

INSPECTION REPORT

CANNOCK CHASE HIGH SCHOOL

Cannock

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124466

Headteacher: Mr. D.J. Knight

Reporting inspector: Mr. D. Driscoll
11933

Dates of inspection: 11th – 15th September 2000

Inspection number: 223954

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of students:	11 to 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Hednesford Road Cannock Staffordshire
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. G. Hindley
Date of previous inspection:	6th November 1995

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			Teaching and learning
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Cannock Chase High School is a very large, mixed, foundation comprehensive school educating pupils between the ages of 11 and 18. The number of pupils on roll has risen from 1286 at the time of the last inspection to a current figure of 1813, very few of whom are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Nineteen pupils have English as an additional language, although all are relatively fluent in English. The pupils in most year groups at the school arrived with levels of attainment that were below average. However, pupils' attainment on entry to the school has been improving steadily over the past few years and is now average. Around one in seven pupils has special educational needs; a proportion that is below the national average. Over one in twenty pupils have Statements of Special Educational Needs; that is above the national average and double the proportion at the time of the previous inspection. The socio-economic circumstances of the students are broadly average. The school is very popular with parents and there are more children applying to join the school than there are places available.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good and effective school where pupils achieve well. The school achieves results that are average, and improving, at the end of Key Stage 4 and above average at A level. Overall, the school provides good value for money and the sixth form is very cost effective.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve well in almost all their subjects as a result of the good teaching that they receive.
- Standards are improving at a rate that is above the national average because of the very good leadership of the headteacher.
- Pupils develop very well as young adults as a result of the very good systems for monitoring and promoting their personal development.

What could be improved

- Targets on individual education plans are too vague to help those teachers who have difficulty setting work of an appropriate standard for pupils with special educational needs.
- Some pupils are underachieving in design and technology, modern foreign languages and religious education because of weaknesses in the curriculum.
- The structure of the timetable does not promote good punctuality and reduces the amount of time spent teaching.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since the previous inspection. Provisional results for 2000 show large increases in the proportions achieving the national standard in the core subjects at the end of Key Stage 3. Examination results at GCSE have improved at a rate that is better than the national average and results at A level have improved from well below to above average. The quality of teaching has improved significantly. The school has made very good use of information from monitoring to set targets for improvement and consistently meets them. Most of the weaknesses identified in the previous report have been addressed successfully and some, such as the provision for staff development, have been converted into strengths. Weaknesses still remain in the provision for pupils with special educational needs.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	D	C	C	B
A levels/AS-levels	B	C	B	

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

Pupils' performances in the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were well above the national average in English, average in mathematics and below average in science. Provisional results for 2000 indicate very significant improvement in mathematics and science in particular. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at GCSE grades A* to C was average, as were the proportions gaining one or more and five or more GCSEs at grades A* to G. These results represent good levels of achievement. Results, using the average GCSE points score per pupil, have risen at a rate that is faster than that found nationally. Pupils achieve better results than those in similar schools and better results than would be expected given their attainment on entry to the school. Results at A level have improved dramatically from well below to above average.

The work seen during the inspection generally confirms the results of tests and examinations although in several subjects the standards seen are higher, reflecting the general trend of improvement. Standards of attainment are above average in most subjects, but below average in modern foreign languages and religious education at Key Stage 4. There is also a degree of underachievement in design and technology at Key Stage 3.

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

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good: pupils demonstrate a willingness to learn and an enthusiasm for the activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good: pupils respond well to the high expectations of behaviour. The number of permanent exclusions is low.
Personal development and relationships	Very good: pupils demonstrate a great respect for the feelings and beliefs of others, which leads to very good relationships throughout the school and a distinct absence of bullying or other oppressive behaviour.
Attendance	Satisfactory overall, with a below average rate of unauthorised absence.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Good

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

Teaching is at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons and is good or better in 69 per cent of lessons. Teaching is very good or better in 15 per cent of lessons, but less than satisfactory in four per cent of lessons. The proportions of lessons reaching these standards were similar in all years, although there was no unsatisfactory teaching in the sixth form. The consistency of good teaching is a major strength of the school and leads to pupils acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding at a good rate. Teaching is good in all three core subjects. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught to a satisfactory standard. Teaching is effective in meeting the needs of most pupils, but those with special educational needs make satisfactory rather than good progress because of inadequate individual education plans.

The strengths of the teaching lie in the teachers' knowledge of their subjects; the way in which they plan interesting lessons that challenge pupils, the way that maximum use is made of the time available and, most of all, the way that they manage their pupils, setting consistently high expectations of their pupils' behaviour. Such teaching leads to good learning where pupils are keen and motivated to work hard. The use of targets at Key Stage 4 ensures that pupils have a good knowledge of their own attainment and how to improve.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Unsatisfactory: there are weaknesses in design and technology, modern foreign languages and religious education, which do not meet statutory requirements, as well as information and communication technology, all of which reduce the progress made by pupils. The sixth form curriculum is good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Unsatisfactory: pupils do not make the good progress made by their peers because of inadequacies in co-ordination. Targets, and other information, on individual education plans are too vague to be of use to teachers.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good: the school makes good provision for cultural development and very good provision for moral and social development. There is not enough attention paid to spiritual development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good: there are very good procedures for monitoring and promoting both personal and academic development. The systems for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are also of a high standard.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good: the headteacher has earned the respect of parents, staff and pupils. There is a very clear focus on raising standards and a strong commitment to improvement on the part of staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory: the governing body has a good knowledge of the school, plays a very good role in its development but fails to meet some statutory requirements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. A good level of data analysis is used to target specific weaknesses.
The strategic use of resources	Good: The school targets its spending effectively at those areas which will have the most impact on standards. The principles of best value are applied very well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents are very pleased with almost all aspects of the work of the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is too much variation in the amount of homework set from day to day.

The inspection team agrees with the parents' views.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Pupils of all ages achieve well at the school, although middle and higher attaining pupils tend to make better progress at Key Stages 3 and 4 than those pupils with special educational needs. Until the current Year 7, pupils entered the school with levels of attainment that, overall, were below average. By the end of Key Stage 3, their attainment has risen to an average level and by the end of Key Stage 4 it is above average. Levels of attainment are above average by the time students leave the sixth form.
2. Attainment in the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in 1999 was close to the national average. The proportions of pupils reaching level five or above were close to the national average in English and below average in mathematics and science. The proportions reaching level six or above were above average in English, average in mathematics and below average in science. Overall, results were well above average in English, average in mathematics and below average in science. However, the provisional results for 2000 indicate significant improvement in the results for mathematics and a very large increase in science, whilst the results in English have been maintained. The average results over the past four years show that the girls usually outperform boys, but by no greater margin than that seen nationally. Results have been rising at a rate that is similar to that found nationally, despite a dip in results in 1998.
3. Overall, results were in line with those of schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds in 1999 and indications are that results have improved significantly in 2000.
4. The standards of work seen during the inspection differ from the results of the national tests in 1999, but are in line with those suggested by the provisional results for 2000. Pupils are now attaining above average standards in English and science and average standards in mathematics. This represents a good level of achievement for pupils in all three subjects. In the work seen, pupils also achieve well, compared to their attainment on entry to the school, in art, geography, history, physical education and religious education. Achievement is satisfactory in all other subjects except design and technology, where the curriculum is too narrow and pupils are underachieving. Standards are above the level expected in art and physical education and at the level expected in all other subjects except music where they are below the level expected nationally.
5. Since the previous inspection, standards of attainment have either been maintained or improved in all subjects.
6. In the GCSE examinations in 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at grades A* to C was close to the national average, as were the proportions gaining one or more and five or more passes at grades A* to G. The average points score per pupil in 1999 was also close to the national average. These results represent a good level of achievement given the pupils levels of attainment at the start of Key Stage 4. Results, using the average GCSE points score per pupil, have risen at a rate that is faster than that found nationally. Over recent years, results have risen from well below average to the national average. Results were above average in 1999 when compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds.
7. In 1999, GCSE results were well above average in geography and music. Results were broadly average in all other subjects except art and design and technology, where results were above average, and in science where results were below average. However the results for design and technology and science are both rather misleading, in that far fewer pupils study design and technology than is seen nationally and far more study double award science. Results in the short course GCSE in information technology were below the national average. Pupils performed particularly well in home economics and music and relatively poorly in science and history, compared to their performance in the other subjects that they studied. At the time of the

inspection, the results for 2000 had not been finalised but initial indications are that results for almost all subjects had either been maintained or improved.

8. In the work seen during the inspection, attainment is above the level expected nationally at the age of 16 in all subjects except English, geography, history, information and communication technology and science, where attainment is similar to the level expected nationally, and in modern foreign languages and religious education where attainment is below average. The standards of work seen during the inspection generally reflect the standards suggested by the GCSE results. However, there are some differences and in information and communication technology, physical education and science standards currently being attained are higher than the results from 1999 would suggest, reflecting the trend of improving standards in these subjects. In some subjects, the standards vary according to the attainments of the particular group of pupils studying the subject. The work seen in geography and music, for example, is not quite up to the high standards of last year's GCSE results. In modern foreign languages and religious education, the judgement on attainment is based on the standards of all the pupils, rather than just those who study for GCSE. Pupils achieve better standards than would usually be expected, given their levels of attainment at the start of the course, in all subjects except information and communication technology and science, where achievement is satisfactory and modern foreign languages and religious education where some pupils are underachieving. Achievement in music is very good. The underachievement in religious education is as a result of not having sufficient time to teach the Agreed Syllabus to those pupils who are not studying for the full GCSE. The underachievement in modern foreign languages is because some middle and higher attaining pupils have been placed on an inappropriate course that leads to a qualification well below the level of which they are capable.
9. Since the previous inspection, standards of attainment have either been maintained or improved in all subjects.
10. The average A level points score per candidate was above the national average in 1999 and was an improvement on the results from the previous year. Results were well above average in environmental science and physics and above average in information technology. Results were average in all other subjects except biology, where they were below average, and English and theatre studies where they were well below. The best results, when compared with students' attainment on starting the course, were in general studies and worst were in dramatic and expressive arts. The school has since changed the syllabus in theatre studies and the provisional results for 2000 were among the best in the school. Two students studied for, and passed, advanced GNVQ in business.
11. In the work seen during the inspection, attainment was above the level expected nationally in all subjects except English, music, physical education and religious education, where attainment is at the level expected nationally. These standards are generally reflected in examination results, although there are some differences caused by differing levels of attainment of the groups of students starting the courses. Students achieve very well in art and achieve well in all their other subjects except information technology where achievement is satisfactory.
12. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs at Key Stages 3 and 4 is satisfactory overall, but they do not make the same good progress as their peers. In most subjects, the expertise of the teachers ensures that pupils of all levels of attainment make similar progress. This is brought about by carefully matching work to the needs of the pupils. However, some find this difficult to do either because they are inexperienced or because the range of attainment is very large in the mixed ability groups. The teachers do not receive sufficient help and guidance from the individual education plans which are too vague and insufficiently monitored. This has a particular impact in design and technology, modern foreign languages and science. Students with special educational needs make good progress in the sixth form.
13. Pupils' standards of literacy are above average at Key Stage 3 and average at Key Stage 4, reflecting the improved standards of the more recent intakes. The contribution made by

subjects, other than English, to the pupils' development of literacy is uneven. Good practice exists in design and technology, art, religious education and geography but is not replicated to the same extent in all subjects.

14. In design and technology there are frequent opportunities for independent reading and pupils analyse a range of different resources. Some of the materials used are too difficult for some of the weaker readers to cope with independently. There are good opportunities for independent research in religious education and art, where reading for information is well supported through skills such as annotation, but in other subjects there are not enough structured opportunities for reading.
15. The standard of numeracy is satisfactory at both key stages. The great majority of pupils possess good basic skills in numeracy. Applications and aspects of numeracy across the curriculum focus mainly on the interpretation of data and use of graphs. Mental and estimating skills are not encouraged and the teachers often provide the numerical outcome to problems. In geography, good use is made of number on fieldwork studies, interpreting climate and rainfall data. In history, pupils study population statistics at the time of the industrial revolution. In science, graphical skills are developed well. At Key Stage 4, good use is made of algebra, substitution and transformation which continues into sixth form physics and chemistry lessons.
16. The rate at which pupils make progress is usually a result of the quality of teaching that they receive, so that where teaching is good, the standards achieved by pupils are higher than expected. However, there are some notable exceptions to this rule. Teaching is good in design and technology but the pupils are only achieving satisfactory standards at Key Stage 3 because the work of the different material areas is uncoordinated and pupils do not design and make products in a sufficiently wide range of materials. A similar situation exists in information and communication technology where the work that takes place in other subjects is not coordinated well enough to make up for the lack of discrete lessons. In modern languages, the Certificate of Achievement course is taught to a satisfactory standard, but the course itself is inappropriate for the middle and higher attaining pupils. The teaching in religious education is good, but there is insufficient time devoted to the subject at Key Stage 4.
17. Every year the management has set appropriately challenging targets for its performance that look for continued improvement. These targets are met each year.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

18. The overwhelming majority of pupils behaves well both in and out of lessons, showing a mature respect for others' feelings, and an awareness of their own responsibility for helping to create the calm, friendly and businesslike atmosphere that pervades the school. The quality of relationships amongst the pupils and between pupils and staff members is very good, stemming from the way that staff treat each pupil as an individual who is valued for themselves. The quality of relationships and behaviour, which have been sustained since the time of the previous inspection when the school had many fewer pupils, have a very positive effect on the standards of work that pupils achieve, since they can concentrate on their work in a relaxed, predictable environment.
19. In large numbers, pupils are enthusiastic about the school and what it has to offer them. Pupils from Year 7, who had attended the school for less than a week when the inspection took place, spoke warmly about the helpfulness of teachers and other pupils, and the atmosphere of trust that abounds. Year 11 pupils spoke of the very good support that they have received throughout their time in the school, which has encouraged them to believe in themselves and work hard to achieve their potential. Students in the sixth form enjoy the range of opportunities that are available to them, choosing to stay on at the school because of the good teaching and very good relationships with staff. Pupils of all ages take enthusiastic part in the many activities that are available outside lesson times, particularly sports, music and drama, and the great majority show interest and willingness to learn in lessons. The only area in which pupils' attitudes appear

somewhat less than enthusiastic is in their late arrival to lessons. In part this is caused by the difficulties of movement around a split site, but some pupils take advantage and the start of many lessons is delayed or interrupted by as much as ten minutes, as latecomers drift in and settle down.

20. Pupils behave in a mature and civilised manner. They are polite, friendly and spontaneously helpful, and know precisely where the line is drawn between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. The number of permanent exclusions is below that from schools of a similar size and type, while the number of fixed period exclusions is around the average. The school uses this sanction as one of last resort, and only a very small percentage of the total school population is involved, mostly boys from Year 10. Most of the pupils are excluded for only a single, short period, usually for their persistent failure to comply with the expectations of the community and after the pastoral staff have explored many other avenues in order to help them change their ways. The great majority of pupils want to behave well, and they are prepared to remonstrate with their peers, who may be causing a nuisance, since they see that such behaviour impinges on everyone's opportunity to learn. In a small number of lessons, where teachers failed to sustain pupils' interest, this resulted in their behaving in an unsatisfactory manner, but this is a highly unusual occurrence. The norm is for pupils to support their teachers. During one morning registration period the inspector arrived considerably before the form tutor since she was on duty. Pupils were all sitting quietly, amicably chatting among themselves and one unobtrusively left the room to warn their tutor of the inspector's presence. This admirably demonstrates the mature behaviour and good attitudes that are the norm throughout the school.
21. The very good relationships that abound among all those who work in the school are one of its strengths. Despite its size, it has the atmosphere of a large, supportive family in which the different members respect each other's opinions and needs. Pupils acknowledge that there are occasional instances of bullying but all those spoken with confirm that these are dealt with swiftly and very effectively so that this is a rare problem in the school. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds are fully integrated and valued, as are all pupils. Parents agreed that the school was very quick to stamp on any form of oppressive behaviour and praised the resulting high standards. Pupils instinctively move aside or open doors for those who have physical disabilities, and in lessons those who have understood a theme or topic more swiftly than others are usually happy to help their colleagues out. In most lessons pupils collaborate well on joint exercises and are very willing to use their initiative and take on responsibility for, for example, setting up experiments in science or developing improvisations in drama; there are, however, few opportunities for them to demonstrate these abilities in mathematics lessons. Pupils' maturity flourishes as they progress through the school, so that they develop into thoughtful young adults who are prepared to voice their opinions and contribute to the community, although too many are forgetful of the anti-social consequences of dropping litter. They listen well to, and value others' points of view. They consider current affairs and take a suitably moral stance over, for instance, food and fuel hoarding during the recent petrol protests. Year 9 pupils, who have received training, act as sensible and helpful peer mentors, other pupils responsibly organise sports teams and events, while the Year 13 prefects thoroughly enjoy their duties as helpers and role models for younger pupils. This warm relationship between the oldest and youngest members of the pupil population epitomises the atmosphere of friendship and support that runs throughout the school.
22. Pupils' levels of attendance at school are satisfactory, and similar to those achieved at the time of the previous inspection. The rate of unauthorised absence is considerably below the national average and has significantly reduced since 1995. In the most recent academic year, all the year groups with pupils of compulsory school age had attendance above ninety per cent, with many tutor groups achieving an average over the year of more than ninety-four per cent, which is high. Attendance levels in the sixth form are similar to those in the rest of the school. Last year around twenty per cent of pupils had the equivalent of one day or more a week absence from school, in other words their attendance for the year was below eighty per cent, but there are few pupils whose attendance is poor. Considerable numbers of pupils take term time holidays, some for more than the statutorily allowed ten days, but the majority of absence is caused by ill health. A small number of parents allow their children to stay away from school for inappropriate

reasons but the school works hard to alter these attitudes with the result that the overall levels of attendance compare favourably with those in the local area. Instances of internal truancy are minimal; pupils say that staff are extremely swift to notice if anyone disappears during the day. As with the good behaviour and relationships, pupils' regular attendance at school has a positive impact on their standards of work.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

23. The quality of teaching, and of the learning that such teaching promotes, is good in all years. Teaching is at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons and is good or better in 69 per cent of lessons. Teaching is very good or better in 15 per cent of lessons, but less than satisfactory in four per cent. The proportions of lessons reaching these standards were similar in all years in the main school, although there was no unsatisfactory teaching in the sixth form. The consistency of good teaching is a major strength of the school and leads to pupils acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding at a good rate.
24. At Key Stage 3, teaching is good in all subjects except design and technology, modern foreign languages and music, where it is satisfactory. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is good in all subjects except modern foreign languages and science, where it is satisfactory, and in information and communication technology where teaching is very good. In the sixth form, teaching is good in all subjects except mathematics and vocational education, where it is satisfactory, and in art where teaching is very good. The quality of learning matches the quality of teaching in all subjects except information and communication technology, where there are not enough computers in some classes. Despite this, the quality of learning is still satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4.
25. The teaching has many strengths and no significant weaknesses. The greatest strength in the teaching lies in the teachers' subject knowledge. This allows them to move away from their lesson plan to follow up individual pupils' own lines of inquiry. In geography, for example, the teachers' in depth knowledge of the Peak District meant that they were able to paint a graphic picture of the affects of increasing tourism. Providing such background, and being able to answer probing questions without having to refer to text books earns the respect of the pupils and helps to maintain their good levels of concentration. Such respect is also at the heart of the good way that teachers manage behaviour. They know their pupils very well as individuals and are adept at keeping them working hard simply by reinforcing the high expectations of the way that pupils should behave in lessons. In most lessons, pupils need very few reminders from the teacher to remain on task, simply because the lessons are interesting and the pupils are keen to learn. In drama, for example, the teachers are real performers who can enthuse pupils so that they do not even have time to think about misbehaviour.
26. The teachers also have high expectations of their pupils in terms of what they are able to achieve. At Key Stage 4 in particular, the teachers are made aware of the capabilities of their pupils through the use of assessment data that is converted into target grades. These are also conveyed to the pupils and it is explained to them that, although they may be working at a given level now, there is always somebody who greatly surpasses their target and, if they work hard enough, then they can be that somebody. This leads to pupils having a good knowledge of their own learning and the system is now being extended into Key Stage 3. Such expectations are reinforced by the good use that is made of the time available. In information and communication technology, for example, pupils are set work that makes use of the computers during lunchtimes and after school, effectively extending the length of the lesson. This is also an example of good homework, but overall the use of homework is satisfactory. There tends to be the right amount of homework set overall, but the variation between individual teachers, classes and even nights of the week is too great and leads to pupils having too much homework one night and too little the next. The school has responded to parents' concerns over the matter and is planning a new homework system. Pupils respond well to the high expectations and make consistently good efforts to improve their standards of attainment.

27. The high expectations that teachers have of middle and higher attaining pupils usually holds true for those with special educational needs. However, whilst many teachers have the skills to enable them to set suitably demanding work for all pupils, teachers of design and technology, modern foreign languages and science do not always set work of an appropriate level of difficulty for pupils with special educational needs, particularly in the mixed ability classes. The pupils can either be left behind or find the work easy because their needs are not properly identified on the individual education plans and the targets on them are too vague. This match of method to the capability of the pupil is the most significant difference between good teaching and satisfactory teaching. Good use is made of the support staff in lessons, particularly in physical education, to support pupils with statements of special educational needs.
28. All subjects make good use of the resources that are available. The computers are generally used well and one excellent example was provided by a French lesson. The pupils logged onto a French resort's website and were given a number of research tasks to carry out, such as finding out the name of a film that was playing at the cinema. The pupils had to use their existing French to navigate the site and try to get the gist of the meaning of many unfamiliar terms. The pupils were really excited about the way that the task was presented and produced a great deal of work in the lesson. Indeed, they did not want to stop at the end. The success of the lesson was down to good planning, which is widespread across the school, and the availability of a support teacher with a good knowledge of computers.
29. Satisfactory attention is paid to developing the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. However, this tends to be uncoordinated. For example, geography teachers place a strong emphasis on the correct spelling of geographical terms. In design and technology and religious education the pupils write in a good range of different contexts. However, there is not enough attention paid to literacy in mathematics. Most teachers mark and assess basic accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar and pupils pay attention to the detail of their work. A similar situation exists with numeracy skills. For example, many teachers positively discourage reliance on the calculator for straightforward calculations but in other lessons pupils use the calculator for the simplest of tasks.
30. The marking of work is generally good. Most teachers mark work both regularly and thoroughly. Comments explain exactly where the pupil has gone wrong or where the weaknesses are in the work. Targets are set for improvement in many subjects and deadlines enforced. However, the marking in mathematics is unsatisfactory. Homework is ticked but comments are rare and it is not the policy of the department to mark pupils' classwork, which leads to poor written work going unchallenged.
31. There have been significant improvements in teaching since the previous inspection and there is now a greater proportion of teaching that is good or better and a smaller proportion of teaching that fails to reach a satisfactory standard.

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

32. The breadth and balance of the curriculum is unsatisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4, but good in the sixth form. The length of the teaching week at 25 hours is in line with the national average. However, the structure of the timetable results in many lessons starting late as there is no time for movement between lessons, despite the large nature of the site. There is, however, an extra lesson at the end of each day for the teaching of sixth form subjects.
33. At Key Stage 3, all pupils study the subjects of the National Curriculum as well as religious education, drama and personal, social and health education. However, the curriculum in design and technology does not meet statutory requirements as pupils do not design and make products in a sufficiently wide range of materials. In information and communication technology, the lack of a co-ordinated approach to the use of computers in other subjects leads to inequalities in the provision that pupils receive. There is also a break in continuity caused by the lack of lessons in Year 8 that leads to work having to be repeated in Year 9.

34. At Key Stage 4, all pupils follow a core curriculum, with a good range of further subjects from which to choose. However, the curriculum for the individual pupil is not necessarily broad and balanced and as such is unsatisfactory. Statutory requirements are not met in design and technology as it is offered as an option and a number of pupils do not study a design and technology course. Religious education does not meet the statutory requirements of the Agreed Syllabus as there is insufficient time for topics to be covered in the appropriate depth. The Certificate of Achievement course is unsuitable for many pupils studying a foreign language and does not meet statutory requirements.
35. In the sixth form there is a good range of AS and A level courses. The provision of few vocational courses is appropriate given the provision that exists elsewhere in the vicinity. Religious education does not meet statutory requirements, as it is taught as part of general studies, which is optional.
36. The number of statutory breaches throughout the school means that the school cannot ensure equality of access to the curriculum and this is unsatisfactory.
37. The school makes satisfactory provision for the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Good specialist teaching in the English and mathematics departments has a positive impact on standards at Key Stages 3 and 4. The head of English has provided good guidance to her colleagues on techniques such as the use of writing frames and reading strategies. However, there is no such guidance from the head of mathematics. Good practice exists in design and technology, art, religious education and geography but is not replicated to the same extent in other subjects. There is a lack of co-ordination across departments in the explicit planning for and development of both literacy and numeracy skills. The school has rightly identified the need for a whole school policy on literacy in order to achieve a consistent and rigorous approach and one is scheduled for the end of the current term, but the same cannot be said for numeracy.
38. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory, although there are two distinct elements to the provision. Pupils with statements of special educational needs are supported well by support in class and appropriate withdrawal from lessons for extra help. However, there are many weaknesses in the individual education plans for other pupils on the register of pupils with special educational needs. Individual education plans are not in place for all pupils on the register and where they do exist they lack sufficient detail in terms of targets, criteria for success, what teachers should be doing to support the pupils within individual subjects, current levels of achievement or even the nature of the pupil's difficulties. This leads teachers to cope on their own in the classroom and the lack of information means that, in some cases, pupils with special educational needs are unable to make the good progress of their peers.
39. The school offers a good range of extra-curricular opportunities for pupils, which helps enrich the curricular provision. Extensive activities take place in music, drama and sport, and there are many cross department initiatives such as the Year 9 science and drama day. Across the school, departments offer curricular clubs, activities and educational visits. The physical education department offers a wide range of activities for all abilities. Supervised by all the physical education staff, these are well supported by approximately forty eight per cent of pupils.
40. A good moral, personal and social education programme is provided for pupils throughout their school life, and this is proving effective in preparing them for future education, the work place and adult life. Systems are in place to monitor the delivery and success of the programme, which includes health education, sex education, bullying and drug misuse. The school's provision for careers education and guidance is good. In Key Stage 4 it includes the opportunity for all pupils to have one week's appropriate work experience. All work experience is carefully monitored and the staff provide careful preparation and follow-up, both during, and after the placement.

41. The school has established good links with the community, which enhance the pupils' intellectual and personal development. These include good links with businesses, and with the Youth Service and other partner institutions, for example the use of computer aided manufacture delivered at a local college, and all of these are supporting the curriculum. Links with primary schools make the transfer of pupils efficient and productive for both schools, primarily so that the pupils feel confident and happy in the transition.
42. The last inspection report said that the school was successful in providing breadth and balance in the curriculum it offered at all key stages, this is now not the case at either Key Stage 3 or 4. The sixth form curriculum, however, has improved. Comment was made that some time was lost through movement, this is still the case and is having an impact on the teaching time in many lessons. The provision for pupils with special educational needs was heavily criticised in the previous report and there are still significant weaknesses in the provision. Therefore, there has been unsatisfactory progress since the time of the last inspection.
43. The school makes good overall provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
44. The school's provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory. There is no whole school approach to promoting pupils' spiritual development in the classroom. Where there is good practice, it is as a result of initiatives at individual departmental level. For example, in English pupils are provided with good opportunities for reflection. In art they draw inspiration from the beauty of the natural world, and from the mythology of the ancient god and goddesses. In history they are challenged with the spiritual worldview underlying medieval culture. In physical education, pupils explore their feelings and emotions through movement. In religious education they explore the mysteries of creation, but not all pupils study the subject in the sixth form. In other subjects, opportunities are missed to enhance pupils' spiritual awareness. The school has offered parents the opportunity for their children to take part in a daily act of collective worship, to be held before the start of the school day. Parents have, however, declined this opportunity on behalf of their children, and consequently, there is no daily act of collective worship. Assemblies are held weekly for each year group. They are primarily moral and social in tone, and largely devoid of any religious or spiritual content. There is no evidence of any spiritual dimension in tutor time.
45. The school makes very good provision for the moral development of pupils. It has clear values, based on respect and caring for the individual, which are shared by parents, pupils and teachers alike, and which inform its daily life. Pupils learn right from wrong, and improve their behaviour. Their teachers provide good role models, demonstrating the respect for others that the wish pupils to acquire. There is an effective programme of personal, social and moral education, complemented by a modular studies programme covering moral issues relating to substance abuse and relationships. Pupils are confronted with moral issues in a number of other subjects. In English they explore the rightness of motives and actions through texts such as Macbeth. In drama and science they examine the ethical implications of genetic engineering, and in geography, issues relating to the environment. In history they are challenged by anti-Semitism and the holocaust, while in religious education they explore religious insights into a wide range of moral questions.
46. The school also makes very good provision for the social development of pupils. Pupils' self-esteem is enhanced and positive achievement given public recognition, through the merit awards. Pupils are given very good opportunities to take responsibility and develop leadership and social skills, through, for example the prefect system and the sixth form council. Pupil volunteers are trained to act as peer mediators to help resolve conflicts, and older pupils support younger ones with their reading skills. The Duke of Edinburgh Scheme, the Young Enterprise Scheme, residentials, field trips and sports activities and teams all make a positive contribution to pupils' social development.
47. Pupils are also given very good opportunities to develop skills of collaborative working through paired and small group activities in lessons. Social issues are addressed in the personal, social

and moral education programme, and in a number of other subjects in the classroom. Social issues permeate work in English, for example, in exploring the relationship between language, society and gender. In history, pupils explore constitutional change, and the protest movements of the 19th and 20th centuries, such as the suffragettes. In geography they explore the roles of men and women in different societies, and in religious education, issues relating to racial segregation.

48. The school makes good provision for the cultural development of pupils. They have very good opportunities to develop their skills in the creative and expressive arts through musical and dramatic activities outside the classroom. They can develop the skills of performing for an audience through regular annual productions, concerts, and participation in dance and drama festivals. They are also given good opportunities to develop their aesthetic awareness through theatre and museum trips. In English, there is a strong emphasis on this country's literary heritage.
49. Pupils' understanding of other European cultures is enhanced through language based and other study trips abroad, for example to France and Spain, and by recreational trips, such as for skiing. During their Activity Day, Year 7 pupils have the opportunity to explore the way of life of the Hindu, Moslem and Sikh communities through visits to a mandir, mosque and gurdwara. Some subjects raise pupils' awareness of the multi-cultural diversity of contemporary British society. Religious education introduces pupils to the beliefs and practices of the major faith communities of the country. In geography, pupils are led to value diversity through the study of Kenyan, Bangladeshi, Brazilian and Japanese cultures. In history, they form an appreciation of the contribution of Islam to civilisation. Physical education draws on traditional games from other cultures.
50. The high standards of social, moral and cultural provision have been maintained since the previous inspection. There were no judgements on spiritual provision in the previous report.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

51. The school provides very good care for its pupils. Staff members work together in a highly effective manner to help all pupils feel at ease and confident that they are valued as individuals. This is no small success for a large community working on a split site. Parents and pupils alike praise the pastoral care provided by the school, which enables pupils to concentrate on their work within a predictable, supportive environment and, thus, achieve good standards of work. This caring side to the school emanates from the very top. Its success is due to the way in which the pastoral manager skilfully leads her year and form tutors to combine systematic record keeping systems with an all important emphasis on each pupil's particular circumstances, so that any support is tailored to their individual need.
52. Much time and trouble is taken over ensuring that Year 7 pupils settle swiftly at the school. The good relationships that have been built up with the primary schools that send pupils to Cannock Chase, mean that pupils have good opportunities to meet some of the secondary school staff, and that these staff have an accurate profile of their new pupils' strengths and weaknesses. During the inspection, pupils in their first week at the school appeared confident and happy.
53. Procedures for ensuring good discipline and eliminating any oppressive behaviour are very good. Staff are, by and large, consistent in their expectations of behaviour and their issuing of rewards and sanctions, and they encourage pupils to tell them if they have any problems. Individual teachers, particularly the form tutors who mostly stay with their pupils as they progress through the school and teach them for their personal and social education lessons, are also observant and quick to notice if a pupil appears unhappy, or their standards of work are deteriorating. Staff build up very good relationships with pupils who, then, want to behave well for their teachers. This trusting relationship between staff and pupils also means that concerns relating to child protection are dealt with well. The formal procedures relating to this area are very good, with all information handled in a suitably confidential manner. There is regular training about child

protection for all staff, and good liaison with outside agencies in order to offer pupils the best possible support.

54. Staff register and monitor attendance in a satisfactory manner and work closely with the Education Welfare Service, with the result that levels of attendance at the school are around the national average, and consistent throughout all year groups. Pupils state that staff are very quick to detect any truancy. However, many staff are too ready to accept the late arrival of pupils at lessons without question, making generous allowances for the time it takes to move between sites. Also, the absence of unequivocal procedures for recording when sixth form students arrive and leave the site creates a health and safety hazard.
55. The highly efficient and effective Pupil Referral System, which was praised in the previous report, enables staff to build up an accurate and objective picture of every pupil in the school. There is a clear hierarchy for the flow of information, and scope for those who make referrals to know what action has been taken. The system can be adapted to any concern whether this is attendance or behaviour or standards of academic work and provides concrete evidence, which can be used as a starting point for discussions with pupils, parents, school staff or outside agencies. It is used for 'good news' as well as bad. During the year there are also two specific occasions on which staff compile reports on the behaviour, effort and homework of each pupil whom they teach, so a comprehensive record is built up. This is used when form tutors discuss with pupils their individual progress during the one to one "Future Focus" meetings that pupils find very helpful. As pupils progress through the school, pastoral staff develop a clear picture of which individuals need support and the teachers are very willing to adapt the school's provision to the individual's needs. For example, teachers provide work for those whose ill-health keeps them from school; pupils who have poor attendance may work an adapted timetable in order to ease their re-entry to lessons; or older pupils who become disaffected with school are helped to gain valuable training through such programmes as the Beacon Project.
56. The school nurse provides another very useful thread to the school's network of support for pupils. She complements the work of the external health professionals who deliver the standard medical care for pupils by, for example, organising the immunisation programmes, offering care to pupils who have specific medical needs or feel unwell, and administering first aid throughout the school. This means that teaching and other support staff can concentrate on their tasks without interruption.
57. Pupils' welfare is less well catered for in terms of health and safety. Within departments, staff conduct regular risk assessments and generally carry out their day to day activities in a safe manner. However, on a whole school basis, it is not clear precisely who has responsibility for ensuring that risk assessments are carried out regularly, and that appropriate action is taken to remedy any hazards. Inspectors drew the school's attention to various items of concern, particularly the poor standard of footpaths and paved areas around the school, and the condition of the pupils' toilets, especially those in the upper school site.
58. The quality of pastoral care has improved still further from the good provision evident at the time of the previous inspection.
59. The school's procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. A substantial amount of data on pupils' attainment is collected and recorded when they enter the school, including end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test results and the results from cognitive ability tests; this information is then communicated to heads of department for their guidance. As pupils progress up the school, information gathered on their attainment is stored on a central departmental record, updated during the year and available to every class teacher. The system is complemented by information on pupils' behaviour, effort, homework and progress, which is collected twice a year in all subjects and is also made available to every member of staff. The system for assessing pupils' attainment and progress is good in every department, apart from in information and communication technology where it is very good.

60. The use made of assessment in planning the curriculum is satisfactory. The school uses information on pupils' attainment from Key Stage 3 National Curriculum test results and in GCSE examinations to predict their attainment at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form respectively. Each pupil is then given minimum target grades for performance in GCSE and A level examinations and pupils identified as underachieving are offered support through the mentoring system. The system is very effective in making teachers aware of the capabilities of their pupils and allowing them to set high expectations in the classroom. The system is now being introduced in Key Stage 3. The use made of assessment in planning the curriculum is good in information and communication technology, geography, science, religious education, music and English and satisfactory in all other departments. There are some good examples of departments using assessment information to improve provision; for example, in English, it is used not only to determine pupil-grouping arrangements, such as having separate teaching groups for boys and girls, but also in setting specific targets for improvements in subject skills.
61. Much of this good work, however, is offset by the unsatisfactory assessment of pupils on stages two to four of the special educational needs register. The individual education plans do not clearly identify monitoring and recording arrangements and the review dates are unrealistic and infrequent. Pupils are initially placed on the appropriate stage of the register, but are not assessed regularly to decide if and when further support is required.
62. With the exception of the provision for special educational needs, the assessment of pupils has improved since the previous inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

63. The school has good links with parents. Parents and the school work together in a close partnership that enhances the quality of education provided by the school and, thus, has a good impact on the standards achieved by pupils. The partnership is built at a personal level, with staff keeping in good touch with parents when necessary, but overall, the written communication is not so comprehensive, and, in a very positive return to the inspection questionnaire, this is the area that parents felt least happy about. The great majority of parents hold very positive views about the school, and over recent years parents from an increasingly wide area have made it their first choice of secondary education for their children. They consider that it is well managed and they particularly like the way in which staff are so approachable and respond swiftly to any concerns or suggestions. Parents are happy that their children are expected to work hard at the school, and consider that the good teaching enables pupils to make good progress in their academic work, while developing a mature attitude to life. Inspectors' findings agree with parents' opinions.
64. The school regularly consults with parents about whole school issues, through questionnaires or meetings of the Parent Teacher Association, and staff try hard to work in partnership with parents when it comes to resolving problems of individual behaviour or general effort. They use the information amassed through the Pupil Referral System to contact parents at an early stage in order to nip any potential problems in the bud, but also to highlight any pupil's particularly good progress or contribution to the community, and celebrate this with a letter home. Through interim reports, evening meetings and informal dialogue, parents are kept sufficiently well informed about their children's progress. However, while pupils' annual written reports give a clear indication of their overall standards of achievement, they provide little detail about their particular areas of strength and weakness within a subject and in some reports the targets identified for pupils are not sufficiently focussed on specific problems. Newsletters and curriculum information sheets give parents a good overview of school events and what their children are studying, but there is no regular vehicle through which parents can gain a comprehensive view of all the activities which pupils take part in. Neither the governors' annual report nor the prospectus includes all the required information, nor do they do justice to the vibrant nature of the school community.

65. Whilst the quality of much of the information provided for parents is of a good quality, the overall quality is brought down to a satisfactory level by the quality of information for parents from the special needs department. Parents are not involved with the drawing up of individual education plans and the success criteria are not written in a way that parents find easy to understand.
66. One of the most outstanding features of the school's links with parents is the accessibility of the headteacher. He is always available for parents to drop in and talk from 7.30 am each day and many take advantage of this facility. All parents have his home 'phone number and know that they are free to contact him at any time. Parents speak with high praise for the way that the school makes them feel welcome.
67. Parents play a good part in their child's education. They attend in good numbers the meetings to discuss pupils' work, and the great majority are supportive about, for instance, ensuring that their children attend school regularly. They are diligent about overseeing their children's completion of homework, and some make good use of the opportunity provided in pupils' planners to express dissatisfaction with the amount or content of the work that teachers expect pupils to do at home. Teachers respond swiftly to such complaints. Many parents actively support the school's many sporting activities and a particularly dedicated band recently helped to paint the gymnasium, thereby saving the school a considerable amount of money. The Parent Teacher Association is an active group which involves itself in all areas of school life, from providing refreshments on open days, mounting events for pupils' entertainment, to acting as a sounding board of parental opinion.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

68. The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher and senior staff. The headteacher has developed a very strong sense of commitment among the staff to improving the education of all pupils and this has resulted in a rapid rise in examination results and a huge rise in the number of pupils choosing to stay on into the sixth form. Parents, teachers and pupils alike speak with genuine warmth of the respect and admiration that they have for the headteacher and the very good leadership that he provides. The school is particularly effective in meeting its aims and the values that it promotes regarding the importance of the individual are reflected in many aspects of its work.
69. Governors play a very good role in shaping the direction of the school through their good knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses. They are aware of the quality of the leadership of the headteacher and have confidence in his judgements. However, this does not prevent them from keeping a critical eye on proceedings and stepping in when they feel that it is appropriate. The one unsatisfactory element of their performance is the failure to ensure that statutory requirements are met. Not all pupils study design and technology and religious education and the curriculum does not meet requirements in design and technology and modern foreign languages. There is information missing from the prospectus and annual report of the governing body. Overall, the governing body discharges its responsibilities in an appropriate manner.
70. There are good systems for monitoring the work of the school, in particular the teaching and learning. Each department is reviewed twice in a three year cycle as well as regular observation of teaching by teachers in posts of responsibility. Strengths and weaknesses are discussed, with the strengths being passed on to colleagues and the weaknesses addressed. Good use is made of data from tests and examinations and from the views of parents. The heads of departments, for example, have been instrumental in bringing the school's attention to the link between homework and examination success. The school is now implementing a scheme to improve the emphasis that is placed on homework in order to raise standards further.
71. The school regularly evaluates the success of its systems to provide support, in its widest sense, for pupils. Staff critically assess their current practice and adapt what they do in the light of their findings. Pastoral staff work together as an effective team that uses the information gleaned about pupils to good advantage when offering them support and guidance.

72. Each year the management team reviews the progress that has been made by the school, draws up appropriate priorities for the next year's work and initiates good plans to address them. Priorities are always firmly rooted in raising standards and are based on a good analysis of information. For example, the school identified the underperformance of boys in English and put a project in place whereby they were taught separately from girls. This not only overcame the underperformance of the boys, but was also successful in improving the standards achieved by the girls. The results are evident in the improvement of, for example, the National Curriculum test results. Responsibilities are delegated to staff in posts of responsibility who respond well to their tasks.
73. Many subjects are managed well, although there is a clear link between the quality of management of a subject and the standards achieved. There is, for example, very good management in art where achievement in the sixth form is very good. The main weaknesses in management lie in the provision for special educational needs, design and technology and information and communication technology. The provision for all of these areas is uncoordinated and leads to an unsatisfactory provision in design and technology and for pupils with special educational needs. In information and communication technology, the achievement of the pupils is not as good as the quality of teaching that they receive.
74. The financial planning in the school is good. The school receives a basic budget that is allocated in April but is based on the number of pupils at the school in the previous January, so that the school is somewhat "out of pocket" in September when the numbers are increasing so rapidly. This happens each year and the school plans very effectively to cover the shortfall. The bursar keeps a very tight rein on spending and all requests for funds must meet carefully drawn up criteria based on the school's priorities for development. The grants for building work have been used appropriately and account for the apparently very high carry over from the previous year as the project has overlapped financial years.
75. The school applies very well the principles of best value and makes appropriate use of new technology. It compares its performance with the highest attaining schools in the area and consults widely with parents. One of the most impressive features is the way that the curriculum is costed. For example, the school runs several courses in the sixth form which have small numbers of students. However, this is able to take place at no extra cost to the school because of the dedication and professionalism of the teachers, who give up their non-contact time to ensure that the courses can run and leads to a very cost effective provision. Any extra curricular activities that are not directly related to raising standards in subjects must be self-funding. The bursar is rigorous in applying competitive tendering systems to ensure that the school gains the best value for money. Overall the school makes good use of the funds that are available to it.
76. The number, qualifications and experience of teaching and support staff is matched well to the demands of the curriculum. The ratio of pupils to teachers is average, but the amount of time that they spend teaching is high, reflecting the amount of non-contact time that they have given up to teach extra classes. Amongst the staff there is a good mixture of new, young and experienced staff. Learning support staff are experienced and well trained; they are used effectively to support statemented pupils. However, there is no systematic classroom support for the other pupils on the special needs register. This was reported in the last inspection report. Staff are dedicated, loyal and caring and work well as a team. The school values its staff very highly and invests considerable time and money in their development.
77. The school's arrangements for staff induction, training and continuous professional development are good and this is having a direct effect on raising standards. The whole process of school development planning, departmental planning, target setting, appraisal, training and now performance management combine to work most successfully. The process is tracked and the effectiveness of training is monitored well. The school has been rewarded with an "Investors in People" award. Staff training was a key issue at the last inspection and there has been significant improvement in this area.

78. Most subjects have sufficient resources and accommodation, although there are not enough basic items in science and computers for some classes in information and communication technology, both of which lead to pupils having to work in groups that are too large and some pupils therefore missing out on their practical experience.
79. The high standard of leadership and management evident at the time of the previous inspection has been maintained. All the key issues from the previous report have been addressed successfully, with the exception of improving the provision for pupils with special educational needs.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

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

(1) Ensure that targets and other information on individual education plans are more precise to help those teachers who have most difficulty in setting work of an appropriate standard for pupils with special educational needs. (Paragraph 38)

(2) Improve the curriculum by:

- ensuring that pupils design and make products in an appropriately wide range of materials at Key Stage 3 and that all pupils study the subject at Key Stage 4; (Paragraph 33 and 34)
- providing a suitably challenging course at Key Stage 4 in modern foreign languages; (Paragraph 34)
- providing sufficient time for the teaching of religious education at Key Stage 4 and ensuring that all students study the subject in the sixth form; (Paragraph 34 and 35)
- ensuring that there is sufficient time allowed for pupils to move between lessons so that they can arrive punctually. (Paragraph 32)

The school's management is already working on the first issue.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	235
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	67

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	15	54	26	4	0	0

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

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y13
Number of students on the school's roll	1813
Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals	264

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y13
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	71
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	210

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	19

Student mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	41
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	65

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.2
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
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 students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	139	138	277

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	82	80	58
	Girls	101	75	61
	Total	183	155	119
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	66 (49)	56 (54)	43 (52)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	34 (20)	36 (31)	11 (23)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	79	83	101
	Girls	103	90	105
	Total	182	173	206
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	66 (54)	63 (52)	75 (66)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (24)	37 (24)	28 (24)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	114	122	236

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	45	105	109
	Girls	62	115	118
	Total	107	220	227
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	45 (44)	93 (92)	96 (100)
	National	46.6 (43.3)	90.9 (88.5)	95.8 (94.0)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score Per student	School	38 (32.9)
	National	38 (36.8)

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	35	45	80

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	19.4	16.9	18.1 (17.5)	3.5	2.9	3.1 (2.6)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	Average point score
Number of students entered for Advanced GNVQs and the average points score per candidate	School	2
	National	10.2

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	4
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	6
Pakistani	7
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	3
White	1790
Any other minority ethnic group	2

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	1	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	38	6
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	107.4
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	263

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	80.0
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25
Key Stage 4	23

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	3806734
Total expenditure	4363717
Expenditure per student	2700
Balance brought forward from previous year	1044470
Balance carried forward to next year	487487

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1723
Number of questionnaires returned	195

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	46	43	7	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	52	44	2	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	38	51	7	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	44	48	5	1	2
The teaching is good.	47	49	2	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	49	37	9	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	28	1	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	78	21	1	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	47	44	6	2	1
The school is well led and managed.	70	28	2	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	43	2	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	52	3	2	5

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

ENGLISH

81. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests, the proportion of pupils reaching level 5 or above was in line with the national average and above the average for similar schools. The proportion reaching level 6 or above was above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. The relatively high proportion reaching level 6 and above raised the average points score to well above both the national average and the average for similar schools. Results have risen significantly over the past four years and provisional results for this year indicate that the standards of 1999 have been maintained. There were no significant differences in the results of boys and girls. Pupils did better in English than in their mathematics and science tests. These results represent good achievement given the pupils' below average standards on entry and reflect both good teaching and a good curriculum at Key Stage 3.
82. The proportion of pupils passing at grade C or higher in the 1999 English examination was in line with the national average as was the average points score. These results represent good levels of achievement given the pupils' end of Key Stage 3 test results. However, the pupils' performance in English was slightly lower than in most other subjects that they studied. Girls did better than boys but not more so than is the case nationally. Standards in GCSE English have improved considerably since 1997 when less than a third of pupils achieved C or higher. Provisional results for the 2000 examination show the improvement in standards has been maintained.
83. In the 1999 GCSE English literature examination the proportion passing at grade C or higher was in line with the national average. The school enters a smaller proportion of pupils than most schools although the entry rate increased in 1999. Despite the increased entry, the proportion achieving grade C or higher has been maintained and represents good achievement.
84. Results in both the 1999 A level English language and English literature examinations were well below the national average, albeit from a small number of candidates. In 1998 English language results were above the national average and English literature results were in line. Results fluctuate from year to year with the different standards of attainment of students starting the course, but are usually higher in language than literature. The results generally represent good levels of achievement for the students when their attainment on starting the course is taken into account.
85. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards are above the level expected nationally at the age of 14 and in line with the standards expected nationally at the ages of 16 and 18. Pupils of all levels of attainment are making good progress.
86. At the age of 14 standards of speaking and listening are good. The great majority of pupils are confident speakers who express themselves well and listen attentively. Standards of reading are above expectation because pupils understand that texts not only tell stories but also represent deeper meanings. This was clearly evident in one girl's analysis of how Ann Frank's use of language clearly conveyed her experience of anti-Semitism. Higher attainers have read some challenging material, such as 'Pride and Prejudice' and 'The Go-Between', and respond positively to Durrell's rich use of imagery in 'My Family and Other Animals'. Standards of writing are above expectation because at least two thirds of the pupils can write clear, accurately punctuated English. They make good progress in developing paragraphing and organisation. The higher attainers write with a clear sense of audience, varying and controlling sentence length.
87. Lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, do not use standard English consistently. Nevertheless, they listen well and express themselves clearly. When reading, their fluency is well below average but they can identify broad differences between formal and informal language. Their writing displays frequent errors in expression and accuracy,

although their handwriting is of a better standard than usually seen by pupils of similar attainment.

88. At the age of 16 standards of speaking and listening are above average. As well as conveying information pupils develop arguments and justify opinions clearly. Standards of reading and writing are broadly average. The higher attaining pupils have very high standards of reading, producing closely analysed comparisons between Blake's 'London' and Wordsworth's 'Lines Composed on Westminster Bridge'. Middle attaining pupils understand their texts well but do not consistently apply their knowledge effectively to answering the requirements of the title of an assignment. Most pupils write clear and accurate English. The work of the higher attaining pupils is outstanding. Pieces such as the witty and superbly written parody of 'Brideshead Revisited' by one Year 11 boy show great audience awareness and a rich range of vocabulary. Although they convey meaning clearly, a proportion of middle attaining pupils do not consistently reach the expected level because their grasp of punctuation and formal expression in writing is not as strong as other middle attaining pupils. Nevertheless, pupils are making good progress, sustaining the improvements achieved in Key Stage 3 and benefiting from the department's policy of teaching 'target sets' at the C/D borderline.
89. Some lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, reach average levels of attainment in their speaking and listening but a few are still not secure enough in their use of standard English in appropriate contexts. Their reading skills are below average, although they can retell the main events of the texts they study. Writing standards are also below average, and in the case of a small number of pupils taking the Certificate of Achievement, well below, because of inaccuracies.
90. At the age of 18, higher attaining students are producing highly analytical pieces in their English language course that are above the level normally seen on an A level course. Middle attaining students meet the standard expected. Their work shows sound understanding of issues such as the impact of gender on language use, but lacks the succinctness and insight of the higher attainers. Lower attaining students are more superficial. In English literature overall standards are in line with the level expected but there is little evidence of students consistently exceeding expectation. Although knowledge of the texts is good students do not consistently apply this in a focused way to the title's requirements. They also tend to pay insufficient attention to the link between language and meaning. Nevertheless, as a result of good specialist teaching, these students are making good progress, given their prior attainment.
91. Overall, pupils' standards of literacy are above average at Key Stage 3 and broadly average at Key Stage 4, reflecting the improved standards of the more recent intakes. The contribution made by subjects, other than English, to the pupils' development of literacy is uneven. In design and technology there are frequent opportunities for independent reading and pupils analyse a range of different resources. Some of the materials used are too difficult for some of the weaker readers to cope with independently. There are good opportunities for research in religious education and art – where reading for information is well supported through skills such as annotation - but in other subjects there are not enough structured opportunities for reading.
92. The development and use of subject vocabulary are strengths in design and technology, art, religious education and geography. In science the development of the use of key words is increasing but not well established across the subject. A clear policy in geography identifies opportunities for developing literacy skills, especially through the use of different writing tasks. Geography teachers also place a strong emphasis on the correct spelling of geographical terms. In design and technology the pupils write in a good range of different contexts as they do in religious education. In art pupils do a lot of analytical writing and the importance of developing literacy is well set out in the department handbook and clearly has a positive impact. There is not enough attention paid to literacy in mathematics.
93. The standards of teaching and learning are good throughout the school. A significant strength is the subject expertise of the teachers. Pupils value this expertise and so respond positively and with high levels of interest, focusing on developing their skills of accuracy, expression and the

depth of their response to the texts. Good planning means that lessons have a clear series of activities that develop learning. This was clearly evident during a Year 13 English language lesson in which students applied and extended their own knowledge of the linguistic strategies of political speeches because of a series of well-directed and paced activities. At both Key Stages 3 and 4 teachers focus explicitly on developing skills that improve attainment. The development of challenging and good quality reading resources at Key Stage 3 has secured a good basis for progress at Key Stage 4. High expectations are reflected in this material and in the policy of teaching boys and girls separately in Years 8 and 9. During a Year 9 lesson with middle attaining boys on the development of language, the teacher deliberately structured her questions to match the boys' preference for opportunities to speculate and analyse. She successfully drew them into thinking more deeply about the topic. Marking at Key Stage 4 is strong with accurate use of grades and clear recognition of strengths and weaknesses. Regular homework throughout the school has a positive effect on improving standards and cementing good attitudes to work. Whole class teaching is consistently brisk with good pace, however during some lessons there was a lack of urgency about the pace of the pupils' work when they were working in small groups or individually. In the best teaching pace was sustained throughout the lesson. For example, during a Year 9 lesson with middle attaining girls, a brisk and rigorous approach to whole class and small group work resulted in highly motivated learning that was very good in terms of both quality and quantity. Some marking at Key Stage 3 underestimates the standards of the pupils' work. The department makes good use of information about the pupils' previous standards when setting targets at Key Stage 4. However, at Key Stage 3 it does not make enough use of the pupils' Key Stage 2 standards to set targets, so pupils are unclear about their potential.

94. The head of department provides strong leadership by ensuring that there is a clear focus on improving standards. This has led to the development of a highly professional and committed team. Together they have they have improved standards through the careful targeting of pupils and their grouping, the monitoring of teaching and learning, good monitoring of pupils' progress and the provision of improved professional development. The department tackle issues, such as the underachievement of boys, head on with impressive results. There are, however, not enough opportunities for the pupils to use computers in their lessons.
95. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Examination results have improved at both Key Stages 3 and 4. There were no clear judgements in the previous report against which to judge improvement in teaching.

Drama

96. In 1999, the number of pupils gaining A* to C grades at GCSE was in line with the national average. Results at A level in theatre studies were well below average. The school subsequently changed to A level drama and provisional results indicate that the results for 2000 are among the best in the school.
97. At the age of 14, the level of attainment is in-line with that expected for pupils of the same age nationally and they are achieving well. They listen and watch performances attentively. Pupils use gesture and characterisation effectively and make good use of the available space. They use a wide range of techniques and understand how to integrate them. The attainment of pupils at the age of 16 is in-line with that expected nationally. Pupils use and combine many drama techniques and understand how and when they are most effective. In groups they negotiate effectively, noting the views of others to achieve the desired end result. Attainment at the age of 18 is in-line with that expected nationally. Students communicate ideas and text well, utilising characterisation and sensitivity, combined with an appropriate use of timing. All are self confident and work well collaboratively with good levels of concentration and perseverance which results in pride in the quality of their performance.
98. Teaching in drama is good and this results in good learning and achievement. Teaching is characterised by clear, lively expositions to which pupils respond enthusiastically. The lessons are planned well, with clear, understandable objectives which results in good pace to the

lessons and motivation and concentration on the part of the pupils. All teachers have good subject knowledge that enables them to teach confidently, with good relationships creating a safe and supportive environment for pupils to feel confident to "have a go". During lessons teachers make effective use of observational and analytical skills, combined with question and answer techniques which clarify and reinforce teaching points and challenge pupils to greater achievements.

MATHEMATICS

99. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests, the proportion of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 attaining level 5 and above was below both the national average and the average for schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. The proportion attaining level 6 and above was close to both the national average and the average for similar schools. Overall, results were close to the national average, but below the average for similar schools. Both boys and girls achieved broadly similar results in 1999. Results in mathematics were better than those in science, but not as good as the English results. National Curriculum test results in mathematics have fluctuated since the last inspection, however, the average points scores for all pupils over the last two years in mathematics have improved at a greater rate than that seen nationally. Provisional results for the Year 2000 show a significant rise in the proportion attaining level 5 and above, continuing the trend of recent improvement.
100. In 1999, the proportion of pupils attaining GCSE at grades A* to C was above the national average and there has been continued improvement since the last inspection. The average points score achieved for 1999 was above the national average with girls achieving slightly better at the higher grades than the boys did. Pupils generally performed better in mathematics than they did in most of the other subjects that they studied.
101. Results in the 1999 A level examination were above the national average. Results fluctuate from year to year according to the attainment of the students on entry to the sixth form.
102. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards achieved by pupils at the age of 14 are broadly in line with the level expected of pupils of the same age nationally. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment which are below average and their achievement by the end of the key stage are better than might be expected in relation to their earlier attainment. Pupils of all levels of attainment possess well-developed strategies for solving problems and conducting investigations. Pupils apply their mathematical skills appropriately in the tasks that they are set. However, the pupils' skills in the use of information and communication technology to support their work in mathematics are underdeveloped. Pupils' numeracy skills are broadly average, but this is a significant improvement on their skills when joining the school. Pupils have a good understanding of shape, space and measurement using the correct terminology when discussing the properties of regular figures. Pupils appreciate the use of algebra, for example, substituting values into algebraic expressions, which represent the area of simple mathematical figures. Higher attainers extend their knowledge of algebra to include the solution of linear functions and Pythagorus' Theorem, applying key algebraic routines well. The standard of presentation in most exercise books is good with neat and accurate diagrams. However, some middle and lower attaining pupils do not express themselves well and often poor spelling and inaccurate diagrams go unchallenged by the teacher. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers.
103. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards attained by pupils at the age of 16 are above the level expected of pupils of the same age nationally and the pupils are achieving well. The standard of coursework for GCSE is good. High and middle attainers use algebra as a tool, from formulating expressions from simple data to solving simultaneous and quadratic equations, applying all the appropriate skills for checking and interpreting the results well. Low attainers draw straight-line graphs from given functions in a variety of contexts, for example conversion graphs, completing the inverse successfully. Pupils possess a good understanding of shape, space and measurement with high attainers solving complex problems involving trigonometry.

The level of attainment when handling data is good. Pupils of all levels of attainment understand the difference between representative values making the appropriate calculations when necessary. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers.

104. The standard of numeracy is satisfactory at both key stages. Applications and aspects of numeracy in subjects other than mathematics focus mainly on the interpretation of data and use of graphs. In geography, good use is made of number on fieldwork studies, interpreting climate and rainfall data. In history, pupils study population statistics at the time of the Industrial Revolution. Mental and estimating skills are not encouraged and the teachers often provide the numerical outcome to problems. Although reliance on the calculator for straightforward calculations is positively discouraged in some areas of the curriculum, pupils sometimes use them for the simplest of tasks. In science, graphical skills are developed well but there is no consistent approach across the school to this aspect. At Key Stage 4, good use is made of algebra, substitution and transformation which continues into sixth form physics and chemistry lessons.
105. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards attained by students at the age of 18 are above the level expected nationally. This represents a good level of achievement for these students. The students demonstrate particularly good skills in problem solving, testing hypotheses and applying knowledge to new situations.
106. The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is good. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is very good and leads to confident teaching that enhances pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. Teachers, for example, demonstrate good observational and analytical skills so that they intervene well with questions that deepen pupils' understanding. Lessons are planned well in many respects, but teaching strategies tend to be confined to exposition and questioning, relying heavily on the textbook, which some pupils find boring. Parents also made this point. The use of resources other than worksheets to enhance teaching and learning is not evident and insufficient use is made of computers. Teachers do encourage pupils to take an active part in the lessons by answering questions and the rapid-fire use of questioning ensures that a brisk pace is maintained. The use of available time is effective, particularly for the low attaining pupils, where work is broken down into 'bite' size activities, reflecting their capacity to concentrate. The management of pupils' behaviour is quiet and effective, being brought about by clear expectations of both high standards and good behaviour by the pupils and the focus is firmly on working hard during the lesson, to which the pupils respond well. For example, to improve numeracy skills teachers insist on using mental arithmetic rather than calculators whenever possible. This approach has overcome the initial unwillingness on the part of the pupils and they now appreciate the benefits to their own progress. Homework is generally an extension of the classwork and is satisfactory, although opportunities for investigative work, particularly for the gifted and talented pupils are often overlooked. The only significant weakness in teaching is in the marking of work, which is unsatisfactory. Homework is ticked but evaluative comments to help pupils understand their strengths and weaknesses are rare. It is not the policy of the department to mark pupils' classwork, and this leads to poor written work going unchallenged.
107. The mathematics department is led and managed well. The department works well together and there is a clear commitment to raise pupils' attainment. The monitoring of teaching is satisfactory overall. There are good aspects, such as the analysis of attainment of different groups of pupils, but the marking of pupils work needs much closer monitoring.
108. Overall, good progress has been made since the last inspection. There has been improvement in educational standards at Key Stage 3, GCSE and A level and the quality of teaching has improved.

SCIENCE

109. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests, the proportions of pupils at the age of 14 achieving level 5 and above, and level 6 and above, were both below the national averages. The average points

score achieved by the whole year group was also below the national average, and well below that for pupils from similar schools. Results in science were below those the pupils achieved in mathematics, and well below those in English. Analysis of the value added to pupils' national curriculum levels in science since they joined the school suggests they made satisfactory progress. There were no significant differences in the results of boys and girls. Teacher assessments of pupils' standards give much higher scores than the test results. Results in the period 1997 to 1999 declined, however the provisional results for the year 2000 show a significant improvement in standards.

110. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grades at A* to C was below the national average, as was the average points score. However, a much higher proportion of the year group was entered for the double science paper than is found nationally. Boys' results were better than those of the girls, but there is no consistent pattern over the years. Comparison of results at GCSE with the results these pupils achieved at the end of Key Stage 3 indicates that satisfactory progress was made during Key Stage 4. Pupils performed relatively poorly when comparing results with those in other subjects that they studied.
111. The results at A level in 1999 were well above the national average in environmental science and physics, while those in biology were below. Too few pupils were entered for chemistry to make reliable comparisons with national statistics. Results have been similar since 1997. Compared with forecast grades based on students' GCSE results, results in biology and chemistry were below the level expected, while they were broadly in line with forecasts in environmental science and physics. The number of students taking A and AS level courses in each of the four science subjects is increasing significantly.
112. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards are now above average at the age of 14 and higher than those indicated by results in national tests in 1999. The department is now stable after significant disruption in staffing two years ago and the standards are higher as a result of the good teaching provision that is now in place. The standards observed reflect a continuation of the trend in improving results evident in the 2000 tests. The improvement is also noticeable at Key Stage 4, where the standards observed are now in line with the standard expected nationally. This represents a satisfactory level of achievement. The standards observed at the age of 18 are generally above average and students are achieving well.
113. The scheme of work for Key Stages 3 and 4 contains a sensible balance of each of the four attainment targets, though pupils show some lack of confidence when undertaking practical work. This is often so in Key Stage 4. For instance, pupils in an average attaining group in Year 11 are unsure of the difference between the AC and DC connections on power packs. In a higher attaining Year 11 class, because pupils are working in groups which are too large, some pupils simply watch other pupils in their group set up the equipment and take the readings, and do not gain from the experience themselves. The standard of pupils' written accounts of their investigations, however, is in line with national expectations. Little practical work was seen in sixth form lessons. Pupils in a higher attaining group in Year 9 confidently explain how a high pressure is produced by concentrating a force on to a small area, and vice versa. In the sixth form, work in theory lessons is thorough and at the appropriate level; in a Year 13 physics class, for example, students learn how the definition of the ampere can be derived from the equation for the force between two parallel wires. Pupils with special educational needs generally make satisfactory progress rather than the good progress made by their peers. In many lessons, particularly in mixed ability groups, insufficient thought is given to providing appropriate work for them when preparing worksheets or when setting homework tasks. They occasionally have difficulty in copying from the board or screen, or in writing quickly enough in order to keep up with the rest of the class. Many of these problems are caused by the individual education plans, which do not provide teachers with sufficient information for them to be able to plan appropriate tasks.
114. Teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and the sixth form, and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. Teachers' planning of the content of lessons is good, but less time is devoted to the consideration of teaching methods that would stimulate the interest of the pupils. The objectives for each lesson

are clear, though these are not always explained to pupils. Good use is made of question and answer techniques, but insufficient opportunity is provided for pupils to ask questions at Key Stage 4. The pace of lessons is good, though there are occasions in sixth form lessons when more urgency is required. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject is usually high, and interesting background information enhances many lessons. There is also a high expectation that all pupils should be on-task. The reason why this is not achieved in a minority of lessons, particularly at Key Stage 4, is due to over-long input by the teacher, and a failure to split the lesson into a number of appropriate activities. The effects of these differences between Key Stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form becomes apparent in the quality of learning. The quality of learning at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form is good because the pupils are stimulated by the activities and so put more effort into their work. The pace of the learning is consequently slower, but still satisfactory, at Key Stage 4 where the activities are not as motivating.

115. Teachers demonstrate a high level of classroom management techniques in many lessons. A lower attaining group in Year 9 remained on-task throughout a lesson on the structure of the human skeleton because of the lesson structure; pupils learnt the names of the main bones, and their function. The use of key words by the teacher helped to consolidate what had been learnt in the lesson. Similarly, a 'target' group in Year 10 was initially diffident, but the teacher's approach, the lesson structure, and the appropriateness of the tasks all led to good pupil involvement in the discussion and exercises about renewable energy sources. In a sixth form environmental science class, pupils studied the regulations for the production of organic food; their interest was enhanced by the opportunity to taste omelettes made from organic and from non-organic eggs, and to say which they preferred. Homework is set regularly, but it often lacks challenge and interest, and makes no allowance for differences in pupils' aptitude. The standard of work in books and folders is generally high, but it varies between classes, partly because there is a wide variation in the standard and frequency of marking. This includes variation in the monitoring of sixth form folders.
116. There is satisfactory leadership and management of this big department. The head of department leads by example in her dedication to her work, her approach to teaching, and in the positive working relationships she develops with pupils, teachers and non-teaching staff. There is a strong feeling of teamwork within the department. Members of the department are receptive to new ideas, and the department is involved in a large number of interesting initiatives. There is, however, insufficient monitoring of the work of the department by those staff within the department with positions of responsibility. This means that there is inconsistency in practice, for example in the frequency and depth of marking, and in the development of literacy skills. There is a severe shortage of basic equipment, such as beakers. This leads to pupils having to work in groups that are too large and reduces progress, particularly at Key Stage 4.
117. Since the last inspection in 1995, the level of attainment in external examinations has been consistently below national averages at the ends of Key Stages 3 and 4. GCSE results are now below rather than above the national average. Pupils' practical skills are no longer at a consistently high level. Overall, therefore, the department has made unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection. However, recent progress has been significant with improved results over the past year and the quality of teaching is now better than at the time of the previous inspection.

ART

118. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to C in the GCSE examinations in 1999 was above the national average, as they have been for several years. Results at A Level were broadly average.
119. In work seen during the inspection, attainment is above the level expected nationally for 14 year olds and they are achieving well. By the end of Year 9, pupils have well developed art skills and work with confidence and assurance. They research and design well using investigative approaches that develop their drawing skills and intellectual understanding of the main art

concepts. They all select and use the full range of fine and broad drawing and painting media to record accurately from observation and to produce expressive and imaginative outcomes. All work well in three dimensions and construct confidently in clay and mixed media. Their understanding and use of pattern is good. Resource books and homework are used very well to develop design and investigative skills and these are linked effectively to the study of artists and other cultures to inform the development of their work.

120. In work seen during the inspection, attainment is above the level expected nationally for 16 year olds and they are achieving well. Pupils build on their previous experience to further enhance, in particular, their research, drawing, painting and design skills. They improve further their selection and study of the work of artists to inform the individual and personal development of their work. Some pupils make good use of computers, digital cameras and a scanner to improve the breadth of their research and further develop ideas. Throughout both Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers.
121. In work seen during the inspection, attainment is above the level expected nationally for 18 year olds. This represents a very good level of achievement for these students. Students particularly develop their knowledge and understanding of a very diverse range of artists to direct their investigation and working practice. Personal studies and written work are of a high standard. Most students are making good use of the new technologies to support their research and investigations. Practical skills improve significantly as students take on large-scale works and make more expressive use of a range of media.
122. At Key Stage 3, teaching is good and has a positive impact on learning. Pupils make good progress through the course, because of the quality of the planning and the well-structured programme of learning. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject, they are very well organised and their lessons are carefully planned. They maintain purposeful relationships with pupils, who behave well and act responsively. Attitudes to learning are good and pupils work responsibly and with care for materials and the work of others. Good use is made of the resource and homework books to direct investigative learning about media, the artists, cultures and topics being studied. Most lessons are characterised by high expectations, clear tasks, brisk pace and well focused activities that motivate pupils. At Key Stage 4, teaching is good with particular strengths in the individual support for pupils. Learning is consistently good in the full GCSE course and satisfactory within the Year 11 short-course. Pupils work responsibly and are well motivated. Pupils continue to make good progress as a consequence of the effectiveness of the planning and teaching, which is responsive to their individual needs. Projects are challenging and motivate effectively. In the sixth form, teaching and learning are consistently very good. Students are highly challenged both creatively and intellectually.
123. The subject is led and managed well. There are clear policies and procedures firmly in place to direct the work of the teachers and in particular, the assessment and recording of pupils' attainment and progress. The spiritual and cultural dimensions of learning in art are well considered and, together with visits to museums and galleries, this enriches the pupils' learning.
124. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Results at GCSE have remained above the national average and at A level have improved. Teaching at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form has improved.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

125. In 1999, the proportion of pupils achieving GCSE grades A* to C was above the national average. Girls achieved significantly better results than the boys did. Pupils achieved slightly lower results in design and technology to those in the other subjects that they studied. It is not possible to determine a trend in results as pupils have previously been entered for the short GCSE rather than the full GCSE for which they are now entered. However, The GCSE food technology A* to C grades remain below the national average. Results at A level were above the national average in 1999; an improvement on previous results.

126. In work seen in lessons during the inspection, attainment at the age of 14 is in line with the standard expected nationally. However, the achievement of pupils is unsatisfactory owing to the lack of opportunities they have to work in a sufficiently wide range of materials. The work in food and textiles in particular does not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum for pupils to design and make products. Pupils in other material areas show an ability to analyse and draw conclusions using existing products. They gain a good range of basic skills in designing and making products in graphics, resistant materials and electronics. Pupils with special educational needs also make unsatisfactory progress as a result of the limited range of strategies and methods used by teachers to support them in their work. The information given in individual education plans is insufficient for teachers to plan appropriate work for pupils with special educational needs. The result is that lower attaining pupils are "led by the nose" through the tasks. In graphics and resistant materials, pupils achieve satisfactory levels of attainment. They are taught a suitable range of making skills combined with two- and three-dimensional drawing skills. Pupils are able to apply these skills to their own design ideas. A good example in a Year 9 graphics lesson was when pupils were designing the floor plan of a bungalow and demonstrating their skills in drawing a variety of views. They were able to design a planned view and then develop these into three-dimensional perspective drawings. Higher attaining pupils achieved considerable accuracy, paying good attention to fine line and scale. Lower attaining pupils were able to achieve a fair level of accuracy using the support materials that the teacher provided as a starting point to develop their perspective views.
127. In the work seen during the inspection, attainment at the age of 16 is above the level expected nationally. This is in line with the standards suggested by the GCSE results in 1999. Pupils are now achieving well. All pupils use a wide range of investigation and research skills, and evaluate strengths and weaknesses effectively as they progress with their design ideas. They develop work of very good quality, including a range of making skills that also take account of large-scale manufacturing processes. In food technology, pupils generate and use numerical data in the form of charts, graphs and food calculations to produce products of good quality. They analyse products well. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, pupils analysed products, using a good range of skills, to collect information that would influence the commercial success of a product. Higher attaining pupils were able to identify very specific features of products, then use charts and grids to categorise the information. Pupils then linked this well to the development of a specification. Lower attaining pupils apply some basic analytical skills and use the tables and charts to help them order and use the information they gather to influence their own designing. Design work in all the material areas is supported with accurate, well-developed plans. Folder work includes the testing processes, materials and finishes as they develop their final designs. All the work reflects a high degree of research to gain such a broad range of ideas and to include the variety of construction techniques, some pupils using computers well to analyse their research data and present these in the form of graphs and charts. Higher attaining pupils apply accuracy and depth to the development of their designs in all material areas. Lower attaining pupils design products well suited to their intended purposes and to complete work of good quality.
128. The work seen of students currently on the A level course is above the level expected nationally and they are achieving well. In general, practical skills are good and students show an advanced depth of knowledge and understanding. The content of their folder work demonstrates a breadth of study and good application of knowledge and skills to the products they design.
129. The quality of teaching and learning at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory and at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is good. Teachers use interesting methods, enabling pupils to understand difficult concepts. This was seen in a Year 7 resistant materials lesson where pupils were designing a steady hand game. They were learning to use gridlines to enlarge and reduce the size of their drawing. Higher attaining pupils were able to apply detail and accuracy to fairly complicated drawings while lower attainers were able to apply all the basic skills to produce simple drawings in various sizes. The teacher involved the pupils well in the development of these skills, encouraging some pupils to work on the white board alongside her. As a result of this interesting approach, the pupils responded well, showed a high level of interest and learning was good. This

was particularly effective, giving pupils the opportunity to evaluate both their own work as well as the work of other pupils in the group. Some teachers succeed in stretching students of all levels of attainment, but this is not consistent across the department. At Key Stage 4 teachers set realistic subject specific targets for pupils which are having a positive effect on progress as pupils are able to focus more individually on the ways to improve their work. This method of setting targets for pupils in the classroom is underdeveloped at Key Stage 3 so that expectations are not as high as they are in Key Stage 4. All teachers place a good emphasis on developing technical vocabulary when pupils record their findings; this is having a positive effect on the development of the pupils' literacy skills. Pupils form good relationships with their teachers and work hard for them. They behave well because they know what standards are, and are not, acceptable. The limited experience of some newly qualified teachers at this early stage of joining the school is also having an impact on the achievement of pupils in those lessons where the emphasis is on the artistic rather than the technological.

130. The management of design and technology in the school as a whole is unsatisfactory. The management is fragmented leading to a lack of clarity for heads of subjects within design and technology and no overall vision and direction for the subject. This has resulted in an unsatisfactory curriculum where there is inequality of opportunity for pupils to work in a wide enough range of materials and to develop the basic knowledge and skills prior to the GCSE courses they choose. Pupils who choose textiles and food have no foundation in the subjects from their work in technology at Key Stage 3. Not all pupils study design and technology at Key Stage 4, which does not meet statutory requirements. Although teachers work well as teams within their respective specialisms, there is lack of unity across the main areas of food technology and resistant materials. This results in, for example, assessment being only based on work in resistant materials so that pupils do not reap the benefit of success in other material areas and teachers are unaware of their overall levels of achievement. Teaching, on the other hand, is monitored well but again this is compartmentalised within the different material areas.
131. Progress made since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching has declined at Key Stage 4 and standards are similar to those at the time of the last inspection.

GEOGRAPHY

132. In 1999, the proportion of pupils achieving GCSE grades A* to C was well above the national average. This was a significant improvement from results achieved in 1997 and 1998. Pupils' performance in geography was similar to their performance in most other subjects that they studied. The provisional results for 2000 indicate a fall in results. No students studied A level geography in 1999.
133. In work seen during the inspection, the standards attained at the age of 14 are at the level expected of pupils of the same age nationally. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress with the acquisition of geographical skill and knowledge by Year 9 and are achieving well. By the age of 14, pupils studying Japan compare their life style with that of a Japanese pupil. They know that Japan is a densely-populated country, which suffers from extremes of climate and landscape, for example volcanoes and earthquakes, monsoons and typhoons; they know it is a country known for high technology goods and the high-speed bullet train. Low attaining pupils categorise traditional and modern customs of Japan and high attaining pupils show a good understanding of tectonics and tidal waves. Pupils understand some of the cultures, for example, bowing as a greeting or eating using chopsticks. This contributes to their cultural understanding of the Far East. Pupils possess good skills in terms of presentation, accurate note taking and cartography.
134. In work seen during the inspection, the standards attained at the age of 16 are at the level expected of pupils of the same age nationally. This is lower than the level suggested by the GCSE results from 1999, but more in line with the provisional results for 2000. By the age of 16, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, have a basic understanding of the role of water authorities in the distribution of water supplies. Low attaining pupils understand the

problems caused by the long distance that water might have to travel before consumption. High attaining pupils understand the problems related to the re-cycling, metering and leakage of water. Pupils studying the National Parks appreciate the impact that new life style trends have on their use, for example, the effects of reducing the retirement age and improving affluence. The best course work is at the highest levels; the key points are made, often through diagrams, annotated photographs, sketches and maps. This is often enhanced through good use of computers. Conclusions are based firmly on evidence gathered in fieldwork or research. The less successful studies and course work tends to be descriptive rather than analytical. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, continue to make good progress as they move through the key stage building successfully on the foundations laid in Key Stage 3. By the end of Key Stage 4 they are achieving well.

135. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards attained by students currently in Year 13 are above the level expected nationally. Students demonstrate a very good understanding of the economic impact of the 2000 Olympic Games being staged in Sydney after careful research using the Internet. They successfully analyse, and present to their peers, the positive and negative impacts of the games in economic, social and environmental terms. They use good observational skills, successfully analysing housing patterns in Birmingham.
136. The quality of teaching throughout the school is good and results in good learning. Teachers possess a good knowledge and understanding of their subject. This enables them to extend pupils horizons. For example, teachers' in-depth knowledge of Cannock Chase and the Peak District leads to pupils developing a good understanding of their patterns of use. Staff usually challenge, probe and demand high standards, however, there are occasions when pupils are allowed to get away with doing too little. High attaining pupils are challenged well through observation and inquiry as they apply their knowledge in order to analyse video film about modern and traditional Japanese culture. Teaching methods are generally satisfactory, however, there are occasions, for example in a Year 8 ecology lesson, when they are inappropriate and pupils become bored. This is because there was insufficient variation in the activities. Teachers tackle moral issues and develop understanding of different cultures particularly well through activities such as debating the pros and cons of nuclear power in Year 11. Pupils show gains in their learning as they make good oral presentations to the class, for example, rural problems in Year 12. Pupils listen and contribute well to question and answer sessions, which contributes to their understanding of the issues. Geography also makes a good contribution to pupils' literacy and numeracy skills through the teachers' good emphasis on, for example, the use of the correct geographical vocabulary and data analysis. As a consequence of good teaching, good behaviour and positive attitudes, all pupils, including those with learning difficulties, make good progress in their learning in both key stages and in the sixth form. A great strength of the teaching is the emphasis placed on investigative, analytical and evaluative skills. Pupils develop greater independence as they research topics, for example, the effect of climate, relief and soil on determining the type of farming.
137. The department has very good leadership and is very well managed. The head of department has an excellent educational vision for the development of the subject; he is very supportive of team members. The monitoring of the department is very effective.
138. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. New and young staff are making a significant impact on learning, attainment and improvement in GCSE examination results. Standards in the sixth form have also improved.

HISTORY

139. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils obtaining grades A* to C was in line with the national average. Girls performed better than boys did but both boys and girls gained results that were lower than those in the other subjects that they studied. These results were similar to those in 1997, but an improvement upon those in 1998. Results in the 1999 A level examination were above the national average. The trend in results is similar to that at GCSE.

140. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are in line with those expected for pupils of the same age nationally. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of the topics they are studying; for example, in a discussion on the industrial revolution, Year 9 lower attaining pupils successfully described how workers suffered from poor hygiene conditions. Pupils of all attainment levels can select information for a specific purpose; Year 8 higher attaining pupils effectively researched textbook material in order to explore the connections between Arabic and English when studying the extent and legacy of the Islamic empire.
141. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards of attainment at the age of 16 are in line with those expected for pupils the same age nationally. These standards reflect the attainment in recent examination results. Pupils of all attainment levels show a satisfactory knowledge of the course content whilst higher attaining pupils write sound analytical answers to questions. A wide range of historical source material is used competently; Year 11 pupils of all attainment levels accurately analysed contemporary film footage of Stalin's reign in order to write notes on people's opinions of him.
142. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 18 are higher than those expected nationally. These standards reflect the attainment in recent examination results. Students can formulate complex views which are clearly expressed orally and supported by appropriate evidence; Year 13 students successfully researched obituary articles on Sir Robin Day in order to make comparisons with contemporary interpretations about the life of Disraeli.
143. Pupils' achievement in both Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form is good. As they progress through the school, they make good advances in historical knowledge, understanding and skills. Higher attaining pupils are developing the ability to use source material to support arguments and question evidence. In Key Stage 3, progress towards developing extended writing skills is currently being made by higher attainers but such skills are still relatively underdeveloped amongst lower attainers. Sixth form students are developing good analytical skills; in a lesson on ideology, Year 12 demonstrated their increasing ability to analyse and discuss documents when researching the nature of fascism. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers.
144. The quality of teaching and learning in both Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form is good and results in good learning. In all lessons, good teaching enhances pupils' understanding of the subject. The main strengths are good planning based on confident knowledge of the subject, clear aims well explained to pupils and good classroom control and management. In the best lessons, a variety of teaching methods is used to stimulate interest and maximise learning opportunities; here the quality of teaching challenges and enthuses pupils, allowing them to learn effectively. In a Year 7 lesson, for example, on using historical evidence, the teacher successfully captured the enthusiasm of the pupils by circulating some of her own possessions amongst the class so that they could make deductions about her lifestyle. A purposeful and relaxed learning environment exists because of high quality teacher relationships with pupils and the effective use of deserved praise and encouragement. Marking is regularly carried out but there are not enough informative comments on how pupils can improve their work.
145. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of history ably leads a committed team of staff that is focused on raising attainment. It is currently tackling the issue of raising boys' attainment at Key Stage 4 and has successfully introduced a number of new initiatives, including more appropriate and relevant teaching styles; recent in-service training has supported this. There is appropriate monitoring of these developments together with good procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress.
146. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved throughout the school and standards have risen at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

147. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to C in the GCSE short-course in 1999 was below the national average, as it had been for the previous two years. The provisional results for the year 2000 indicate a significant improvement. At A Level, results show an improving trend from 1997 to above average in 1999.
148. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are in line with those expected for pupils the same age nationally. The majority of pupils has an average range of information technology skills and can work with confidence, but there are some gaps in their knowledge, understanding and capability. They are able to use a word processor with varying degrees of competence to draft and write for various purposes and audiences; collect and enter data for entry into a spreadsheet and database; carry out simple searches and extract information for a particular purpose and can successfully use simple formulae to calculate values. There is some understanding of the impact of information technology on the lives of people. Most possess a good understanding of the functions of the main software programs and can select the appropriate program for a purpose. Presentation software is used very well in the core course and in design and technology. Pupils confidently combine word processing with clip art and images from the web, to present ideas and communicate meaning effectively, for example in Year 9 where they combine information to create all aspects of the organisation of a fictional music band.
149. Within science and design and technology, pupils use sensors to gather data. In music they use software to compose, record and modify music, and in art and design they make some use of digital cameras and graphical software for design and presentation purposes. In English, religious education, history, modern foreign languages and special educational needs, the use of word processors and other presentation software is developing well and pupils improve their computer skills. In some of these subjects pupils use a database or spreadsheet to gather, organise and present information effectively; and the development of the Intranet is beginning to be used effectively in English to support the development of reading skills and in history for research purposes. Despite the number of subjects making use of computers, much of the work remains uncoordinated with the core programme. In addition, the development of IT skills in subjects is not recorded, as these subjects do not contribute to the assessment of pupils' IT capability. This leads to pupils carrying out similar tasks in several different subjects, rather than developing their skills further.
150. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards of attainment at the age of 16 are in line with those expected for pupils the same age nationally. Pupils have built on the on the skills, knowledge and understanding developed at Key Stage 3 and further enhanced, in particular, their data handling and presentation skills, through two wide-ranging modules. Work in the year 11 GCSE short-course is thorough and systematic with well-documented analysis and evaluation, even at lower levels. Attainment in lessons in the sixth form is above average. Students demonstrate a high level of skills and work confidently, selecting appropriate software and planning their research effectively to inform their projects. All are able to evaluate software effectively to determine its appropriateness and incorporate into their project outcomes. Information technology is also used in a variety of contexts within geography, art and design, music, science, design and technology, religious education and business education, with the addition of physical education in the sixth form. However, the same drawbacks as those at Key Stage 3 still exist.
151. At Key Stage 3, teaching is good. Teachers are well organised and the materials they use are relevant and purposeful. The majority of lessons are characterised by high expectations, clear tasks and projects that motivate pupils. In some lessons however, there was insufficient demonstration by the teacher, which led to some pupils being unsure of basic principles. This did impact on learning as pupils failed to understand basic principle. The quality of learning, however, is only satisfactory despite the good teaching. Many classes are taught in rooms that are too small and have insufficient computers. This leads to some pupils spending time having to watch their peers as pupils are forced to work in groups as large as four to a computer. The

other constraining factor is the structure of the curriculum. Pupils receive lessons in Years 7 and 9 with a gap in Year 8. The work in other subjects is supposed to make up for the lack of lessons in Year 8, but the reality is that insufficient use is made of computers in other subjects to compensate. The resulting gap means that much of the work from Year 7 is forgotten and must be taught again in Year 9. The pupils, including those with special educational needs, therefore achieve only satisfactory standards despite being taught well.

152. At Key Stage 4, teaching is very good. Teachers have very high expectations of what can be achieved by the pupils in their coursework. Homework is used exceptionally well to make up for the small amount of time devoted to the subject. Tasks are set that ensure that activities such as research and data collection are carried out outside of lessons and that the use of computers in lessons can be maximised. However, as at Key Stage 3, the quality of learning is not as good as the quality of teaching. The quality of learning is good, but is reduced again by the lack of continuity in lessons. Much of the early part of the course has to address material that has been covered in the past because of the long gaps between the modules. This leads to pupils only acquiring their knowledge skills and understanding at a satisfactory rate over time, in contrast to the very good progress that they make in individual lessons. This is further compounded by insufficient use of computers in other subjects, so that by the age of 16 pupils, including those with special educational needs, are achieving satisfactory standards, despite the very good teaching. The same problems do not arise in the sixth form, where teaching and learning are both good. Planning is very relevant to the syllabus and the same high expectations as Key Stage 4 are apparent. Students achieve well at A level. Teachers at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form make very good use of the time that is made available at lunchtimes and after school to extend the lesson time that is available.
153. Whilst the teaching of the core programme of information technology is well managed and monitored, the overall leadership and management of the subject is unsatisfactory. The curriculum is not sufficiently planned or co-ordinated to maintain progress and so by the beginning of Year 9, pupils' attainment has fallen from average at the end of Year 7 to below average. The good teaching then brings them back up to the average. Overall, the long-term development of the subject is poorly planned and lacks a strategic vision for the co-ordination of all aspects of information technology across all subject areas. As a consequence of this lack of co-ordination, pupils in Key Stage 3 have few opportunities to develop capability in modelling or producing graphical outcomes as charts and graphs. There are also limited opportunities to use control technology, multi-media applications or make use of the Internet for research and communication purposes.
154. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved significantly and this has compensated for the problems caused by the curriculum. Standards of attainment are similar to those at the time of the previous inspection at Key Stages 3 and 4, but have improved in the sixth form. The number of computers has much improved from a ratio of 1:18 to 1:10, with large investment and new building for 3 new computer suites. However, this development has barely caught up with the growth in the size of the school and the demands of the revised National Curriculum and so there is still a lack of sufficient computer resources for whole classes.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

155. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportions of pupils gaining grades A* to C were in line with the national averages in both French and German. Pupils gained results that were similar to the other subjects that they studied. However, less than half of the pupils study for GCSE. Most study for a Certificate of Achievement in French, German or Spanish and these courses last for only one year in Year 10. Attainment in GCSE has risen in line with national rates since the previous inspection. There were too few students entered for A level to make statistical comparisons valid.

156. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards at the age of 14 are in line with those expected nationally. This represents a satisfactory level of achievement for most pupils. There are no significant differences in attainment across the four aspects of the subject. Pupils can answer questions in a basic way about such topics as places in town and finding their way, food and drink, the parts of the human body and illnesses. Most pupils listen carefully to the teacher, to audio tapes and to other pupils when they are talking and can respond appropriately. Most pupils are confident when speaking and try hard with pronunciation. Even at this early stage in their learning higher attaining pupils in Year 7, for example, are able to talk about themselves and where they live with some confidence. Pupils develop their reading skills mainly by reading textbooks to find the answers to questions and their reading skills are broadly average. In their written work, most pupils are able to write a number of sentences or short paragraphs with reasonable accuracy. Higher attaining pupils are able to use a range of tenses and use correct adjectives. For example, pupils produce interesting work on when they were young and about their likes and dislikes in food and drink. The standards achieved by pupils with special educational needs are unsatisfactory. They do not reach their potential or make maximum progress because the work is not appropriate for their needs.
157. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards at the age of 16 are below those expected nationally and many pupils are underachieving. Pupils studying for GCSE extend their work from Key Stage 3 and add other topics such as going on holiday. During the inspection pupils were preparing for an oral examination and higher attaining pupils were able to develop quite sophisticated conversations, using and varying the language to suit different situations. In their written work, pupils produce work with competent use of language and often with touches of humour. However, many pupils are not following the GCSE course and instead are following a Certificate of Achievement course that limits pupils to the equivalent of National Curriculum level three and does not meet statutory requirements. Higher attaining pupils in particular do not make enough progress and their levels of achievement across listening, speaking, reading and writing are unsatisfactory. This was clearly seen in a lesson where pupils were engaged on tasks which were clearly far too easy for most, and which pupils said they had done before in Year 7. The course is, however, appropriate for low attainers including those with special educational needs and these pupils make satisfactory progress on the course. The school has already identified the problems created for the middle and higher attaining pupils and is planning to make rapid changes.
158. In work seen during the inspection, students in the sixth form are attaining above the level expected of students taking A level courses and are achieving well. They are able to read and understand some quite difficult and authentic texts from newspapers and magazines. Students possess good speaking skills and are able to discuss, in some detail, topics such as the rise of neo-nazism in Germany and the roles of men and women in German society. They are able to write at length and with good accuracy. This was seen, for example, in some moving and highly descriptive pieces of work, in French, on the futility of war.
159. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In most lessons, teachers have good class control and there are good relationships between pupils and with their teachers. Pupils generally behave well in lessons and have good attitudes to work. However, in those lessons where behaviour is unsatisfactory, it is largely because of the lack of challenge in the work provided in the certificate of achievement course, and because the teacher does not have good strategies for dealing with the restlessness which follows as pupils become bored. Even where teaching is satisfactory, there are a number of lessons where teachers lapse into English too often, restricting the use of the language being taught. This was the case in one lesson where teaching was unsatisfactory. However, the teacher reacted to the criticism extremely well and the weakness had been corrected in the next lesson observed. Teachers' planning is good and this provides a progressive programme over time. In some lessons where teaching is otherwise satisfactory, teachers do not provide work that is tailored to the needs of the range of attainment found in classes. This particularly affects the progress of younger pupils with special educational needs. This is mainly as a result of poor quality individual education plans, which do not have sufficient detail on what the pupils' needs are or how to address them. Where teaching is good and very good teachers have very good subject knowledge that is used to provide a variety of

challenging activities that move at brisk pace and keep pupils both interested and occupied. Teachers employ a range of activities to encourage pupils to use and vary their language to fit different situations. These include the skilled use of question and answer, imaginative use of overhead projectors, pair and group work and learning "games" as well as listening and writing tasks. Teachers set regular, relevant homework. Good use is made of information technology to enhance and enrich the curriculum. There is good use of assessment to track pupils' attainment and progress and for setting individual and pupil targets. It is the use of assessment data that has revealed the unsuitable nature of the short certificate of achievement course. All of the teachers show a high level of commitment to the personal and subject development of the pupils. This is seen in the extra lessons provided after school and the extra work set for sixth form students in the summer holidays which is marked and discussed with them during that time.

160. The management of the subject is satisfactory overall. The head of department has shown good leadership in correctly identifying the weakness in the curriculum and drawing up plans to address them. The good level of monitoring that takes place has brought about the identification of the weaknesses. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development. There is a strong moral dimension in most lessons and pupils are taught right from wrong. In most lessons there is good provision for social development through sharing, taking turns and working together in groups. Each year there are school trips to France and Germany that make a good contribution to both social and cultural development. There is also a cultural element in many lessons especially in the sixth form.
161. Overall, progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. GCSE results have risen but, within the overall picture, there are groups of pupils whose attainment and progress are not satisfactory. There were no clear judgements in the previous report against which to judge the improvement in the quality of teaching.

MUSIC

162. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C was well above the national average and was an improvement on previous years. The number of pupils studying music is small and results at GCSE tend to fluctuate according to the attainment of the particular group of pupils when they start the course. Pupils gained results that were better than most of the other subjects that they studied. The number of students entered for A level is too small to make statistical comparisons valid.
163. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are below those expected nationally. This represents a satisfactory level of achievement given the pupils attainment in music when they join the school. By the end of Year 9, pupils can perform in groups, both a melody and simple accompaniment. The higher attainers can add chords to their compositions and perform with confidence and control on their chosen instruments. They perform both by ear and using simple notations and are able to improvise melodically and rhythmically as individuals and in groups. All can use guitars, keyboards and percussion instruments whilst the higher attainers use orchestral instruments. Computers are used widely and appropriately. Pupils with special education needs are well integrated and make similar progress to other pupils.
164. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards of attainment at the age of 16 are above those expected nationally. This represents a very good level of achievement given their attainment at the end of Key Stage 3. In analysis and listening work pupils easily recognise geographic sources for music from other cultures and also scale forms and instrumentations. They can describe and discriminate well in this work, whilst placing it in an historical context, using a range of appropriate vocabulary. In dictation exercises they are able to fill-in missing rhythms and intervals. They compose in various styles and timbres and textures and use computers appropriately to research, refine, modify, score and record their ideas. They perform with confidence and control and are developing a sense of style and phrasing.

165. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards of attainment at the age of 18 are in line with those expected nationally. They compose in various styles for a wide range of instruments. They make widespread use of computers, but not to the detriment of hand-written scoring and composing. In all aspects of their work they make convincing comments and describe music using a wide range of musical vocabulary. Students describe and discriminate in their analysis and are able to place music both in its historical and cultural context.
166. Throughout the school, the attainment of many pupils is supported well by the range of good quality peripatetic teaching and extra-curricular opportunities.
167. Teaching, and the quality of learning that it promotes, is satisfactory at Key Stage 3, good in the sixth form and very good at Key Stage 4. Teachers have at least good, and in Key Stage 4, very good subject knowledge, which leads to confident teaching with clear and lively expositions and demonstrations. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, the confident explanation and use of question and answer created very constructive relationships and so pupils felt confident and able to challenge themselves further. Teachers make good use of targets, both for attainment and behaviour. This results in high expectations, as in a peripatetic lesson. By the end of the lesson the pupils were performing in an appropriate style and with confidence, a simple duet. Where lessons are planned effectively, there are clear objectives that the pupils understand and this leads to very good pace and progress. This was clearly seen in a Year 11 lesson where the pupils' understanding, and the clear guidelines from the teacher, enabled them to develop greater independence. They were able to persevere and concentrate very well, and with appropriate teacher intervention, modify, refine, and finish their work to a high standard. Effective lessons end with a good review of the work covered, as in a Year 7 lesson where it led to targets for the next week. However, at Key Stage 3, some lessons are pitched at the level of middle attainers, regardless of the range of attainment that exists in the group. This results in a lack of challenge for the higher attainers, while lower attainers struggle. Throughout the key stages and in the sixth form, teachers use homework to effectively consolidate and extend learning.
168. The department is well led and managed. The department has introduced good arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress and the data gathered is used well to make appropriate changes to the curriculum. There is a commitment to continually strive for improvement and success across the department.
169. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Teaching and standards have improved at Key Stage 4.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

170. In the 1999 GCSE sports studies examination, the proportion of students gaining grades A* to C was in line with the national average. Pupils gained results that were similar to the other subjects that they studied. Results have improved over recent years. In 1999, students were entered for the first time in the A level physical education examination and achieved results in line with the national average.
171. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards of attainment at the age of 14 and 16 are above those expected for pupils of the same age nationally. This represents a good level of achievement at both key stages.
172. By the age of 14, pupils have at least satisfactory knowledge of the aspects they are studying and many have better understanding than expected for their age. In health related fitness work, pupils of all levels of attainment understand the main factors which constitute a healthy lifestyle. Higher attainers can calculate their heart rate target training zone and use this knowledge to make good fitness gains. Pupils judge performance well, but their ability to plan work is underdeveloped due to lack of opportunity. In games, most understand the basic principles of attack and defence and use their individual skills effectively in a match situation. Lower

attainers' use of space and their timing of passes, are two particular areas of weakness. Higher attainers consistently use good techniques to outmanoeuvre opponents.

173. By the age of 16, most pupils can plan tactics and use well-developed skills to beat opponents. High attaining pupils are able to analyse performance and plan improvement. Poor spatial awareness and below-average hand-eye co-ordination affect lower attainers' performances in volleyball and basketball. GCSE groups are on target to achieve national expectations at the end of Key Stage 4. They understand the main theoretical aspects and their practical skills are generally good. The quality of written work in both GCSE and A level groups varies from very good to poor, according to the ability of the individual. There is not enough use of information technology to enhance written work. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the age of 18 is in line with the national average. This represents a good level of achievement for the students, many of whom join the course with below average levels of attainment. Students taking A level have a sound knowledge of the physiological and psychological factors that affect performance. They can apply their knowledge of the various energy systems to different methods of fitness training. Students are confident and well informed in oral work. Higher attaining students can research from a variety of sources; analyse data and make accurate summaries.
174. The quality of teaching and learning in both Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form is good. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and plan lessons carefully. They create an environment that has a positive effect on learning. Their expectations are high, particularly with regard to performance, behaviour, kit and safety. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good and they progress well. They listen to instructions, communicate well in group-work and confidently try new skills. On entry, pupils consolidate prior learning and quickly learn new skills, basic rules and tactics. They begin to develop knowledge of a healthy lifestyle. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to develop independence in a good proportion of lessons. For example, in a Year 11 games lesson pupils were required to plan basic tactics and judge overall team performance. Most improved their ability to make correct tactical changes. Learning is less effective where there is too much direction by the teacher. Teachers provide appropriate learning activities for pupils of all levels of attainment and pupils with special educational needs make progress that matches that of others in the group. Their progress in GCSE examination work, particularly with regard to literacy skills, is accelerated due to good support. For example, in a Year 8 gymnastics lesson, the teacher used simplified instructions, modified tasks and specially adapted equipment to improve lower attaining pupils' learning beyond expected levels for their ability. Pupils undertaking examination courses improve their ability to research information, summarise findings and analyse performance. However, teachers miss the opportunity to enhance learning through the impact of information technology. In GCSE classes, homework is set and marked regularly and extends learning. The marking of homework in A level studies provides insufficient written comments to indicate strengths and areas for improvement.
175. The physical education department is well led and managed. Teachers work well together as a team and there are clear aims and strategies to raise pupils' attainment. The subject makes a considerable contribution to the social, moral and cultural development of pupils. The provision for extra-curricular sport is very good, with almost half of all pupils and a good proportion of staff, involved. Individuals and teams in a wide-range of sports achieve good results at local, regional and national levels. Representative sport extends the highest attainers, and some students gain regional and international honours.
176. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. Pupils' attainment has improved. GCSE results have improved beyond the national trend and the A level examination has been successfully established. There were no clear judgements on the quality of teaching in the previous report against which to judge improvement.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

177. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C was close to the national average. However, their performance was slightly higher than in most other subjects for which they were entered. There has been a long-term trend of improvement which appears to have continued from the provisional results for the Year 2000. No students took A level in 1999.
178. In the work seen during the inspection, the attainment of pupils at the age of 14 pursuing the Agreed Syllabus is in line with its expectations and pupils are achieving well. The majority have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the richness and diversity of religion, of the place of Christianity and other principal religions in the country, and of their distinctive features. They also have a sound grasp of religious language, concepts and symbols. They understand why the beliefs of practising members of faith communities are important to them, and of how their lives are shaped by them. Their skills in making a personal response to religious and ethical questions are well-developed.
179. In the work seen during the inspection, the attainment of pupils at the age of 16 pursuing the Agreed Syllabus is below its expectations and the standards they achieve are unsatisfactory. This is not a reflection on the quality of teaching or on pupils' attitudes towards the subject. It is a consequence of the wholly inadequate time allocated to teaching the Agreed Syllabus at Key Stage 4. Pupils are unable to study the Syllabus in the depth necessary for them to reach appropriate standards of attainment across all areas of its content. Whilst this situation holds true for the majority of pupils, there are some differences for different groups of pupils. Those pupils pursuing the GCSE examination course, particularly the highest attainers, make good progress in their study of Christianity and Islam and their ethical teachings. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress at Key Stage 4 because the lack of depth in content is more appropriate to their needs.
180. At the age of 18, the attainment of students pursuing the A Level course is close to the level expected nationally. In the Sixth Form, the Agreed Syllabus is delivered through the general studies programme and students in Year 13 are attaining standards in line with expectations. Currently, therefore, students achieve well by the age of 18. However, the curriculum has now changed for Year 12 students and general studies is now optional. This means that not all students are receiving their entitlement in the subject, which is a breach of statutory requirements.
181. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. Where teaching is strongest, teachers have a very good grasp of their subject, know clearly what they wish their pupils to learn, and have high expectations of them. They plan their lessons well, engaging their pupils' interest through a variety of imaginative and challenging activities and tasks, which are well matched to their individual needs. For example, Year 7 pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity, Sikhism and Islam was extended through a "Quiz", based on identifying a range of artefacts and photographs associated with those religions displayed in the classroom, and through self evaluation of their learning in the lesson. Year 8 pupils were intellectually stretched when exploring the person of Jesus, through his portrayal by artists from different ages and cultures. In whole class review and evaluation of their work, they showed that they had grasped the difference between objective and symbolic representation, and what the artists were trying to convey about Jesus.
182. Teachers use good questioning skills to extend understanding, whether, for example, in exploring the ethical issues relating to segregation in America in the 1950's with Year 9, or in leading A Level students to grasp the concepts of descriptive, narrative, applied, and meta-ethics. They encourage the development of pupils' literacy skills through writing for a variety of purposes and audiences. Well-developed skills in empathetic and creative writing were, for instance, evident in Year 8 work on Creation, and Year 9 work on the Psalm 139. Teachers provide pupils with very good opportunities for developing skills of collaborative working, for example, exploring the origins of the Qu'ran in Year 10. They also encourage them to develop skills of independent learning and enquiry, using a variety of resources including computers and the Internet. Meaningful homework is set, and work marked conscientiously and supportively. This good teaching is underpinned by the very good relationships that teachers enjoy with their

pupils. They create a learning ethos in which pupils feel secure, and able to take risks in their learning. In instances where teaching is satisfactory rather than good or better, teachers have good general teaching skills, but their specialist knowledge is less secure.

183. The quality of leadership and management is very good, and has a significant impact on standards and the quality of education. The head of department has a very clear vision of the educational direction the subject should take, which is shared by other members of the department, who feel ownership of the various areas of responsibility delegated to them. There is a very strong ethic of teamwork based on shared values and a commitment to high achievement.
184. Despite the unsatisfactory curriculum at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, progress since the previous inspection has been good. Many of the criticisms raised in the previous report have been addressed most successfully. The quality of teaching and learning has been significantly improved, and is monitored well. There are now good procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress and attainment. Schemes of work have been much improved, and pupils' choices enhanced with the recent introduction of A Level in the sixth form. Appropriate time has been allocated to teaching the Agreed Syllabus at Key Stage 3. The subject now makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Consequently, standards of attainment have been raised overall.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

185. Results at GNVQ intermediate level in 1999 were above average in health and social care and broadly average in business. Two students studied GNVQ business to advanced level and results were below the national average. However, numbers taking each of the three courses are very low, so that results can fluctuate wildly from year to year. In 1998, for example, the three students studying for advanced level obtained results that were well above the national average.
186. In the current Year 13 there are only 2 students studying advanced health and social care. In the work seen they are attaining satisfactory standards, which represents an appropriate level of achievement for these students. They have a sound knowledge of the topics they study and interact very well.
187. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It is generally better on the health and social care courses, where students have got off to a flying start and many in Year 12 are already displaying a better understanding of their topics than would normally be expected. A particularly good feature of the teaching is the way in which coursework and other tasks are integrated into the life of the school. For example, students assist the school nurse with the immunisation programme and speak to parents about first aid and the GNVQ course itself. This ensures that they are well prepared and helps to develop their self confidence in real life situations. The teaching in business is generally satisfactory with no significant strengths or weaknesses. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection.