

INSPECTION REPORT

KING ETHELBERT SCHOOL

Birchington

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118810

Headteacher: Mrs Carole Bailey

Reporting inspector: Anthony Shield
3569

Dates of inspection: 25 – 29 September 2000

Inspection number: 223944

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Modern
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Canterbury Road Birchington Kent
Postcode:	CT7 9BL
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr N. Hudson
Date of previous inspection:	April 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Raymond Orchard 9885	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p> <p>Accommodation</p>
Roger Garrett 19913	Team inspector	<p>English</p> <p>English as an additional language</p>	
Andrew Bird 23528	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Alan Jarvis 2711	Team inspector	Science	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Don Gwinnett 16548	Team inspector	<p>Art</p> <p>Music</p>	Assessment
Peter Thompson 2183	Team inspector	<p>Design Technology</p> <p>Information and Communication Technology</p>	
Bob Castle 22590	Team inspector	Geography	Learning Resources
Peter Gilliat 4773	Team inspector	<p>History</p> <p>Religious Education</p>	

Diane Shepherd 20412	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages Equal Opportunities	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Judith Evans 4647	Team inspector	Physical Education	Staffing
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

King Ethelbert School is a mixed secondary modern school of 761 pupils aged 11 – 16, situated in Birchington in the Thanet district of east Kent. There are more boys than girls in all years except Year 7 where there is a balance. Pupil mobility is significant with 81 pupils joining the school other than at the usual time in Year 7. Some of these are pupils who have previously been excluded from other schools. A high proportion of the pupils come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (28.9 per cent) is above average, and the proportion of pupils with special educational needs is well above average at 48.9 per cent, mostly related to moderate learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural problems. Of these pupils, 20 have statements of special educational needs. Nearly all pupils are from a white UK heritage; there are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups, or with English as an additional language. On entry, most pupils' attainments are well below average, and the school admits few pupils of above average ability.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an improving school which now provides a sound education for the majority of its pupils. Most pupils now achieve standards which are at least in line with their ability. They have good attitudes to work and behave well, although there are isolated instances of poor and insensitive behaviour. Almost all the teaching is at least satisfactory and much is good or better. As a result, most pupils make at least satisfactory progress and are learning well. The curriculum and provision for pupils' personal development are satisfactory. There are good arrangements for care and the support of pupils' progress. Parents are much more positive in their support of the school than previously. The school's leadership and management are proving effective in securing well-founded improvements to all areas of the school's work. It provides satisfactory value for money. Improvements have been such that the school is no longer considered to have serious weaknesses

What the school does well

- Excellent leadership by the headteacher and effective support from her deputies are giving the school a clear sense of purpose
- Pupils achieve well in English, religious education and physical education as a result of good teaching
- Rigorous management procedures are enabling the work of the school to be monitored and evaluated effectively
- Effective development planning and careful budgetary planning are helping the school adopt a clear set of priorities for improvement
- Committed and caring staff provide a supportive and increasingly challenging learning environment

What could be improved

- The overall quality and consistency of teaching and in particular the range of teaching methods used, and the consistency with which assessment is used to plan the curriculum and set individual pupil targets
- Standards in mathematics and numeracy skills in particular, French and information and communication technology could be better
- Planning and provision for the spiritual development of pupils is not as satisfactory as it is for their moral, social and cultural development

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the previous inspection in April 1998, the school has made enormous strides in raising standards of pupils' attainment, and improving the quality of teaching and learning. Strong and effective leadership and management have ensured that pupils are now beginning to realise their potential, and that the issues from the last inspection have been addressed. Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 rose

significantly in 2000 in English, mathematics, science and most other subjects. Inspectors judge that these improvements have been sustained. The school is on course to meet its targets and has a good capacity to continue its improvement.

STANDARDS

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

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

Given their attainment on entry, most pupils now achieve a satisfactory standard of work overall. Recent improvements in standards have been marked in almost all subjects, although there is still some underachievement in mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT) and French through the school, and in design technology (DT) in Key Stage 3. In English, religious education (RE) and physical education (PE), pupils achieve well and progress is good.

In 1999, the school's Key Stage 3 test results in English, mathematics and science were well below the national average, and that of other modern schools. Boys and girls did equally badly. However, the school's results have been improving, broadly in line with the improving national trend, and there was a more significant improvement in 2000 in all three subjects.

At GCSE in 1999, the average total points score per pupil was very low and amongst the lowest 5 per cent nationally, and well below the average for similar schools. Up to this year, results have not been improving as fast as the national trend, but a significant improvement in 2000, indicates that pupils are now achieving satisfactorily. In 2000, 25 per cent of pupils achieved five or more A*-C grades at GCSE, and this cohort of pupils made very good progress through Years 10 and 11. Pupils did particularly well in English, science, RE and PE. Results in mathematics have improved but are not as good as those in English and science. The school's targets for GCSE performance in 2000 were challenging and were very nearly met. Its targets for 2001, are challenging, and sensibly based on a realistic assessment of the cohort's performance.

In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the end of both key stages is below national expectations in all subjects except PE where it is in line with expectations, and in music and French where it is well below. Standards in RE are line with national expectations by the age of 16.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good overall. Most pupils are keen to learn and work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory, but the standard of behaviour observed in lessons varies. Some isolated instances of poor and insensitive behaviour were observed, both in and out of the classroom.

Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory overall; many teachers have established trusting and productive relationships. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously.
Attendance	Satisfactory and broadly in line with the national average. Attendance has improved significantly since the previous inspection. The rate of unauthorised absences has also improved and is now average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching was judged to be at least satisfactory in over ninety-two per cent of lessons observed during the inspection. In nine per cent it was very good. Teaching was unsatisfactory in just over seven per cent of lessons.

In both key stages, the overall quality of teaching in English is good, while in mathematics and science it is satisfactory. Teaching is also good in art, religious education (RE) and physical education (PE), but there are weaknesses in the teaching of French. Strengths of the teaching include teachers' subject knowledge and understanding and their classroom management of pupils. Weaknesses include the use of a limited range of teaching strategies which affects pupils' concentration and leads to passive learning, and the use of assessment to inform future planning and set targets for pupils to achieve. In general, teaching is well planned to meet the needs of all pupils. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The few pupils with English as an additional language are well taught and they make appropriate progress.

The teaching of literacy is good in English and in some other subjects, but not consistently. In some subjects, untidy handwriting, spelling and grammatical errors are left unchecked. The teaching of numeracy is less satisfactory, and in mathematics, this important basic skill has not been taught systematically.

Pupils' learning in lessons is satisfactory and most pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress through both key stages. In English, PE and RE, pupils make good progress. Learning is unsatisfactory in French, although progress is better during Years 10 and 11, when the curriculum is more focused on examination requirements.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. The curriculum has appropriate breadth and balance at both key stages, although there are shortcomings in the opportunities for vocational work in Years 10 and 11.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Overall provision is satisfactory. Individual education plans meet pupils needs appropriately and additional help provided by support assistants is good.

Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The small number of pupils are being appropriately catered for and integrated in to the work of the school
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall. There are good opportunities for developing social awareness and taking responsibility. Provision for moral and cultural development is satisfactory, but opportunities for a greater spiritual awareness are not always taken and are unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school supports pupils well and the quality of care is good. Pupils' progress, particularly in Years 10 and 11 is monitored carefully. Assessment data is beginning to be used effectively to predict performance, but not consistently in all subjects.

The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory, although a few parents do not contribute fully to their children's learning through ensuring regular and punctual attendance.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent leadership by the headteacher and very effective support from her deputies are giving the school clear direction and a common sense of purpose. Management at all levels is at least satisfactory.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors ensure that most statutory requirements are met. They offer committed and hard working support to the school. Committees work well to monitor the school's work.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school has an acute awareness of its strengths and weaknesses. Very good management systems ensure effective monitoring and evaluation of performance.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are well used to support learning. Budgetary planning supports the objectives identified in the school development plan. The school is making good use of additional funding to secure improvements in attendance, behaviour and bullying. The school applies best value principles to all its spending decisions.

There are adequate teaching and support staff to meet the school's needs. Resources are just satisfactory, although currently the library is not sufficiently well stocked to support pupils' learning. Despite improvements since the last inspection, accommodation is currently inadequate. Building work in progress at the time of the inspection will do much to rectify the shortcomings in the accommodation.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a caring staff and good relationships and respect between staff and pupils the environmental improvements that have taken place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the quality and frequency of homework behaviour in class inadequate reporting on progress

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the fact that their children enjoy coming to school and the pride they now feel in the school.• the school expects pupils to work hard and achieve their best	
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Overall inspectors agree with parents' views, particularly those which please parents. However, they found that well designed homework tasks are being set. The school's careful monitoring of homework ensures that it is set when required. Reports are adequate although targets set are not always precise enough to be useful. Regular parents' evenings give parents good opportunities to discuss their child's progress with the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Standards overall are below national expectations at the end of both key stages, but most pupils' achievements are satisfactory given their ability and attainment on entry. Recent improvements in standards have been marked in almost all subjects, although there is still some underachievement in design technology (DT) in Key Stage 3, and in mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT) and French throughout the school. In English, religious education (RE) and physical education (PE), pupils achieve well and progress is good.
2. On entry, most pupils' attainments are well below average, and the school admits few pupils of above average ability. As a consequence a well above average proportion of the pupils (48.9 per cent) have special educational needs, mostly related to learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural problems. Twenty of these pupils have statements of special educational need. Pupil mobility is significant with eighty-one pupils joining the school other than at the usual time in Year 7. Some of these are pupils who have previously been excluded from other schools. In general, the school does well to integrate these pupils into the curriculum and ensure they achieve as well as they might.
3. In 1999, the school's Key Stage 3 test results in English, mathematics and science were all well below the national average, and that of other modern schools. Boys and girls did equally badly, although boys did better than girls in both mathematics and science, while girls did better in English. However, the school's results have been improving, broadly in line with the improving national trend, and there was a more significant improvement in 2000 in all three subjects. For example, the percentage reaching level 5 in English rose from 45 per cent in 1999 to 54 per cent in 2000; in mathematics the percentage rose from 39 per cent to 58 per cent, and in science from 29 per cent to 63 per cent. This improvement is a result of the school's increased focus on the quality of teaching and learning, and a greater commitment by the staff to ensure all pupils achieve well.
4. Similar improvements have been made in GCSE results. In 1999, the average total points score per pupil was very low and amongst the lowest 5 per cent per pupil nationally, and well below the average for similar schools. The proportion achieving five or more A* to C grades was just 12 per cent. Up to this year, results have not been improving as fast as the national trend, but a significant improvement in 2000, indicates that pupils are now achieving at least satisfactorily. In 2000, 25 per cent of pupils achieved five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, and this cohort of pupils made very good progress through Years 10 and 11, based on the achievements in Year 9 tests. Pupils did particularly well in English, where 37 per cent achieved an A* to C grade, in science (36 per cent A* to C), religious education (RE) and physical education (PE). Results in mathematics (27 per cent A* to C) improved, but remain below achievements in English and science.
5. The school's targets for GCSE performance in 2000 were challenging, and were very nearly met. Its targets for 2001, are challenging, and sensibly based on a realistic assessment of the cohort's performance.
6. Overall, pupils identified as having special educational needs are making satisfactory progress in lessons in relation to knowledge, skills and understanding. This is particularly so where there is effective support from learning support assistants. In a Year 9 geography lesson, for example, good examples were provided by support assistants to help pupils improve their understanding about animals in the forest. Many teachers handle pupils identified as having emotional and behavioural problems with tact and sensitivity. This then enables these particularly challenging pupils to make progress towards the targets on their individual education plans.
7. There are relatively few gifted and talented pupils in the school. However, progress for the more able pupils is satisfactory in most subjects, and good in English, physical education and religious

education. However in music, their progress is unsatisfactory; limited opportunities for additional instrumental lessons are provided.

8. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the end of both key stages is below national expectations in all subjects except PE where it is in line with expectations, and in music and French where it is well below. Standards in RE are line with national expectations by the age of 16.
9. In English, standards of attainment are below those expected nationally at the end of both key stages. However, pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry, and often better, as a result of good teaching and consistently high expectations of work and behaviour.
10. Standards of literacy are below average, particularly in writing, where weaknesses in handwriting, spelling and punctuation can impede progress and bring down standards in other subjects. Poor presentation, particularly amongst lower attaining boys is affecting standards. The school's emphasis on reading, particularly with the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs has resulted in most pupils having sufficient skills to read, speak and listen at least competently. However, higher order skills and expressive speaking and reading aloud are not common. The English department has given a strong lead in raising standards of literacy, and most subjects have responded well, by challenging poor spelling and grammar and encouraging reading. Key words in subjects such as design technology and geography are displayed and reinforced through lessons, and pupils are given a structured framework for their writing. In French, however, pupils' weaknesses in areas like presentation, handwriting and spelling are not being addressed, and responses to the school's literacy policy is not yet fully consistent across all subjects.
11. There are a small number of pupils with English as an additional language. Their progress is satisfactory and they are well supported and integrated into the curriculum.
12. Standards in mathematics are not high enough at the end of both key stages, largely because numeracy skills, weak on entry to the school are not systematically taught and reinforced through the curriculum. Although standards are improving, and GCSE results in 2000 show a marked improvement, some pupils still underachieve in mathematics.
13. The standard of numeracy is poor at both key stages, and many pupils struggle to use and apply number and graphs with any confidence. Mental and estimating skills are unsatisfactory. Pupils at Key Stage 4 were observed performing repeated addition in place of multiplication and were also unable to divide sums by a single digit. Applications and aspects of numeracy across subjects are limited and focus mainly on the interpretation of data and use of graphs. In geography data collected from fieldwork studies is analysed well. In design and technology, bar charts and pie charts are used to illustrate research and design ideas and in science the interpretation of time and distance graphs are satisfactory. A poster of bar charts and percentage figures is used effectively to inform pupils and staff of current levels of attendance achieved by tutor groups. There is no whole school policy on numeracy and no audit has been conducted of pupil' needs and the extent to which numeracy can be taught across all subjects.
14. In science, standards are below expected levels nationally at the end of both key stages, but progress is satisfactory and pupils achieve standards in line with their ability and prior attainment. In addition, there are now clear signs of a marked improvement in standards, especially in GCSE examination results. This is because of very sound teaching which promotes good attitudes to work.
15. Overall standards in art are below national expectations, but pupils' achievements are in line with their ability and prior attainment. Although GCSE results have worsened since the previous inspection, standards are now rapidly improving as a results of changes within the department. Improvements result from the enthusiastic teaching of new staff and improved planning of lessons.
16. Standards are not high enough in design technology at the end of Key Stage 3, and are well below national expectations. Much of the work lacks challenge, the rate of progress is often too slow and not enough emphasis is given on achieving accuracy and good presentation. Attainment at the end

of Key Stage 4 remains below expectations, but pupils' achievements have improved during the past year and progress is now satisfactory.

17. In geography, standards are improving, particularly at GCSE. Pupils, at 14 and 16 years of age, now achieve standards, which are in line with national expectations, and they make satisfactory progress in their learning.
18. GCSE results in history also improved significantly in 2000. While attainment is below expectations at the end of both Years 9 and 11, pupils' achievements are satisfactory and sound progress is made in lessons.
19. Standards in information and communication technology at the end of both key stages are below national expectations and not high enough. This is due mainly to the inadequate curriculum offered prior to the beginning of this academic year. At Key Stage 4, no specialist course was provided and pupils' progress depended upon their choice of GCSE courses. The curriculum has now been completely redesigned and changed for both key stages. As a consequence, the progress of pupils of all abilities is improving.
20. Standards in French are well below national expectations by the end of both key stages, and below what they should be, given the attainment of pupils on entry to the school. This is because of much unsatisfactory teaching. However, a new head of department has brought a fresh sense of direction and energy.
21. Overall standards in music are well below expectations at the end of both key stages, and are too low overall. A lack of time for music in the curriculum and staffing difficulties have contributed to this situation.
22. Pupils achieve well in physical education as a result of good teaching. Standards by the end of both key stages are in line with national expectations.
23. In religious education, standards are below expected levels in Year 9, but broadly in line by the time pupils reach the end of Year 11. Pupils achieve well and make good progress as a consequence of well focused, effective teaching and positive attitudes to the subject in the classroom.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

24. Pupils' attitudes to school are good overall in both key stages, and most pupils are keen to learn and work hard. They show interest positive attitudes to their work and are keen to answer questions. A small minority have limited concentration and are easily distracted, particularly when teaching fails to inspire and motivate. Pupils work well together in groups, sharing ideas and collaborating purposefully. Pupils with special educational needs have satisfactory attitudes to work although when they are supported in class, this has a beneficial impact on both attitudes and behaviour.
25. Overall behaviour in lessons and around the school is satisfactory in both key stages. The school functions as an orderly community and most pupils are polite and respectful to others. Some good examples of a sensitive awareness to others were witnessed, particularly in corridors, where holding open doors for others to pass through was common. In lessons, while the overwhelming majority of pupils behave well, some isolated instances of poor and insensitive behaviour were observed. Sometimes, this has a negative impact on the learning of others. However, behaviour has improved since the last inspection and the impact of the new behaviour policy and increased monitoring by the senior management team has had a good effect. Pupils feel able to report instances of bullying and harassment, and in most cases, this is dealt with speedily and effectively, often with the support of peer mentoring from older pupils. The incidence of fixed term exclusions is slightly above average, but has reduced significantly since the last inspection.

26. Relationships within the school community are mostly satisfactory, and many teachers have established trusting and productive relationships with the pupils. Pupils themselves are generally courteous to each other, staff and visitors. Older pupils develop good relationships with the younger pupils, particularly through the "buddy system", which enables older pupils to support and relate to younger pupils. Year 11 pupils with statements of special educational needs are appreciative of the help and support they have received from the learning support department throughout their time in the school. They comment that the support they receive in lessons has enabled them to make good progress.
27. Personal development is satisfactory and many senior pupils behave responsibly and with maturity. Since the last inspection, the school has worked hard to extend the opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and to become more involved in the workings of the school. Pupils' views are taken seriously through both year and school councils, and pupils carry out their responsibilities conscientiously. Bus monitors, reception monitors, and register monitors all contribute effectively to the smooth running of the school.
28. Attendance has improved significantly since the previous inspection. In 1998/99 attendance was very low in comparison with other schools, and unauthorised absence in the same year was well above the national average. However, overall rates of attendance, including unauthorised absences, are now satisfactory and broadly in line with the national average. New strategies over the last year have helped improve the figure to around 90 per cent. Punctuality is satisfactory. Lessons start on time and learning opportunities are not wasted.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

29. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in both key stages. Teaching was judged to be at least satisfactory in over ninety-two per cent of lessons observed during the inspection. One in three lessons was good and one in ten very good. Teaching was unsatisfactory in around just over seven per cent of lessons.
30. In both key stages, the overall quality of teaching in English is good, while in mathematics and science it is satisfactory. Teaching in other subjects is satisfactory, but good and particularly effective in art, religious education and physical education. However, there are weaknesses in the teaching of French.
31. The teaching of literacy is good in English and in some other subjects such as geography and design technology, but in others, untidy handwriting, spelling and grammatical errors are left unchecked. Where teachers are thinking about the use of language in their subjects and how they might contribute to overall standards in literacy within their subject, learning is good. The teaching of numeracy is less satisfactory, and in mathematics, this important basic skill has not been taught systematically.
32. Strengths of the teaching include teachers' subject knowledge and understanding and their classroom management of pupils. Most teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and sufficiently confident to teach with interest and commitment. In mathematics for example, teachers intervene in pupils' work with challenging questions having made a careful analysis of their problem. This results in pupils' understanding being deepened through re-thinking a problem. In art, the teacher's own high level of skill is used to demonstrate how to work in specific media and inspire the pupils to work with the same degree of confidence. In geography, teachers present ideas with assurance, and the confident manner in which the teacher asked and answered questions in a Year 9 lesson on volcanoes ensured pupils made rapid progress.
33. Almost all teachers have good classroom management skills. They demonstrate a patient and caring approach, concerned about the progress of all pupils in the class. Expectations of both work and behaviour are high and most pupils respond with a determination to do well. The non-confrontational approach of the art teacher in a Year 10 lesson looking at pop art engendered the

trust and confidence of all pupils. Challenging pupils, many on the special educational needs register with emotional and behavioural problems, are treated with respect and patience.

34. Where teaching is less successful, it is often because of the limited range of teaching strategies used. This often results in a slow pace of learning and some lack of concentration by the pupils. In one Year 8 French lesson observed with a middle ability group, the teacher spent far too much time speaking to the whole class at a very basic level, without linking this to other skills. After thirty-five minutes the pupils' attention began to wander, and progress was unsatisfactory as not enough was achieved. In geography, pupils are not always involved in their own learning sufficiently, and they are too reliant on the teacher for ideas and solutions to problems.
35. Currently too little use is made of computers across subjects which would offer alternative approaches to learning. This is largely because the resources have not been available until now, although there remains a problem in both English and mathematics.
36. Passive learning also means that pupils do not always have confidence in what they do know and what they need to do next to improve. Pupils are insufficiently involved in thinking about their own performance, although this aspect is better during Years 10 and 11, where the GCSE examination criteria impose a more structured framework for learning, and the school is able to predict grades and share these with the pupils. However, National Curriculum levels are rarely used to assess pupils and guide them in knowing what to learn next in order to reach the next level. Marking is often good, but not consistently so. In history, geography, mathematics, science, design technology and RE, evaluative comments are not always sufficiently detailed to enable the pupils to learn from their mistakes. Target setting at the level of the next learning step is not well embedded in practice.
37. Parents expressed concern at the quality and frequency of homework. However, evidence from the inspection indicates that homework is used well to consolidate learning and encourages pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning. The school's systems for recording and monitoring the setting of homework ensure that it is regularly set according to the timetable. The English department in particular uses homework effectively. In a Year 10 lesson on autobiographical writing, the homework both reinforced learning and prepared the pupils for the next lesson.
38. In general, teaching is well planned to meet the needs of all pupils. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The majority of pupils at stages 3 to 5 on the school's register of special educational needs receive effective in-class support from support assistants. Newly developed and focused individual education plans include better quality targets than at the time of the last inspection. Targets are now generally more realistic, clear and attainable. This enables subject teachers to plan their work more effectively to match the ability range of pupils. Practice, however, varies. In a Year 11 music lesson, for example, there was very little adaptation of plans to meet the needs of the full range of ability within the group. This was also the case in a Year 7 French lesson. The result was that not all pupils were making the progress of which they were capable. In other lessons, particularly where support is effective, the progress made by pupils is good. In another Year 7 modern foreign languages lesson, a support assistant with a good command of French enabled pupils to gain confidence and make progress. Where there is no in-class support a lack of a good range of strategies to support pupils identified as having special educational needs means their progress is not as good as it should be.
39. More able pupils generally make satisfactory progress. The school has more recently worked hard to ensure that pupils following GCSE courses achieve the higher grades of which they are capable.
40. The few pupils with English as an additional language are well taught and they make appropriate progress.
41. Pupils' learning overall in lessons is satisfactory and most pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress through both key stages. In English, PE and RE, pupils make good progress. Learning is unsatisfactory in French, although progress is better during Years 10 and 11, when the curriculum is more focused on examination requirements. Pupils' learning skills are satisfactory.

Most work hard, with interest and at a reasonable pace. It is only in the area of their own self knowledge of their learning that there are weaknesses.

42. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. There is less unsatisfactory teaching and more good and very good teaching than previously. However, some of the weaknesses remain; the last report was also critical of the narrow range of teaching approaches and of passive learning by pupils. The school now needs to adopt a more rigorous approach to improving aspects of teaching if recent improvements are to be sustained.

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

43. The school provides a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum that meets statutory requirements, including those for RE. Improvements to the curriculum since the last inspection have been considerable, particularly in relation to subject planning for progression through schemes of work and in the provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE). The school is undertaking a review of the curriculum in the light of recent national changes, to improve aspects of the timetable and to improve the provision of work related courses in Years 10 and 11.
44. Through their standards committee, governors have become more involved in approving policies and are taking good steps to monitor the curriculum. They have approved a satisfactory curriculum policy and very good policies on literacy and sex-education. This year they plan to systematically visit subject departments as part of the improving systems to monitor the school's work.
45. In the first three years, up to the age of fourteen, pupils study all the subjects of the National Curriculum, as well as RE and PSHE. Arrangements for ICT have recently been improved to ensure a sharper focus on the acquisition of skills, and the curriculum is being taught through modules of work in design and technology, mathematics and English. In the last two years all pupils study seven common subjects and a programme of PSHE. Two further option subjects are then chosen from the nine, which are available. An interesting development has been the links established with a local technology school, through which some Year 10 pupils study a vocational course (GNVQ) in ICT. However, currently this is the only vocational course that is available, and in this respect there has been little progress since the previous inspection. The school has plans to address this issue in its forthcoming review of the curriculum.
46. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, have satisfactory access and an equal opportunity to take an active part in the full curriculum. The focus on the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3 is helping pupils to concentrate on key learning skills whilst providing breadth and variety. At Key Stage 4 the option scheme gives the pupils a degree of choice.
47. The school has rightly focused on improving pupils' literacy skills. A summer literacy school has given incoming pupils in Year 7 a more confident start when they arrive in September. A very good policy for literacy across the curriculum has been recently introduced. Some good examples were seen in English, science, history and RE lessons. Provision is however, still patchy, and there is further to go in helping pupils develop better sentence structure, presentation of work, correct grammar and increasing the opportunities for extended writing in all subjects.
48. There is not a similar strategy for improving numeracy skills, and currently provision is unsatisfactory. However, the school has sound plans to introduce a more structured approach.
49. Extra-curricular provision, good at the time of the last inspection, remains good, particularly in sports, but also visits, residential experiences and regular shows and productions. These add strength to the whole curriculum. A number of games clubs are provided for the younger pupils to develop a personal interest. Few pupils have individual music tuition and the opportunities for the more able pupils are limited. In general, there is a lack of opportunity for pupils to participate in music groups.

50. Since the last inspection, revision clubs have been introduced in many subjects to help pupils to prepare for GCSE examinations. These have had a very good impact and many pupils speak in appreciative terms about the help and commitment given by staff.
51. Provision for PSHE is now good and has improved significantly. A well thought out programme has been developed for all years, which is taught effectively by form tutors. There are also excellent policies for sex-education and drug awareness. Provision is particularly good, as it has been planned to enable appropriate topics to be taught at the right stage of pupils' emotional and physical development. Teaching is placed firmly in the context of family values and healthy human relationships. The lessons observed during the inspection show that it is working very well in all years. Provision is having a positive impact on pupils' personal development.
52. A satisfactory curriculum is provided for the pupils with special educational need and the school fully meets the curricular requirements set out in pupils' statements of educational need. Pupils are entered for the full range of examinations and special arrangements are facilitated if required. The PE department has planned an appropriate curriculum for the three pupils with physical learning difficulties. A small number of pupils are currently working towards examinations in the Certificate of Achievement in English, mathematics and French. Provision has also been planned to enable some pupils to opt-out of a non-core subject if it is clear they will benefit from extra basic skills support. The small number, and often-transient pupils, whose first language is not English are clearly known and are given the appropriate support to access the curriculum.
53. Careers education is a good feature of the curriculum. Last year the school was awarded the distinction of being a "Kent excellence in careers" school. The comprehensive programme of careers related topics, is primarily taught in ICT in Year 9 and PSHE in Year 10 and 11. All pupils undertake a valuable work experience placement in Year 11 through which they are given the chance to learn about the world of work. The timing of this has sensibly been reviewed and as from this year pupils will now do this in Year 10, so that they can focus on examinations in Year 11.
54. There are satisfactory and improving links with the community, other schools and local colleges. For instance, the Thanet Business Partnership has worked closely with the school and helped mount careers awareness days. The local bus company has provided speakers to help in the PSHE programme. Since the last inspection very good links with Thanet College have been developed and community courses are now provided as twilight or evening sessions. Links have also been established with Canterbury Christ Church University College and Kent advisory services who provide mentors for staff and help with course development and monitoring the curriculum.
55. Since the last inspection improvements are also evident in the timetabling which has eliminated split classes and is more efficiently organised. The length of the teaching week is in line with recommendations. There are sound plans to review the length of lessons and number of periods taught during the week to provide greater flexibility for timetabling and rectify the shortage of teaching time in some subjects.
56. Overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. However, while provision for pupils' moral and cultural development is satisfactory and social development is good, opportunities for spiritual awareness are unsatisfactory.
57. In most subjects there are missed opportunities for insight into values. Some subjects, such as science and religious education, contribute effectively to spiritual awareness, but as yet many subjects do not make any specific provision. Opportunities to emphasise the spiritual dimension are missed, particularly in music and geography, but also in assemblies. The statutory requirement to provide an act of daily collective worship is not met, and there are missed opportunities in assemblies for reflection through music and readings. As a result the pupils are not as inspired by their learning as they might be.
58. There is a good moral ethos in the school. Staff are good role models in the way in which they care for individuals and clearly demonstrate hard work. All departments expect civilised behaviour

from their pupils and make clear the difference between right and wrong. Pupils are encouraged to collaborate positively in subjects such as physical education, personal, social and health education and English. They are expected to respect other people's views and to listen to each other. Issues with a moral dimension such as drugs and adoption are discussed in personal, social and health education lessons. Pupils generously fill shoeboxes with goods for charity each Christmas.

59. The school's provision for pupils' social development is a strength, and contributes much to the personal development and maturity of pupils as they move through the school. Those following the Youth Action Group scheme develop important links with the immediate community that contribute to their social development. Pupils act as prefects, bus monitors and reception monitors. Some pupils have been trained as peer mentors and are learning to take responsibility for younger pupils. Further opportunities for them to develop their social skills are provided through the year and school councils, which have been formed since the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs are encouraged to participate in these forums, and to take a full part in the life of the school. A lunchtime games club run by support assistants for younger pupils with special educational needs provides good opportunities for developing social skills. Careers provision, particularly at Key Stage 4, together with work experience placements, has a positive impact on pupils' social development. The school's focus on emphasising the role of the form tutor in developing social education has had a marked effect on pupils' social development, and progress in this area since the previous inspection has been good.
60. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory, despite the weaknesses in music. However, many subjects, including art, history, geography and religious education include aspects of a multi-cultural education in their planning. Pupils' are introduced to a wide range of cultural activities and events through visits to places of worship including the Regents Park mosque and Rochester cathedral. The English department has an extensive programme of theatre visits and workshops. It also fosters cultural awareness through participation in a wide range of competitions and activities. The recent appointment of a European Director has strengthened links between subjects and a joint programme of cultural and linguistic visits is planned.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

61. The quality of support and guidance is good and is having an impact on raising achievement. Standards of pastoral care are good and have a high priority in the school. Most form tutors are effective in their role and monitor pupils' personal and academic achievements carefully. Improvements since the last inspection have been good.
62. The school's well-documented health and safety policy has been fully implemented, and statutory requirements are met. Some minor hazards remain, such as the removal of the condemned mats in the gymnasium. The school is working hard to ensure the safety of pupils catching buses after school.
63. The requirements for child protection are fully met. All members of staff have been trained and are aware of the procedures to be followed.
64. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. These include same day contact with parents, a twenty-four hour dedicated phone line and good support from the education welfare officer. Registers fully meet legal requirements, and registrations are conducted efficiently helping to promote an orderly start to both morning and afternoon sessions.
65. Procedures for monitoring and improving behaviour are good. The school has worked hard to address behavioural issues since the last inspection, and its involvement in a funded Home Office programme, is a measure of its commitment. An appropriate system of rewards and sanctions is proving effective; individual pupils' records are carefully monitored and the overall school ethos has improved. As a consequence standards of behaviour are improving. Some imaginative new approaches to reduce bullying and truancy are being introduced with the support of the Home Office funding, including circle time, individual counselling and peer mentoring in which older pupils

give time to respond to the concerns of younger pupils. Circle time, in which pupils discuss issues and resolve problems amongst themselves in a structured and supportive way, has been introduced successfully.

66. Pupils have good access to adult support and help through the pupils services department, which enables many of the administrative issues relating to pupils' welfare to be dealt with swiftly and sympathetically.
67. The quality of assessment procedures and their use to raise pupils' achievements are satisfactory; there has been considerable improvement since the previous inspection. In November 1999, an improved assessment policy was introduced. This is detailed and provides good guidance to teachers. All departments now have their own assessment strategies based on the whole school policy. Most teachers follow the whole school and departmental guidelines and this is helping pupils to be much clearer about what they have to do to improve. However, some departments, such as mathematics and French, do not link their assessment criteria sufficiently closely to National Curriculum levels. Regular monitoring of heads of department by senior managers ensures they apply and improve their systems of assessment within their areas of responsibility.
68. Whilst some departments, such as English, art and physical education, set realistic targets for pupils based on their assessments, this practice is not consistently good across all departments. Every teacher is now required to set targets for each pupil they teach based on their assessments. These are reviewed at least termly and often at the end of each project. Form tutors are expected to monitor pupils' progress in meeting these targets through a regular programme of individual review meetings. There is close scrutiny of pupils' attainments on entry and realistic long-term targets are set based on these. Further targets, based on pupils' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3, predict what pupils' should achieve in their GCSE examinations two years later in every subject they take. The headteacher and her deputy have spoken to all Year 10 and 11 pupils to make sure they understand how targets were arrived at and how important it is that they match these targets. Senior staff have also spoken to the parents of all Year 10 pupils so that they are also clear about the importance of the GCSE targets. To improve use of assessment data, the forms used to track individual pupils' progress have been revised. Advice has been sought from specialists in the field of school assessment, and support has been provided to teachers needing further help. Sophisticated software has been bought to help teachers' strategic use of assessments. All this activity has benefited the quality of assessments and pupils' subsequent learning, although the school is confident that systems can improve yet further. Much has been achieved in a short space of time; inspectors agree that assessment strategies have improved and that further improvements will result from the close monitoring that is taking place.
69. Procedures for the identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs are effective and meet fully the requirements of the Code of Practice. A range of data on entry enables the learning support department to identify strengths and weaknesses for those pupils with learning difficulties. When statements of special educational needs are reviewed annually, the review draws upon a wide range of professional opinion and consultation with parents or carers. This provides for and informs the updating of pupils' records on a regular basis. Individual Education Plans are reviewed on a regular basis and targets are modified, changed or reinstated. However, the status of the targets is unclear, and there is no information on pupils' reading or spelling ages or their National Curriculum levels. As a consequence, teachers cannot always plan to meet their needs in full.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

70. The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory. Parents' views are now considerably more positive in support of the school's work than at the time of the last inspection. However, a few parents still do not fully contribute to their children's learning by ensuring regular and punctual attendance. The impact of parents' involvement with the work of the school is limited, although

there is good support for the school from the parents/teachers and friends association, which raises funds for additional resources.

71. Responses to the questionnaire indicate that while most parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, a significant minority do not feel that the school works well with them and that they are not kept well informed about the progress their child is making. This is despite the school's provision of regular opportunities for discussing each pupil's progress through regular written reports and parents' evenings with staff. The school has carried out its own survey of parental views through a questionnaire, and has acted on several of the issues arising, such as homework and consultation evenings.
72. The quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory. Newsletters are informative and well produced; they highlight curricular matters, school events and termly meetings. Most parents have signed the well-designed home/school agreement. Home contact books are used inconsistently by form tutors, parents and pupils, but are now being more carefully monitored. Annual reports fully meet legal requirements. The information given in the reports is adequate although the targets set are not always precise enough to be useful.
73. Parents and carers are appropriately involved in the annual and transitional reviews of pupils with statements of special educational needs. They are kept well informed as to their child's progress. The latest annual governors' report to parents includes full information on the school's policy for special needs, an improvement since the last inspection. However, the school prospectus does not contain sufficient explicit information about the school's policy for providing for pupils with special educational needs.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

74. The headteacher is providing excellent leadership and giving the school a strong and purposeful sense of direction. Her vision is clear, well communicated to and shared by the whole school community. The sense of change, direction and improvement is tangible. She is very well supported by two relatively newly appointed deputies, who are working well together to promote a cohesive drive for improvement. Management processes, criticised at the time of the last inspection are now much improved, and the school has made good progress in addressing the key issues relating to management.
75. The management restructuring has created an effective framework for monitoring the school's work, and heads of department and heads of year are now held accountable for standards and for the quality of provision within their teams. Rigorous line management procedures help promote shared values, and provide good opportunities for monitoring and consultation. Procedures adopted within the Quality Assurance Team are effective in monitoring and promoting higher standards. A regular review of subject departments has been instigated, and formal reports with targets for improvement are written.
76. Good practice is identified and used to inform and improve practice, and the school is making a determined effort to improve standards. Regular line management meetings are proving effective in addressing both whole school and subject specific issues. Targets set in reviews are followed up at these meetings. Heads of department reported that they find the meetings both useful and challenging.
77. However, not all heads of department have either the management expertise or experience to manage the work of their teams effectively, and there is still work to be done to ensure more consistently good standards of management at this level. The allocation of an external adviser and mentor to each department is proving an effective means of raising awareness of management accountabilities at this level. Although heads of department are expected to observe lessons to monitor standards, the process is not formalised and some heads of department need more skills and training to do this effectively.

78. The key stage co-ordinators manage heads of years and form tutors. Heads of Year are increasingly active in monitoring the academic as well as the pastoral progress of pupils, and have an increasingly good overview of pupils' academic progress and targets. Meetings of staff across subject boundaries in task groups has given the opportunity for all staff to contribute to school improvement in a meaningful way.
79. As a consequence of the effective management structure and procedures, the school has evaluated its work carefully and has a realistic and appropriate plan for addressing weaknesses. The plan meshes well with the budget plan, and educational priorities drive the process of budget setting. Action taken has been robust and effective.
80. Governors are committed and offer a good range of skills and hard working support to the school. Statutory requirements are fully met, apart from the requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship. Given the available accommodation, this has proved difficult to provide. Governors' committees are increasingly confident in their ability to challenge and scrutinise the school's work, because of the management systems now in place. Many governors are well informed through regular contact with the school. Links with subject departments are planned which should serve to improve their understanding still further.
81. School development plan priorities are monitored carefully by one of the governors' committees, enabling governors to maintain a good overview of the school's progress. A thorough scrutiny of the plan and its budgetary implications is carried out before the budget is set. The school's finance officer is effective in seeking additional funding from a range of private and public sources. Funding, including that for special educational needs, the education action zone and the Home Office project, is used appropriately. Although there has been no recent financial audit, the area finance office has confirmed that the school's financial systems and procedures are satisfactory.
82. The school seeks to apply best value principles whenever possible. Finance committee meetings discuss the cost effectiveness of decisions and seek the best value for money in all transactions. Costs are regularly compared with similar schools, and difficult decisions for example, the restructuring of both administrative staff and management have been made to improve efficiency, as well as to improve the service.
83. Since the last inspection significant improvements have been made to the staffing structure, including the administrative staff. There is now a good balance of experienced and new staff in the school providing sufficient numbers of specialist teachers with appropriate qualifications to meet the needs of the National Curriculum, although the head of ICT has no formal qualifications in his subject. Most of the staffing issues from the previous report have been addressed. Learning support assistants provide good support for pupils with special educational needs, although there are insufficient specialist special needs teachers to support the large number of pupils on the special needs school register. Monitoring and evaluation of support assistants is not as well developed as in other areas of the school, and inconsistent practice has not been fully addressed. In addition, there is inadequate administrative support for the special educational needs co-ordinator.
84. The school has worked hard to improve the arrangements for professional development. There is a comprehensive induction programme for all newly qualified teachers and staff new to the school. The school has received the 'Investors in People' award in recognition of the good arrangements for the management of professional development and training of staff. The school is well placed to introduce performance management.
85. Despite improvements since the last inspection, accommodation remains unsatisfactory, particularly for art, drama, indoor physical education, music and information and communication technology. However, a programme of new building and refurbishment is underway and these deficiencies will be largely remedied. The rolling programme of redecoration and improvement has already made a difference to the entrance hall, the assembly hall, office areas and the staff room. Two rooms have new computer suites and a skills centre has been created. In addition the pupil

care area has a new medical room. Pupils and staff have worked well together to carry out some of the internal decoration.

86. The library is very small, but there are plans to relocate and expand the space. The sports fields are of a good size but the indoor provision for physical education is limited and inadequate for the number of pupils. The gymnasium and the school hall are both too small to facilitate whole school assemblies.
87. Overall learning resources are adequate and provide sufficient support in most subjects. This is an improvement since the last inspection when the school was under-resourced in a number of areas. However, weaknesses remain. In French, textbooks are not always being used effectively. An insufficient number of keyboards and computers has an adverse effect on learning in music, and despite recent improvements, there remains an inadequate number of computers to ensure adequate access within each subject. Fixed and mobile gymnastic equipment, although safe, need replacing. The library book stock is currently low, although there are plans to increase the range and improve the quality when the library is relocated.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to maintain the school's improvement, governors, senior management and staff must:

1. Improve the overall quality and consistency of teaching and learning by:
 - increasing the range of teaching and learning methods used (paragraph 34)
 - ensuring pupils take a more active part in their learning (paragraph 34)
 - using computers more routinely in all subjects (paragraphs 35, 139)
 - improving pupils' own awareness of their progress and of what they need to do next, through better marking and the effective use of assessment data to set targets (paragraphs 36, 38,41,68,69)
 - improving the consistency with which handwriting, spelling and punctuation are challenged in all subjects (paragraphs 31)
 - continuing to work with parents to secure their commitment and involvement in the learning of their children (paragraphs 37, 70 - 73)

2. Raise standards in mathematics and numeracy skills (paragraphs 12, 13, 31, 100,103) in particular by:
 - implementing a policy for the teaching of numeracy across all subjects (paragraphs 48,107)
 - ensuring more systematic teaching of basic numeracy skills (paragraph 107)
 - practising mental and estimating skills more rigorously (paragraphs 104-5)
 - using computers to promote numeracy skills (paragraph 103)
 - improving the quality of marking, and widening the range of teaching and learning strategies (paragraph 106).

3. Raise standards in French (paragraphs 20, 140) by:
 - ensuring that teaching is of a more consistently good quality (paragraphs 142-144)
 - using French more routinely as the language of instruction (paragraph 142)
 - improving the planning, quality of assessment and target setting (paragraphs 144, 146)
 - raising overall expectations and improve the pace of learning in lessons (paragraph 144)

4. Raise standards in information and communication technology (paragraph 19) by:
 - ensuring the revised curriculum is fully implemented across all subjects (paragraph 136)
 - using a wider range of teaching strategies, including whole class demonstrations and the use of printed class materials (paragraphs 138-9)

5. Improve the planning for the spiritual development of pupils (paragraph 56) by:

- ensuring all subjects plan for this aspect of pupils' development in their schemes of work (paragraph 57)
- providing more opportunities for reflection in assemblies, through music and readings (paragraph 57)

The issues relating to improving the quality of teaching and learning and the use of ICT in all subjects are already under consideration in the school's development plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	148
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	56

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	10.3	33.1	48.9	6.2	1.4	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	761	n/a
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	220	n/a

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	20	n/a
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	367	n/a

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	10

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	81
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	66

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.9
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.1
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
	1999	75	65	140

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	25	29	24
	Girls	38	26	17
	Total	63	55	41
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	45 (62)	39 (41)	29 (39)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	4 (26)	20 (14)	1 (8)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	26	24	17
	Girls	38	22	17
	Total	64	46	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	45 (37)	33 (41)	24 (35)
	National	64 (61)	64 (64)	60 (61)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	21 (5)	16 (5)	1 (9)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (30)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	73	81	154

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	5	55	63
	Girls	13	64	70
	Total	18	119	133
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	12 (8)	77 (71)	86 (87)
	National	46.6 (44)	90.9 (90)	95.8 (95)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	20 (20.5)
	National	38.0 (36.8)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate	
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	52	90.4
	National		n/a

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	7
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	2
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	2
White	739
Any other minority ethnic group	7

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	43	5
Other minority ethnic groups	2	2

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)	47.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	20
Total aggregate hours worked per week	500

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	70.8
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	22.9
Key Stage 4	21.9

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	2007900
Total expenditure	1964059
Expenditure per pupil	2489
Balance brought forward from previous year	-21448
Balance carried forward to next year	22393

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	757
Number of questionnaires returned	178

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	37.3	53.7	4.5	2.8	1.7
My child is making good progress in school.	35.0	48.0	5.6	1.7	9.6
Behaviour in the school is good.	25.8	45.9	8.6	3.4	16.1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30.3	44.9	10.1	6.7	7.8
The teaching is good.	26.9	56.2	4.5	1.1	11.2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31.2	37.5	14.8	7.4	9.1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47.4	35.4	8.6	5.7	2.8
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56.2	34.2	1.7	1.1	6.7
The school works closely with parents.	30.3	41.7	13.7	6.3	8.0
The school is well led and managed.	31.8	46.0	7.4	1.7	13.1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35.8	47.1	3.4	3.9	9.6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24.4	35.2	9.6	7.9	22.7

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

ENGLISH

88. Standards of attainment in English are below those expected nationally at the end of both key stages. However, pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry, and often better. This is because teaching is good overall, and because leadership and management of the department are effective in consistently expecting high standards of work and behaviour.
89. 1999 Key Stage 3 test results were well below the national average for all pupils. In comparison with both all schools and similar schools, pupils' performance was well below the national average. Though results have fluctuated over the last four years, the trend in results is broadly in line with the national trend albeit at a much lower level. Pupils' performance has been slightly better in English than in maths or science over that period. There has not been a significant difference between the performance of boys and girls: if anything, girls have performed slightly worse than boys. Provisional results for 2000 show an improvement in results at both level 5 or higher and at level 6 or higher.
90. 1999 results for A* to C grades in GCSE were well below the national average. Pupils' performance in the grade range A* to G was very close to the average performance nationally. Comparison between these pupils' average points score in English at Key Stage 3 in 1997 and at GCSE in 1999 suggests that they achieved at least as well as they should given their prior attainment, and often better. Provisional results for 2000 indicate a significant improvement with 37 per cent of pupils achieving A* to C grades. This group of pupils made very good progress through Years 10 and 11 to secure these results. Pupils do slightly better in English than they do in maths or science. The small number of pupils entered for the Certificate of Achievement course achieved three distinctions and four merits. Entries for GCSE English Literature have been restricted mainly to girls in the upper two fifths of the ability range over recent years. Apart from 1998, results have been consistently close to or above the national average.
91. The recent history of test and examination performance indicates that the department has succeeded in ensuring that pupils have done at least as well as they should in relation to their prior attainment, and often better. Many pupils have been able to realise their potential after making good or very good progress.
92. In work seen during the inspection, the standard of attainment at age 14 is below expected standards nationally. Achievement is good, given the pupils' well below average attainment on entry, and considering the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. The emphasis given to reading and the use of support groups for special educational needs enable a majority of pupils to read, speak and listen competently by the end of the key stage. Expressive speaking and reading aloud is, however, limited to a few pupils. Writing standards are much more variable, and bring down standards of attainment overall. There are particular weaknesses in sentence structure, lack of punctuation and spelling. Pupils with special educational needs make appropriate gains in knowledge and skills, often through working confidently with "Successmaker" software.
93. By the age of sixteen attainment is below the national expectation. However, given their attainment at the end of Year 9, pupils' achievements are good. Reading, speaking and listening competence are in line with national standards. Average attainers can write at length, use information effectively, and adapt their language style appropriately to suit the context. They can make use of persuasive devices to enhance an oral presentation. Lower attainers, many with special educational needs, are able to recall information accurately but have difficulty in using evidence to support their comments and in using the appropriate tone to convey a point. They lack the vocabulary to express meaning clearly. Their written work lacks ease and fluency, and weaknesses in sentence structure, spelling, handwriting and presentation (particularly among boys) continue to depress standards of attainment overall.

94. The quality of contributions made by other subjects to standards of literacy is satisfactory overall. The school's literacy policy statement has clear aims and provides guidance on how all teachers can contribute to the improvement of literacy skills. It includes strategies for helping boys in particular to fulfil their potential, and promotes the importance of reading. The English department has given a strong lead in raising the profile of reading, writing, speaking and listening by encouraging pupils to enter local and national competitions and by arranging visits to and by nationally known authors. The school has provided the opportunity for Years 7 and 8 to have a literacy lesson modelled on that provided in primary schools, uses appropriate computer programs to support pupils with special educational needs, and promotes the use of a structured framework for writing, word lists and word walls. A "Literacy Summer School" providing two weeks of intensive study and support has operated for two years. The small number of pupils with English as an additional language are provided with appropriate teaching support and those who have a more stable and continuous relationship with the school are successfully integrated into its work. They make equally as good progress as other pupils. Some good practice exists in other subjects. In design and technology, pupils are encouraged to make notes and record key words emphasised by the teacher, and in geography, teachers encourage reading aloud, and the speaking and accurate recording of key words. Pupils are benefiting from this emphasis on important literacy skills. In French, however, Year 11 pupils' weaknesses in areas like presentation, handwriting and spelling are not being addressed, and responses to the school's literacy policy are not yet fully consistent across all subjects.
95. In English, pupils' attitudes to learning are good in both key stages. Standards of behaviour are good. Pupils listen with interest, participate actively in group discussions and make use of opportunities their homework gives to carry out further research independently. They respond particularly well when the teacher's own lively approach, knowledge or enthusiasm stimulates their interest. This was the case, for example, in a Year 8 class when the class made good progress and deepened their understanding through the teacher's expressive description of Macbeth's visit to the witches, and her subsequent stimulating suggestions for creating their own spell. In a Year 9 class observed, pupils enthusiastically offered replies to the question "What would you have done?" when their teacher good-humouredly presented them with awkward or embarrassing situations to solve. In a Year 10 class, the teacher used a personal anecdote to illustrate that everyone has something to write about, and held pupils' attention completely.
96. Teaching is good overall in both key stages, leading to good learning and progress. Strengths of the teaching are frequently in evidence. On rare occasions the teacher talks too much or allows organisational matters to distract from the purpose of a lesson, and learning lacks focus as a consequence. Sometimes, activities are mistimed and result in a rushed and clumsy end to the lesson. In one lesson observed, too much was attempted. As a result, the pace of learning slowed, and pupils were not sufficiently stretched or engaged in fruitful work. Such weaknesses are rare and usually arise from inexperience or loose planning and organisation. On the other hand, teaching strengths are much more frequently evident. Teachers use effective strategies to develop pupils' writing skills, like using "balloon dialogue" in comics to show where speech marks should occur. They demonstrate a high level of preparation based around a well-planned scheme of work, careful assessment of pupils' progress, good choice of interesting resources and varied activities, good relationships with pupils and good use of homework. All these features ensure that good learning takes place throughout the key stages and that pupils make good progress. In particular, teachers' high expectations about standards of work and behaviour are significant in changing pupils' habits and attitudes so that they recognise the importance of developing their literacy skills, and gain confidence in themselves and their ability to succeed.
97. The department has shown a good rate of improvement since the last inspection and its capacity for further improvement is good. Test and examination results indicate that pupils achieve at least as well as expected and often better. Although standards of attainment overall remain below national expectations, there have been improvements in the standard of reading, in the progress pupils make, and in the quality of teaching overall. The quality of leadership in the department is very good, and is a significant factor in maintaining the department's status as "a beacon" in the school.

Drama

98. Drama is offered to pupils throughout Key Stage 3 as a separate subject and as an option in Key Stage 4. GCSE results in 1999 were very low compared with nationally for A* to C grades and below average for A* to G grades. Provisional results for 2000, show a substantial improvement, and all pupils entered for drama achieved a grade in the range A* to G. In the limited observation undertaken during the inspection, standards are below national expectations by the end of both key stages. Pupils are beginning to work collaboratively but their understanding of key skills and techniques is limited. They have difficulty in sustaining a role in improvised or prepared performance, and are not yet sufficiently aware of audience or how to use space effectively. Given the opportunity, some read aloud well from a script and most listen and attend carefully to their classmates. Pupils in a Year 11 class when preparing for a scripted monologue were able to produce an empathetic account of Frankenstein's feelings as he contemplated the consequences of his actions, but the standard was affected by limited expressive skills in writing.
99. Attitudes to learning are satisfactory and sometimes good: most pupils are involved and co-operative as a result of good relationships with their teacher, and, particularly in Key Stage 3, they enjoy working in drama. Occasionally the motivation and self-discipline of some pupils are less good. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. The teacher quickly establishes a pleasant relationship with pupils, uses a variety of imaginative ideas to develop group working and positive attitudes to drama and gives good feedback on work in progress, with a judicious mixture of praise and evaluative comment. As a result most pupils make steady progress in developing knowledge, understanding and skills. Weaknesses do occur, for example when a lesson does not begin promptly enough or a lesson's purpose is not always clearly explained. Sometimes the skills required for an activity are not sufficiently emphasised, or insufficient time is allowed for reflection and evaluation at the end of a lesson. These weaknesses affect the quality and pace of learning so that progress is not as good as it should be. Drama is making a positive contribution to pupils' confidence and to the life of the school through clubs and productions. The head of department is working hard to raise standards, and her work and the subject's profile in the school will be further enhanced by better quality accommodation.

MATHEMATICS

100. Standards overall are not high enough at the end of both key stages, largely because numeracy skills, weak on entry to the school are not systematically taught and reinforced through the curriculum. Although standards are improving, and GCSE results in 2000 show a marked improvement, some pupils still underachieve in mathematics.
101. On entry in Year 7, the attainment of pupils is well below the national average for their age. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests, the proportions of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 attaining both levels 5 and 6 and above are well below the national average. These results are well below the average for similar schools, and pupils are performing at least one year behind that expected nationally of pupils of the same age. Both boys and girls achieved broadly similar results, and pupils did not do as well in mathematics as in science and English. Results have fluctuated since the last inspection, but are improving, and at a faster rate than that seen nationally. Provisional results for 2000 show a rise in the proportion attaining level 5 and above, continuing the trend of recent improvement.
102. In 1999, the proportion of pupils attaining GCSE at grades A* to C and A* to G was well below the national average. The average points score was also well below the national average, although girls achieved slightly higher grades than the boys. Provisional results for 2000 show a significant rise in the proportion of pupils attaining GCSE at grades A* to C, but pupils continued to perform less well in mathematics than they did in science and English.
103. In work seen during the inspection, standards achieved by pupils at the age of 14 are below the level expected, and many pupils underachieve. Basic numerical skills are weak and underdeveloped, and pupils experience difficulty in using and applying basic numeracy skills in

tasks set. The use of computers to promote pupil's numerical skills is limited at present to Year 7. Pupils' understanding of shape, space and measure is satisfactory, and they use correct terminology when discussing the properties of regular figures. Pupils in Year 9 make satisfactory progress and understand transformation geometry. Pupils understand the use of algebra, for example substituting values into algebraic expressions, which represent the area of simple mathematical figures. However, the rules of algebra are less well developed, particularly for the higher attainers in Year 8. Pupils in Year 7 completed a car survey and represented their findings clearly as posters. However, determining and appreciating the representative values for given sets of data by high attainers in Year 9 is not secure. The standard of presentation in most exercise books is unsatisfactory with untidy layout, inaccurate diagrams and graphs. Written exercises are often incomplete or in error. Middle and lower attaining pupils do not express themselves well and poor spelling and presentation goes unchallenged by the teacher. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers.

104. Standards reached by pupils at the age 16 are below expected levels, and most pupils are underachieving. The standard of coursework for GCSE by the highest attainers is satisfactory, however, skills in problem solving, testing hypotheses and applying knowledge to new situations are unsatisfactory. Weaknesses in basic numerical skills undermine the extent to which middle and low attainers can develop their coursework and use and apply number, for example, some middle attainers in Year 11 use repeated addition in place of multiplication and cannot divide sums by a single figure. Mental and estimating skills are unsatisfactory. Pupils in Year 11 use computers satisfactorily to support their work. High attainers use algebra well as a tool, from formulating simple expressions and algebraic substitution to drawing the graphs of quadratic functions and applying the rules of indices. Middle attainers experience difficulty manipulating Pythagoras' Theorem successfully and anticipating outcomes. Pupils possess a good understanding of shape, space and measurement with low attainers selecting the appropriate unit of measure when calculating area and perimeter of compound figures. Attainment when handling data is satisfactory. The standard of presentation in most exercise books is unsatisfactory with a variety of writing styles, a poor record of work, inaccurate diagrams and untidy layout. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers.
105. The standard of numeracy is poor at both key stages. Applications and aspects of numeracy in subjects other than in mathematics focus on interpretation of data and use of graphs. Although reliance on the calculator for straightforward calculations is positively discouraged in the mathematics department, pupils at Key Stage 3 use them for the simplest of tasks in other subjects. Mental and estimating skills are not encouraged and teachers often have to lead pupils towards achieving a correct answer with the emphasis more on process than on understanding.
106. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory but with some shortcomings in particular aspects. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject is good and leads to confident teaching. Teachers, for example, demonstrate good observational and analytical skills so that they intervene well with questions that challenge pupils' thinking and understanding. Lessons are planned well in many respects, but teaching strategies tend to be confined to exposition and questioning, relying heavily on the textbook. Lesson objectives are often not shared with the pupils. Opportunities for pupils' personal development are limited at both key stages, for example the use of group work to enable pupils to use the mathematics vocabulary and confirm their understanding with one another. The use of available time is ineffective, particularly for low attaining pupils where work is not broken down into 'bite' size activities, reflecting their capacity to concentrate for short periods. The focus of the majority of lessons is on process and less on conceptual understanding. Intellectual challenge, pace and rigour are absent from many lessons, for example, Year 8 pupils became too involved recording the coins available to use in giving change, when making a purchase with a £5 note. Work is not differentiated and extension opportunities, particularly for the most able, are not considered in many lessons. The use of resources other than published worksheets to enhance teaching and learning is not evident and insufficient use is made of computers. A rare example of using resources well to reinforce conceptual understanding was demonstrated at Key Stage 4 with images from the graphic calculator displayed onto the whiteboard. Pupils were quickly able to appreciate the graphical effects of changing the coefficients of a quadratic function and as a result highly motivated to complete set tasks. Teachers do encourage pupils to take an active part

in the lessons by answering questions and the occasional rapid-fire of questions ensures that a brisk pupil/teacher interaction is achieved. The management of pupils' is quiet and effective brought about by clear expectations of high standards of behaviour and the focus is firmly on work for the duration of lessons. Pupils' attitude to mathematics is good. Pupils of all abilities respond well to questions contributing to the pace of lessons, signalling a willingness to learn. Homework is set regularly and appropriately, although opportunities for investigative work outside the published scheme are overlooked. A significant weakness in teaching is in the marking of pupils' work. Marking criteria are unclear. Homework is 'ticked' but evaluative comments to help pupils understand their strengths and weaknesses are rare. As a consequence, pupils are not always clear about their achievements and how they might improve. Teachers do not mark classwork and this leads to a poor standard of written work and mistakes and misunderstanding which go unchallenged. Teacher records of marking and assessment are accurate and up to date, but the use of assessment data to inform planning and set targets is unsatisfactory.

107. Leadership and management of the mathematics department are unsatisfactory. The department works well together and there is a clear commitment to raise standards however, existing policies such as marking and assessment, the use of computers and standards of presentation require further clarification to support this ambition. Additional policies, including numeracy, literacy, teaching and planning for different needs should be introduced, coupled with strategies for their implementation and rigorous monitoring. The teaching of basic skills needs to be formally introduced into lessons together with a revised scheme of work and methods to monitor pupils' improvement across each key stage.

SCIENCE

108. Standards are below expected levels nationally at the end of both key stages, but progress is satisfactory and pupils achieve standards in line with their ability and prior attainment. In addition, there are now clear signs of a marked improvement in standards, especially in GCSE examination results. This is because of very sound teaching which promotes good attitudes to work. Only in investigative science are pupils' skills insufficiently secure; the consequence of inadequate planning within the curriculum.
109. By the age of 14, the proportions of pupils reaching both level 5 and level 6 in the national tests in 1999 were well below the national average for all schools and similar schools. Results improved in 2000, but most pupils are still about three to four terms behind the expected standard for their age; girls are further behind than the boys. However, in relation to their attainment on entry both girls and boys are making sound progress through Years 7 to 9. Results have been improving at the same rate as that nationally.
110. In 1999 the proportions of pupils attaining GCSE grades A* to C and A* to G were well below the national average and the average for modern schools. However, in 2000, GCSE results improved significantly. The percentage gaining an A* to C grade was 36%, double that of the previous year. This group of pupils made excellent progress during Years 10 and 11. Inspection evidence indicates that the gains that have been made will be sustained. Improvements in the last years GCSE results are due to the top classes being allocated the best teachers, revision clubs being introduced and more accurate assessment of coursework investigations.
111. In work seen in Years 7 to 9, attainment overall is below expectations. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of science is often patchy, and standards in experimental and investigative work are particularly low. Numerical skills to support their learning are often inadequate, and computers are not used sufficiently to enhance progress. However, some pupils work comfortably at the expected level. For example, pupils in a middle set in Year 7 class know that energy exists in a number of forms and can be stored. Those in a top set in Year 9 can label most parts of the human breathing system and explain what happens when you breathe in and out. However, pupils in a bottom set in Year 8 have difficulty in explaining the difference between heat and temperature, and pupils in a top set in the same year cannot confidently explain what is meant by a change of state or a melting point. Pupils in Year 8 make simple plans and predictions for an investigation into what materials

might be the best insulating material but cannot elaborate on how to make their test fair or state a prediction that was based on good scientific knowledge. Pupils in a middle ability Year 9 class struggled to plan an investigation to see how heat losses might be reduced. Work is sometimes presented well, especially when insisted upon by the class teacher, but too often it reflects inherent weaknesses in pupils' literacy skills. However, pupils' use of key scientific vocabulary is improving because of the new approach of teachers to improve literacy.

112. By the age of 16, in work seen during the inspection, attainment remains below nationally expected levels, but pupils' subject knowledge is less patchy as a result of a clearer examination focus. Teachers give more attention to investigative work and ensure pupils' work is accurate. As a consequence, standards improve more quickly. Teachers share assessment criteria with the pupils, enabling them to understand better what needs to be achieved to get a good grade. Although some new equipment has been purchased to enable pupils to gather data electronically, the use of computers remains too low. For some pupils, numeracy skills improve, as for example in the calculations, graphs and transposition of mathematical formulae observed in a Year 11 class who were working on frictional forces. Presentation of work is more careful. Pupils are given more chance to undertake interesting and lively project work, as was seen in a Year 11 environmental science lesson, which looked at "honey pot sites" in the Lake District. In Year 11, pupils are working on the challenging concept of how particles collide to produce a chemical reaction and are building up their knowledge of rates of reaction. This is good evidence of how standards in the top sets are improving.
113. Pupils' learning is satisfactory. In the top sets, pupils in all years work hard and are attentive to tasks set. Some pupils have developed some independence in undertaking practical work and are gaining new knowledge and understanding at a good rate. Challenging tasks in lessons promotes a positive intellectual effort. As a result, work improves and tests marks reflect a growing understanding. Most pupils in the middle and lower sets are attentive in lessons but work at a slightly slower pace. While good attitudes overall make a strong contribution to the standards of work produced, the attitudes and behaviour of some pupils deteriorates during lessons, particularly when they do not understand the work that is set. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress in their learning as a result of very skilful management by their teachers. Positive relationships are fostered and the support assistants are used well in lessons. However, pupils' self-knowledge of their progress is unsatisfactory. While older pupils have some knowledge of their predicted grades at GCSE, elsewhere they have no understanding, either through marking, tests, reports or discussion of what level they are at and how they might get better. Individual learning targets linked to clearly identified strengths and weaknesses in their scientific learning are not set.
114. The quality of teaching is sound overall; some of it is good. Some unifying approaches to teaching are being encouraged across the department, which are generally having a good impact on the pupils' learning and standards. Greater emphasis is being given to clearer lesson objectives, adherence to schemes of work and using key words to help develop pupils' literacy standards. Newly purchased textbooks enliven some lessons. In the most effective teaching seen in Years 7 and 9 the teachers put the lesson objectives, key words and tasks to be achieved on the board, so all of the pupils could clearly see what was expected. This helped the pupils' learning considerably. In a Year 9 lesson, very good teaching taught to the lowest set in the year which included expert management and good opportunities for them to think also had a good impact on pupils' learning. Lessons more often begin more effectively than they end, and opportunities are missed to assess what the pupils actually achieved and for the teacher to clearly explain the key points to remember. For example, in a Year 10 lesson looking at the difference between breathing and respiration, it was unclear to the pupils at the start what had to be achieved by the end of the lesson, even though it was delivered with enthusiasm and was well supported by the learning support assistant. In another Year 10 lesson which looked at how different metals reacted with acids, key words were on the board but not referred to in the lesson; insufficient time was made available at the end to emphasise the key ideas to remember. Homework is usually well set but opportunities are missed to provide evaluative comments on marked class work and homework.
115. The department works well as a team, and has demonstrated that the teachers are open to innovation. The new head of department is having a very strong impact on developments and his

leadership and management are very good. There have been many improvements since the last inspection. Good progress has been made in enhancing resources, reviewing schemes of work, monitoring the work of the department and focusing on the priorities of the school.

ART

116. Overall standards are below national expectations, but pupils' achievements are in line with their ability and prior attainment. Although GCSE results have substantially deteriorated since the previous inspection of 1998 when the proportion gaining C grades or above was above the national average, standards are now rapidly improving as a result of changes within the department. Improvements result from the enthusiastic teaching of new staff and improved planning of lessons.
117. In 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades at GCSE was far below the national average. The proportion gaining a G grade or above was also well below the national average. This was the case for both boys and girls who scored lower grades in their art examination than in most of their other subjects. In the unconfirmed recent year 2000 GCSE, the proportion gaining a C grade or above is higher than the previous year, but is still significantly below the national average.
118. Most pupils enter the school in Year 7 with below average skills in art, although a few have considerable skills. To improve this low starting point, interesting lessons help to grab pupils' attention and enthusiasm. The resulting popularity of the subject boosts pupils' confidence and improves their achievements. By the end of the key stage, pupils in Year 9 produce interesting images based on the work of surrealist painters such as Salvador Dali. They successfully move from producing flat two-dimensional images towards making three-dimensional models. This helps them to realise that different media have their own special qualities that affect the work of art. The quality of work using clay and other three-dimensional media has improved from last inspection because of its regular use. However, pupils still depend too much on teachers' ideas. They often ask, "what shall I do next" and are lost for ideas when the teacher replies "use some imagination". Their efforts are often predictable, lacking a sense of enterprise or urgency. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils have made some very exciting sculptures based on the themes of fire and water. These are skilfully crafted using a range of materials including plaster, wire, wood and fabric. However, pupils' grades are lowered by their failure to produce good written commentaries describing how they arrived at their final ideas. Because of this, pupils' use of literacy to support their artwork is barely satisfactory. Many pupils fail to complete work at home and some choose art because they want a relaxed working atmosphere, not realising they have deadlines to meet. Despite teachers' warnings, some pupils' chatter in lessons, not realising that this takes their minds off the task in hand and adversely affects their standards. Pupils have made good use of a recently purchased digital camera, although lack of computers restricts their appreciation of the technology-intensive nature of modern arts industries. Pupils with special educational needs are given helpful support and make satisfactory progress. Higher attainers are also encouraged to be ambitious but are too happy with efforts that lack visual boldness. There is little difference between the work of boys and girls.
119. The quality of teaching and learning is good in both key stages. All teachers are now specialists, which is an improvement on the previous inspection. Teachers communicate their skills confidently and so pupils respond positively to instructions. Their learning improves as a result of their respect and confidence in teachers. In only one lesson did pupils not show proper respect to a teacher. This was a Year 9 class, whose work was well below expectations as a result. The good planning of lessons is a significant strength that is having a beneficial impact on learning. Teachers avoid dry exercises that simply build up technical skills. Instead they give pupils projects that interest them. An example was seen in a Year 8 lesson where pupils were designing dragons that they would make firstly in card and then in clay. The pupils' enthusiasm pushed on the pace of learning helping them to progress well. The management of pupils is increasingly good. Teachers expect pupils to listen quietly and regularly remind them about their behaviour. Most pupils respond appropriately and the mood for learning is improving as a result. Teachers inject pace into lessons by cutting down long introductions to a minimum and by setting regular time deadlines. This is slowly replacing the over-relaxed learning atmosphere by a more purposeful and energetic mood.

that is having a positive effect on standards. Teachers' marking is positive but successfully highlights areas of weakness so that pupils know what they have to do to improve. Homework successfully reinforces what is done in lessons and provides GCSE pupils with important opportunities to research the background details to their practical studies. As already mentioned, not all pupils build on these opportunities successfully. Pupils' attitudes are increasingly positive, and most now co-operate with teachers. Whilst there is still too much chatter in some lessons, many pupils are getting the message about the link between concentration and quietness.

120. There were many issues for improvement from the previous inspection. Pupils now use a much greater variety of materials, including those for three-dimensional work. They are beginning to understand more about the work of different artists and designers, with interesting projects specially designed to help them imitate or adapt others' work. Resources have improved and there are well written schemes of work in both key stages. New purpose-built art studios will shortly replace the outworn older premises. The management of the department is forward looking and energetic. Pupils and teachers feel well supported. There are improved strategies for assessing pupils' work and pupils benefit from target setting that tells them how to improve. Teaching is successfully monitored in order to identify ways it can be improved. However, whilst there are interesting visits to places of artistic interest, there are not enough visits to the school from artists in the community. Although standards have a long way to go before they match national expectations, the department is doing the right things to increase the rate of improvement, and this is showing in a new optimism for the future.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

121. Standards are not high enough at the end of Key Stage 3, and are well below national expectations. Much of the work lacks challenge, the rate of progress is often too slow and not enough emphasis is given on achieving accuracy and good presentation. More projects based on the full research-cost-design-make-evaluate cycle are needed to ensure pupils' skills and understanding are appropriate. Whilst attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 remains below expectations, pupils' achievements have improved during the past year and progress is now satisfactory.
122. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are below expected levels nationally, particularly those attained by boys. Pupils undertake a range of projects involving graphics, electronics, structures and food, textile, wood, metal, board and plastic materials, but the work undertaken lacks challenge and is well within the ability of the pupils. For example, several lessons are spent in Year 8 on making and decorating a die from a wooden cube and in Year 7 on the production of a pop-up card. Work is too often sloppy and untidy. The practice of banding pupils into two ability groups and subdividing each band into four classes does help to improve standards. Pupils in the low ability groups, many of whom have special educational needs, are well catered for and a great deal is done to ensure they make progress. In contrast, most of the other groups undertake the same range of work and little is done to challenge the most able. Boys and girls are taught separately in Year 8, but little is done to address the imbalance in attainment between boys and girls by, for example, providing a more male orientated range of projects for boys to improve their motivation. The department is unable to incorporate pneumatics, hydraulics and computer control into its project work because of the lack of equipment in these areas.
123. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards remain below national expectations, but achievements are more in line with what might be expected. Work at this level is more challenging and appropriate. Results in textiles at GCSE were particularly good in 2000, with the percentage of pupils attaining A*-C grades above the national average. The results in the child development course were disappointing. The discipline of work to the standards set by the external awarding bodies is a key factor in the improved standards in Key Stage 4. Some of the course work done in food technology and graphic products is of a high standard. Standards are similar to those at the time of the last inspection.
124. The quality of teaching is satisfactory but there are some weaknesses. All teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject, plan lessons well and generally exercise good class control. Some

teachers make good use of whole class group question and answer sessions. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is a particular strength. In one good lesson observed with a Year 9 lower ability group, the teacher successfully engaged the full attention of the pupils through effective classroom management and a lively approach. As a result, pupils made good progress. Overall, teachers have a patient and caring approach, firm control and the ability to encourage progress by giving ample attention to the needs of individuals. Learning support assistants play an effective and important role with these groups. Weaknesses occur when teachers fail to gain the interest of pupils in the work and require too many unnecessary routine tasks to be done, for example, reading out loud from a textbook and copying notes from the board. This lack of challenge leads to slow overall progress and unsatisfactory achievement. Expectations of accuracy and good presentation are not high enough.

125. The attitude and behaviour of pupils is good in Key Stage 3 but some times unsatisfactory in Key Stage 4. Problems occur when the teaching is uninteresting and the pace of lessons is too slow. Good attitudes are exemplified by interest in the work, high levels of concentration and good achievement. Pupils show particular interest in food technology and textile technology.

126. The department is well led by a recently appointed experienced food technology teacher. She has gained the trust of the staff since her appointment and is beginning to make secure improvements. Overall progress since the last inspection has been just satisfactory. Accommodation, currently unsatisfactory and dispersed throughout the school, will be much improved with the completion of the new technology block next year.

GEOGRAPHY

127. Standards are improving. Over the last three years there has been significant improvement in GCSE results; the consequence of improving teaching and a concentration on literacy skills, which enhances pupil presentation and understanding. Pupils, at 14 and 16 years of age, now achieve standards which are in line with national expectations; they make satisfactory progress in their learning.

128. In 1999, the proportion of pupils achieving GCSE grades A* to C was very significantly below the national average with only 13 per cent of pupils entered achieving A* to C grades compared with 53 per cent nationally. However, pupils entered for GCSE geography did better in geography than in mathematics and very similarly to history. In 1999, boys' achievement in GCSE results is better than girls. This is a considerable improvement from 1998 results. GCSE results for 2000 show a very marked upward trend; the 2000 cohort is a similar size to the 1999 cohort and pupils make a one hundred per cent improvement in the percentage of A* to C grades achieved.

129. Throughout Key Stage 3 in work seen during the inspection, the standards achieved at age 14, are at the level expected of pupils of the same age nationally. By the age of 14, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, show knowledge about plate tectonics. They know earthquakes are caused by plate friction as one plate moves over another and volcanoes result where tectonic plates move away from each other. Pupils successfully compare eruption of two types of volcano; high attaining pupils understand that different types of lava produce contrasting landscapes. Most pupils present well-drawn diagrams and sketch maps, which are appropriately labelled, however, the presentation of work from a minority of low attaining pupils is less good. The use of spider diagrams in order to enhance their notes compensates for low literacy skills. Question and answer session show that pupils understand the work; however, many low attaining pupils have difficulty transposing work into their books. Numeracy skills are not well developed and impede progress in some aspects of geography. At times, pupils are passive recipients of information. From a low base on entry, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in the basic skills of map work, the use of keys and scales and knowledge of the rainforests and vulcanicity. In work seen during the inspection, the standards achieved at age 16 are at the expected level. Year 11 pupils understand some of the physical and human factors that effect footpath erosion in the Lake District and their impact upon the environment. High attaining pupils understand some of the problems associated with footpath erosion and that solution are complex and involve a range of strategies. Pupils demonstrate a

simple understanding of chalk landscapes; they successfully identify the contours patterns of dip and scarp slopes from an ordnance survey map but find difficult the identification of landforms from photographs. Investigative and analytical skills are not well developed as pupils rely too heavily on the teacher for their learning.

130. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at both key stages but with some shortcomings. Teachers show good knowledge and understanding of their subject, which allows confident presentation, extending pupils' horizons. Staff usually demand high standards of work and behaviour, but not consistently particularly with low attaining pupils. When expectations are high, pupils react positively and learning is effective. However, teaching strategies do not always involve pupils sufficiently in their learning, and overall, pupils are too reliant on the teacher. As a consequence, they do not sufficiently develop the skills of enquiry, analysis and evaluation. Long term planning of work is good, but individual lesson planning does not always show different strategies for the range of pupils' needs. The concentration on developing literacy skills in geography lessons has had a good impact, especially with lower attaining pupils. Teachers effectively use word games to focus on topics like erupting volcanoes and animal life in the rain forests. Although graphs and charts are used to represent data, the standards of numeracy are unsatisfactory, and there is more to be done to ensure that pupils use number confidently to analyse and interpret geographical data. The most effective learning is in lessons which expect a high level of response from pupils; for instance, in a Year 9 lesson observed on volcanoes, pupils showed a good level of understanding from the previous lesson and a keen interest in the immediate relevance of the topic. Pupil's work is regularly marked, much of it thoroughly done with detailed comments encouraging pupils to do better. However, a small amount of marking is minimal. The use of computers for enquiry, analysis and presentation is under-developed. Pupils listen and contribute well to question and answer sessions, which enhances their understanding of the issues. Overall, pupils' behaviour is satisfactory and they show positive attitudes; this enhances learning. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties, make satisfactory progress throughout both key stages.
131. The department is led and managed satisfactorily, and standards are improving as a result. Policy and curriculum documents are clear, but success criteria in the departmental development plan are not linked to pupil outcomes and insufficient links are made with finance. The systematic monitoring of teaching by the head of department is under developed. Many of the issues reported in the last inspection report have been successfully addressed. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

HISTORY

132. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in history and make sound progress in lessons. In 1998 and 1999 GCSE grades at A* to G were broadly in line with national averages but were well below at grades A* to C. However, results in 2000 showed considerable improvement at grades A* to C, mainly because pupils' attendance was much better and teaching was more closely focused on the examination requirements.
133. Attainment in Year 9 is below national expectations. Pupils show a sound grasp of the content of a topic but many have difficulty in recalling previous work and this holds back their progress. They work quite well with sources, so that Year 7 pupils, for example, are able to find out about life in medieval Britain using a series of pictures. Oral work can be good; for example, Year 9 pupils talked persuasively about reasons for the growth of factories in 18th and 19th century Britain. Pupils find written work more difficult, especially selecting and organising information to produce structured historical writing. In Year 11 attainment in work seen is below the national average. Pupils use sources successfully to extract information, for example on the Plains Indians' attitudes to the land in work on the American West. However, many pupils lack confidence and expertise when required to produce writing containing historical explanations and analysis. Overall, pupils' attitudes to history are positive and standards of behaviour in the classroom are good.
134. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with some good and very good teaching. Good knowledge of the subject material and teaching requirements is well used to extend pupils' learning. Appropriate strategies are in place to improve literacy levels but on some occasions

opportunities are missed to develop pupils' writing skills. Teaching methods are usually well judged so that new topics can be understood by all pupils; in one Year 11 lesson skilful questioning helped pupils grasp difficult ideas about medicine and healing in ancient Greece. But sometimes tasks and resources are not entirely appropriate; for example, video material on changes in 18th and 19th century Britain was not well matched to pupils' attainment levels in a Year 9 class. Pupils are well managed, so that they are able to get on with their work and make progress. Helpful and constructive marking in some classes leads to improved work but assessment practice is not yet sufficiently consistent across the department to ensure that effective targets are set for all pupils. In the best lessons skilful questioning and a lively, brisk pace makes for good learning.

135. Leadership of the department is satisfactory, and the level of improvement since the last inspection has been generally satisfactory. Resources have improved and progress has been made on developing assessment procedures. Staffing difficulties have been resolved and there has been some improvement in the quality of teaching, but good practice is not yet consistent across the department. The development of the subject scheme of work in response to the revised National Curriculum will help to promote further improvement.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

136. Standards at the end of both key stages are below national expectations and not high enough. This is due mainly to the inadequate curriculum provided prior to the beginning of this academic year. At Key Stage 3 the earlier curriculum failed to give pupils appropriate and uniform coverage of the principal applications and uses of information and communication technology. At Key Stage 4 no specialist course in information and communication technology was provided and pupils' progress depended upon their choice of GCSE courses. The curriculum has now been completely redesigned and changed for both key stages. Whilst the new curriculum has only been in use for three weeks early indications are that it is working well and that the progress of pupils of all abilities is improving in all years. The new curriculum is a big improvement on that which existed at the time of the last inspection.
137. At the end of Key Stage 3 only one in eight pupils attain expected levels, although the attainment of girls is significantly better than that of boys. It is expected that the proportion of pupils reaching this level will increase once the new curriculum arrangements are fully implemented. Discrete lessons in information and communications technology are now being taught by the design and technology, English and mathematics departments. These new arrangements provide a good coverage of word processing, spreadsheets, graphics, publishing, the internet, measuring and modelling, but the coverage of databases remains inadequate. At Key Stage 4 the GCSE course in business studies had the largest content of information and communication technology last year. One-half of the pupils examined obtained A* to C grades, a result which is in line with the national average. The majority of pupils however took other GCSE courses and made variable progress in information and communications technology, and the overall attainment was unsatisfactory. The business studies course is being replaced by both short and full GCSE courses in information technology, which are compulsory for all pupils. These new courses meet statutory requirements and early indications are that they are leading to improved standards for pupils of all abilities. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated in class groups and make satisfactory progress.
138. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory but there are weaknesses. All teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and plan their lessons well. However, at both key stages, teaching strategies are not always being used to ensure good progress. Pupils are given applications at an early stage and teachers help them to understand the network and software as the work progresses. As classes are large, many pupils find this approach frustrating as they cannot get the help they need quickly enough to maintain satisfactory progress. Learning and progress would be improved, particularly for the more able, if teachers used more demonstrations and printed class materials. At Key Stage 4 the practice of teaching groups of pupils on the short and full GCSE courses together is not always effective, as the wide range of attainment makes planning suitable tasks difficult. Teachers are well supported by network technical assistants. Pupils are interested

in computing and eager to learn. Many pupils have the opportunity to use computers at home and bring to their school studies significant understanding and knowledge of the use of computers. The work done by some of these pupils is of a high standard. Knowledgeable pupils are keen to help those who are less able in lessons, a practice which is encouraged by teachers. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is always satisfactory and often good, particularly in Years 10 and 11. When the pace of lessons is slow or the teacher is unable to provide the help needed quickly enough, concentration sometimes slips. Pupils see the Internet as an invaluable source of learning material and are keen to use it. The school has a good policy on access to the Internet.

139. The subject is well led by a recently appointed ICT co-ordinator. He has a strong technical background but needs support to develop his teaching methods. Good plans are in place to support ICT development in other subjects, but these have yet to be fully implemented. The school has no policy which sets out clearly the school's educational aims in information and communication technology. A new computer network has recently been installed and provided local sponsorship can be obtained it is planned to be extended to enable the English and mathematics departments to make their contributions to the teaching of the subject. The school has made big strides in improving the curriculum and learning resources since the last inspection but these improvements have yet to have an impact on improving standards.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

140. Standards in French are well below national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3, and below what they should be, given the attainment of pupils on entry to the school. In 2000, pupils of French were assessed by their teachers as working well below the national level and this was confirmed in work seen during the inspection.
141. Examination results at GCSE in 1999 were well below the national figure for those gaining A* to C grades and dropped even further in 2000. At A* to G level, results are slightly below the national expectation. The figures are distorted by the fact that last year only about one third of the year group was entered for GCSE examinations. Those following certificate of achievement courses gained creditable results, although this course is not designed for a wide range of ability.
142. In work seen during the inspection, at the age of 14, standards in listening, speaking, reading and writing are well below average. French is not used routinely by all teachers as the main means of communication in class, although there is good practice in some lessons. Pupils speak with weak accents and are not given enough opportunity to improve this through classroom activities. They are able to understand basic French when this is spoken by their teacher, but find it hard to understand foreign voices on tape because some teachers are reluctant to give enough practice at this skill. Little time is spent on reading, again because teachers are reluctant to use the material that has been provided. Writing is consistently underdeveloped. Most written work consists of copying and there is very little development through Years 7 to 9. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress that is in line with their ability.
143. In work seen during the inspection, at the age of 16, standards are well below average in French. Pupils lack confidence in speaking and find it difficult to remember work they have done before. As a result they make slow progress in speaking and listening. The new course book is not being systematically used to develop the four skills required. Teaching styles are similar to those used at Key Stage 3 and do not give pupils enough practice on the type of tasks they will have to complete in the examination. There is little attempt to extend the work for most pupils. Pupils with special educational needs make progress that is in line with their ability.
144. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory, although it was good or very good in some lessons seen. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject. However they do not plan their lessons carefully enough to ensure that the pupils make progress in all areas of the subject curriculum. Their expectations are not always high enough and the methods they use do not bring out the best in their pupils. The reluctance to follow the schemes of work is leading to unsatisfactory learning by many pupils. In a very good lesson with Year 10, the teacher worked hard to boost the pupils'

confidence. She made good use of the resources at her disposal, was enthusiastic and had high expectations. The lesson was conducted a brisk pace. By the end of the lesson pupils were able to say in French which school subjects they did and did not like. They gained a real sense of achievement. In another lesson, unsatisfactory learning took place because the pace was too slow and too much time was spent on one activity. This meant that the pupils started to lose concentration. The written exercise was completed on the worksheet and then copied into the exercise books. Time was not used wisely and expectations were too low. The use of assessment is not yet established well enough to help the pupils make progress and enable teachers to identify areas of weakness. Work is not yet linked to National Curriculum levels. There is good, but limited use of information technology, and most teachers possess the necessary skills to include it in their teaching. One teacher makes use of the Internet as a teaching resource. Opportunities to use school facilities are limited by the lack of access to computers.

145. Pupils' attitudes to work and behaviour are satisfactory. In some lessons they work well in pairs. Teaching styles do not always reflect the fact that most pupils have difficulty concentrating for long periods. Work is not presented in a consistent manner.
146. Since the last inspection there have been many changes. The head of department has only been in post for one term and has already started to make an impact. She has a clear idea of what needs to be done but now needs to encourage her staff to work alongside her to raise standards. With her strong and positive leadership there is much potential for improvement. Teaching must be better planned, with full use made of the new course; lessons must be conducted at an appropriate pace and with realistic expectations. Teaching methods must reflect what the pupils need to know. Pupils must be made aware of what they need to do to improve their work, through regular assessments and target setting. Work must be more clearly focused on examination requirements. Much has been achieved in a short time but because these changes are very recent, overall improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

MUSIC

147. Standards are well below expectations at the end of both key stages, and are too low overall. In the 1999 GCSE, the proportion gaining a grade C or above was well below the national average. In the unconfirmed year 2000 GCSE results, the proportion gaining above grade C was even lower than the previous year. At the time of the last inspection, GCSE results were well above the national average. Factors contributing to this falling trend in standards include the lack of time for music lessons, the lack of visiting instrumental teachers, and the unsatisfactory staffing situation in the run up to the examinations in 2000. Other factors include the lack of development or assessment planning and the unsatisfactory level of resourcing. However, a recently appointed music teacher is very keen and capable to make improvements. New accommodation will shortly replace the old dilapidated hut that is the current music room.
148. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards of work seen are well below the standards expected of 14-year-olds. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards are below those expected of 16-year-olds. Pupils enter the school at age 11 with a variety of prior attainments depending on which junior school they attended. Most attain well below the standards expected of 11-year-olds. Newcomers sing tunefully but do not perform confidently on percussion instruments or compose using the simple structures of music. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have not made sufficient progress in their skills or understanding. Pupils do not use devices such as repetition, sequence or drone when composing their own simple music. The lack of instruments in the music room and the lack of any quiet practice areas severely limit pupils' practical opportunities. Pupils' use of music vocabulary is limited because the lack of facilities prevents teachers underpinning pupils' theoretical knowledge with interesting practical work. By the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to perform or compose because of the cramped music room. Their compositions lack subtlety because they have not developed appreciable playing skills. This is because most GCSE pupils have not had instrumental lessons from visiting teachers. This places the school at a serious disadvantage compared to most schools. Pupils who join extra curricular activities make good progress. However, whilst the regular shows and concerts provide stimulating motivation for pupils, the lack of an instrumental tradition disadvantages pupils compared to other schools. Pupils'

competency using information and communication technology is negligible because the single computer and various electronic keyboards owned by the department cannot be used in the music room because of its lack of security. This will alter when the new premises are in use.

149. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in both key stages. However, despite having energy and commitment the new music teacher is facing an uphill task because of the unsatisfactory accommodation and resourcing. Nevertheless, several busy sessions were seen where pupils were on task and enjoying learning. In a Year 11 lesson, for instance, pupils listened carefully to extracts of music, answering questions about style and instrumentation in an alert way. However, the lack of practical music opportunities eventually made pupils bored and their learning suffered. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils enjoyed singing "YMCA" with the actions. Being a fine day, they rehearsed other songs in small groups out on the field before coming back to perform in front of each other. This was an enterprising use of space and led to a thoroughly enjoyable session that aided pupils' own creative efforts. The teacher's lesson planning is still undeveloped and so there is little sense of continuous progress over time. Planning does not yet cater for the full spectrum of ability within classes and so some pupils do work that is too easy for them. The teacher's management of pupils is improving, and most pupils now respond courteously. However, some pupils, particularly at the end of Key Stage 3, are not fully co-operative, expecting to chatter and relax rather than working. Where this happens, the pace of learning suffers and pupils become very restless.
150. The management of the department is in a state of flux, with a newly qualified teacher currently heading the department. Inevitably, some things are not securely in place. Whilst the new teacher has ideas for how to improve matters, these have not yet been put down in a well-formulated development plan. The key issues from the previous inspection have not been successfully addressed. Standards remain well below national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3 and the accommodation and resourcing for the subject still adversely affect standards. The time available for the subject at Key Stage 3 is still well below the national average and procedures for assessing pupils still fails to provide clear targets for improvement. Level of take up for instrumental lessons remain very low. On the positive side, the teacher is keen to make improvements and the new accommodation should make a big difference. The senior management fully supports new developments in music and there are many pupils who are very willing to join extra curricular performance activities. However, whilst things are set to improve, standards remain too low.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

151. Pupils achieve well in physical education as they progress through the school as a result of good teaching. Standards in lessons observed by the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with national expectations and match teacher assessments. Standards by the end of Key Stage 4 are also in line with national expectations with a number of pupils achieving above. GCSE examination results in sports science are well above national averages, with 61 per cent achieving A* to C in 2000.
152. By the end of Year 9, pupils in games have a sound knowledge and understanding of the rules and positional play and are able to perform the basic sending and receiving skills with increasing control and apply them into a competitive game. In Year 7 gymnastics pupils are able to plan, perform and evaluate a simple gymnastic sequence using the floor and simple apparatus. Although the majority of pupils are at the beginners stage, a small number of more able pupils perform with increasing control, fluency and clarity of body shape. In Year 7 cross-country pupils demonstrated sound levels of physical fitness and are beginning to build up their strength and stamina. A number of pupils showed good levels of fitness and were able to sustain activity over an extended period of time. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils increase their knowledge, understanding and performance skills in a range of activities. In games the more able pupils perform sending and receiving skills with control, accuracy and consistency changing pace and direction to outwit their opponents using more advanced tactics.
153. Pupils have positive attitudes to their work. They are well behaved and willing to be physically active. Pupils enjoy their lessons and participation rate is high. This is due to the high expectations of all staff in the department. Their enthusiasm and positive role model motivates the pupils. In both key stages pupils are aware of their own and others safety and use the equipment

and facilities with due care and attention. As pupils move through the school they develop good social and co-operative skills in partner and group work and in competitive play they demonstrate fair play and good sporting behaviour.

154. Teaching and learning are good overall. All teachers are knowledgeable specialists in a range of activities. The management of pupils is good and positive relationships are developed fostering confidence, trust and respect. Praise and encouragement is given in a sensitive and supportive manner. Lessons are well planned and organised with a balance of activities however lessons do not always end with a cool down. Teachers make good use of demonstrations for pupils to emulate and questioning to improve their knowledge and understanding. In games tasks are often teacher directed with insufficient opportunities for pupils to be responsible for their own learning and to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities. Teaching is very good in the examination groups where target setting, regular testing and focused learning takes place.
155. Physical education is a strength in the school because it provides a wide range of activities in the curriculum and extra curricular including health-related exercise taught as a discrete area and the highly successful and popular examination course. The curriculum at Key Stage 3, however, has an emphasis on games; time allocation is below the national average, and a small number of pupils do not have access to the same curriculum. In Key Stage 4 pupils do not choose their two areas of activity to study in depth at the beginning of Year 10 and there are no opportunities to achieve accredited vocational qualifications. Pupils have extensive opportunities to play in intra and inter school matches and fixtures and a number of pupils go on to play at local and regional level.
156. Leadership and management are very good. Day to day structures and procedures are very effective and efficient supported by a developing handbook. Careful financial planning has enabled the department to provide good learning resources especially for the examination groups. However the gymnastic equipment is old and needs replacing. The department works well together as a team, is committed and gives generously of their time. Information and communication technology is a weakness and the department currently does not make effective use of data. Schemes of work now need reviewing to bring them in line with the National curriculum. Indoor accommodation is inadequate to support the present curriculum especially in inclement weather. Changing rooms are small for the numbers of pupils using them at any one time and storage is inadequate to safely and secure equipment.
157. Since the last inspection the department has maintained the good quality of teaching and learning and has worked hard to significantly raise standards and recruit high numbers in GCSE groups. Participation rate is now high and pupils' attitudes and relationships are good. Teaching and learning styles to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities and develop pupils as independent learners still need further development. There also remains a number of pupils in Key Stage 3 who do not have access to the same curriculum.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

158. Pupils achieve well in religious education and make good progress in lessons. In 1999, for the first time, over half the pupils in Year 11 were entered for the GCSE short course and nearly a quarter gained A* to C grades. In 2000 the whole of Year 11 was entered and well over half the pupils gained A* to C grades. This good result, which was one of the best in the school, was largely due to well focused, effective teaching and positive attitudes to the subject in the classroom.
159. Attainment in Year 9 is slightly below the level expected by the Kent Agreed Syllabus. Most pupils are developing a sound knowledge of the key features of the Buddhist, Christian, Hindu and Muslim traditions. They understand the importance of religious beliefs and practices within different faith communities but find it more difficult to appreciate how these can make a difference to individuals. Written work is quite well presented but tends to be brief and sometimes inaccurate. Attainment in the Year 11 GCSE groups is broadly in line with national averages. Pupils have a sound knowledge of Christian and Muslim beliefs and practices. They discuss social and moral issues well and understand related religious perspectives, for example on marriage and divorce. Attitudes to RE in the classroom are positive and standards of behaviour are good.

160. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, and sometimes very good. Work is planned thoroughly so that pupils' learning is clearly structured to help them make maximum progress. A reasonable range of teaching methods is used; in one Year 9 lesson, for example, video material was well used to extend pupils' understanding of aspects of Islam. Effective classroom management helps pupils respond positively to oral questioning and written assignments. Lessons are taken at a good pace so that best use is made of lesson time. All written work is marked and acknowledged but at the moment insufficient help is given to pupils on ways to improve.
161. The level of improvement since the last inspection has been good. All pupils now follow GCSE courses in Year 10 and 11 and their attainment in all years has improved. In Years 7 to 9 attitudes to RE and standards of behaviour have also improved significantly. The quality of teaching has become more consistent since the last inspection, although half the lessons in Years 10 and 11 are still taken by non-specialist teachers. The department is well led and organised, and a good scheme of work and improved resources have helped to raise standards in the subject.