boys nationally by a wider margin than is the case for girls; there was a similar pattern to results in 1998. In 2000, there is a significant improvement in GCSE results. Girls achieved a higher proportion of A* and A grades than boys, who nevertheless improved significantly the percentage of A*-C grades achieved. Pupils overall, and boys in particular, do significantly better in design and technology than they do in other subjects at the school.

96. The standards of work seen during the inspection, and the pupils' achievements, are average for the end of Key Stage 3, and above average for the end of Key Stage 4. Pupils with special

educational needs make good progress. At Key Stage 3, pupils quickly establish good drawing skills, then develop and apply increasingly high level graphical skills as they progress through the school. Standards of manufacturing are good; tools and equipment are used carefully and accurately in the construction of products. The progress of some lower attaining girls is hampered through fear of use of equipment. Lower to middle attaining boys, including many pupils with special educational needs, often achieve at well above expected levels, particularly at Key Stage 4. Standards of numeracy achieved by these pupils are good when working with resistant materials, reflecting care, precision, good estimation, accurate prediction and measurement skills. At Key Stage 3, higher attainers' knowledge of electrical concepts is lower than would be expected, and they have limited opportunities to take initiatives with their own learning. This reduces their ability to apply creative and analytical processes to the design problems they encounter. In the Key Stage 4 food course, middle attaining girls have some difficulty understanding the more theoretical aspects of the subject, even though higher attaining girls exhibit good evaluative skills. Creative achievement is, however, good in the work of middle to higher attaining Year 11 girls when they generate highly imaginative projects in textiles. For example, some work in multi-cultural contexts such as African culture is used as the basis for developing their own clothing styles. At both key stages, pupils show a good sense of audience in the way they communicate their design ideas. Literacy levels are at least satisfactory, and often good, particularly when teachers include literacy issues specifically in their planning. Presentation of coursework folders at Key Stage 4 is enhanced effectively by the appropriate selection and use of computer software. Standards of computer literacy are at least satisfactory and sometimes good. Pupils at Key Stage 3 understand how to generate control procedures that are effectively applied using computer aided design and machining to design intricate, vacuum formed plastic storage container inserts.

97. Teaching is good at both key stages, as is learning. Some teaching is very good. At Key Stage 3, the full impact of the teaching is reduced by the timetable. Pupils spend blocks of time on different aspects of the subject, which disrupts the continuity of the relationships pupils form with individual teachers. It also results in some unfinished and rushed work by pupils who then lose some motivation. Progress during Key Stage 4 is good. It is better for more able girls who cope well with the theoretical aspects of the courses and for lower and middle attaining boys who develop high levels of confidence with practical work. All pupils however make at least satisfactory progress at this stage reflecting the better understanding teachers have of their pupils and the trust that exists between them. Lessons are generally well managed and planning is effective throughout the school. They often show detailed knowledge of individual pupils and some effective use of assessment data, allowing lessons to be tailored to individual needs. The positive work ethic that exists encourages and supports pupils in their learning, even though higher attaining pupils are not encouraged to take sufficient responsibility for their learning. The variety of methods employed in a food lesson allowed pupils to consolidate their learning using different perspectives. The good progress made by lower attaining boys in resistant materials and higher attaining girls in textiles results from teaching that matches the learning style of the pupils. The attention given by teachers to all aspects of the design process ensures that pupils develop a balanced perspective in the projects they design and develop. For example, good quality farm implements that are fit for their purpose are designed and developed by GCSE pupils as part of their coursework. In electronics, middle and higher attainers sometimes find the way theory is taught difficult to apply. The range of visual stimuli used in graphics lessons limits the pupils' perception of high quality and high standards in the subject. Additionally, the dated and cramped nature of the accommodation is unhelpful to teaching in that it does not reflect an image of twenty-first century design and technology. Assessment is good at both key stages, and pupils are generally clear about what they need to improve in order to make better progress. This is assisted by helpful marking of work and the setting of appropriate relevant homework. At Key Stage 4, good oral feedback from teachers ensures that pupils formulate appropriate targets for further improvement.

98. The department is well managed, based on a central concern for the pupils' learning. Teachers are beginning to use data from their own analyses, and their monitoring of standards and progress, in a way that helps them to define priorities and plan development. They work collaboratively and effectively matched by positive responses from most pupils, who show a great willingness to learn. A good range extra-curricular opportunities is offered, including Young Engineers and electronics clubs; however pupils have a very narrow understanding of the role and nature of technologies in their own culture and in other cultures. A new link with North Devon College is beginning to broaden this perspective.

99. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. It has eliminated the health and safety hazards identified as a key issue, even though no further improvements have been made to the unsatisfactory accommodation previously noted. That standards are not affected by the accommodation is a tribute to the efforts of the teachers. However, the condition of the workshops has an adverse effect on learning opportunities. Standards at Key Stage 3 have improved slightly, but there has been considerable improvement at Key Stage 4. Girls' results outperformed boys' at the last inspection; boys' results have improved significantly, whilst those of girls have remained steady, remaining approximately in line with their national average. Previously, graphical skills were underdeveloped, but these are now good. The department now needs to focus on raising the standards of middle attaining girls. Teachers also need to support higher attainers to become more independent learners, able to develop and combine more creative, imaginative and analytical approaches to their work.

GEOGRAPHY

100. The teachers' own assessments of standards at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 show very low results compared with the national average for both boys and girls. Results in 2000 are much better, but still well below the 1999 national figures and well below the school's test results in 1999 and 2000 in the core subjects. However, the very wide fluctuations over the last three years, both in the subject and compared with the school's results, raises questions about the accuracy of past Key Stage 3 assessments in geography. The GCSE results in 1999 at the end of Key Stage 4 are well below average, with pupils tending to get much poorer results in geography compared with the other subjects they took. Results in 2000 are significantly better, with an average rise of 1.3 grades compared with 1999, and a much higher proportion of pupils obtaining grade C or higher. A feature of the results in 2000 is the very marked improvement in boys' results, which are slightly better than the girls'. The reverse is the case nationally.

101. At the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, standards in work seen during the inspection are average; achievements are good at both levels, reflecting recent improvements, particularly in teaching. At Key Stage 3, diagrams are a strength, and most pupils, apart from the lowest attainers, are able to plot information accurately on to graphs, for example, plotting information from an environmental survey of Holsworthy. The development of geographical skills generally is sound. As a result of very good teaching, there was considerable progress in a Year 7 lesson as pupils developed their skills in describing places, with some sophisticated description from some high achievers. There is a sufficient range of written work to help the development of literacy skills, which are average overall. However, progress in developing literacy skills is more variable between different groups of pupils, with higher attainers progressing better; generally, girls' written work is better than boys', with few boys achieving highly. At Key Stage 4, most pupils are able to distinguish between different types of volcano and their characteristics. In one group, the progress of lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, was greatly helped by having a simplified question sheet and practical tasks, together with good quality individual help by the teacher and learning support assistant. There were good levels of understanding of coastal processes, including cliff formations, by most pupils in one class

of mainly high attaining pupils. In another class, the standard of work of a number of boys was low; however, with one or two exceptions, they were trying hard and achieving well in relation to their standards at the beginning of Key Stage 4. During the week of the inspection, there was little use in lessons of number skills and no use of computers. From work seen in books from last year, standards of numeracy are satisfactory, with most pupils coping when numeracy skills are needed in geography. Pupils' course work from last year made limited use of computers, but there was insufficient evidence to make a judgement of standards in the use of computers in geography.

102. The quality of teaching at both key stages is very good; none is less than good. Learning is now also very good and, under the guidance of new staff, has the potential to raise standards further. Very good planning is a hallmark of all lessons. The impact of this, and of the very good start of all lessons, is that pupils are very clear of the aims of each session and what is expected of them. Their learning is clearly focused from the beginning of the lesson. Similarly, the brisk pace, and the teacher's knowledge and enthusiasm, lead to good learning with a rapid increase in knowledge and understanding. Varied activities take place from the start of most lessons, leading to high productivity by pupils. In one Key Stage 3 lesson, the teacher's confident expertise made for good quality teaching of geographical skills; constant reinforcement, in slightly different ways, and regular checking of learning led to rapid progress, and enabled the teacher to emphasise any difficulties that she noticed. In another Key Stage 3 lesson, pupils considered what factors made Italy unique; the teacher had very high expectations of the rigour of the pupils' thinking, but the tasks also catered well for pupils of different abilities so they all could experience success. Just occasionally, however, a long session of whole class teaching gave fewer opportunities for individual attention to be given to pupils of differing abilities. An example of a Key Stage 4 lesson gives a flavour of the very good teaching seen during the inspection. Pupils were very clear of what was expected of them as the aims were clearly explained, along with plenty of encouragement to do well. Excellent overhead transparencies and a very well chosen video clip complemented outstanding explanations from the teacher. The awe and wonder of volcanoes, and their immense power, were conveyed with verve and enthusiasm. There were strong visual images, with pupils involved in building up diagrams in the board to break down facts and ideas into manageable units. All of this, and the brisk pace, led to very good learning with pupils concentrating, working very hard, and being actively involved; more and more resources and activities were progressively introduced into the lesson. In a class with a very wide range of ability, all pupils advanced their learning considerably, with some lower achievers very well supported by a classroom assistant. Potentially difficult pupils were very well handled by the teacher; the attitudes and behaviour of all the other pupils were very good, responding to the teaching with great interest and wanting to do well.

103. Geography is part of the humanities faculty. Overall, management is satisfactory. The faculty is efficiently administered, and its complex arrangements operate smoothly. The teachers work well together and are committed to raising standards; the development plan is sound, focusing on whole school issues. However, management at subject level is in transition; following staff changes, there is no leader of the subject at present. Whilst the outline scheme of work is quite adequate at both key stages, there is little scope during this transitional period for new curriculum developments. For example, the use of computers is much underdeveloped at present, and many resources are in need of updating or replacing. Similarly, although assessment arrangements are sound, they have the potential to be good with further refinement. Given the present temporary circumstances, the learning experiences of pupils are remarkably good, with the quality of teaching a notable strength; the very good attitudes and behaviour of the vast majority of pupils reflect the very positive classroom atmosphere in geography lessons. As with the other humanities subjects, geography at Key Stage 3 is taught in concentrated blocks of time, followed by several weeks when the other subjects are taught. This creates some problems of continuity; on the other hand, having five 50 minute periods for two weeks allows intensive teaching of topics.

104. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Geography now has an adequate amount of teaching time; there are more opportunities for able pupils to be challenged, and there is some evidence of discussion, research and enquiry work. Assessment strategies were highlighted as a major weakness at the last inspection; there have been considerable improvements, though there is still work to be done on making effective use of assessment in planning and reviewing teaching methods. Computers still do not make the contribution they should to geographical learning. The present temporary arrangements for the subject clearly leave question marks about the future. However, from the evidence of this inspection, there is very great potential for future developments and improvements.

HISTORY

105. Standards based on the teachers' own assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 are broadly average. They have fluctuated since the previous inspection between below and above the expected levels for 14 year olds, with girls performing consistently better than boys. Teachers' assessments for 2000 are significantly higher than for 1999, but especially so for boys. At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results in 1999 are below average at grade C and above, a sharp fall since the time of the last inspection. The A* to G pass rate, however, has remained at a commendable 100 per cent. A small number of pupils also gained a short course GCSE pass. Pupils taking history in 1999 tended to gain lower grades in history than in their other subjects. The 2000 figures, however, show a significant improvement for both girls and boys. After several years where boys attained as well as, and sometimes better than, girls at the highest grades, girls have surged forward in terms of points score, A* to C grades and top grades. There is, as yet, insufficient evidence to support a trend, but the picture is one of good recent improvement.

106. At the end of both key stages, standards in work seen during the inspection are average. Based on the levels of prior attainment, this represents satisfactory achievement at both key stages. Boys participated equally with girls in lessons observed, but there was some evidence of boys at Key Stage 3 evading writing. This, together with the acknowledgement that a lot of work is done by pupils at home, may explain why girls are still outperforming boys, despite improvements in boys' performance, which relate to the good faculty developments in basic skills. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils can identify key features of people and periods taught with confidence, having practised this skill over the key stage. Their books show that they can give reasons for and explain the economic effects of the Black Death, higher attaining pupils linking this to the heightened negotiating skills of labourers. All pupils throughout the key stage demonstrate an appreciation of the uncertainty involved in the study of history, with recently arrived Year 7 pupils quickly grasping the problems of obtaining and relying on evidence. This is because good early attention is given to sources and evidence. It prepares pupils well for the development of interpretation and more in-depth enquiry skills: good examples were seen of both in pupils' work, as in a report on the massacre at Wounded Knee, which included an informed interpretation of the short and long term motives of each side. In their assignments, pupils' range and depth of knowledge and understanding was seen to be good overall, but in two lessons in Year 9, it was at best sketchy. This again suggests that many work hard at home.

107. At Key Stage 4, pupils broaden their knowledge, understanding and perspectives satisfactorily. In a lesson in Year 10, their increasing knowledge helped them to understand how the different personalities of the rulers of Germany and Russia affected the political situation in both countries prior to the First World War. Their coursework presents clear, and often detailed explanation of why the United States - too often referred to as "America" - became increasingly involved in Vietnam. More able pupils evaluate the effects of public opinion on government action, and its use by the anti-war movement. Their understanding of the Domino Theory was evident from a Year 11 lesson observed,

though more in concept than in detail. By the end of Year 11, pupils can organise their ideas and write well structured essays which contain supporting evidence and substantiated opinion. There is evidence of good teaching of essay structure, nearly all work seen having a clear introduction and conclusion. A strength is the good development of literacy skills, especially writing. The subject makes a very good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy, adhering closely to faculty and college policies. There is satisfactory use of numeracy. Individual pupils do use computers for word-processing and illustrating their work, but there was no evidence of all pupils using the Internet for research during the inspection week as indicated in schemes of work.

108. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at both key stages, as is learning. Common strengths of all teaching are good marking, good pupil management, and a secure subject knowledge and understanding. The last two strengths enable teachers to ask probing questions which encourages pupils to think more deeply about their work. Some teachers include fascinating detail to aid pupils' recall and trigger reflection. In one Year 10 lesson, for example, the snippet of information that Kaiser Wilhelm II's arm was deformed lifted the pupils' interest and helped their understanding of his character. Pupil management is usually good, and never less than satisfactory; behaviour is always good. The main strength, common to nearly all lessons, is the teachers' attention to writing skills and vocabulary. This combines well with good assessment in lessons. Teachers display dogged persistence in checking pupils' understanding of words and phrases used in texts, and by the pupils themselves; this helps the pupils' understanding. Not only key words, but also phrases and sentence starts are highlighted. This is a help to all pupils, but especially to those with difficulties in expressing their knowledge in writing, often boys, and pupils with special educational needs. These pupils make satisfactory progress overall, better where they are in fully mixed ability groupings. Most teachers use good resources, mostly produced by the school, to help pupils to understand as well as to extend their learning. However, this was not the case in one unsatisfactory lesson, where too many and too complicated materials caused pupils, many with learning difficulties, to become confused, to lose interest and thus make insufficient progress.

109. The strength of the best teaching, illustrates what is lacking in the weakest teaching, and to a lesser extent, in satisfactory lessons. This is an understanding of how children learn, including an awareness that they learn in different ways. This was illustrated in a very good lesson which included a variety of methods and styles of delivery, as well as focusing sharply on clear learning objectives throughout the lesson. There was a mix of listening, discussion, reading and writing, plenty for pupils to look at, and a variety of activities, all simple and quite short. The mix was suitable to the maturity level of the pupils and the time of day, requiring little in the way of resources, but depending on good planning and organisation. As a consequence, pupils learned effectively through whichever methods suited them, they stayed alert, had plenty opportunity to contribute to the lesson, and they enjoyed what they were doing, a key component to successful learning. This contrasts with a sameness about several other lessons, relying mainly on oral work, but by way of persistent question and answer, not developing into useful discussion. When carried too far, as it was on one occasion, some pupils got bored, some confused and many passive. It was to their credit that they continued to behave well.

110. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is good organisation, efficient administration and a high level of team collaboration and cohesion. There is a willingness to try something new and a spirit of continual improvement. Assessment procedures, a weakness in the previous report, have been tackled effectively. The head of faculty does monitor the pupils' work and teaching, but this has not yet had a positive effect on the overall quality of teaching, which is similar to that seen in 1998, in spite of the many strengths within the team.

111. The improvement since the last inspection is good. The effects of improvements made to the curriculum, and especially to assessment, since the last inspection are now showing in recently

improved standards. Some study units have been revised and literacy developments are linked to resource materials and guide sheets. The department has developed a very good National Curriculum levels assessment guide, which is used to good effect not just by teachers in their painstaking marking and grading of work, but by pupils before and after they do their assignments. This is good practice, involving pupils in their own learning, and promoting their understanding of what to do to improve. It contrasts with many comments in pupils' reports, which are too general to be helpful.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

112. At the end of Key Stage 3, the proportions of pupils reaching at least the expected Level 5 and the higher Level 6 are above average in the 1999 teacher assessments. Boys' results are below average at both levels. In 2000, the boys' performance improved dramatically, being comparable with the girls' performance at Level 5 and exceeding it at Level 6. Results overall have fluctuated over the last three years, but observation suggests that the teachers' assessments are slightly optimistic. There have been no GCSE entries in the subject to date.

113. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards observed during the inspection and the achievements of pupils in relation to prior attainments are average; they are both below average for the end of Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3, most pupils have developed an average standard of keyboard skills. Standards are satisfactory when pupils communicate or handle information using a professional word processor or a desktop publishing programme. They use a complex range of software tools effectively, as in a Year 9 English printing project when a very good sense of audience was displayed in the final presentation. Good levels of literacy are additionally promoted through the emphasis on fitness for purpose of the language used. Spreadsheets are used appropriately during Key Stage 3 to assemble data and model numerical solutions to problems. Satisfactory standards are also achieved in the use of databases to collate information and interrogate them with a particular purpose in mind. Higher attainers have only limited opportunities to reach higher National Curriculum levels through evaluating the fitness for purpose of their approach, using the desktop as a creative tool and to experiment with novel methods and approaches. All pupils gain some understanding of how to generate computer control procedures, and apply them appropriately to the production of suitably designed products using computer-aided design and computer-aided machining techniques. Good standards of numeracy are promoted through accurate measurement, modelling and numerical programming. Many pupils are increasingly using CD-ROM and the Internet in basic ways to aid their research. The use of e-mail is growing, for example in modern languages, even though purposeful use is currently limited. Pupils with special educational needs in Key Stage 3 are achieving standards in line with their peers.

114. At Key Stage 4, there are only limited examples for pupils to extend their skills and deepen their understanding. Although on paper, opportunities should exist to develop their skills across the curriculum as a whole, in reality, this is not yet happening. Much of the work that pupils undertake uses levels of skill achieved in, and more appropriate to, earlier years. However, there are some areas of success. In art, a small number of Year 11 pupils demonstrated high level graphics skills using specialist software and a range of peripherals such as a scanner and digital camera, resulting in high quality work that was imaginative and made a good impact on an audience. An expertly compiled work experience newsletter for parents was carefully designed by Year 11 pupils, combining knowledge of the target audience and good levels of computer skill.

115. The contribution that other subjects make to information and communication technology is unsatisfactory overall, but especially so at Key Stage 4. The existing specialist core course at Key Stage 3 effectively introduces the knowledge and range of skills identified in the National Curriculum programmes of study. Substantial consolidation of those skills and further development then takes

place in the English and in the design and technology departments as a result of well planned and progressively taught experiences, enhanced by effective assessment. Contributions to learning in data management takes place in mathematics and science, where some Year 8 pupils are also taught how to prepare and deliver PowerPoint presentations. Pupils are also introduced to the use of computers for data-logging and measurement in science. More limited use of computers is also made in art, humanities and modern foreign languages. Planning is satisfactory but there are currently limited strategies for ensuring that all pupils gain an experience that goes hand in hand with their specialist work. At Key Stage 4, pupils have very few opportunities to use computers, or to develop their skills in a coherent manner. English and design and technology again make the major contributions to learning, whilst mathematics plans to increase its role. Art and science make limited contributions that reflect the skills of the staff and the quality of access to hardware and software. Pupils in business education and in travel and tourism use computers in more limited ways than are usually seen, although access to equipment here is good.

116. The quality of teaching within the core course at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory and ensures satisfactory progress overall at this level. At Key Stage 4, teaching and pupil progress are unsatisfactory overall. Extensive planning has been undertaken for a cross-curricular course at Key Stage 4, but insufficient actual teaching currently takes place. When teaching occurs in the taught course at Key Stage 3, planning is effective and focused on learning needs. The teacher reacts sensitively to pupils and maximises progress for middle attaining pupils. Pupils experience meaningful learning activities that are well organised for in Years 7 and 8. They are eager and self-disciplined when using computers, whilst pupils with special educational needs show great pride in their achievements. Despite the existence of written resources for more able pupils, teaching styles do not enable these pupils to become sufficiently independent learners, using the desktop creatively and developing the skills to use the computer to apply their skills to a range of problems. Only limited links have been developed with primary schools, which reduces the level of knowledge teachers have of pupils' often substantial prior experiences of working with computers. In the new GCSE course at Key Stage 4, teachers set high expectations and use their good level of subject knowledge to plan and set suitable tasks. However, lower attaining boys have a difficulty following the way some of the theory is taught. Generally, the most effective teaching in subject areas occurs where the teachers are most confident and where there is an effective whole department approach to the work, as in English and design and technology. In many subjects, the organised training programme for teachers has not reached the stage where teachers are able to plan and promote sufficiently progressive learning experiences for their pupils.

117. The overall management of information technology is now good as a result of the whole school strategic planning. This results in clear direction for the subject and an appropriately costed, sustainable development plan. Day to day management is effective with clear roles for the co-ordinator and technicians, who ensure that good support is offered to pupils and staff, and that the focus is increasingly kept on pupils' learning. The monitoring of teaching and learning is currently limited, and the quality of assessment is dependent upon the variable skills and abilities of the teachers in subject areas. A satisfactory assessment and recording system is in place at Key Stage 3 in Years 7 and 8.

118. Overall, progress from the low base identified in the last inspection has been good. There have been significant changes in the management, organisation and planning of the subject, which ensures compliance with statutory requirements. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is fully in place, whilst at Key Stage 4 the planned programme meets requirements, but its delivery cannot be assured at present, although the new GCSE course is a welcome development. Computer resources have improved considerably. The number of modern computers within the school has increased, and is now in line with the national average. These are supported by the recent installation of high quality fibre

optic cabling, good networked access to the Internet, high quality software and an appropriate range of peripherals such as printers and scanners. Equipment is suitably deployed, although full advantage is not currently taken by many subjects. A satisfactory staff training programme is in place supported by the New Opportunities Funding Initiative, and this is already beginning to contribute to improved learning for pupils. However, substantial unfulfilled training needs still exist.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

119. At the end of Key Stage 3, the teachers' own assessments in French in 1999 show standards to be broadly average. There has been a gradual improvement in the proportion of girls attaining at higher levels since 1997. This overall upward trend was continued in 2000. At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results in French in 1999 are significantly below average. Both boys and girls tended to perform less well in French than in their other subjects in 1999. The group of pupils sitting GCSE in 1999 had, however, had a lack of continuity of teaching in the period leading up to their examinations. A change of examination syllabus saw a significant improvement in the proportion of pupils gaining at least grade C in French in 2000. Standards in German at GCSE have been consistently above national average, but the numbers who entered are too small to make any statistical comparisons reliable.

120. Because of staff absence during the week of the inspection, judgements about standards in German have been made on the basis of observations of a small number of lessons taught by supply staff, the scrutiny of pupils' earlier work and a higher than normal level of discussions with pupils outside the classroom. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards and achievements in French and German, from work seen during the inspection, are average. Higher attaining pupils in both French and German can write with considerable fluency, although not always with accuracy, using the future and perfect tenses appropriately. The average and lower attainers can write and speak French on familiar topics when they have learned the work well. Pupils are making good use of dictionaries to support their writing. Pupils are developing language awareness by understanding the basic rules of grammar, using the right terminology and applying the rules. Pupils can understand a range of sometimes quite rapid French spoken by the teacher and listen carefully to extract details from recordings. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards and achievements in French are broadly average; in German they are slightly above average. The higher attainers continue to write at length with variable accuracy although the work written for their modular examination shows that accuracy is not a problem when the task is structured. Comprehension of both French and German by average and higher attainers is generally good. Pupils of all abilities find it difficult to recall material from topics not recently covered. They need prompting to talk at any length on a range of questions but the higher attainers do eventually succeed. The low attainers are too happy to respond with single words. Pronunciation at both key stages is very variable. The German and French accents of some pupils sound authentic, whereas others find it difficult to apply the basic rules. There was little evidence of any extended reading at either key stage. There was no direct evidence of pupils using information and communication technology during the inspection, but printouts in pupils' work show that some pupils are competent users of e-mails, can research on the Internet and can use a desk top publishing package to present their findings. Progress over time is broadly satisfactory for all pupils at both key stages. The higher attainers at Key Stage 4 are not developing the ability to work outside the demands of the GCSE course and, as a result, their work is rather similar in outcome. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 when the lesson content matches their needs. At Key Stage 4, progress is hampered for some lower attaining boys and girls by their rather negative attitudes to France and the French, whom they see as helping to depress pastoral farming.

121. Teaching in French and German is satisfactory overall at both key stages; some is good. As a result, learning is also satisfactory overall, and often good. Teaching is slightly better at Key Stage 3,

particularly in French, and there is a small amount of very good teaching at both key stages. Most of the teachers support their use of French and German by gesture and visuals to ensure that pupils understand what is being said. Occasionally, teachers talk too much in English about what the pupils should do in French rather than getting the pupils to actually do it themselves. This limits the opportunities that pupils have to use the language for themselves. Teachers give good guidance to pupils on how to approach learning or listening tasks. A real strength of the teaching in French is the way in which teachers make it very clear at the beginning of the lesson what pupils will be learning. The best lessons then end with pupils assessing themselves by going over what they have learned, and being very clear about what they have learned, and what they must still practise. Planning is generally satisfactory. Occasionally, teachers do not build in enough small steps in their planning. As a result, pupils are expected to use the language before they have had enough practice, with the result that they are not able to use the language with confidence. There is a good variety of activities to allow pupils to practise the new language in a range of ways. For example, in Year 7, pupils used a song to support their learning of the alphabet and used a dice game to help with numbers. In Year 8, pupils cut up sentences to enable them to see the pattern of adjectival agreement. The management of pupils is good. There is a good balance of encouragement and calm firmness. As a result, behaviour is good and almost all pupils have positive attitudes to the subject. Any problems that do occur with pupil management are often as a result of inadequate planning. There is generally a suitable range of resources used, although some lessons are delivered totally from the textbook, leading to a lack of variety and fewer opportunities for pupils to try things out in different ways. The overhead projector is not always used as much or as well as it could be to provide pupils with visual support. Marking is, on the whole, regular but the marking policy is not consistently applied. In the early stages of learning French, enthusiasm is striking, but even older pupils show a desire to join in and do well and are pleased when a task is completed successfully. Pupils listen attentively, not just to the teacher but also to their peers.

122. The curriculum is appropriate for all pupils, although the school is aware that pupils with special educational needs in Year 10 are not receiving specialist teaching for all their German lessons. Information and communication technology is not yet integrated sufficiently into the modern language curriculum for all pupils. For a school of this size, and given the low incomes of many families, the foreign exchanges are well supported. Procedures for assessment are good overall. There are central records of each pupil's progress and the teachers' judgements at the end of Key Stage 3 are supported by a standardised portfolio of pupils' work. Teachers are beginning to make good use of data to track progress and make grade projections at Key Stage 4, but are not yet using their own assessment data at all levels to inform their lesson planning. The head of department has created a supportive environment, and has used lesson observation and attended in-service training to ensure regular discussion on teaching and learning. Documentation, although extensive, is not as up to date as it should be in all areas. There is, however, real coherence in the approach of the department.

123. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards overall have improved, and although boys' attainment has also improved, there are still few boys in the top sets. Significantly, there is now no unsatisfactory teaching. Clear learning objectives are now being set and teachers are focusing on areas such as speaking and grammatical awareness, which were seen as weak in 1998.

MUSIC

124. In the teachers' own assessments of standards at the end of Key Stage 3, the proportion of pupils attaining or exceeding the national expectation is well above average. However, in the light of work seen during the inspection, this judgement appears optimistic. In the 1999 GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils gaining grade C and above is well below the national

average; in 1998 the proportion was well above average. However, the small number of candidates involved makes statistical comparisons unreliable. Generally, girls do better in their GCSE than boys. In the unconfirmed year 2000 GCSE results, the proportion gaining above grade C would appear to be a little higher than in 1999. Whilst some of the fluctuation in standards year on year results from the prior attainment of candidates, lack of sufficient lesson planning at Key Stage 4 means that results are not improving as much as they should. Other factors adversely affecting pupils' performance includes the low time for music in Key Stage 3, unsatisfactory accommodation and one over-large GCSE group where pupils cannot get sufficient individual attention. Some visiting teachers encourage pupils to take instrumental examinations, which boosts their interest and musical confidence.

125. At the end of both key stages, standards of work seen and the progress that pupils make are below average. Pupils enter the school with a variety of prior attainments depending on which junior school they attended. Overall, standards are in line with those expected of 11 year-olds. Most sing tunefully and have used tuned instruments regularly for composition and performance work. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have not progressed satisfactorily. Their compositions lack a sense of structure and too many have failed to develop appreciable performance skills. This carries on into Key Stage 4. This is largely because there are insufficient practice rooms where pupils can rehearse their work undisturbed. This was particularly noticeable in a Year 10 lesson, for instance, where well over 20 pupils all had to rehearse in the one music room because there was insufficient space elsewhere for them to practise. There were also too few instruments to go round. The result was work of below average quality and low pupil motivation. Shortage of time in music lessons has also lowered overall standards in both key stages. This has improved in Key Stage 4 from September 2000, but remains below average in Key Stage 3. Inadequate provision for class music lessons is somewhat offset for regular extra curricular provision for pupils who participate. Of particular note is the school band, containing some dedicated young players who have developed high standards of musicianship. Pupils in this and other performance groups develop good musical teamwork skills that culminate in well-attended concerts both inside and outside the school. By the end of Key Stage 4, some GCSE pupils listen critically to music, successfully identifying the main stylistic conventions used by different composers at different times and places. Whilst there is satisfactory use of computers by some GCSE pupils, for example to sequence compositions, the lack of suitable machines limits what they can achieve in performance and composition at both key stages.

126. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall at both key stages, although a small minority is unsatisfactory. Within the constraints on the subject, learning is also satisfactory. The lack of good lesson planning at Key Stage 4 sometimes hampers the pupils' progress. Satisfactory management of pupils results in generally sound attitudes and behaviour. In lessons observed, the teachers' commitment and enthusiasm ensured that most pupils listened and learnt satisfactorily. However, the teachers' ingenuity is taxed to the full because of the cramped main teaching room, the lack of practice space and the insufficient level of resourcing for GCSE groups. This means that some pupils become bored and pace of their learning suffers. In one GCSE lesson, for instance, some pupils were wasting valuable time because they had to share keyboards when they needed one each to complete the task successfully. Teachers support pupils' literacy development by teaching relevant musical vocabulary and through setting written work that requires thoughtful reflection. Teachers have largely realistic expectations; they know that pupils particularly enjoy modern styles of music, which are used successfully to push on the pace of learning. In less successful lessons, the teacher failed to set separate work for the higher attaining pupils, some of whom played instruments to a high standard. In one Year 9 lesson, for instance, one very able child, who was a gifted instrumentalist, was doing the same work as everyone else. She was understandably bored, but felt it would be impolite to complain. In more successful lessons, expectations are higher. In one Year 7 lesson, for instance, a well-chosen song helped pupils to sing effectively in three independent parts. The song was great fun and the pupils responded enthusiastically to the challenge. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress

when supported by specialist staff, although this only happens in occasional lessons. Teachers do not use the limited space to best advantage. Some bulky items of equipment, which are only used occasionally, get in the way of pupils learning.

127. Progress since 1998 has been unsatisfactory; many of the issues for development from the last inspection have not been addressed successfully. The accommodation remains poor, with pupils not being able to hear what they are doing properly. On occasions this results in silly behaviour. The teacher tries hard, but the problems often lie with the accommodation, not necessarily the teacher's management of behaviour. The overall quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and lesson planning provides interesting activities that successfully engage pupils' attention. Pupils' added commitment has resulted in increased numbers opting for GCSE. This is a positive reflection of improved learning at Key Stage 3. However, the Year 10 GCSE group is now much bigger than in most schools and prevents the teacher giving sufficient individual attention. The management of the department is in a state of flux, with a temporary teacher keeping things ticking over during the head of department's maternity leave. However, monitoring of the teaching has successfully identified aspects for improvement. Suitable systems for assessing the pupils' work have now been developed, and are being used effectively to show pupils how they might improve.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

128. In 1999, the teachers' own assessments of standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are average; the same is the case in 2000. This is confirmed by work seen during the inspection. Most boys and girls achieve expected standards in their activities, including pupils with special educational needs. Standards in swimming and games are slightly above average. At the end of Key Stage 4, there have been no GCSE results to date. However, observed attainment is above average overall. In the core physical education programme, standards are average. Those pupils who have chosen to take GCSE physical education are reaching above average standards overall in their practical games activities. The pupils' learning skills are generally good at all levels, and their rate of progress in physical education is good in each key stage. Pupils with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress. At Key Stage 4, progress accelerates for many pupils, particularly those taking the GCSE course. Their progress in the practical elements of the course is good because skilful teaching combines with the pupils' commitment; this results in effective learning.

129. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection in 1998, when a significant proportion was judged to be unsatisfactory. Overall, teaching is now good at Key Stage 3, and satisfactory at Key Stage 4, as is learning; no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. At Key Stage 3, the teachers' subject knowledge and understanding are strong. Lessons are effectively structured, with good opportunities to engage pupils in the planning and evaluation of their work, in gymnastics and dance. This successfully enables pupils to take responsibility for their learning, and to develop the essential skills of independence and critical review. There is need to provide more opportunities for these elements in games activities, where a higher proportion of direct teaching sometimes limits the pupils' development in this area of their work. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is particularly effective in GCSE work. The most successful teaching combines strong subject knowledge with good pupil management skills, high expectations of the quality of pupils' response, and well judged teacher intervention and feedback to promote learning. Where this was the case, for example, in Year 7 dance, Year 8 gymnastics, Year 10 hockey, and Year 11 GCSE cricket, pupils were notably working well, enjoyed the work presented, took responsibility for their own learning, and made good progress. Relationships and discipline are strong, and lessons are usually purposeful and busy. As a result, pupils are co-operative and behave well in their lessons. Attitudes are very positive, and levels of interest and enthusiasm are high. Participation rates are good, and pupils develop good learning skills. They show good commitment and work hard in their activities, listening well to advice from their teachers, and

apply it effectively in improving their skills. Boys and girls work well together, and take responsibility readily, for example in organising equipment in the sports hall. On occasion, lessons can be slow to get underway. Whilst work is usually well matched to developing the skills and capabilities of the majority of pupils, there is need to ensure a closer definition of tasks and resources to help the least able improve their progress further.

130. The management of physical education is good. Leadership and day-to-day administration are strengths, and the introduction of regular, structured monitoring and evaluation of teaching is a positive development. Curricular planning is satisfactory; National Curriculum requirements are mainly met, although the programme at Key Stage 3 requires review to ensure a more balanced experience in games activities, given the subject strengths of the whole team. Subject documentation, including planning for development and risk assessment, is secure, and good assessment procedures are in place, which ensure that the pupils' progress in physical education is effectively tracked throughout the school. Facilities for physical education are good overall. Resources are adequate, although funding for the subject is not generous. There is a good range of extra-curricular opportunities for boys and girls which enhance the curriculum provision. These are popular and well supported, and enable some pupils to achieve high standards, both individually and within their teams.

131. Improvement in physical education has been good since the previous inspection. In addition to improved teaching, the GCSE course has now been introduced. The department has sustained its commitment to both curricular and extra-curricular provision, and has successfully gained the Sportsmark award, whilst continuing to provide valuable opportunities for personal development through the Junior Sports Leader scheme and the Active Lifestyles programme.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

132. In 1999, a very high proportion of Year 11 pupils took the GCSE short course examination in religious education. The results were well below average, with boys' results particularly low. A small number of pupils took the examination for the full GCSE course in 2000, but the proportion obtaining higher grades was still low. About half the year group also took the GCSE short course examination; although still low, the results were slightly better than those obtained in 1999.

133. Standards in work seen are average at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. However, at Key Stage 3, there are wide variations. Higher achievers, boys and girls, work at above average levels, and can express their ideas in depth in writing and speaking; lower achievers, particularly boys, produce much poorer written work. However, there is an emphasis on correctly spelling both religious and general words, and quite a lot of class reading occurs. So, although there is much variation, literacy standards overall are satisfactory. In one lesson, there was a good degree of understanding of some of the essential aspects of Buddhist beliefs, which was reflected in the quality of paired discussions; overall achievement was good, with good progress in linking Buddhist beliefs with a range of contemporary environmental issues. In work seen in books from last year, there are some outstanding examples of extended writing from the Buddhism unit, with higher achievers developing their ideas on how their lives would be different if they were Buddhists. In most Key Stage 3 lessons, pupils are achieving well, though, on occasions, some would achieve more if they remained focused on their tasks all the time. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well when supported by classroom assistants. In one lesson, good quality help with a range of pupils with varying special needs raised their achievement. At Key Stage 4, many higher achievers produce thoughtful work on topics such as suffering and euthanasia, and produce detailed work on Christianity and the central facts of the faith. There is perceptive work on the Trinity, showing some depth of understanding on this and on the authority of the Bible. In one lesson, there was good understanding of ethical issues surrounding abortion, with sensible and mature comments from pupils, especially boys. Achievement is less where

there are fewer opportunities to develop discussion, which remains at a superficial level. There was low achievement in one class containing mainly pupils with special educational needs; literacy levels were low and books showed incomplete work. There is insufficient evidence of numeracy and computer work to make judgements about standards in these skills.

134. Teaching at Key Stage 3 is good; at times, it is excellent. At Key Stage 4, teaching is also good; it is never less than satisfactory, and can be very good. This results in learning that is also good at both key stages. An excellent lesson at Key Stage 3 started splendidly with a rapid and effective recapitulation, and a very good setting of the context of the lesson. The quiet but authoritative lead from the teacher created a very good atmosphere for a period of reflection; there was an excellent choice of music to encourage pupils to use their imagination to consider their thoughts when listening. There was plenty of challenge and encouragement from the teacher and two classroom assistants, circulating and focusing help where needed. The lesson moved on to the second and third pieces of music at just the right moment, maintaining the momentum of the lesson. These characteristics and the very high expectations of behaviour and depth of response led to high quality learning, and to an outstanding contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Pupils across the ability range were interested, concentrated fully, and made rapid progress in developing their intellectual and creative skills. In all lessons, very good teacher knowledge, thorough planning, with a progressive sequence to the work, encouraged rapid learning. Only occasionally does the pace of lessons drop, and, consequently, the pace of learning. Marking is a real strength, with detailed comments and use of levels, and contributes significantly to pupils' learning and improvement. Much teaching at Key Stage 4 has similar good characteristics as is found at Key Stage 3; good planning with a clear sequence of activities all help learning. The use of overhead transparencies gives impact to teachers' explanations and helps learning. Despite challenging behaviour from some very difficult pupils in one lesson, the teacher engaged the class in debate, maintained pace, used time well, and showed much stamina and persistence. In some lessons, there are missed opportunities to extend pupils' thinking through the lack of discussion or paired work, or by not allowing discussion to flow.

135. Religious education is part of the humanities faculty. Overall, management is good. The faculty is efficiently administered, and its complex arrangements run smoothly. There are satisfactory procedures for the regular monitoring of teaching. At subject level, the one specialist teacher provides clear and effective leadership, and there is a very clear rationale for the subject's place in the curriculum. There is now a well balanced programme of study at both key stages that satisfies all legal requirements; the rotation system at Key Stage 3 hinders continuity, but, on the other hand, provides concentrated blocks of time for teaching the subject. Although time for the courses is short, it is adequate. Particularly helpful are the guidance notes produced for the non-specialist teachers who make valuable contributions to the Key Stage 4 course. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are usually very positive and can be excellent; it is only occasionally in Year 11 when disruptive behaviour can hinder learning. Overall, the subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Other great strengths are the very good procedures for marking, assessing, recording and monitoring of pupils' progress; they are a model of good practice.

136. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. There is now adequate time for all pupils to study a short GCSE course at Key Stage 4, and present trends in the subject are very positive. Standards seen now are higher than the results of recent years. Standards at Key Stage 3 are higher than Key Stage 4; standards in Year 10 are higher than in Year 11. The quality of teaching overall is good, and some is outstanding. There have been staffing and timetabling difficulties until recently, and examination results have been well below average. However, there is now strong evidence of high quality experiences for pupils, of improving standards, of stable staffing, and of the commitment of teachers to further improvement in the future.

THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS UNIT

137. Although historically the special educational needs unit was a separate provision for pupils with learning difficulties, this is no longer the case. Pupils with a range of special educational needs are now fully integrated into classes and follow a broad and balanced curriculum. They make overall satisfactory progress; many make good progress, especially those who benefit from skilled support from learning support assistants. The pupils' response to their work is good. Specialist teaching in the learning support department is of satisfactory quality. However, there are too many pupils with too diverse a range of difficulties in the teaching groups for individual needs to be met fully. Some teachers in subject areas have insufficient knowledge and expertise to cater for the needs of all pupils, and there are some lower set pupil groupings where the attention-seeking behaviour of some pupils reduce the progress others make.

138. Funding from the budget is supplemented by the school, and is relatively generous, but provision is only satisfactory. Spending on learning support staff is higher than in most schools, and the key support of many of these classroom assistants is a key factor in the good progress made by many pupils. In some cases, however, this support has resulted in teachers concentrating on other pupils, rather than developing their own skills in meeting the needs of all pupils in a class. Conversely, there is insufficient specialist teaching to meet the needs of those pupils with complex difficulties. This is because the available teaching time is not deployed sufficiently well. Assessment is satisfactory overall, with good procedures for identifying pupils' special educational needs, but individual educational plans continue to be unsatisfactory, in spite of considerable rewriting, as targets are too general. There is unsatisfactory provision for planning the pupils' transition to further education or employment. There is a high level of care of pupils with special educational needs amongst all staff, notably learning support staff. Partnership with parents is satisfactory for those whose children have a formal Statement of Special Educational Need. However, this aspect is unsatisfactory overall. For example, parents are not informed if their pupil is placed on the first stage of the school's register of special educational needs; some expressed alarm when they discovered this fact. Staffing is adequate although not always well deployed; resources are good though not fully used; accommodation is superb. The management of the learning support department is satisfactory, with good day-to-day monitoring, but there is insufficient evaluation of whole school provision for special educational needs, and a lack of strategic planning for the future.