

INSPECTION REPORT

COPLESTON HIGH SCHOOL

Ipswich

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124842

Headteacher: Mr L Robinson

Reporting inspector: W Keast
1522

Dates of inspection: 2-6 October 2000

Inspection number: 223977

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

© Crown copyright 2000

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Copleston Road
Ipswich
Suffolk

Postcode: IP4 5HD

Telephone number: 01473 710951

Fax number: 01473 274467

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr P Lusardi

Date of previous inspection: October 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
W Keast	1522	Registered inspector	The school's results and achievements
			How well are pupils taught?
E Dickson	19653	Lay inspector	Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
J Lovgreen	22423	Team inspector	English
			English as an additional language
V Foster	1292	Team inspector	Mathematics
M Bailey	30512	Team inspector	Science
G Rayner	10817	Team inspector	History
			Information technology
R Fox	4617	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
			How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
S Jordan	25073	Team inspector	Geography
			Religious education
R Allison-Smith	2501	Team inspector	Art
R Coulthard	11746	Team inspector	Music
			How well is the school led and managed?
J Challands	22042	Team inspector	Physical education
O Hall	23880	Team inspector	Special educational needs
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			Equal opportunities
B Munden	2495	Team inspector	Design and technology
J Judson	31139	Team inspector	Sixth form

The inspection contractor was:

Qualitas Education Consultants Ltd
Langshaw
Pastens Road
Oxted
Surrey
RH8 0RE

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Registrar
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	11
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	14
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	17
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	19
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	21
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	21
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	24
SIXTH FORM	25
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	26
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	31

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is an oversubscribed, mixed comprehensive school with 1722 pupils, aged from 11 to 18. This is much larger than most secondary schools. The school has a joint sixth form with a neighbouring 11 to 16 school. Four per cent of pupils, which is higher than most schools, have English as an additional language and eleven of these are at an early stage in their development of English. The school has a 30 place Area Support Centre for pupils whose moderate learning difficulties have been recognised with a statement of special educational need. Amongst the pupils with statements of educational need, the other main groups are those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, and specific learning difficulties. Altogether 3.3 per cent of pupils have statements of special educational need. Although this is above the national average, the proportion of pupils with recognised special educational needs (10.8 per cent) is below the national average. Most pupils come from an area which is broadly average in socio-economic terms. The attainment of pupils when they come to the school has been gradually rising and in September 2000 reached the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The effectiveness of the school is good. Pupils make good progress from below average attainment when they come to the school to above average GCSE examination standards, as a result of the good teaching they receive. Their progress was particularly good from Year 9 national testing in 1997 to examination in 1999. Pupils' attitudes to work and their behaviour are good. Good leadership has resulted in good improvements having been made since the previous inspection. The cost effectiveness of sixth form is good and the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Provides very clear educational direction which is supported by very good strategic use of resources
- Provides good teaching at all stages
- Generates very good relationships within the school with very good pupil attitudes to school and learning
- Operates very good monitoring procedures for aspects of pupils' academic and social development resulting in high standards and in a marked absence of oppressive behaviour
- Provides very good opportunities for pupils' social and moral development
- Provides very good careers education and guidance

What could be improved

- The systematic monitoring of teaching to ensure greater consistency of practice
- The management of modern foreign languages
- The underachievement in music and in GCSE drama
- The absence of religious education in the sixth form curriculum

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in October 1995. It has dealt with all the previous issues and successfully resolved the majority of these. Those remaining to be resolved are continually being addressed. The most dramatic change has been that the teaching observed during this inspection was much better than that reported in the last one. Alongside this has gone an increasing level of performance, particularly in GCSE. The sixth form has become established in the last three years. Overall the school has improved to a greater extent than might reasonably have been expected. The arrival of a new head has added additional impetus and the capacity is there for further improvement.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	A	B	A	B
A-levels/AS-levels	n/a	D	B	

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

In this report, the term 'standards' refers to pupils' attainment relative to some clear benchmark, such as National Curriculum levels, or descriptions, at the end of a key stage. 'Above average' standards, for example, means that a higher proportion of pupils of a particular age are succeeding at or beyond the level set in the majority of schools. 'Achievement' on the other hand, reflects the accomplishment of pupils in relation to what you would expect of these particular pupils. The pupils' prior attainment, what they can already do, is the reference point for pupils' achievement.

The results of testing at the end of Year 9, in 1999, were in line with the national average but well below that of schools with similar proportions of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. Fewer than five additional such pupils would have placed the school in the next group where the comparison would have been in line with the average. This was a dip from previous years and the higher levels have been restored in 2000. English and science were weaker than mathematics. The trend over the last four years is in line with the national trend. At GCSE the trend is above the national trend. Results in English literature, geography, media studies and food technology have been consistently above, and drama consistently below, national averages. The school reached the target of 54 per cent of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-C that it had set for 1999 and has set realistic targets, based upon the best available predictions, for subsequent years. Results at A level, in 1999, were broadly in line with those of pupils with similar average GCSE point scores. The standards in the work seen generally match previous examination results. However, standards throughout in music, in GCSE drama and in sixth form English language, French and German are below those expected from pupils of a similar age. Generally, the progress pupils are making is at least satisfactory and often good although there is underachievement in music and in GCSE drama.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and go to lessons expecting to work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Very good behaviour in lessons and generally good around the school in areas which could create problems.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Relationships are very good. Some reluctance to take initiative and ask questions in lessons. Many examples of pupils taking responsibility.
Attendance	Good. Unauthorised absence rate is low.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall 203	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 was satisfactory or better in 96 per cent of lessons. It was very good or excellent in 22 per cent. In only 4 per cent of lessons was teaching less than satisfactory. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Teaching in English, mathematics and science was good throughout the school. Teaching was good or better, throughout the school, in design and technology, geography, history, religious education and Spanish. Teaching was unsatisfactory in music and in GCSE French and has been in GCSE drama. Generally, all aspects of teaching were good. Teachers made good use of their own knowledge and understanding to plan well. Their high expectations of their pupils and the use of good teaching methods provided challenging work to support pupils' learning and progress. Teaching was unsatisfactory when pupils made insufficient progress in the lessons. This was due, in two instances, to poorly managed behaviour but was more usually due to poor planning which either did not take sufficient account of pupils' understanding, or did not address the needs of the subject sufficiently. Pupils' learning closely matched the quality of teaching they receive. They acquire knowledge and skills at a good rate, work hard, concentrate well and generally have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve. Some of the higher attaining pupils are too passive in their learning. A particular weakness exists in the oral modern foreign language skills pupils need to move on to A level language courses.

Pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy enable them all to take full part in learning. Literacy skills are well taught in English but their development is not yet sufficiently supported within all subjects of the curriculum. Numeracy skills are well taught in mathematics, where the national numeracy strategy is being introduced, and generally supported across the curriculum.

The school makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs and for those for whom English is an additional language, and meets their needs well. The setting in many subjects successfully helps meet the needs of pupils with different levels of attainment. The *express groups* in mathematics are effective in meeting the needs of the highest attaining mathematicians.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The statutory requirements are enhanced by a good range of other courses.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The curriculum is effectively modified and pupils are well supported within mainstream classes and by withdrawal into small groups.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils' needs are identified precisely and the help they receive is effective. Those whose English is at an early stage receive individual support. Pupils are well integrated within the school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Provision for moral and social development is very good, for cultural development is good and for spiritual development is satisfactory. Assemblies do not provide as great a contribution to this as they could.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Well. Procedures are very good for monitoring and assessment, for improving attendance and eliminating oppressive behaviour.

The school works well in partnership with parents. Parents are consulted about proposed changes, kept well informed about school events and pupils' progress, and are generally very positive about the school. Some parents take the opportunity provided by the pupil logbook for home-school communication.

A good range of choice within the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 meets the interests and needs of all pupils while retaining an overall balance. The good opportunities in the sixth form allow pupils to broaden their education beyond their academic subjects. There is a good variety of extra-curricular activities, both weekly and annually, to cater for pupils' interests and support their academic progress. The statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form and daily acts of collective worship are not met.

Support for pupils' learning is good, following from the monitoring procedures, but there is room for further development, particularly in the focus of the recently introduced action targets.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. Very clear educational direction with most appropriate priorities for development. Good and clear delegation of responsibilities but variability in the response by heads of department.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Well. Governors effectively carry out their statutory duties, are generally well informed and closely involved in agreeing strategic priorities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Sound. Good evaluation of pupil attainment and progress but a current weakness in monitoring and evaluating classroom practice.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Financial constraint has required very tight and well-focussed budgeting to support planned developments.

Overall, the number and experience of the teachers and the support staff meet the needs of the curriculum well. The provision of accommodation and the resources for learning are good. However, despite recent additions, the resources for ICT remain below average for a school of this size.

A further strength of the management in the school is the very good induction programme for newly qualified teachers.

The school makes good use of comparative data available from the local education authority in evaluating how well it is doing and in setting challenging targets. These targets are for the school, for subjects and for individual pupils. Consultation with local authority support staff has taken place and great care is taken to ensure that decisions on spending reflect value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the school expects their children to work hard • That they feel comfortable about approaching the school • That the teachers are particularly caring of their children • That their children like coming to school • That their children make good progress • That behaviour is good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of extra curricular activities • The school response to incidents of bullying • The closeness with which the school works with parents

The inspectors fully agree with the strengths that parents and carers recognise in the school. From the questionnaire returns, a comparatively high proportion of parents were uncertain whether the school offered an interesting range of activities outside lessons. The inspectors would assure parents that, in their judgement,

students are fortunate in both the interest and breadth of the range of activities offered. Despite individual experiences, pupils do not believe that bullying is a problem. They praise the school's response and the evidence from the inspection is of very good procedures which are effective. The inspectors believe that the school works hard to involve parents and carers and to keep them informed.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

- 1 Results in the Key Stage 3 national testing in 1999 were in line with the national average point score but were well below the average point score for schools with similar proportions of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. However, fewer than five additional pupils with a known entitlement to a free school meal would have placed the school in the next group where the comparison would have been in line with the average. Results in mathematics, in 1999, were well above the national average and in line with the similar school average. Results in English and science were in line with national average but well below the similar schools average. The 1999 results in English and science were an unexplained drop from previous higher scores. The unconfirmed results for 2000 show a return to these higher levels. The school trend over the last four years is similar to the national trend. On average pupils made the expected progress from their Key Stage 2 to their Key Stage 3 results. Girls performed better than boys by a slightly greater margin than they do nationally.
- 2 In 1999, the proportion of pupils who gained five or more grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations was above the national average and close to the similar schools average. The average point score for these pupils was well above the national average and above the average for similar schools. Averaged over the last three years, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-C has been above, and the average point score per pupil has been well above, the corresponding national figure. The results in 1998 were lower than the preceding or following years. The school trend over the last four years has been higher than the national trend. The unconfirmed results for 2000 maintain the rising trend. Girls' performance was better than that of the boys by a slightly greater margin than nationally. The 1999 GCSE results were very high when compared with the results obtained by pupils who had similar Key Stage 3 results in 1997.
- 3 Results, in 1999, in most subjects were above the national average. In French, art and physical education they were in line with the national average and below in Spanish and drama. Results in Spanish and German have alternated on an annual basis partly as a reflection of which language is the one being studied as a second language by the pupils who are the most able linguists. Results in English literature, geography, food technology and media studies have been consistently above the national averages while those in drama have been consistently below. Pupils made greater progress in geography, history, mathematics, food technology and religious education relative to their progress in all the subjects they studied and less progress in science, English language, design and technology, drama, physical education and Spanish.
- 4 In 1999, the average point score of those pupils gaining two or more A levels, or their equivalent, placed the school above the national average. These were an improvement on the first results gained by sixth form pupils. Most subject results were comparable with the national results. However, results in science, geography, Spanish and art were above and in history and French were below the respective national results. Comparison of A level success with average GCSE point score shows that the achievement of the great majority of pupils was satisfactory. The unconfirmed results for 2000 indicate a drop in attainment level but these are for a cohort of pupils whose GCSE results were also lower than those of the preceding and subsequent year groups. In 1999, the proportion of pupils who successfully completed their GNVQ courses was below the national average.

- 5 The attainment of pupils when they come to the school has been gradually rising and in September 2000 it reached the national average. The results of previous year groups in both GCSE and A level therefore indicate that good progress has been made through the school.
- 6 The school reached the targets that it set for itself in the 1999 GCSE examinations. Over many years the local education authority has analysed past examination performance in comparison with the county-wide testing of reading carried out at ages 10+ and 12+. On the basis of this data the school sets its realistic targets.
- 7 The inspection took place at the beginning of the school year so judgements about the Key Stage standards and achievement relate to pupils who are at the beginning of Years 9, 11 and 13.
- 8 From scrutiny of work and classroom observation, overall standards being demonstrated at the end of Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form are in line with national expectation. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are above national expectation. In English, mathematics and science, standards are as expected in Key Stage 3. Achievement in science and English is satisfactory and is good in mathematics. Standards are higher than might be expected in Key Stage 4 in all three subjects and achievement is good. Standards in English, overall, in the sixth form are satisfactory and achievement is satisfactory while those in mathematics and science are higher than might be expected and achievement is good. Standards in English literature are higher than nationally expected in both Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, again demonstrating good achievement.
- 9 In the other subjects of the curriculum in Key Stage 3, standards are higher than expected for pupils of this age in design and technology, history, geography, art and religious education; below expectation in music and at expected levels in the other subjects. In this key stage, achievement is good in design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT), geography, Spanish, art and religious education; elsewhere it is satisfactory but with underachievement in music. At the end of Key Stage 4 standards are well above expectation in religious education, above in design and technology, history and geography, and at expectation in the other subjects. Here achievement is very good in geography and religious education, is good in design and technology, and Spanish, and is satisfactory in most other subjects. Pupils underachieve in drama and music. In the sixth form, standards are above expectation in history, geography and art, below expectation in French and German, and at expected levels in the rest. Sixth formers achieve particularly well in Spanish, art and geography.
- 10 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, overall, at both key stages. Pupils from the Area Support Centre (ASC) and other pupils with special needs are withdrawn for additional literacy skills such as corrective reading and spelling. They make good gains in Key Stage 3. Progress in reading and spelling is less consistent in Years 10 and 11 because pupils have insufficient individual reading practice. However, pupils generally achieve well in a range of modified courses at Key Stage 4 which lead to an appropriate level of GCSE and Certificate of Achievement or Competence. Pupils from the Area Support Centre and mainstream pupils with special learning difficulties are well integrated and supported in lessons. Their progress is good because targets and work are successfully adapted to their abilities. As a result pupils feel confident and are articulate. Examples of good achievement are found in design and technology, English, and science. The progress of pupils on the lower stages of the Record of Support is slower than expected because of an inconsistent approach to planning, target setting and day-to-day recording of achievement by learning support staff in many subject areas. Examples include history, information technology, physical education, music, mathematics, geography and religious education.

- 11 At the end of Year 7, 60 pupils are identified to form an express group in mathematics. The first pupils to be identified in this way are currently in Year 11. In the end of Key Stage 3 tests in 1999 the percentage of pupils attaining high levels was well above the national average suggesting that the strategy is leading to greater achievement by the more able pupils.
- 12 Pupils acquire good numeracy skills in their mathematics lessons. Emphasis is placed on the four basic rules and on the development of mental mathematical skills. The National Numeracy Strategy is being implemented in Years 7 and 8 and there are plans for its continuation into Year 9, where pupils currently have a separate mental mathematics lesson each week. There is a numeracy policy and liaison with the science department over when skills such as changing the subject of a formula are taught. Pupils have the opportunity to apply their numeracy skills across a wide range of subjects. They handle number and measurement fluently in science and geography. They are able to apply spatial concepts to their 2-D and 3-D work in art and design and technology. They make sense of information presented graphically in a range of subjects including physical education. They demonstrate a facility with handling statistical information, for example when using ICT for work in science on the frequencies of tides, with appropriate graphical representation.
- 13 Pupils have good literacy skills. The school's literacy initiative has vigour and vision, and is well co-ordinated. It is not yet consistently used by all departments. In most subjects, pupils are rarely expected to read aloud, and missed opportunities were evident, for example, in history and science. As a result many pupils read too quickly or too quietly when asked. The well-stocked, well-organised library plays a key role in encouraging pupils to read for pleasure or information, and to learn how to research a topic.
- 14 Most pupils speak clearly and with confidence. In drama and science, teachers encourage pupils to present information or opinion to the rest of the class. In design and technology, some pupils had been invited to the 'Dome' to present a project, having won a local competition. Subjects such as art, mathematics and science expect pupils to use specialist vocabulary appropriately and most respond well.
- 15 There are good opportunities for extended writing in history where writing frames are particularly well used, and in design and technology where evaluations of practical work take place. Both result in good standards of work. Structured worksheets contribute to pupils' literacy skills in science. Good standards of presentation of written work were noted in pupils' work in almost all subjects. Key words are displayed and well used in science and geography. In general, too little attention is paid to the quality of note-taking, some subjects making too much use of copying out.
- 16 Overall, standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are generally in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages and the sixth form. Progress for the great majority of pupils is good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in the rest of the school. Pupils often use computers competently and confidently to enhance their work in a range of subjects. When they do so, they work together willingly and to good effect, particularly in the younger years, sharing work and ideas well. Standards are highest in those aspects of ICT in which opportunities are provided most regularly, particularly in using word processors and desktop publishers to organise and present information. Opportunities are fewer, and skill and confidence consequently less consistently achieved, in aspects such as modelling situations and reflecting upon and discussing experiences of using computers.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 17 Attitudes to school and to learning are very good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are keen to be involved in all aspects of school life. In nearly all cases, pupils of all ages and abilities respond positively in lessons, showing interest and maintaining good concentration. They are attentive to their teachers and quickly engage in any tasks they are set. Where opportunities are provided, they collaborate effectively in group activities. In practical lessons, such as science, they follow instructions sensibly, handle apparatus with care and think about what they are doing. For example, in a Year 10 science lesson pupils set up the practical equipment sensibly and safely, and responded well to questioning about the ways in which energy can be saved in the home. In physical education lessons they are generally enthusiastic, working well together and helping each other in the development of their performance. In ICT lessons pupils work well together at the computers, sharing ideas and dealing with their own problems rather than always asking for help. However, in several lessons, for example in English and science, some pupils were generally reticent and passive, lacked intellectual curiosity and did not take part in oral work.
- 18 Behaviour throughout the school is good, especially in lessons, where it is often very good or excellent. Pupils are obedient and co-operative - they enter classrooms clearly expecting to work and behave. In the dining-room pupils are generally well-behaved, queuing up in an orderly manner to buy food. While pupils usually move sensibly around the school, there are occasional incidents of jostling in the narrow corridors. No incidents of bullying or aggressive behaviour were observed, and pupils report that any incidents of bullying are dealt with efficiently and appropriately. A number of fixed term exclusions have been made in the last year but this is below the average for similar schools. With a deliberate intent to keep pupils at school if at all possible, there were no permanent exclusions last year.
- 19 Pupils from the Area Support Centre and pupils with special educational needs who are withdrawn for smaller group work, work well collaboratively. Their behaviour is good in the majority of lessons due largely to the commitment and sensitivity of teachers and learning support assistants.
- 20 Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and teachers, are very good. High levels of mutual respect are clearly evident and pupils are courteous and friendly to visitors. Tutors and Heads of Year remain with their groups for five years and therefore know their pupils well. This continuity in pastoral provision helps to create a sense of community in such a large school. Pupils interviewed, both formally and informally, shared their positive perceptions about the school and felt comfortable to approach teachers if they had a problem. They appreciate and take part in the range of extra-curricular activities available. In addition, many undertake responsibilities as prefects, library monitors and representatives on year councils.
- 21 Attendance is good. It is above the national average and unauthorised absence is very low. Registers are taken at prescribed times. Most pupils are punctual and lessons start on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 22 The overall quality of teaching is good. Ninety six per cent of the teaching observed was at least satisfactory, approximately two-thirds was good or better and just over one-fifth was very good or excellent. In each key stage and in the sixth form teaching was good. In Key Stage 3 there was a slightly lower proportion than overall of very good and excellent teaching and in Key Stage

- 4 a slightly lower proportion of good or better teaching. In the sixth form there was no unsatisfactory teaching and one-third was very good or excellent. Overall, in only eight observed lessons was the teaching unsatisfactory and most of these happened to be in Key Stage 3. Pupils' learning related closely to the quality of teaching they experienced. Good teaching led to good learning taking place as pupils gained new knowledge, applied themselves to their work and practised their skills and understanding in new and familiar contexts.
- 23 The various features which contribute to teaching are all good. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject and of what is required for examination success enables them to plan lessons which present pupils with appropriately challenging work. They use a variety of effective teaching methods and the basic skills of most subjects are taught well. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and, as lessons proceed, they use good questioning to check understanding and learning and to provide encouragement and direction. Pupils are managed well and lessons, therefore, proceed at a brisk pace. Homework is satisfactorily used to support and extend the work in the classroom. Teaching was unsatisfactory when the majority of pupils in the class made insufficient progress during the course of the lesson. On two occasions this was due to poorly managed behaviour but was more usually due to poor planning. This planning either did not take sufficient recognition of the understanding and knowledge of pupils, resulting in them being unable to engage with the lesson, or it did not address the requirements of the subject, resulting in pupils simply 'marking time'.
- 24 Teaching and learning in English is generally good. A very good focus on reading results in pupils feeling confident in approaching literature. A strength of the teaching is the attention paid to spiritual, moral and cultural issues such as racism, isolation, disability, and the thinking behind other cultures. However, some of the content of some lessons is too dull and predictable and, although group discussion is a regular feature of English lessons, much of it is at a low level. Teaching in mathematics is good. Teachers' subject knowledge is a major contributing factor to pupils' achievement, especially in the high attaining sets and in the sixth form. The quality of teachers' planning is a strength and learning objectives are shared with pupils. As a result of the teaching, pupils' learning is also good. In science, teaching is good in all stages. Good subject knowledge and understanding are shown by the teachers' clear explanations, communicated in a lively manner. A strength of the teaching is the very good relationships between teachers and pupils. The encouraging and supportive teachers engender in the pupils a positive attitude and interest in their work in science. This results in good learning.
- 25 In most other subjects of the curriculum, teaching in Key Stages 3 and 4 is good. In Key Stage 3 it is sound in French, German and physical education but unsatisfactory in music. In Key Stage 4 it is very good in geography, sound in ICT but unsatisfactory in French, drama and music. Teaching in the sixth form is good in most subjects. It is very good in art and physical education and sound in French and German.
- 26 In art, in the most effective teaching, an appropriate balance of activities, stimulating discussion points and access to the work of other artists helps motivate pupils and raise their personal expectations. Where teachers are over-directive, pupils become more passive in their learning and make less progress. In design and technology, teachers' good knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the curriculum allows planning and the structuring of work to focus pupils' learning. Good assessment procedures provide individual support and guidance for pupils to improve their attainment.
- 27 The good teaching in geography is strongest in Key Stage 4 where teachers' clear focus on examination requirements and the criteria for success helps make the teaching most effective.

Tasks involve the practice of subject skills at appropriate levels. The content and the method of teaching make a significant contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In history, good planning results from a careful consideration of how learning outcomes might be achieved and evaluated, and leads to clearly set tasks and stimulating teaching. Good questioning techniques support and motivate pupils. The use of ICT is frequently effectively incorporated. Good support is provided for the development of pupils' literacy skills but less so for developing their numeracy skills. In both these subjects good learning results.

- 28 The teaching of ICT is effectively achieved within the teaching of the subjects of the curriculum. Specialist teachers use their knowledge to support pupils and their subject colleagues. A strength is the emphasis on active teaching, with thoughtful and effective support for individuals, that allows pupils to seek their own solution whenever possible. This approach enables pupils to both develop their ICT capability and enhance their work in the subject in which they are using it. In modern foreign languages, teaching overall is satisfactory. It is strongest in Spanish, where it is good. Here, good use of an assistant combines with searching questioning and effective group work to lead to good learning. Teaching in German good in Key Stage 4 and sound overall, leading to sound learning taking place. In French, teaching is unsatisfactory in Key Stage 4 but satisfactory elsewhere. Overall in language teaching, a lack of consistency in areas such as teachers' use of the target language, their marking and recording procedures, and the variation in quality of planning, leads to variable progress, particularly in French and German. There is a weakness in pupils learning the necessary oral skills for successful progression on the A level courses. All teachers are competent, confident linguists and a strength of the department is the fact that teachers use French, Spanish and German to communicate with one another and with assistants.
- 29 In drama, the quality of the observed teaching was good. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic, and succeed in making pupils keen to perform. Good questioning by teachers helps pupils to think about what they were doing, and to realise the importance of staging and movement, as well as speech. However, GCSE results clearly indicate that the teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 has been unsatisfactory. Learning is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in the sixth form. Teaching in music is unsatisfactory, overall, in both key stages. Teachers have good technical knowledge and some good use is made of their practical talents. However, they do not assess what is being understood by higher, medium and lower-attaining pupils and plan lessons on the basis of this knowledge. Introductions to lessons are often too long. This results in insufficient learning taking place. In physical education, where teaching is at least satisfactory and often better, a secure knowledge of the subject is regularly conveyed to pupils through perceptive observation of performance, appropriate intervention and good teacher directed question and answer sessions. Teachers regularly assess on-going work but the involvement of pupils in this is under-developed.
- 30 Teaching in religious education is good. Thorough preparation results in clear learning objectives and the setting of tasks matching the needs of the pupils. All teachers question pupils skilfully to check and extend their understanding. Teaching makes intellectual and creative demands on the pupils. However pupils are given too few opportunities to work as groups in preparing their own presentations and displays. A particular strength of the teaching is its inclusiveness with encouragement for pupils of all faiths to follow the course. This results in good learning.
- 31 The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special needs is good overall in both mainstream lessons and in groups withdrawn for more individual work. Teaching is most effective in Key Stage 3. Teachers have a clear focus on developing systematic skills in the corrective reading programme. They explain and demonstrate tasks well and extend pupils'

understanding through skilful questioning and good use of the board, where pupils have the opportunity to write word sounds and numbers to reinforce their understanding. Teachers and learning support assistants are good role models. They relate well to pupils and give them good support in lessons and in small groups, to help boost their confidence and esteem. On occasion, pupils are given insufficient opportunity to work independently or have limited opportunity to talk and assess what they are learning. Individual education plans are used effectively to plan and set targets for pupils with statements in the special education needs department. However, teachers in many curriculum areas make insufficient use of individual education plans (IEP) to plan work for low-attaining pupils in their subjects.

- 32 Since the previous inspection the school has devoted time and resources to developing teaching and the subsequent learning. This investment has been effective and has noticeably improved the overall quality of teaching from that reported previously. The weaker teaching reported in some subjects has improved but weaknesses remain in music and some language teaching. Work is now more closely matched to pupils' needs. There is less variation in teaching across and within the subjects of the curriculum.

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

- 33 The quality and the range of learning opportunities are good in all three key stages with significant strengths. The curriculum reflects the aims of the school well. Statutory requirements are met in Key Stages 3 and 4 but not in the sixth form where there is a lack of religious education. There are good opportunities to use information technology across the curriculum and appropriate provision for personal and social education at all three key stages. Setting, particularly in subjects such as mathematics, contributes to the high standards achieved. There are effective strategies for teaching literacy and the development of numeracy is good. The National Numeracy Strategy is being implemented in Years 7 and 8.
- 34 In Key Stage 3, pupils study the full range of national curriculum subjects enhanced by a second European language or Bengali from Year 8 for more able pupils, and dance in Years 7 and 8. In Key Stage 4, all pupils study a common core of subjects including double science and a choice of design and technology course, enhanced by a choice from a wide range of additional subjects including media studies, four foreign languages, drama and child development. Curriculum provision for pupils with special needs is good at both key stages. Courses have been effectively modified and developed for low-attaining pupils at both key stages, since the last inspection, and give a good range of choice, breadth and balance. Lower-attaining pupils achieve accreditation for their work through Certificates of Achievement in subjects such as modern languages and resistant materials. A modified curriculum appropriately allows some pupils to follow work related courses, although this vocational opportunity is not yet available for all pupils. In the sixth form, a sufficiently large number of A and AS level courses, together with four GNVQs, provides good opportunities. This curriculum is broadened further by a series of short course opportunities. There is no opportunity for pupils to follow an ICT course to GCSE or A level examination.
- 35 Most subjects plan well to provide coverage of the National Curriculum and to provide good support for the teaching. Planning is less satisfactory in modern foreign languages and music, where the lack of coherent schemes of work mean that teachers are inadequately supported in identifying clear learning objectives for lessons and making sufficient allowance for pupils' differing learning needs. Curriculum planning in modern foreign languages does not address the requirements of the National Curriculum to develop pupils ICT expertise.

- 36 The curriculum is enhanced by a good variety of additional activities. These include very successful exchanges to France, Spain and Germany, visits to theatres and an artist's studio, geographical visits for Year 11 and historical tours for Year 10 to northern France. Sixth formers go to Paris to enhance their studies in art. Numerous teams operate in a range of sports and in music a range of high quality musical ensembles is valued and supported by pupils. Many pupils are involved in the school dramatic production. Opportunities are provided at lunch times and after school, on a weekly, if not daily, basis for pupils to seek help and support in, for example, design and technology, ICT, English and geography. These opportunities contribute well to the raising of standards in the subjects of the curriculum as well as broadening pupils' experience.
- 37 Equality of opportunity and access to the curriculum for all is good overall.
- 38 A comprehensive personal and social education programme is taught to all pupils throughout the school and makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. Components of this good and well-planned course include aspects of political education and citizenship as well as health, sex and drugs education.
- 39 The careers programme is very good and begins in Year 9. It is very well planned and comprehensive, and includes work experience for all pupils. An excellent resource area is very well used by pupils and good support from the local careers service makes a valuable contribution in preparing pupils for further education and work
- 40 The school has developed good community links. Local clubs provide coaching for pupils in return for use of the school's sporting facilities. Participation in the Community Sports Leadership Award, sporting competitions against local schools and visits from speakers from industry help to broaden pupils' horizons. Relationships with partner institutions are good. Some sixth form pupils coach team games at local primary schools and mathematics masterclasses are held at the school for pupils in their last year at primary school.
- 41 Since the last inspection, religious education has been fully included in the main school curriculum. The allocation of time to subjects has been modified and review has led to further changes to operate from September 2001. The current proposals for modern foreign languages, however, do not resolve the issue of a reduction in time for the first language when pupils study a second, identified in the previous report.
- 42 The spiritual provision for pupils is satisfactory overall and is particularly effective in subjects such as English, history and religious education where frequent opportunities are provided to share opinions and express feelings. As was the case during the last inspection, the school does not meet the requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Pupils attend two assemblies a week in their year groups. Assembly themes are well planned but rarely have a spiritual dimension, or provide an opportunity for pupils to reflect.
- 43 Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. Moral issues are well handled and pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong. Pupils feel that teachers are consistent in their expectations of behaviour and in their implementation of the school's system of rewards and sanctions. Good opportunities to explore moral and social issues such as slavery, racism and war crimes are provided in history. In other subjects too, pupils encounter the notions of right and wrong as, for example, in physical education where they are expected to consider the importance of rules and fair play, and in design technology where pupils are strongly encouraged to respect the environment. Moral themes feature very strongly in English and drama where pupils discuss and dramatise situations connected with peer pressure and experiments on animals. The ethical

and moral issues behind some contemporary issues are studied in geography and religious education. Pupils are encouraged to think of others through the school's activities in fund-raising for a range of worthy causes, including a neighbouring hospice.

- 44 The school makes very good provision of opportunities for social development. Relationships are positive and mutually respectful. Tutors and heads of year remain with their groups for five years and therefore know their pupils well and this creates a sense of community. Opportunities for pupils to play a part in the making of decisions are provided through the year councils. A school council plays a considerable role in certain aspects of school decision making. Residential experiences in this country and abroad enrich their social experiences. In lessons, pupils often work together in pairs and groups, and take responsibility for their work, although not all teaching promotes independence and initiative: in some lessons pupils tend to be passive learners and the teaching does not always address this. Social issues are studied and discussed in design technology, and in science pupils learn to apply scientific knowledge to examine social, ethical and environmental issues such as pollution, nuclear energy and energy conservation. The good range of extra-curricular activities presents many opportunities for pupils to develop socially. Year 11 pupils assist at induction evenings for Year 6 pupils and parents. New pupils in the sixth form are well integrated, although several reported that they do not have many opportunities to take on responsibilities.
- 45 Provision for cultural development is good. Within the curriculum pupils' studies include poetry from the Caribbean, textiles from other countries, the history of medicine and the traditions associated with the major religions. Art makes a significant contribution through topics that include different cultures and belief systems. Within the study of modern languages, pupils gain an insight into the cultural traditions of other countries which is enhanced by their visits to Germany, France and Spain. In their study of history, pupils have opportunities to visit a local primary school which developed an appropriate display, complete with sound effects, in an old air-raid shelter. During the inspection the school held a *Poetry Olympics* involving more than 100 pupils and staff in lively recitations.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 46 The school makes effective provision for the care and welfare of its pupils. Procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare are good. Procedures for monitoring academic and personal development are very good and are a strength of the school. The educational support and guidance for pupils is good. Day to day working practices ensure a safe and secure environment for both staff and pupils as, for example, in the effective supervision roles around the school during breaks. An effective behaviour policy based on the principles of assertive discipline stresses pupils' personal responsibility. Pupils earn credits and commendations to encourage good behaviour, which is managed consistently in lessons and makes an effective contribution to teaching and learning overall. Behaviour outside the classroom is generally good. Pupils feel that the school has a good atmosphere and their positive attitudes and values in supporting the aims of the school bear this out.
- 47 Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are very good. A very good assessment policy defines clear roles and responsibilities. Very good use is made of a wide range of assessment data to predict examination grades on the basis of pupils' prior attainment. A system of minimum and *golden* targets gives pupils a realistic idea of their potential standard, together with a challenging goal. Pupils find this helpful and motivating. Pupils identified as possibly underachieving receive support and mentoring through their heads of year. The policy of action targets to promote pupil progress is good. However, there is inconsistency in

implementation across the different departments of the school. Action targets are insufficiently subject specific.

- 48 The use of transfer targets in literacy and numeracy, generated in the primary schools, provides good curriculum continuity and promotes good learning from the moment pupils arrive. Performance reviews, focusing on under-performance in Year 11, lead to effective mentoring. Pupils in Key Stage 3 do not have a clear idea of their standard of work in terms of National Curriculum levels and the planned extension of achievement targets to the lower school will help these pupils raise their attainment.
- 49 The use of assessment to adapt the curriculum to meet the individual needs of students is good. An alternative curriculum has been introduced to meet the needs of low-attaining students. The design and technology and history departments have adopted specific strategies to raise the achievement of boys, and these appear to be having a positive effect on standards. The strategy, in modern languages, in which boys and girls are taught separately in some Key Stage 3 classes, is being evaluated. Science has introduced *Thinking Science* materials in Year 8 in order to raise achievement. The introduction of target setting has led to a wider variety of teaching and learning styles being used, by some subjects, to promote more independent learning. The use of attainment data, to identify whether teaching has or has not been successful, varies between departments.
- 50 Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are good and are closely linked to a home-school agreement. The use of 'consequences' sheets is an effective monitoring tool for poor behaviour and teachers follow behaviour procedures consistently. Positive behaviour is effectively praised. The heads of year play an important role in the consistent and effective operation of these procedures. A social inclusion policy is effective in reducing the need for formal exclusion. It is closely linked to a pastoral support programme for disaffected pupils and offers an alternative curriculum at Key Stage 4, which includes good links with the local community. The school prefect system is effective in maintaining pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour at break and lunchtime.
- 51 Procedures for eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. Strengths lie in the respect and tolerance pupils show towards each other. A well-established anti-bullying policy is part of the personal and social education programme. Annual pupils' surveys ensure on-going awareness of bullying issues. Incidents that arise are effectively dealt with immediately and parents are kept informed.
- 52 Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good. A very effective system is in place to check first day absences, funded through the social inclusion programme. Procedures for monitoring absence are effectively operated within the well-structured pastoral system. Pupils with long term health and attendance problems receive very good support through their heads of year and the Education Welfare Officer.
- 53 Child protection procedures are fully in place with a designated, trained member of staff. Good links are established with Social Services and annual reports are made to the Governors. However, there are some inconsistencies in keeping staff informed with regular Child Protection information.
- 54 The academic performance and welfare, overall, of pupils with special educational needs are appropriately monitored and supported. Pupils are identified early and good contacts with primary school staff ensure a smooth entry to senior school. Support from specialist agencies is used

effectively, including specific disability related provision. Pupils with statements are effectively monitored and transitional and annual review assessments meet statutory requirements. Individual education plans for pupils on Record of Support levels 2 and 3 have inadequate subject specific targets to help the pupil focus on his or her progress. Pupils have limited opportunities to visit the special needs area during breaks to discuss problems or take part in activities because specialist staff are often timetabled away from the special needs base. This reduces valuable contact time and is having an adverse impact on pupils' care and welfare and on the ethos of the department overall. The education needs of pupils with English as an additional language are identified and have been communicated to staff. Good quality individual tuition by withdrawal from lessons helps pupils gain precise understanding of vocabulary and increase general conversation skills. In other lessons, there is effective support. As a result, these pupils are able to access all subjects of the curriculum.

- 55 The school has maintained a good level of care for its pupils since the last inspection. Annual reports now meet statutory requirements. Interim progress reports have been introduced and the development of procedures of assessment and the use of assessment has been managed carefully with pilot studies and thorough evaluation.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 56 Since the last inspection the school has continued to develop an effective partnership with parents. Parents' views of the school, as expressed through their questionnaire returns and at the parents' meeting, are positive. Most parents feel that their children enjoy school, are expected to work hard and are making good progress. They feel comfortable about approaching staff with any concerns.
- 57 Through a range of surveys and documents, parents are consulted about developments in the school, such as the change of timing of the school day and the home-school agreement. The latter took the form of a questionnaire which was used to analyse parents' views on many aspects of school life, including communication, homework and standards of behaviour.
- 58 Most parents have little direct involvement with the work in school. A small Parents' Association provides the school with a discretionary fund for trips and supports the annual Craft Fair. However, most parents are supportive and encourage pupils in their work at school and at home. Attendance at parents' evenings and information sessions is generally good. Parents are encouraged to become involved in their child's work at home through signing the log book. These are checked regularly, by most form tutors, in Years 7 to 9. They are all effective means of home-school communication. The tutorial system ensures that tutors and heads of year know pupils well, involving parents when necessary. Parents of pupils with special educational needs, and the pupils themselves, are involved at all stages of review.
- 59 The range and quality of information is good. This is achieved through the prospectus, twice-a-term newsletters from the Headteacher and the fortnightly *Copleston Matters* which gives details of events and activities. Written annual reports are detailed, personal to each pupil and include targets for improvement in most subjects. Parental consultations are held once a year. The school goes further than it is required to do by providing interim progress reports and opportunities to discuss these with tutors. In addition, regular sessions are held to inform parents about aspects of their children's education such as coursework, target-setting and careers guidance.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 60 The leadership and management of the school are good. In his first year in post, the head has accurately assessed the strengths of the school and has given a very strong lead in establishing future priorities. The agenda for development takes good account of these strengths and the head is establishing appropriate structures for the principal purpose of raising further pupils' attainment. The school's very good aims are very evident in the present working of the school. Despite the very large numbers of pupils, there is a very strong 'feel-good factor' throughout the school. This stems from the friendly and positive nature of the pupils themselves, very good relationships between them and the staff, and a system of organisation that builds and maintains strong corporate identity within each year group.
- 61 Management procedures have been thoroughly reviewed over the past year and are good. The job descriptions of all members of staff have been clarified, agreed and implemented. Members of the senior management team are very dedicated and have rigorous targets for which they are accountable to the head. They understand and share the head's vision and they successfully play their major role in ensuring the smooth running of the school on a day-to-day basis and in the longer term. Very good communications enhance the efficiency of the school's senior management team. In general, heads of department organise their departments well, but there are weaknesses in the management of modern languages and music. Members from the senior management team work to a common agenda with their link department, but their effectiveness varies in assisting departments to devise appropriate targets and plans for development.
- 62 The special educational needs department is led with considerable skill, expertise and sensitivity. Good progress has been made since the last inspection to increase resource allocation and in the development of reading schemes and Key Stage 4 courses. Individual education plans meet the requirements of the Code of Practice. However, in the past year, expertise in specialist learning areas has been dispersed. Learning support assistants have no formal meeting with the co-ordinator and, because special needs staff teach in other subject areas, there is little opportunity to meet and plan together. These factors are impacting unfavourably on the monitoring of progress for pupils on the lower levels of the register.
- 63 Provision to support pupils for whom English is an additional language is good and is very well organised. Pupils make good progress in both key stages. The level of staffing is satisfactory and staff are well deployed. Information on individual pupils is clear and up to date, and there is precise identification of those whose acquisition of English is at an early stage. The school is sensitive to the cultural and religious experiences of such pupils, and arrangements are made to allow attendance at, or celebration of, appropriate festivals. Liaison with homes is achieved by translation, the use of interpreters, telephone calls and home visits.
- 64 The governing body is fully aware of its statutory responsibilities and discharges them well. However, failure to ensure the provision of religious education in the sixth form and daily collective worship for all pupils remain breaches of legal requirements. Governors are very well informed about the school and have a clear idea of its strengths and weaknesses. They are familiar with assessment data and predictions for pupils' attainment and they are able to give an informed judgement on the school's results. They set realistic, yet challenging, targets for the head and the school. Governors are closely involved in deciding the school's priorities and they agree with the head that the major current priority is the need to raise attainment still further. Governors shrewdly examine the school's development plan before approving it. Appropriate sub-committees meet regularly. A senior member of staff is linked with each. There is regular contact between staff and governors, but governors are not formally linked with individual

departments and there is no procedure for monitoring departments and reporting back to the full governing body. This aspect of their role as critical friend needs developing further. Governors will shortly be spending a day in school, strengthening their roles within departments and with respect to the school's strategic development.

- 65 The monitoring of teaching is unsatisfactory. It ceased as a routine activity amongst departments when formal appraisal was discontinued nationally. A very good scheme for the performance management of staff has been agreed and awaits introduction in 2001. This will enable the school's senior managers to re-establish monitoring of teaching as an important means of raising standards of teaching and learning.
- 66 An effective planning cycle over the year enables line managers to make all departments aware of national and other priorities for development. Departments link their planning to these and are able to influence strategic planning through their line managers. Departmental development plans are relevant and carefully constructed. A very good agenda for the school's future development is set out in the school development plans for 2000 and 2001. These contain wide-ranging targets, clearly linked to raising attainment. The plan embraces curriculum, literacy, teaching, management, increased use of ICT, the school environment, the possible future of the school as a specialist college for sport, and the promotion of the school in the area. The means for achieving targets are clearly stated, as are criteria for success, together with timescales, responsibility and costs for each area of development.
- 67 The school has made good progress towards achieving its targets. Management structures are appropriate and there is a high standard of planning at senior management level. The head has begun wide consultation towards reviewing the school's aims. Staff have recently made good progress towards refining the curriculum by assessing the opportunities within subjects for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. There is a shared commitment amongst staff to improvement. Good evidence of this is the purposeful use made of data from national and other tests to furnish teachers with appropriate expectations of what each pupil may achieve. The capacity of staff to achieve current aims is satisfactory, given that there are areas where management within departments has weaknesses. There remains a need to identify and share the best practice in teaching.
- 68 The three-year financial plan is a very effective strategy for shaping longer-term and current expenditure. It underpins the educational priorities that have been identified, informs decision-making and has contributed greatly to the very good strategic management of resources. There are some effective systems in place to ensure that spending remains within the allocated budget. These include the production of monthly budget profiles and forecast reports and some rigorous monitoring procedures overseen by clerical staff. Budget reports ensure that key staff and governors have accurate and current information on which to base their decision-making. In making these decisions, governors and staff are keenly aware of and apply best value principles. Computers are a vital part of the strategic financial management of the school as well as for routine administration and storing and analysing data. They are used very effectively for monitoring and control purposes, record keeping, administration, analysis of assessment information and to carry out financial transactions.
- 69 A strength of the school is the very good and rigorous induction programme that has been put in place for newly qualified teachers beginning their teaching career in the school. The year-long programme of regular meetings, observations of lessons and feedback has helped, for example, teachers adapt and refine their teaching styles, effectively manage pupil behaviour and carry out

observations of other more experienced teachers. This sharing of good practice has been particularly effective with gains for both experienced and less experienced teachers.

- 70 Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are good overall. The school is fully staffed with sufficient qualified teachers, learning support and technical assistants to meet the demands of the curriculum. A government funded initiative, to improve teacher expertise in the use of ICT, has begun to have a positive impact on standards in English, history and information technology and in the departmental management of science. This rolling programme will be available to other teachers in due course. Despite a very tight budget the school has appropriate plans in place to carry out further improvements to the accommodation and to improve resources where there are deficiencies. The strategic targeting of resources has enabled the school as a whole, and aspects of the school in particular, to benefit. There are notable examples of improved facilities in the humanities and sixth form centres. Teaching and learning are significantly enhanced by the quality of the environment - a factor that contributes positively to the school ethos and educational standards. The school buildings and sporting facilities provide good social and learning opportunities both for pupils and members of the wider community.
- 71 Appropriate plans are in place to address remaining weaknesses in accommodation and resources including the over-crowded dining areas and two temporary classrooms, both in a poor state of repair. The financial plan includes a sound strategy for the future spending on ICT resources, taking into account the need to add to the number, replace outdated computers and maintain existing stock. Currently the resources available for teaching ICT are lower than the average pupil to computer ratio and are insufficient to meet the demands of the curriculum.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 72 To continue to improve the quality of education that the school provides, to maximise achievement and raise standards further the governors and the school should:
- (1) Put into operation a systematic monitoring of classroom practice for the purpose of management. This monitoring, and subsequent evaluation of school performance, should seek to ensure that:
 - good teaching practice is recognised and shared amongst teaching staff;
 - school and departmental policies are being followed by all teachers;
 - a pupil's experience does not depend so heavily upon the teacher that they have;
 - there is less variation in line management links with the senior management team
(*paras: 10, 13, 23, 25, 31, 47, 48, 61, 65, 67, 85, 94, 104, 107, 108, 111, 113, 134, 146, 157, 158, 166, 176, 177, 180*)
 - (2) Address the weaknesses in the management of modern languages which relate to:
 - a lack of agreed documentation to guide and support the teachers
 - a lack of monitoring as detailed in the first key issue
 - a fragmentation in the responsibility for French and German
(*paras: 28, 33, 41, 146, 147, 152, 157, 158, 159, 160*)
 - (3) Remove the underachievement:
 - in music by
 - accurately assessing what is being learned by higher, medium and lower-attaining pupils;

- planning lessons on the basis of this information;
 - relating learning to meaningful musical experiences;
 - ensuring that pupils understand what they are to do;
- (paras: 29, 35, 167,169, 170, 171, 172)

in drama by

- ensuring that teaching in Key Stage 3 provides a programme for developing the skills and attitudes essential to success at GCSE;
 - improving pupils' ability to evaluate and comment on the performance of others, and to apply the lessons learned to their own work;
 - increasing the pace and focus of work in Key Stage 4;
 - providing more consistent teaching styles and routines;
- (paras: 162, 164, 165, 166)

- (4) meet statutory requirements for the inclusion of religious education for all pupils in the sixth form.
(paras: 33, 190)

73 In addition the governors and school should consider addressing the following less important, but significant, issues in their action plan: develop all strands of literacy across the curriculum (paras: 13, 16, 24, 79, 80, 131, 132, 134); ensure all strands of ICT are covered and by all pupils (paras: 16, 138, 143); seek ways of reducing some pupils' passivity and increase opportunities to show initiative in learning (paras: 17, 27, 28, 44, 80, 83, 84, 104, 105, 111, 188); seek ways of greater integration of the sixth form with the school (paras: 44, 77); implement a daily act of collective worship (para: 42); increase opportunities for spiritual development (paras: 42, 136); introduce examination courses in ICT (para: 143); review SEN staffing allocation (paras: 52, 62); further address disparity between boys' and girls' attainment (paras: 80, 154); address weaker aspects of physical education curriculum (paras: 176, 177, 178, 181).

SIXTH FORM

- 74 The joint sixth form, with Holywell High School, was established in 1996 and so was not reported on as part of the previous inspection. Careful planning by both schools, leading to ongoing development, has resulted in a sixth form of over three hundred students, housed mainly in attractive, purpose built accommodation. This provision is good and the cost effectiveness of the sixth form is good.
- 75 Standards attained in public examinations improved from 1998 – 1999 but the average point score per student at both A-level and GNVQ remains below the national average. However, because nationally there are more sixth forms with lower than the average point than there are with higher, the school is above the national average position.
- 76 The general standards of teaching and learning in the sixth form are good but there is variability within and between departments which leads, on occasions, to a lack of appropriate challenge. Overall, curriculum provision is good; students can choose from a wide range of courses and every effort is made to meet their different needs. The academic curriculum is broadened by a good range of additional opportunities. The statutory requirement for religious education is not currently being met.
- 77 Students are supported in their learning and personal development by a clear pastoral structure. The school's plans to develop and enhance the monitoring role of the form tutor will strengthen

this further. There is a positive sense of community within the sixth form which helps newcomers to integrate quickly. However there are few opportunities for students to contribute to the wider school community by undertaking responsibilities and leadership roles.

- 78 Considerable progress has been made in establishing a flourishing and effective sixth form. The challenge now lies in determining its future direction and development.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	203
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	58

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	20	40	33	3	0.5	

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1406	316
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	125	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	55	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	180	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	66

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	33

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.6
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	138	142	280

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	74	101	83
	Girls	110	104	86
	Total	184	205	169
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	66 (76)	73 (64)	60 (68)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	15 (33)	51 (37)	18 (31)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	80	91	90
	Girls	120	106	100
	Total	200	197	190
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	72 (57)	71 (66)	68 (80)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	33 (45)	29 (38)	35 (45)
	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	133	140	273

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	69	119	126
	Girls	89	133	139
	Total	158	252	265
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	58 (47)	92 (93)	97 (95)
	National	46.6 (44.6)	90.9 (89.8)	95.8 (95.2)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	45 (40.9)
	National	38.0 (36.8)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0	N/a
	National		N/a

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	55	70	125

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	15.6	18.3	17.2 (15.9)	2.9	2.5	2.8 (10)
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	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	50	62
	National		82.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	6
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	9
Indian	19
Pakistani	5
Bangladeshi	32
Chinese	15
White	1569
Any other minority ethnic group	18

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani	2	
Bangladeshi	4	
Chinese		
White	26	
Other minority ethnic groups	5	

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	99.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	26
Total aggregate hours worked per week	572

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.8%
---	-------

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24.1
Key Stage 4	21.6

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	4235821
Total expenditure	4168906
Expenditure per pupil	2489
Balance brought forward from previous year	-64405
Balance carried forward to next year	2510

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1711
Number of questionnaires returned	1214

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	26	61	9	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	30	58	4	1	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	24	60	7	2	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	17	60	14	3	6
The teaching is good.	23	66	4	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	22	51	17	3	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	42	48	7	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51	46	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	20	53	18	3	6
The school is well led and managed.	23	58	6	2	12
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	29	57	5	1	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	20	45	14	2	18

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Those who attended the parents' meeting were very positive in their views of the school, a picture which is supported by the very high proportion of responses to the questionnaire. A higher proportion of parents and carers tended to disagree that their children received the right amount of homework, that they were kept well informed about progress and that the school works closely with parents. Few returns had additional comments to explain these disagreements. Some of the higher proportions in the 'don't know' category relate to responses from parents and carers whose children had just entered the school but who, nevertheless, felt that they had a point of view on other aspects. Parents and carers were least happy with the provision of extra curricular activities. A few comments on the questionnaire showed individual parents who were not satisfied with the response the school had made in very specific circumstances, usually related to bullying. In contrast, several parents reported the opposite and it was not felt to be an issue by those at the meeting.

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

ENGLISH

- 79 Since the last inspection, results in national tests in English at the end of Key Stage 3 have fluctuated widely. In 1999, they were in line with the national average but well below the average for similar schools. Taken over four years they are close to the national average, and the difference between the performance of boys and girls matches that nationally. Results for summer 2000 indicate a marked improvement. Teacher assessments have been inconsistent for several years because of insufficient understanding by some teachers of how to apply the criteria for various levels of success to pupils' work. Improved standardisation and moderation have remedied this. The standard of work of pupils currently in Year 9 is above the national average because teachers have good information about pupils' abilities and potential, and they consider this when planning teaching strategies. There is a strong emphasis on basic skills such as layout of written work, planning and drafting writing, and including suitable references. Pupils are always encouraged to use how they respond to what they read as a means of coming to an opinion, which they are then expected to justify. Standards in creative writing and literature reviews are less secure.
- 80 GCSE results in both English language and English literature have improved since the last inspection. In 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining a grade A* to C was above the national average in English language, and well above in English literature with a large number of pupils entered. This good performance was sustained in the 2000 examinations, but girls outperform boys by a greater margin than nationally. GCSE results in the very popular media studies option were well above national average in 1999, and the 2000 results were significantly better. A scrutiny of work and lesson observation showed the attainment of the present Year 11 pupils to be above average. They are particularly adept at analysing and comparing literature texts, many using their wide vocabulary and knowledge of technical terms well. Lower-attaining pupils benefit from their own hard work and well-taught techniques of how to plan and edit written work. Average ability pupils have very competent English but some take too few risks. When challenged to write imaginatively they rely on chronological narrative; sentences have clarity of meaning but are rarely constructed to create an effect. Pupils have good listening skills which they use well, but in oral work they rarely pursue and develop ideas. Whilst many are confident, clear and appropriate speakers, too few use speech to evaluate ideas. Too much whole class discussion is teacher-led, following conventional viewpoints rather than probing and challenging their validity. This feature gave a Year 11 class studying *To Kill a Mockingbird* a sound grasp of plot and themes, but little insight into motive: pupils were informed rather than extended in their thinking and awareness.
- 81 In 1999, pupils' results at A-level in English literature and media studies were close to the national average. Results in the English language/literature combined course were well below the national average. In 2000 the points score per pupil in this examination improved, but a third of pupils failed to achieve a pass grade. Standards seen in sixth form lessons and a scrutiny of representative files confirmed a continuing disparity in pupil achievement in these subjects.
- 82 When compared to their earlier attainment, pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Key Stage 3, good in Key Stage 4 (especially so in literature) and satisfactory at A level. When they enter the school in Year 7, their standards have been below average. Relative to their abilities, pupils produce large amounts of good quality written work, and are skilled in adapting what they write to its purpose. They move from writing poetry to letters to newspaper articles to pamphlets with

ease, although some pupils of average ability find it difficult to sustain more formal styles. In an outstanding Year 9 lesson, where they were using computers to draft a persuasive leaflet about becoming vegetarian, pupils could concentrate on getting the language, tone and message right as they knew that there would be a focus on editing and correction later on in the sequence. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because they are well known and work is adapted to help them. For example, in a poetry lesson with a lower-attaining set the teacher altered the phrasing of questions to allow pupils to feel more confident about answering them. When written tasks were set, the teacher had prepared frames for writing which helped pupils structure work without restricting their ideas.

- 83 The overall standard of teaching observed in English and media studies was good. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen and just over half the lessons were at least good. Some outstanding teaching took place. The amount and scope of written work in pupils' books and files, and the regularity of its marking by teachers, confirm the quality of teaching. In most lessons pupils learn that they need to include both a personal response to written language, and a demonstration of their ability to analyse its effects and communicate these effectively. This is brought about by the studious tone in most lessons, and by teachers' ability to explain the purpose of a task, and how it fits in to the unit of work. There is a very good focus on reading; a reading award scheme linked with the library encourages pupils to read a wide range of genres and styles, and to share their discoveries and enthusiasms. This results in pupils feeling confident in approaching literature. Very sophisticated and challenging questioning to A-level pupils was seen in lessons on the poetry of Blake and Keats, and on the techniques employed in a Stephen King extract, but some other oral work in A level lessons was vague and pedestrian. Pupils benefit from the regular planned use of computers which helps them to develop information technology and English skills in parallel. A strength of the teaching is the attention paid to spiritual, moral and cultural issues such as racism, isolation, disability, and the thinking behind other cultures. This helps pupils to realise the universality of such issues, and their responsibility to be sensitive to them, and to influence other people's views for the good of society. However, too many lessons contained unsatisfactory features. These usually related to the lesson content being too dull and predictable, and the teacher limiting ideas rather than using oral work to open up differences. For example, the teacher of a Year 11 class studying poetry for examination clearly explained the role of the audience in asking questions or seeking clarification when groups presented ideas, but pupils had not been taught the value of such exchanges and only the most basic questions were asked. In contrast, pupils in a Year 10 media studies lesson quickly learnt how to relate image and caption for a newspaper article to the target audience, because the teacher got them to share ideas in pairs and then explain them to other pairs.
- 84 Pupils' attitudes in English are good; their behaviour is very good. They obviously respect teachers, arrive at lessons promptly and well prepared, concentrate during lessons, and take pride in written work. Many are too quiet in class discussion, depending too much on the teacher for ideas and direction. In this sense, about half do not demand enough of themselves, in contrast with their approach to written tasks. A small minority of boys in classes in Years 7 to 11 are too often inattentive in lessons, limiting their own progress or exact understanding.
- 85 Since the previous inspection there has been good improvement. The quality of teaching has improved, GCSE results are above national average, and the leadership and management of the department has developed. Those with management responsibilities are very well organised, and know what their tasks are and how to perform them. Communication is very good, and there is a perceptive view of where improvement still needs to be made. There is a strong sense of teamwork, involvement and commitment. Whilst the setting of homework and its marking has been carefully monitored, there has been insufficient opportunity to check the quality of teaching.

This has resulted in some lessons being too staid and teacher-centred, and there being too much inconsistency in routines and procedures such as marking and the use of mark books, how lesson objectives are arrived at, and how lessons are rounded off. The curriculum is good, notably in terms of opportunities for pupils to study literature and media, and the integration of computer skills. The English department is in a good position to make further progress by sustaining its successes and being determined to tackle issues which need improvement.

MATHEMATICS

- 86 Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 show an overall upward trend over the last three years. In 1999 they were above average in comparison with national averages, but broadly in line with the average for similar schools. Pupils did better in mathematics than in English and science. Girls did better than boys and to a greater extent than nationally. Results for 2000 indicate continued improvement.
- 87 The standard of work of pupils currently in Year 9 is above the national average. Standards are high because setting arrangements provide an additional group and there is additional teaching time in Year 9. Pupils are strong in algebra. They solve a range of equations of increasing difficulty with most pupils able to solve simultaneous equations. They draw graphs of mathematical functions but have limited opportunities to use ICT to enhance their learning in this area. Pupils understand the concept of place value and most are able to write numbers in standard form. They perform calculations involving fractions, percentages and decimals. They understand and use Pythagoras' theorem. They find perimeters, areas and volumes of common shapes with the more able finding areas of circles using a formula.
- 88 GCSE results in mathematics have fluctuated but shown an upward trend since the last inspection. In 1999, the results were above the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C rose to above the national average as did the proportion gaining at least grade G. Pupils did better in mathematics than in their other subjects. There was little difference in the performance of girls and boys. Results for 2000 suggest an increase in the proportion of pupils gaining at least G grade but a decrease in the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C. This decrease can be partially explained by the staffing difficulties which affected some Year 11 pupils.
- 89 The evidence of the pupils' work and the lessons observed showed that Year 11 pupils' attainment is good. It is above the national expectation. They do well in several areas of mathematics. In a Year 11 lesson, average ability pupils used trigonometrical ratios to calculate the size of an unknown side or angle in a right-angled triangle. They were confident in using their scientific calculators to find inverses of trigonometrical functions. Low ability pupils could use and apply their understanding of ratio. Not all pupils are secure with multiplication facts. Higher-attaining pupils were able to synthesise various elements of their work on probability to solve problems.
- 90 GCE A level results in mathematics improved from the previous year. In 1999 the proportion of pupils gaining A to E grades was above the national average. Results for 2000 suggest that there has been a fall in the percentage of pupils gaining A to E grades but the number of candidates was small.
- 91 The evidence of the pupils' work and the lessons observed showed that Year 12 and 13 pupils' attainment is good. Pupils demonstrated a facility with the use of graphic calculators. In one statistics lesson they use grouped frequency data for box and whisker plots and in another they

calculated measures of dispersion. In a pure mathematics lesson pupils reduced equations to linear form.

- 92 When compared to their earlier attainment, pupils' achievement in mathematics is good in all key stages. While progress overall in Key Stage 3 is good, pupils make better progress towards the end of the key stage than at the beginning. This is because the work does not always build suitably on pupils' previous learning experiences. When they enter the school in Year 7, standards are broadly average. From this baseline pupils make good progress. For example high-attaining pupils in Years 9 to 11 make particularly good progress. In a Year 9 lesson, high-attaining pupils created scatter graphs, hypothesised about their meaning, drew conclusions and demonstrated an understanding of correlation.
- 93 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall because the work is at an appropriate level. The setting for mathematics enables pupils to be taught in smaller groups. As a result, their achievement in relation to their abilities is good. In a Year 10 class a pupil with a statement of special educational need was able to play a full part in a lesson on patterns and sequences because of adult support. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make progress in line with their peers.
- 94 Overall, the teaching observed was good. There were some sound and also some very good lessons observed at each key stage. In most lessons teachers' subject knowledge is a strength. This is a major contributing factor to pupils' achievement especially in the high-attaining sets and in the sixth form. Teachers are able to give clear explanations while drawing skilfully on pupils' ideas and suggestions, as in a Year 9 lesson on correlation. The quality of teachers' planning is a strength and learning objectives are shared with pupils. Efficient use is made of time and enabled pupils to make good progress, for example in a Year 9 lesson on mental mathematics. Teaching is less effective where the work planned does not build suitably on pupils' previous learning experiences. This is sometimes the case in Years 7 and 8 where pupils are repeating work which they have already mastered.
- 95 As a result of the mathematics teaching, pupils' learning is also good. Pupils acquire mental mathematical skills, as in a Year 7 lesson where they were adding on 7 and 14 at speed, and in a Year 9 lesson where they were adding 2- and 3-digit numbers mentally. They learn new ideas, as in a Year 10 lesson where they were finding more than one value for a given value of a trigonometrical function. They consolidate their understanding, as in a Year 8 lesson on quadrilaterals. They learn to concentrate, for example, when learning to recognise sequences. Most pupils work at a good pace. In an A level statistics lesson, pupils worked independently and with confidence. Most pupils, however, have limited opportunities to develop as individual learners.
- 96 Pupils' behaviour is very good and their attitudes to their work are good. They collaborate well in pairs and relationships are good. They are able to explain their mental mathematics strategies but they have limited opportunities to show initiative.
- 97 Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Most of the strengths noted in the previous report have been sustained. The department continues to be well led. Results in GCSE and at Key Stage 3 have improved. The quality of teaching and quality of learning have improved. Teaching time at Key Stage 4 has increased and is due to be further increased in September 2001. There are now more mathematics books in the library. Two of the four temporary classrooms are about to be replaced by permanent classrooms. Access to computers is still limited.

SCIENCE

- 98 Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 have risen over the last few years but fell in 1999. However, there was a significant increase in standards in 2000. In 1999, results were in line with the national average, but well below those of similar schools. Results were worse in science than in mathematics but were similar to those in English. There was no significant difference between the performances of girls and boys compared with the national picture. The evidence of the pupils' work and the lessons observed showed that Year 9 pupils' attainment is sound. They have a good grasp of the need to control variables in an experiment and can predict results.
- 99 GCSE results in science have improved since the previous inspection. In 1999, the proportions of pupils gaining grades A* to C and gaining at least grade G were both above the national average. Pupils did not perform as well in science as in their other subjects. Girls outperform boys to a similar extent as nationally. The evidence from work and the lessons observed is that in Year 11 pupils' attainment is above average. Pupils' experimental and investigative skills are good. All pupils have a good standard of planning. Lower-attaining pupils show some lack of accuracy in observation and weak analysis and evaluation skills. The analysis work of average-attaining pupils is good but their evaluation is weaker. High-attaining pupils' work is detailed and thorough. Their skills of planning, obtaining evidence and analysis are of a high level. Evaluation of their practical work is less well developed but is at a good standard.
- 100 The ability of pupils in both key stages to recall scientific facts is better than their ability to apply their knowledge in new situations. Literacy skills are good and are developed well in science. Scientific terminology is well used by pupils. Numeracy skills are good and graphical skills are particularly well taught. Pupils are competent in using computers to research scientific information but do not have sufficient practice in the collection and analysis of data.
- 101 The A level results, in 1999, in biology, chemistry and physics were well above national averages. However, the number of entries is too small to place too great an emphasis upon trends or comparisons. From work and the lessons observed, pupils have a good grasp of the relevant scientific knowledge but a narrow range of scientific reading limits the development of their intellectual skills.
- 102 In the first three years pupils make sound progress relative to their standards when they entered Year 7 and their achievement is satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11 progress and achievement are good. In both key stages there is some underachievement amongst high-attaining pupils, as the work does not always extend them sufficiently. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress in science. Sixth form pupils make good progress and achieve well.
- 103 Overall, the quality of teaching is good across the whole age range. Teaching ranged from sound in about a third of the lessons, to very good in about a quarter of the lessons observed. A strength of the teaching is the very good relationships between the teachers and pupils. Encouraging and supportive teachers engender in the pupils a positive attitude and interest in their work in science. This results in good learning. Good subject knowledge and understanding is shown by the teachers' clear explanations communicated in a lively manner. For example, in a very good Year 10 lesson on the nitrogen and carbon cycles, pupils were required to match correctly scientific terms and definitions, do their own background research on factors affecting decomposition and set up an experiment to investigate this. The lesson objectives were made

clear to the pupils and their interest engaged by pictures of the ice mummy. Clear oral instructions were reinforced in writing on the board, so that pupils knew exactly what to do. The teacher extended pupils' thinking by probing questions and they made very good progress. Teachers manage their classes well and insist on high standards of work and behaviour. In an effective Year 8 class, lower-attaining pupils were given an opportunity to practise both speaking and listening skills as well as extending their scientific knowledge. The teacher's positive approach encouraged and supported pupils and increased their confidence in the use of scientific terms. This led to very good learning. The pupils sustained concentration throughout the lesson and were well motivated.

- 104 In some lessons, teachers do not select the resources and activities to best match pupils' learning needs. Too often, teaching strategies tend to be teacher dependent which do not challenge pupils' thinking through problem solving activities, so that pupils do not develop independent learning skills or extend their learning in new contexts. Marking is completed but few marks or grades are given and no short-term targets are set to show pupils how to improve their written work.
- 105 Pupils enjoy their science and co-operate well in group practical work. However, pupils do not readily volunteer answers to questions posed by the teacher or indeed ask many questions themselves. Higher-attaining pupils make less progress than expected because they tend to be passive and lack intellectual curiosity.
- 106 Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. All the issues raised then have been addressed to some extent but need further development. Standards in public tests and examinations have been maintained or improved. There has been an overall improvement in teaching and learning. There is the capacity to improve further. Thoughtful management, together with a hardworking and committed team, has already planned a range of strategies for raising standards in future years. The development plan targets lack a sufficiently detailed action plan for implementation, to ensure an impact in the classroom. Accommodation in the science department is good with good displays, which stimulate learning. Resources are adequate and efficiently organised by the team of laboratory technicians.

ART

- 107 The results of teacher assessments in 1999 were in line with those reported nationally. The results in 2000 were above national expectation. The evidence gathered during the inspection suggests that pupils in the current Year 9 are on target to attain similar, above average, standards by the end of the year. The majority of pupils achieve well, year on year, and benefit from the range of expertise and teaching styles within the department. Some teachers set more challenging work and have higher expectations of pupils than others and this leads to some variation in standards.
- 108 GCSE results have fluctuated since the last inspection. In 1999, the results were in line with the national average for similar schools whilst in previous years they were slightly above average. The most recent results for 2000, as yet unconfirmed, show the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C falling for the first time. Pupils did comparatively worse in art than in their other subjects. Girls attain higher standards than the boys, as is the case nationally. The standard of work by current Year 11 pupils is higher, broadly average, and their achievement sound. However, in some classes standards are much higher and achievement and progress very good indeed. In particular, the level of challenge and the opportunities for pupils to develop appropriate independent learning skills vary from class to class.

- 109 Results at A level, in 1999, were above the national average. Work seen during the inspection was of a similar standard. Most pupils begin the course with higher than average results for art but their achievement and progress is good. They are highly motivated and work tenaciously on personal research projects that involve them in, for example, interviews with local artists and visits to galleries. Some attend a life class and this adds intellectual rigour to their portfolio of work. Contact with centres of higher education ensures that that pupils are well informed and alert to the opportunities for further study. Progression on to degree and pre-degree courses is very good.
- 110 The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good overall. They benefit from individual teaching, demonstrations by the class teacher and seeing the work of previous year groups. These teaching strategies and the use of visual resources help to underpin their understanding of technical skills and develop their use of language. Their progress was most marked where teachers used recorded information to decide on the most effective teaching and learning styles.
- 111 Overall the quality of teaching and learning are good and in half the lessons observed they were good or very good. Learning was most effective where teachers addressed pupils' learning needs in the way they planned the lessons and longer term objectives. Progress was most marked where pupils were highly motivated, keen to achieve and eager to learn. Examples of very good teaching, leading to very high standards, were observed in two Year 11 classes. In one class, pupils were building complex layers of colours, patterns and textures using lino-prints from previous work based on carved and painted masks. Pupils could give informed views and explanations of their decision-making and the wider cultural factors that influenced their work. In another class, pupils developed paintings and sculptures from their sketches of figures referring to the ideas and compositions of the cubist works of Picasso and Braque. The work in these classes showed clear progression and creativity within an atmosphere of purposeful activity. Teachers had very good classroom management, of pupils' learning and their behaviour, and allowed scope for pupils to develop the skills and experiences needed for independent study. Sixth form pupils benefit from very good teaching in which one-to-one discussions are challenging and thought-provoking, and there is an interchange of ideas where pupils make a positive and lively contribution. Where progress was slower and teachers were less confident about how to maintain pupils' concentration and work level, as in some Key Stage 3 and 4 classes, there was a tendency for them to dominate discussion and to tell pupils what to do next, rather than ask the question that allowed them to work out for themselves the possible answers. This led to passive rather than active learning and occasionally contributed to the development of less than positive attitudes as pupils recognised they were not making the progress they had hoped for. A strength of the teaching is the considerable expertise and the opportunities it creates for team work. The main weakness is in the use made of on-going assessment to shape the next stage of learning and maximise progress.
- 112 Pupils' attitudes and personal development are good and behaviour in lessons is mainly very good.
- 113 Management of the subject is sound. Changes in staffing during the last academic year, created the need for more support and closer monitoring of teaching by line managers and this was not entirely effective or sufficiently rigorous. Nevertheless the department is now getting back on target and the indications are that standards have risen to at least their former level. There has been sound improvement since the last inspection. A strength has been in the management, planning and development of the A Level course. It is highly successful and has made a very

important contribution to the school, the pupils and the wider community. The overall quality of teaching has improved but some of the weaknesses remain.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 114 The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, in 1999, were well above the national average. Evidence from the inspection indicates that current work is above the national expectation. Standards are good because the design technology curriculum is well structured and well taught. Pupils take part in a wide variety of set tasks that develop their knowledge and skills in designing and making. In each of the contributory design technology subjects, pupils carry out research, produce a good range of their own ideas and develop their own solutions into final ideas, which they then make well from appropriate materials. Work varies in depth of content and quality of presentation, depending on pupils' ability, but course work is good in all subjects. For higher-attaining pupils, the range of ideas and the presentation of work, including drawing skills, is very good.
- 115 GCSE results in design and technology have improved considerably since the last inspection. In 1999, the results overall were above the national average for both the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C and the proportion gaining at least a grade G. Results for food technology and textiles technology are higher than those for graphics products and systems and control. Results in resistant materials are lowest because weaker pupils tend to choose this option. The upward trend has continued into 2000. Girls continue to achieve higher results than boys when comparing all subjects. The improvement, with almost all pupils gaining at least a grade G, is a clear indication that pupils of all ability, including those with special educational needs, are using their ability well in design and technology. Scrutiny of completed work and lesson observation shows that attainment in Year 11 is above national expectation. The structured approach used by teachers to address the design process enables all pupils to organise their work, carry out research, develop their ideas and produce solutions to identified problems. Overall, knowledge is being developed well but in some teaching groups knowledge retention is limited. Drawing and graphical presentation of work is often very good. There is good use of ICT in some folders but this is often produced outside lesson time and overall there is insufficient evidence of use of computers in pupils' work. Finished products from previous practical work indicate that all pupils develop satisfactory practical skills in a variety of materials and some practical outcomes are very good.
- 116 Most sixth form pupils gain A-E grades and achieve standards that reflect their prior attainment. Current work indicates that the well-structured course is enabling good knowledge development and a good approach to the design process. The development of specific presentation skills is having a positive effect on the presentation of folders. The depth and quality of course work continues to reflect the range of pupils' ability, from average to well above.
- 117 When compared to their earlier attainment, all pupils make good progress throughout. For example, in Year 7, pupils are quick to learn the principles of making felt, based on their chosen designs, when studying fibres in textiles. Year 8 make strong links between design and technology and ICT when exploring, modelling and communicating design proposals using the computer. Some excellent drawings are produced when researching photograph frames to be made in plastic, and good ideas are developed for items of jewellery when researching the work of other cultures. The Year 9 moisture detection project is particularly good in developing knowledge about electronic components and how they are assembled into working circuits for a particular purpose. In Years 10 and 11, pupils make significant progress in the production of good, and in many cases very good, course-work folders. Content is often well researched and

presented to a very high standard in all design technology subjects and the best work is of an excellent standard. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make at least satisfactory progress and higher-attaining pupils make good progress.

- 118 Overall, teaching is good. Almost all teaching is at least satisfactory and much is good or very good. Teachers have a very clear understanding of the requirements of the National Curriculum and this enables them to focus their work throughout the school. All teachers have good technical knowledge, which is reflected in demonstrations and individual support to pupils in lessons. Overall, planning is very good. For example, excellent planning for Years 10 and 11 textiles results in very good access to research and exemplar materials, and well-planned teaching materials enables Year 9 pupils to model the construction of their electrical circuits very effectively before assembling the real components. Literacy and numeracy skills are developed, in some lessons, through the use of technical language in oral work, the use of calculations and the recording of results of surveys in table and graphical form. Good assessment procedures lead to the provision of support through discussion with pupils about their work. The careful structuring of learning objectives in Key Stage 4 enables pupils of all abilities, including those with special needs, to address the tasks set very effectively. Regular assessment of pupils' work with extended written comments is very effective in enabling pupils to improve their work.
- 119 Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are at least good and often very good. Almost all pupils rapidly settle to work and there is a positive culture for learning in most lessons. Most pupils respond well to their teachers' high expectations of behaviour and are keen to do well in their work. They concentrate in lessons and many spend considerable time and effort outside of lessons in improving their work.
- 120 Design and technology courses have provided good access to the National Curriculum and all statutory requirements are met. Leadership and management are good with close co-operation between the two areas. Effective use is made of current staffing, accommodation and learning resources. Departmental documentation is good and there is a very positive approach to monitoring the development and improvement of the subject. Accommodation for food technology is bordering on unsatisfactory due to the deterioration of the work units.
- 121 Overall standards have improved substantially since the last inspection. There is a very well structured approach to the delivery of design and technology across the school, which is helping to improve standards. GCSE grades are being maintained above the national average.

GEOGRAPHY

- 122 The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, in 1999, were well above the national expectation., the rising trend over the past four years being greater than that reported nationally. There has been a marked improvement in standards since the time of the previous report. The work of pupils currently in Year 9 is above the national average, with high standards in written work and graphical skills. Pupils have a well-developed knowledge of location, are very proficient in subject skills and use geographical terms accurately in both written and oral work. Their knowledge and understanding of themes studied at this stage is good. In a lesson where Year 9 pupils learned about depressions, they showed a clear understanding of the processes involved in the formation of rain, were able to interpret the simple synoptic chart provided and explained clearly such terms as pressure, isobar and depression.
- 123 GCSE results in geography have improved considerably since the last inspection. In 1999 the results were well above the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C

rose and all pupils entered for the examination achieved at least a grade G. The small number of pupils entered for a Certificate of Achievement gained merits and distinctions. This improvement in the results is most significant as all but a very few pupils study the subject at this stage. Pupils did better in geography than in their other subjects. Girls outperform boys by a lesser margin than is the case nationally. Preliminary figures for the year 2000 indicate a continuing upward trend with further improvement in results. Evidence from the inspection is that pupils are maintaining standards which are well above expectation.

- 124 Geography is a popular choice for those pupils following A level courses. In 1999, results were well above the national average. The most recent results are in line with the national average. The overall trend in results over the last three years is upward. The attainment of pupils currently in Year 13 is good.
- 125 When compared to their earlier attainment, pupils' achievement in geography is good; in Key Stage 4 it is very good. When they enter the school in Year 7, standards are average; pupils' have achieved an appropriate level in subject skills, knowledge and understanding. In Key Stage 3, high, average and low-attaining pupils make good progress, as was seen in a lesson where Year 8 pupils plotted contour lines. Pupils achieved a working understanding of the purpose and use of contour lines, higher-attaining pupils going on to identify shapes on Ordnance Survey maps. Year 10 pupils made very good progress investigating the hypothesis that the land-use pattern of cities can be predicted. All had a sound understanding of the major characteristics of cities and were able to identify these with reference to Ipswich. Pupils' achievement at this stage is very good. The good achievement in the sixth form was illustrated during a lesson on coastal environments where pupils recalled and consolidated their learning from previous key stages and were introduced to the advanced skills of analysis and synthesis.
- 126 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because teachers are aware of their particular difficulties, work is set which matches their needs and pupils receive good support from the class teacher. As a result their achievement is good and is reflected in their standards of attainment at the end of the key stages.
- 127 Overall, the teaching observed was good. The teaching is strongest in Key Stage 4 where teachers have a clear focus on examination requirements and the criteria for success which helps make the teaching more effective. Careful and thoughtful planning ensures that pupils understand what is required of them. Tasks involve the practice of subject skills at appropriate levels, for example, pupils in Year 7 were seen to learn simple map skills, while in the sixth form pupils applied statistical methods in their analysis of primary data. Training in the collection, organisation and analysis of data is evident in the teaching at each key stage and illustrates the continuity and progression so much a feature of the teaching and learning. Pupils develop their numerical skills through the many opportunities provided. The development of pupils' literacy skills is well promoted through the use of correct geographical terms and encouraging the making of notes and writing in different styles and for different purposes. This is supported by regular use of simple writing frames and lists of key words. Regular marking provides supportive feedback. Target setting is implemented but does not extend to the agreement of short-term targets which would inform the pupils as to ways of achieving further improvement. Teachers have very good classroom and pupil management skills, the atmosphere in the classrooms is positive and industrious. Through content and method, the teaching makes a significant contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- 128 Pupils respond very positively to the challenging work resulting from teachers' high expectations. They are encouraged to take an increasing responsibility for their learning. This was seen in a

Year 11 lesson where pupils used information from a map to construct and interpret a cross-section and line graph of a 'hot island'. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They have been encouraged to develop good work habits taking particular care over their written work, they are interested and enjoy their lessons. A particular strength is their willingness and ability to listen and they are able to sustain concentration.

- 129 Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The strengths noted in the previous report have been sustained and almost all issues have been addressed. There has been further improvement in attainment, the teaching of 'place' has improved, the advantage in attainment of girls over boys reduced and teaching better meets the needs of all pupils. Good financial management has resulted in an improvement in the range and quality of books available and audio-visual aids are now more readily accessible. The department is working to improve the accommodation and there are very effective displays of work in the classrooms and corridors. The teaching does not contribute sufficiently to the development and practise of pupils' ICT skills, but progress has been made. The department is enthusiastically led and well managed. The teachers combine to form a most effective team with the commitment and capacity to achieve further improvement.

HISTORY

- 130 The results of teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 in 1999 were well above those reported nationally. The standard of work of pupils currently in Year 9 is higher than national expectations. They have a well developed level of historical knowledge and demonstrate good understanding when, for example, using evidence to reach conclusions about public opinion during the First World War. They are able to present their work in a variety of formats, including prose, poems and tables and have good skills in extended writing. Those with comparatively lower skills in this area, produce work of more limited length and content, but it is well structured, with generally accurate spelling and grammar.
- 131 GCSE results in history have gradually improved since the previous inspection. Results in 1999 were above the national average. Pupils did slightly better in history than in their other subjects. Results in 2000 were similar to those of the previous year but a much higher percentage of candidates were boys. Their results have continued to improve. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, the standards of pupils now in Year 11 were higher than national expectations. Most pupils analyse evidence well, when for example they assess the reliability of a story about the ancient Greek physician Asclepius. However, some pupils use evidence merely to obtain information, accepting this at face value and, while they are able to write well, many find it difficult to discuss issues at length orally.
- 132 A level results were below national averages in 1999. However, those for 2000 are much improved and are in line with the generally consistent level that has been achieved since the school started to teach the subject at A level. The improved standards were demonstrated in lessons and work seen during the inspection, as the standards of pupils now in Year 13 are higher than national expectations. Pupils research and present their findings well. Some have weaknesses in their analytical approach however and, although they do well generally, some girls are less confident and able during discussions.
- 133 Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory progress thereafter in their learning, successfully maintaining good standards through each key stage. During all key stages, pupils develop the range and depth of their historical knowledge and skills satisfactorily, with many aspects of understanding developing well. In a Year 8 lesson, they compared Henry VIII,

Charles I and modern figures that they had selected, in terms of the concept of power. In Key Stage 4, they make links between key characteristics of periods and topics studied, for example, analysing the effect of the Second World War on the place of women in society. In the sixth form, they learn to place topics studied into a wider historical context, when for example, explaining artefacts from the Sutton Hoo ship burial in terms of their value to the historian and considering the characteristics of popular history.

- 134 The overall quality of teaching is good and it is often very good in all key stages. In the sixth form it is consistently very good. Planning is good, indicating a thoughtful approach to educational outcomes and how these will be achieved and evaluated. Tasks are set out clearly and exposition is often stimulating, so that pupils are interested in their tasks and fully aware of what they need to accomplish. In making good links with previous and following work, teachers ensure that pupils have a good awareness of the place of current tasks in longer term learning. Good questioning motivates and supports pupils by allowing them to demonstrate, make use of, and reinforce their knowledge and develop their understanding. This has had a particular impact on the motivation and improved standards of boys. Encouragement for pupils to take an open-ended, enquiring, approach and to make links between different parts of their learning, has had a strong impact on their developing historical understanding. Good marking and feedback, with clear setting of targets for improvement, support pupils in progressing and being aware of their levels of success in doing so. This is further enhanced by the good awareness that teachers have of the needs of their pupils, particularly creditable as many have only recently started to teach their groups in this new academic year. The subject provides good support for the development of Literacy skills, by ensuring a good development of specialist vocabulary and the use of such devices as writing frames to develop skills in extended writing. ICT is frequently used as a medium for learning, either in whole class work, or by encouraging its use in individual assignments. The department is not yet strongly supporting numeracy. There is occasional over-reliance on the textbook, so that teachers add insufficient extra value to learning. On some occasions, teachers fail to involve pupils sufficiently, for example, by not allowing them to practise their skills in reading aloud, or presenting information but not allowing its discussion. Sometimes, teachers take contributions from volunteers, but do not challenge more passive pupils to participate. In some lessons, pupils are asked to use sources merely for providing information, with insufficient opportunity to evaluate them as historical evidence.
- 135 Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Especially in the lower years, they are highly enthusiastic and very willing to answer questions and discuss their ideas. Although such involvement is sometimes less marked in Years 9, 10 and 11, pupils do participate willingly when required to do so. Generally, pupils' response maximises the learning opportunities provided.
- 136 Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Standards at GCSE have improved, especially those of boys. The quality of teaching is more consistently good or better. The use of ICT is developing well. The curriculum and assessment remain well planned. Individual needs are well supported but there is insufficient planned work to cater for the wide range of pupil need. The skill in discussing issues is under-developed. Very good leadership and management of the department has been an important factor in the rate of improvement. Good arrangements to support teachers are particularly relevant and prominent in the context of induction procedures provided for newly qualified teachers currently working in the department.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

- 137 Results of teacher assessment in Year 9, in 1999, were below those reported nationally. However, in the areas that pupils were seen working in during the inspection, the standard of

work in Year 9 was in line with national expectations. The areas tended to be those in which the pupils have strengths, partly explaining the higher standards, but the school also needs to satisfy itself that its assessments give full credit to pupil achievements. Pupils are competent, confident ICT users and make full use of it to enhance the quality of their work in some subjects. For example, in science a spreadsheet was used to calculate and present graphs showing the effect of the moon on tides. However, many lack knowledge of the best techniques, such as the use of buttons to speed up work when using word processors and spreadsheets. Few are clear about the relative characteristics and specific uses of different types of software, indicating a lack of opportunities to reflect upon and discuss their experiences.

- 138 In lessons and work, the standards of pupils in Year 11 are in line with national expectations. Pupils showed initiative when choosing software for designing a pamphlet in English and are aware of the relative uses and advantages of similar, but different software, such as word processors and desktop publishers. The quality of some work is reduced by the physical addition of pictures and maps rather than their integration using such devices as scanners.
- 139 Sixth form pupils taking a certificate of competency, in 1999, achieved a very high success rate, the majority passing with a distinction. In lessons and work, the standards of pupils now in Year 13 are in line with national expectations. Pupils use the Internet well to research topics such as structures for design technology, optical properties of materials for science and local archaeological finds for history. Specialist tools are used well to enhance work, for example, in a Year 12 statistics lesson pupils used graphic calculators to calculate quartiles for grouped frequency data. However, some pupils have not yet mastered fairly basic skills such as the use of the right mouse button for shortcut commands.
- 140 Pupils make good progress in their learning during Key Stage 3. Pupils come with a wide difference in their experience and competence but almost all have developed to a level of capability that is in line with expectations by the end of the key stage. Satisfactory progress during Key Stage 4 and the sixth form maintains achievement at the expected level. At all key stages, there are good opportunities to develop, consolidate and apply skills in using computers to organise and present information in a variety of forms.
- 141 In lessons observed in which ICT was being used, teaching was good overall. It was good in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. The knowledge and understanding of ICT specialists is very good, enabling them to support their pupils well in understanding the purposes for which they are using computers and the wider relevance of the new technologies in their lives. For example, in a Year 8 mathematics lesson pupils were encouraged to use a LOGO program to experiment with angles and also to consider the role of computers in controlling robots in car manufacture. Teachers who are not ICT specialists are highly competent and introduce their pupils to some useful techniques as, for example, using *number lock* to speed up entry of numerical data in a science lesson. Some teachers have limitations in their capacity to do this however, which they acknowledge and endeavour to overcome as they develop their experience of using computers in their teaching. A strength is the emphasis on active teaching, with thoughtful and effective support for individuals, that allows pupils to seek their own solution whenever possible. This approach enables pupils to both develop their ICT capability and enhance their work in the subject in which they are using it. ICT makes a good contribution to the development of numeracy skills, with frequent mathematics-based lessons and literacy skills, in English and other subjects. Occasionally, planning fails to ensure an adequate balance of teacher-led exposition and opportunities for pupils to use the computers, so that valuable time during which they are available is wasted and the enthusiasm of pupils is diminished.

- 142 The attitudes of pupils to using computers are good overall and in many observed lessons, particularly in Key Stage 3, they were very good. Behaviour was never less than very good. Pupils listen carefully to instructions and balance enthusiasm with a responsible approach when working. They respond particularly well to opportunities to work together at the computer; sharing work with minimal supervision, contributing and discussing ideas and persevering in dealing with problems, rather than always calling upon the teacher.
- 143 Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The good strategies of team teaching and carefully integrated delivery of ICT through subject teaching has continued. Assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 is now closely linked to National Curriculum levels. Leadership has improved and there is now good forward planning, which closely links curriculum goals and financial considerations. Good progress has been made in updating the school's computer stock. However, the pupil:computer ratio is significantly less favourable than the national average, although the effects of this are mitigated to some extent by good management and deployment of resources. The shortage of peripheral devices, such as scanners and digital cameras, is detrimental to pupils reaching the higher standards that require the ability to integrate different forms of information. Insufficient emphasis is given to information handling, modelling and opportunities to reflect upon and discuss experiences. There is no opportunity for pupils to follow an examined course in the subject.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

- 144 The results of teacher assessment at the end of Year 9, in 1999, were in line with the average reported nationally.

French

- 145 The standard of work of pupils currently in Year 9 is in line with national expectations. Pupils make a good start to learning French. In one Year 7 class, pupils remembered the numbers up to ten, understood the teacher's fluent use of French and used French themselves to sort items into masculine and feminine sets. By the end of Year 9, able pupils understand personal information spoken at near normal speed on a tape whilst in Year 8, lower-attaining pupils write a few sentences about themselves and their families.
- 146 GCSE results in French, although fluctuating widely, have improved since the last inspection. In 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C grades was in line with the national average. Girls outperform boys to a similar extent as nationally. Pupils did slightly worse in French than in their other subjects. Results in 2000 have fallen significantly. The evidence of pupils' work and the lessons observed showed that standards in Year 11 are in line with national expectations. Writing and reading skills are better than speaking and listening skills, which are under-developed across all key stages and for all abilities. Pupils are reticent and reluctant to speak. They give short, unextended answers whenever possible, which means that when they enter the sixth form, they do not have sufficient oral competence to cope with the work.
- 147 A level results were well below national averages in 1999. Over the past three years, A level results declined; numbers entering for the examination increased over the same period. Standards in the sixth form are below national expectations. In Year 12 pupils use English as the main means of communicating within the classroom and in Year 13, they continue to lack confidence and fluency in speaking.

148 When compared to their earlier attainment, pupils' achievement in French is satisfactory at all key stages. When they enter the school in Year 7, pupils make a good start and continue to progress appropriately through the key stages. Pupils with special educational needs achieve appropriate standards. Teachers know pupils well and give good individual support, but few provide additional material or activities to support their particular learning needs. Pupils behave well in French lessons. Year 7 pupils in particular are keen and eager to get to work and fully engaged in the learning process.

German

149 There are currently no pupils studying German in Year 9. Pupils in Year 8 demonstrate standards that are in line with national expectations. For example, they use set phrases effectively to arrange a date with a friend and reinforce their knowledge and skills well.

150 GCSE results for German in 1999 were above national averages and were an improvement on the results reported in the last inspection. Pupils did slightly worse in German than in their other subjects. Results vary from year to year in a similar way to French, although in German this is partly explained by the changing nature of the cohort of entry from year to year. Results were very high in comparison with national averages in 1997, below in 1998 and above in 1999. The pattern continues in 2000 when results have fallen. The evidence of pupils' work and the lessons observed showed that standards in the current Year 10, the only year studying German in Key Stage 4, are in line with national expectations. Average-attaining pupils use previously learnt work and good supportive structures provided by the teacher to extend their descriptions of holidays in the past tense.

151 This is the first year of entry for A level German. Standards are below national expectations in the sixth form. In Year 12, when preparing the description of a picture, pupils lacked confidence and made mistakes agreeing nouns and adjectives. In Year 13, they understood the teacher when she used German but used English themselves to communicate with her.

152 When compared to their earlier attainment, achievement in German for all pupils, including those with special educational needs is satisfactory at all key stages. When they enter the sixth form, however, the lack of a well-structured 'bridging the gap' course, particularly for those pupils now in Year 13, meant that pupils who already had weaker speaking skills, could not cope with the demands of the A level curriculum. This has affected their progress throughout the key stage. Pupils behave well in German lessons. Behaviour was particularly good in a Year 8 lesson where the teacher's high expectations, both of performance and behaviour, kept them on task and fully engrossed.

Spanish

153 On entry to the school, pupils make a very good start to learning Spanish and attain standards that are in line with national expectations. For example, Year 7 pupils understood the teacher's fluent use of Spanish and recalled a large number of words about classroom objects. By the end of Year 8, able pupils write well about sports preferences and average-attaining pupils produce short role-plays about buying goods in a chemist. In Year 9, able pupils write short poems on the subject of food and use dictionaries effectively to help them with their work.

154 The GCSE results, in 1999, were lower than those reported for the last inspection. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C grades was well below national averages. Pupils did

worse in Spanish than in their other subjects. Boys' results were significantly lower than girls'. As with French and German, results fluctuated over the past three years, from very high in comparison with national averages in 1997, to well below in 1999. All pupils gained a grade A* to C in 2000. The evidence of pupils' work and the lessons observed showed that standards in Key Stage 4 are in line with national expectations. In Year 11, average-attaining pupils read well independently and understood the teacher's fluent use of Spanish.

- 155 A level results in Spanish for 1999 were just above national averages. These results are not significant when compared with national data since numbers entered were very small. Standards in the sixth form are also in line with national averages. In Year 12, pupils identified radical changing verbs from a passage on friendship whilst in Year 13 they understood a tape about the Internet and identified key points.
- 156 When compared to their earlier attainment, pupils' achievement in Spanish is good at all three key stages. Pupils with special educational needs achieve appropriate standards. Pupils behave very well in Spanish lessons at all three key stages. They are interested and motivated and enjoy Spanish, which improves their progress and enhances their attainment in the language.

Modern foreign languages

- 157 Teaching in modern foreign languages was satisfactory overall. Over a third of lessons observed were judged to be good, with a small proportion judged to be very good. All teachers are competent, confident linguists and most have good knowledge of the National Curriculum. A strength of the department is the fact that teachers use French Spanish and German to communicate with one another and with assistants. This is facilitated by the faculty base, which is also encouraging a more collegiate approach to working. The main weakness however is the lack of consistency in several areas such as teachers' use of the target language, their marking and recording procedures, the quality of teachers' planning and of display, all of which leads to variable progress particularly in French and German. In all languages few opportunities are provided for using computers and insufficient time is spent ensuring that pupils order their work effectively.
- 158 Teaching in French was satisfactory in Key Stages 3 and the sixth form, but unsatisfactory in Key Stage 4. In good lessons, teachers made good use of resources, as when a teacher used the overhead projector effectively with a Year 7 class to present new vocabulary on classroom objects. Where teaching was less satisfactory, the lesson was conducted almost entirely in English; there was little planning or evidence of consistent checking of performance in exercise books. Teaching in German was satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form and good in Key Stage 4. In good lessons, as in a Year 8 lesson for example, the teacher's effective planning and brisk delivery resulted in good use of set phrases and effective consolidation of previously learnt work. Teaching in Spanish was good in Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good in the sixth form. In the best lesson, the teacher asked searching questions that enabled pupils to make very good progress in developing the skills of listening and in extending their knowledge of the Internet. In Year 11, an independent reading session enabled pupils to develop dictionary skills and to work effectively with one another, whilst small groups withdrew to practise speaking with the assistant.
- 159 Teachers are conscientious and hard working and have a shared commitment to raising standards but there is a lack of clarity as to how this should be achieved. The development plan does not clearly identify the actions required to ensure success and current schemes of work, particularly in French and German, do not adequately support the work of the department. There is no handbook at present, since the previous one is in the process of being updated. This means that

important policy documents, such as the use of the target language or guidance for teaching and learning styles, are not available to support teachers. As a result, teaching varies considerably from teacher to teacher. Staffing difficulties have led to disruption, which has affected standards across the key stages. There are good foreign language assistants in French and Spanish. Although the procedures for assessment are in place, they are inconsistently applied and not used to inform the next stage of learning. As a consequence of these issues, management is judged to be unsatisfactory.

- 160 Results in languages have remained variable since the last inspection and both boys and girls have continued to underachieve against other subjects. Although there has been some progress, in that GCSE results in French and German improved in 1999, they have declined again in 2000. Conversely, although results in Spanish declined in 1999, they have improved again in 2000. Issues identified by the previous report, such as shortcomings in planning and some unsatisfactory teaching, have not been fully addressed. With inadequate schemes of work and no handbook to guide provision, planning has nothing to guide it to ensure that learning objectives are identified for every lesson. The issue concerning time allowance for the second foreign language and its effect on the first language has not been addressed and language will be further deprived of time if the proposed curriculum structure is adopted in 2001. Three languages and NVQ accreditation have been introduced successfully into the sixth form. The time allowance for German is considerably lower than that allocated to the other two subjects. Exchanges continue to be very good and are offered to France, Spain and Germany.

PERFORMING ARTS

Drama

- 161 Drama is provided for all pupils in each year at Key Stage 3, and is a popular GCSE option. Small sixth form groups follow an A level course, there being some overlap with the A level performing arts course. Standards of attainment in drama at Key Stage 3 are in line with those expected nationally. Pupils learn to co-operate in small group and whole class work. They see the need to watch and listen to each other, and to support one another by being encouraging whilst suggesting where improvements could be made. Disciplines and routines are established which enable pupils to work with a sense of confidence and trust. In a very well taught Year 7 lesson, pupils made very good progress in supporting and encouraging each other, and learning to take turns and work for the benefit of the group. The teacher alternated bursts of practical work with whole class questioning and introduced and explained the important ideas of 'focus' and 'blocking out'.
- 162 GCSE results in drama have fallen since the last inspection. In 1999, whilst virtually all pupils gained a pass grade, the proportion gaining grades A* to C grade was below the national average. Pupils did less well in drama than in their other subjects. The 2000 results are lower. The attainment of pupils currently in Years 10 and 11 is below national expectation. In lessons observed, pupils showed a good understanding of such techniques as voice collage, staging and direct address, but were not adept at including these in their performance. Group work was well organised, but often lacked a sense of urgency and clear direction, and few really imaginative ideas arose, although pupils showed notably good understanding of the dramatic potential of contrasting sound and silence.

- 163 Results at A level, in 1999, were above the national average. The evidence from the inspection is that attainment in the sixth form is above national expectation with very good achievement by the ablest pupils. In one lesson, for example, pupils showed an outstanding response to a very well structured lesson which encouraged them to improvise by applying theory to performance, using sophisticated levels of teamwork, negotiation, and trust.
- 164 The quality of teaching was good during the inspection. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic, and succeed in making pupils keen to perform, both in class and in the regular productions and workshops which take place. Good questioning by teachers helps pupils to think about what they are doing, and to realise the importance of staging and movement, as well as speech. The teaching of more able pupils, both at GCSE and A level is good, as is most Key Stage 3 teaching. GCSE results clearly indicate, however, that the teaching in Years 10 and 11 has been unsatisfactory. This is because teaching styles and class routines have been too varied, and pupils have not been taught clear criteria by which to consider their own and others' performance. As a result, few are able to give crisp evaluation of performance: the development of specific skills becomes too haphazard, targets for improvements too vague. Performance becomes inhibited and dis-jointed, leading to competent but unstimulating written evaluation. For example, pupils in a Year 11 class, well behaved and sensible, had limited organisational skills and were not sufficiently aware of how to communicate their rehearsed ideas to an audience. The progress which pupils make is satisfactory in Key Stage 3, unsatisfactory in Key Stage 4, and good in the sixth form.
- 165 Most pupils enjoy drama, and respect the unique opportunity which it offers. They willingly respond to routines and are sensitive to each other. In practical work they are physically considerate and careful to keep within reasonable bounds. GCSE pupils show a pleasant but too relaxed attitude, partly because teachers have not conveyed to them the structure and focus which is required to succeed.
- 166 Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Despite this, the organisation and management of the department is satisfactory. Good schemes of work are available and these show great awareness of the need to look at moral and social issues, and to give pupils time to think about and explore relevant situations and the complexity of the human spirit. The extracurricular side of the department's work is lively. However, there is too little consistency in teaching styles and routines used in classrooms, and the analysis of underachievement at GCSE has been too slow and lacking in rigour, clear direction and targets. A contributory factor has been the number of lessons which have had to be taught in the hall which, because it is cavernous, noisy, dirty and cold, provides poor accommodation for drama teaching. This has long been recognised and work is about to start on new, much improved accommodation.

Music

- 167 The results of teacher assessment of fourteen year olds, in 1999, were slightly above those reported nationally. However, inspection findings indicate that attainment by pupils in Year 9 is below national expectations. Pupils do not have a secure working knowledge of the elements of music specified in the National Curriculum. A few pupils understood note values well in a test. However, pupils did not have a precise knowledge of, for example, the significance of a dot placed after a note. In composing a variation, pupils understood the notes required for playing specified chords, but composing was more draughtsmanship than a creative exercise. They did not understand the need for shaping a tune and to improvise to compose a satisfying melody. Written work comprises mostly the copying of information. Lower-attaining pupils write without understanding and there is some poor spelling. Music makes too little a contribution to pupils'

development of literacy. There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their oral command of technical or expressive language.

- 168 In 1999, GCSE results were above the national average for the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C. In view of the comparatively small size of the sets taking music, detailed comparisons are of little significance. There is little difference between the performance of girls and boys. Recorded evidence from pupils' work in Year 11 for the 2000 examination indicated good standards in composing. Pupils understood the capabilities of the instruments for which they composed. They showed a good grasp of musical structure and abler pupils were able to combine instruments such as violin, keyboard, voice and piano, and produce pieces that had a consistent style and used the tonal characteristics of each instrument effectively. Performing covered a considerable range of attainment, with the best players reflecting the composer's styles convincingly and displaying good technical accomplishment.
- 169 When compared with their earlier attainment, pupils' achievement in music is unsatisfactory and varies too much from lesson to lesson. In Year 7, pupils of all levels of attainment achieved very well in practical work and in understanding related musical theory. In Year 8, where pupils used keyboards, they understood riffs and other technicalities, such as coda and repeat signs. They can play two- and sometimes three-note chords. Higher-attaining pupils could play the accompaniment to a 50's song with a steady beat and accurate chords. Most pupils, however, were unsure about maintaining musical pulse, but played more securely when accompanied by the teacher on piano. In one class, the two pupils who were encouraged to use their guitars for the same task made good progress.
- 170 In work observed in Key Stage 4, pupils made unsatisfactory progress in relation to their previous learning. The small GCSE sets contain pupils with a great range of abilities. Pupils in Year 10 could play simple chords on keyboards and compose melodies above them with varying degrees of fluency. In Year 11, pupils analysed a chorus from Haydn's *The Creation*. Higher-attaining pupils could follow the score accurately, but lower-attaining pupils were not fluent music readers and were not helped by hearing the themes highlighted on the piano at too late a stage in the task. Pupils' progress in lessons during the inspection was well below the levels of attainment achieved in recent GCSE examinations.
- 171 Teaching was unsatisfactory overall in both key stages and it ranged from poor to very good. Teachers have good technical knowledge and some good use is made of their practical talents, such as singing and piano accompanying to boost pupils' progress and help their understanding. However, work is often poorly matched to pupils' abilities. Introductions to lessons are usually too long and teachers do not check pupils' understanding. For example, in a Year 9 lesson where pupils used ostinato as a basis for composing, only one-third of pupils asked had a clear idea of what an ostinato was. Some learning of technicalities is not linked to a meaningful experience, as when a largely unsupervised class in Year 10 had to define a catalogue of renaissance musical terms from a dictionary. The fundamental weakness is that teachers do not assess what is being understood by higher, medium and lower-attaining pupils and plan lessons on the basis of this knowledge. In the very good lesson seen, the teacher achieved a high standard of singing with a Year 7 class and enabled the pupils to achieve good standards of performance on glockenspiels by providing tunes of three levels of difficulty. The pupils introduced elementary dynamics into their performance and learned the appropriate technical names. The lesson proceeded at a good pace because challenging deadlines were imposed, and the overall experience was one of very purposeful fun.

- 172 Pupils behave well, use instruments responsibly and do their best to comply with instructions, even when teaching is at an inappropriate level for them. They are conscientious with written work.
- 173 The department maintains successful extra-curricular activities, including woodwind and recorder groups, an orchestra, and an enthusiastic and versatile choir. These groups are efficiently directed. There is a worthwhile programme of performances in the course of the year, often involving dance and drama. Extra-curricular music provides good opportunities for pupils' social and cultural development. The department is well organised on a day-to-day basis, but overall management is unsatisfactory because strategies for mixed ability teaching are inadequate. This stems partly from an over-reliance on commercial schemes of work. GCSE results have improved, but the department has made insufficient overall improvement since the last inspection. There are thorough systems for evaluating pupils' progress, but these have had too little effect on teaching style.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 174 The results of teacher assessment, in 1999, were a little above those reported nationally. Evidence from the inspection is that attainment in Key Stage 3 is at national expectations. Many pupils apply techniques, skills and competition rules to several aspects of the physical education curriculum, including hockey, gymnastics, basketball and badminton. Basic skills are sound and provide a platform for future development. In badminton, most Year 9 boys have sound racquet skills and execute basic shots successfully. They can apply these to a game situation while at the same time showing good understanding of the rules of the game. Higher-attaining pupils execute both the smash and the drop shot. In Year 8 gymnastics, most girls could control a variety of balance positions and link them successfully into a sequence of movements, although the standard of the movement was below what might be expected.
- 175 GCSE results in physical education have improved since the last inspection. Results in 1999 were similar to the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C has risen steadily over the last three years and the 2000 results continue this improving trend.
- 176 The evidence of pupils' work and the lessons observed showed that the attainment of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is about average for their age. Many girls in Year 10, applied advanced netball skills and techniques and all girl possessed the relevant skills to compete successfully and enjoy playing in a competitive match. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the rules of the game. In Year 11 basketball, all pupils have a sound mastery of all basic skills and apply them in very competitive match situations. Several boys have developed a very high level of skill and tactical awareness. The ability to plan and evaluate is rarely apparent in activities at either key stage and was not being developed appropriately in the GCSE practical lesson observed. The role of exercise in establishing and maintaining health is not consistently emphasised and pupils at both key stages have not developed an appropriate understanding of the short and long term effects of exercise on the body systems.
- 177 Pupils learn and make sound progress in most lessons by the end of Year 9 and learning was less than satisfactory in only one lesson. Pupils are encouraged to develop, not only skills, but also a good understanding of the techniques and rules. In most lessons pupils demonstrated increasing control and levels of accuracy in a range of skills. For example, in a Year 8 badminton lesson, lower-attaining boys consolidated basic skills, learnt both the long and short serve very successfully and were able to use this in a match situation. At Key Stage 4, progress and learning are good as in a Year 10 hockey lesson, where new techniques were learnt and applied successfully to a game situation. Very good progress was observed in a sixth form A level

theory lesson where pupils learnt to apply a structured approach to the coaching of a specific skill. However, the most able pupils in many lessons are rarely sufficiently challenged and progress of pupils in observing and evaluating their own performance and the performance of their peers is unsatisfactory at both key stages. Evaluation of individual performance by staff is used to improve standards during many lessons, although target setting for individual pupils is not yet influencing progress at either of the key stages. A good range of extra-curricular activities, and fixtures with other schools, provide several opportunities for pupils to extend and develop their skills, while good links with the community are also providing opportunities for the use of coaches from local sports clubs.

- 178 The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in most lessons and was good in the majority of lessons in Years 10 and 11. A very good A level theory lesson was observed on the acquisition of skill and good lessons were seen in basketball, hockey, netball, badminton and basic racquet skills. A secure knowledge of the subject is regularly conveyed to pupils through perceptive observation of performance, appropriate intervention and good teacher directed question and answer sessions. Thorough planning, incorporating varied teaching strategies and an appropriate sequence of activities, involving both individual and collaborative learning, is a feature of many lessons. However, planning for the development of the most able pupils is often not incorporated into lessons. Discipline and class management is usually good. Day to day assessment of performance during lessons is regularly used to enhance teaching and learning but the recording of assessment using specific criteria for each activity, and the involvement of pupils in this assessment, to help set targets for improvement has not been developed. Those not participating in lessons are not effectively engaged.
- 179 Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive at both key stages. Most are enthusiastic, well behaved, and co-operative, demonstrating a real enjoyment of the subject. They are attentive and their capacity to sustain concentration is good. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are good. Although there are many opportunities for pupils to work independently and collaboratively at both key stages, opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and to undertake different roles such as coach or official are limited.
- 180 Day to day organisation and leadership of the department is good and communication within the department is effective. Teaching is monitored by the head of department but good practice is rarely shared within the department and in many respects the boys' and girls' departments still operate independently of each other. The sound schemes of work have insufficient reference to activities or strategies to challenge the most able, guidance on ways of developing pupils' planning and evaluation skills, and specific assessment criteria for individual activities. Development planning is thorough but lacking detail of actions. There is not sufficient emphasis upon curriculum review, planning and development.
- 181 There has been good progress in several areas identified in the last inspection report including improved GCSE results. However, there is still very little sharing of good practice in teaching and tasks do not relate to pupil ability in many lessons. Pupils still require more feedback in order to improve individual performance. While learning objectives are now set in many units of work they still do not include planning and evaluation and nor are they regularly made clear to pupils. Overall improvement in the department has been satisfactory.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 182 The standard of work of pupils currently in Year 9 and as observed in the previous work of the 1999 cohort is above the expectation in the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Standards are now higher

because the teaching has improved and the staffing difficulties that affected pupils' learning at the time of the last inspection have been overcome. The quality of written work is a strong feature of the learning; pupils use appropriate terms and demonstrate a sound knowledge and understanding of both the values shared by and distinctive features of different religions. Further, they are able to reflect upon their own views and spirituality, developing an appreciation and respect for the faith and values of others.

- 183 GCSE results in religious education have improved since the time of the last inspection. In 1999, the results were well above the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C rose and the proportion gaining at least grade G was in line with the national average. Pupils choose to take the examination, some follow the short course and others attend additional sessions at lunchtime in order to complete the full course. Pupils did better in religious education than in their other subjects. The margin by which girls outperform boys has fluctuated widely but, in 1999, was broadly in line with that reported nationally.
- 184 The evidence of pupils' work and the lessons showed that in Year 11 the attainment of higher, average and lower-attaining pupils is above that expected nationally. They write effectively and develop an argument, weighing the evidence of opposing groups. For example, in a Year 11 lesson they proved most articulate in advancing their priorities for spending money, reflecting on the reasons for their decisions and considering the views of others.
- 185 The department has had some success at A level in the past but numbers have dwindled and there were no candidates in 1999.
- 186 When compared to their earlier attainment, high, average and low-attaining pupils' achievement in religious education is good at Key Stage 3. Pupils in Year 9 have developed a sensitivity and empathy for the plight of others and are articulate in expressing themselves. Pupils' written work reflects increasing maturity; the description and ideas of the work in Year 7 is replaced by the ability to evaluate, to make judgements and to present evidence in Year 11. Pupils' progress is very good in Key Stage 4. For example, in a Year 10 lesson lower-attaining pupils were asked to explore and reflect upon different answers to the question, "Where does everything come from?". Pupils distinguished between a religious and scientific approach, putting forward their views and theories. Their attainment was well above the expected level.
- 187 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as a result of the good knowledge teachers have of their requirements and the appropriate work which is set. Match of work to pupil need is achieved largely through teacher support, pupil outcomes and the use of parallel resources. However, the department is aware of the need for further developments in this area.
- 188 Overall, the teaching observed was good, the best being at Key Stage 4 where no lesson was less than good and there were examples of very good practice. The thorough preparation of lessons, resulting in clear learning objectives and the setting of tasks matching the needs of the pupils, was underpinned by effective medium and long term planning. The team of teachers, including two non-specialists, showed good subject knowledge and an interest in the subject. All had good class teaching skills and were able to question pupils skilfully to check and extend their understanding. In the better lessons pupils were given time to reflect upon their contributions. The teaching made intellectual and creative demands on pupils. In previously completed work there was evidence of challenge, for example in a study of under-privileged groups, when pupils were required to draw parallels between the response of different religious groups. Teachers supported pupils' learning very well. They dealt, most effectively, with consideration of controversial subjects and remained objective. A weakness in the teaching was the over-

dependence on class teaching methods and the level of teacher involvement. Pupils were given too few opportunities to work as groups in preparing their own presentations and displays. A particular strength of the teaching was its inclusiveness, steps being taken to encourage pupils of all faiths to follow the course. The teaching exploited opportunities for the development of written literacy skills most effectively, but the practise of numerical skills and the use of ICT were insufficient.

- 189 Pupils' behaviour in all lessons was good; in Key Stage 4 it was very good. They are tolerant, confident and conscientious. They respond with interest and enthusiasm to the supportive and informed teaching. In a Year 8 lesson on rites of passage, such was their engagement that pupils groaned when the bell sounded for the end of the session. In Year 11 it is usual for fifty percent of the year group to opt to take an examination. In lessons, relationships with teachers and other pupils were very positive. The department makes a very significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, social, cultural and social development. Teachers give selflessly of their time and the regular lunchtime discussion sessions are well attended.
- 190 The improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Schemes of work have been revised giving greater support for non-specialist teachers and adding coherence to the courses. The lack of time available to the subject in Year 9 has been resolved. Resources have improved. The team of teachers has been strengthened and the accommodation is much better. Strengths noted in the last report have been sustained. However, the subject is still not taught in the sixth form.