

INSPECTION REPORT

THE LANGTREE SCHOOL

Woodcote

LEA area: Oxfordshire

Unique reference number: 123246

Headteacher: Mr J Owens

Reporting inspector: Mrs Kathy MacFarlane
3472

Dates of inspection: 30 October – 3 November 2000

Inspection number: 223987

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of students: 11 to 16

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Langtree School
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Berkshire

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Appropriate authority: Oxfordshire

Name of chair of governors: Mr Anthony Booth

Date of previous inspection: March 1996

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			The school's results and pupils' achievements
			How well are pupils taught?
			What should the school do to improve further?
B Morgan - 15522	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
K Patel - 10481	Lay inspector		
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
B Dewar - 15458	Team inspector		How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
			How well is the school led and managed?
R Westwood - 2023	Team inspector	Maths	
J Billington - 2779	Team inspector	English	English as an additional language
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
N Daws - 23396	Team inspector	Science	
J Hazlewood - 20619	Team inspector	Information technology	
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S Lockwood - 23920	Team inspector	Geography	
D Perrett - 27922	Team inspector	History	
G Butler - 2754	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
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J Prangnell - 2012	Team inspector	Religious education	
J Alexander - 2645	Team inspector		Special educational needs Equal opportunities

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Langtree School is a small rural comprehensive school educating 467 students (252 boys and 215 girls) in the 11-16 age group. Since the previous inspection the number on roll has increased from 417 students and the school is now oversubscribed and is undergoing a building programme to improve facilities. The school is situated to the north of Reading (in the Woodcote Ward) and serves a wide area of South Oxfordshire and Berkshire. Currently the majority of its students are from high social class backgrounds. A significant number of parents have attended higher education. The number of students taking free school meals is 3.2%, which is below the national average. The percentage of students who come from ethnic minority backgrounds is 1.9% and two of these students have English as an additional language. These figures are also below the national average. There are 16.7% of students identified as having special educational needs which is higher than at the time of the previous inspection. This group includes the 4.3% who have statements of special educational need and require additional support for specific learning difficulties which include, emotional and behavioural or speech difficulties. The number of students with statements of educational needs is well above the national average. National test data indicates that standards in English, mathematics and science are above national figures when the students enter Year 7. However, a significant number of students from the partner schools transfer to selective or independent schools at the start of Year 7. The majority of students continue full time education when they leave the school and the remainder usually enter full time employment.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The academic standards of the school have improved overall since the previous inspection. Teaching is good with a lot of very good practice. Students of all abilities respond well to the teaching. Overall the school has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection and has the capacity to achieve its planned improvements. The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are particularly effective in a number of respects. Learning resources remain low when compared with similar schools and are still only just adequate in a range of subjects. The school is providing good value for money.

What the school does well

- Good teaching is a strength of the school.
- The provision for special education needs is very good enabling students to achieve high standards and to be well integrated into the life of the school.
- The headteacher has a clear vision for the direction of the school which is shared by the governors, staff, and students.
- Governors provide very effective support.
- Staff are committed to the interests, well being and success of the students in their care.
- Students respond well by working hard with interest and behaving responsibly.
- Provision for students' social, moral and cultural development is very good.
- The school values the views of parents and carers who make a substantial contribution to the work of the school.
- The school provides extra curricular activities across a wide range of interests.

What could be improved

- Whole school systems for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the work of the school.
- The effective use of assessment data.
- The identification of, and sharing with students what they are expected to learn.

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 previously inspected in 1996. Since then it has made satisfactory improvement overall and in some areas has improved well. Standards have continued to improve. The school aims have been reviewed although there are no stated objectives against which to evaluate the work of the school. Progress has been made with regard to the school planning process. There is now a more coherent approach and a better link between school priorities and the allocation of resources. Good progress has been made with regard to the review of time allocations for subjects. The quality of teaching has improved but there is still a need for a more consistent approach to the sharing of good practice. Some progress has been made on the use of data. The extent of non-compliance in design and technology and information and communication technology has been reduced but collective worship remains an issue. Good progress has been made in design and technology and in music progress is very good.

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				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	C	C	A	C	well above A average B above average C average D below average E
A-levels/AS-levels	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	well below E average

The overall standards attained by students by the age of 14 and 16 years are above the expected levels for their age. Standards by the age of 14 (in 1999) are close to the national average in English. However, recently confirmed results for 2000 show a considerable increase. In mathematics, students' performance was above the national average and well above in science in 1999. When results in 2000 are compared with similar schools they are broadly in line for English and mathematics and above average in science. In other subjects, by the age of 14, standards based on teacher assessments are above national figures in art, French and music, and broadly in line in design and technology, geography, information and communication technology and physical education.

GCSE results have improved overall since the previous inspection, particularly in 2000. Results in 1999 dipped, with the overall GCSE point scores close to the national average but below average when compared with similar schools. However, if results are based on 1997-2000 average results are above the national average. The gap between the average point score for boys and girls was wider than that found nationally in 1999 but in 1998 and 2000 the difference in attainment between boys and girls was much narrower. In 1999 in GCSE results in art, design and technology, English, music and science were above the national average. They were broadly in line in drama, French and mathematics. Results in 2000 show a rise both in the percentage of students gaining 5*A-C and the overall point score per student. The standard of work seen at both key stages during the inspection generally reflected the most recent patterns in examination results. The governors have set appropriate GCSE targets for 2001. These are based on students' results and staff knowledge of

students. Overall students' achievements including those with special educational needs are inline with their capabilities.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The students display very good positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy coming to school and are keen to take part in the activities provided for them.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good both within lessons and around the school. Students are polite, courteous and respond positively to questions.
Personal development and relationships	Students are well supported in their personal development both by staff who know them well and through aspects of personal, social and health education. However, there is less effective use of assessment data to identify short-term targets for students. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Students show initiative and take responsibility around the school.
Attendance	Attendance is good. The school procedures for handling any cases of absence are sound

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The overall quality of teaching is good. In 98% of lessons seen, teaching was satisfactory or better, of these 73% were good or better and of these 36% were very good or excellent. This shows that the school has further improved on the quality of teaching observed in the previous inspection. Important strengths in all subjects are teachers' knowledge, the orderly and purposeful atmosphere, effective use of praise and concern for the individual needs of students. Weaker aspects in less effective lessons are the result of inadequate matching of work to the needs of all students. Teaching could be further improved if all teachers communicated to students what they are expected to learn in lessons and used information and communication technology in lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality and range of learning opportunities provided by the curriculum is good. The school meets National Curriculum requirements except in some aspects of design and technology and information and communication technology. Extra-curricular activities make a very significant contribution.
Provision for students with special educational needs	This continues to be a strength of the school. The continuing commitment of the whole school enables the confidence of all students to be developed, their social skills improved and progress in learning to take place.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	The provision is good.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for students' overall personal development is good. Moral, social and cultural provision is very good. The spiritual development of students is less effective.
How well the school cares for its students	The school shows a high level of care and provides a welcoming atmosphere for students. They appreciate the good pastoral support available from staff. Support for students' academic progress is satisfactory. Target setting is effective and helps students focus on specific areas for improvement. The use of data to track progress is less successful.

All areas of the curriculum meet statutory requirements except for aspects of design and technology, information and communication technology and collective worship. The school encourages good working relations with parents. The majority of parents report good links with the school. The school shows a high level of care and provides a supportive environment for students.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and other key staff have effectively established a clear sense of direction and shared vision for the school which is reflected in much of its work. Management structures do not, however, sufficiently focus on monitoring and evaluation of school procedures and those with management responsibilities at all levels are insufficiently accountable for what they do.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very supportive of and committed to the school. They possess a range of expertise that is used well. They play an important part in shaping the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Current whole school monitoring and evaluation systems do not support the development of the school. The use of data to review performance across the school is currently underdeveloped.
The strategic use of resources	The school manages its budget carefully, decisions are based on educational priorities. Governors understand and apply best value principles. Some accommodation and resources are inadequate. The school provides good value for money.

The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are particularly effective in a number of respects. The school has sufficiently well qualified teachers. There are shortcomings in the existing accommodation which is, however, well used. The tight financial constraints do make it difficult for the school to keep up with essential repairs and maintenance. Spending on learning resources is only just adequate in a range of subjects.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The high standards of behaviour and maturity that students develop. • The good progress that students make. • The quality of the teaching. • Expectations that students work hard. • The approachability of the headteacher and staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The appropriate amount of homework. • The amount and quality of information received about students' progress. • The range of activities outside lessons.

The inspectors were able to endorse the many strengths identified by parents. With regard to the concerns expressed by parents, the inspectors felt that the school sets homework in a satisfactory way. It is generally well used both to reinforce and to extend students' knowledge. The school provides a wide range of activities outside lessons which are well patronised by students and are used to develop and enhance their social and academic development. Inspectors cannot support the views of parents on this issue which is a strength of the school.

The school provides a range of information to parents about students' development, including an interim report and a detailed annual report together with formal opportunities to meet staff. Inspectors feel that these constitute an appropriate range of information. However, the reports would benefit from greater and more consistent clarity about what it is students need to do next in order to improve

and extend their learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The overall standards attained by students at the end of Key Stage 3 are above the expected levels for their age. Overall, standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are just above those nationally. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 have improved in line with the national trend. Improvements at Key Stage 4, although more erratic, have also been on average in line with national trends. The most recent GCSE results showed a considerable improvement on the previous year. Most students including those from different ethnic groups and those for whom English is an additional language, achieve standards appropriate to their ability in the majority of National Curriculum subjects.
2. In 1999 at the end of Key Stage 3 results in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science were above average in comparison with similar schools. However, GCSE results at the end of Key Stage 4 were well below average in comparison with similar schools. The Year 11 cohort for 1999 included a high proportion of boys with special educational needs. The recently confirmed results for 2000 indicate a considerable improvement at GCSE.
3. Attainment on entry to the school at age 11 years based on students' scores achieved in the national Key Stage 2 tests indicates that students are above the national average in the core subjects. These figures are confirmed by the results of cognitive ability tests administered by the school.
4. In English in 1999 students' performance at the end of Key Stage 3 was close to the national average but below average when compared with similar schools. In 2000, recently confirmed results in English showed a significant increase in the percentage of students reaching Level 5 (the national benchmark) and above. In 1999, the percentage of students obtaining Level 6 and above was above the national average and broadly in line with similar schools. The results for 2000 show an even larger percentage of students achieving these levels.
5. In mathematics in 1999 students' performance at the end of Key Stage 3 was above the national average and broadly in line when compared with similar schools. There was a slight improvement in the year 2000. In 1999 the percentage of students obtaining Level 5 and above was above the national average but slightly below similar schools. The recently confirmed results for 2000 show a similar picture.
6. In science in 1999, students' performance at the end of Key Stage 3 was above the national average and well above that of similar schools. In 1999 the percentage of students obtaining Level 6 and above was well above the national average and very high in comparison with the average for similar schools. The results for 2000 were similar.
7. Results at the end of Key Stage 3 over the last four years in the core subjects show an overall trend in line with the national trend. The increased results, particularly in English in the year 2000 show that the school has been successful in improving performance.
8. In other subjects, standards by the end of Key Stage 3 based on teachers' assessments are above national figures in art, French, history and music and broadly in line in design and technology, geography, information and communication technology and physical education.
9. Evidence from observation of lessons, discussions with students and scrutiny of their work

indicate that standards of work of students currently in Key Stage 3 reflect this picture.

10. Over the last three years, at the end of Key Stage 4 GCSE examination standards based on point scores per student have fluctuated while the national trend has shown a steady increase. In 1999, students' results overall in GCSE were close to the national average, but well below average to similar schools. However, results averaged over 1997-1999 were well above the corresponding national figures. GCSE results in 1999 'dipped' as a result of a cohort which included ten students with special educational needs. Although these students did well for their ability, the GCSE point score was reduced. However, in 2000 results showed a significant improvement over performance during the last six years and from the results at the time of the previous inspection. In 1999, the percentage of students obtaining A* and A grades (the highest grades) was 13% whilst in 2000 this figure rose to 21%. This was largely as a result of a concerted effort to challenge the most able. The gap between the average point-scores for boys and girls in 1999 was wider than that found nationally. However, in 1998 the gap was narrower than national figures and recently confirmed figures for 2000 indicate that the difference in attainment between boys and girls has narrowed.
11. The percentage of students achieving 5 A*-C grades in 1999 was well above the national average and comparable to results in similar schools. In 2000 recently confirmed results show a significant improvement on the 1999 figures and those at the time of the previous inspection. In terms of students achieving 5 A*-G grades in 1999 results were well above the national average and above the average for similar schools. In 2000 97% of students achieved 5 A*-G grades.
12. The 2000 GCSE recently confirmed results for 5 A*-C grades (74%) exceeded the school's target for the year group (63%). The percentage of A*-G grades was 97% which was at the school target. The average point score was 45.2, which also exceeded the target (42). Targets for the current Year 11 are lower than for 2000. The percentage of students expected to achieve 5 A*-C is 60%, and for 5 A*-G is 97%, the total point score target is 42.
13. Whole school targets are set but the process relies heavily on teachers' knowledge of students. Individual departments vary the extent to which they use data to decide upon and predict challenging targets. Whole-school targets are based mainly on subject teachers' views of what grade each pupil should achieve. These targets are in practice not sufficiently reliable because there is too much variation in how departments make their predictions.
14. In 1999 attainment in GCSE English was above national results in language and literature. However, in language the number of higher grades were below national figures. In 2000, there was a significant increase in both the percentage of A*-C grades and the higher grades. Mathematics results in 1999 were around the national average but 2000 saw a significant increase. In science, results in 1999 were significantly above the national average and much improved in 2000, students approach to practical work which is developed by their teachers supports their learning and improves results.
15. Other subjects in which students achieved results above the national average (1999 figures) in GCSE were art, design and technology and music. Students' progress in art in the school is just over half a grade better in comparison with national norms that in other subjects they took. In design and technology progress is just of three-quarters of a grade better. Results were broadly in line with national averages in drama, French and below in geography. However, students' progress in drama in the school is just over half a grade worse in comparison with national norms than in the other subjects they took. In French and geography, progress is very close to national norms than in other subjects. In 2000 whilst art and design and technology achieved similar results to 1999, geography, drama and French achieved better results than in 1999. All students entered for German in 2000 obtained an A*-C grade (17 candidates).

16. Standards within individual subjects achieved in both key stages judged by 2000 test and examination results closely match those observed during the inspection. Overall students' achievement including those with special educational needs, are generally in line with their capabilities. The majority of students of all abilities demonstrate high levels of achievement.
17. Students with special educational needs demonstrate particularly high achievement. They are often articulate and knowledgeable and possess artistic and manual skills, which are considerably enhanced by their experiences in the school. For example, a student at Key Stage 4 (Level 3 on the special educational needs register) produced some superb cartoon work on the plot of '*Macbeth*' demonstrating a clear understanding of the text and very high levels of artistic achievement.
18. The progress made by gifted and talented students is satisfactory overall but inconsistent. Good practice was seen in English, modern foreign languages and physical education. In mathematics students demonstrated use of deductive logic. In some areas work set could have been more challenging if it had been more closely matched to students' ability.
19. Standards in literacy are high. Students are confident and articulate; they are enthusiastic readers. Standards of writing are above expectations and have improved since the previous inspection.
20. Standards of numeracy are high. At both key stages students' data handling skills are particularly well developed. In geography, for example, the majority of students in Year 10 were able to observe, measure, record, collate, graph, analyse and draw appropriate conclusions when investigating the behaviour of rivers in North Devon.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

21. Students indicate in discussion that they enjoy coming to school. Parents confirm this view. In every year students display positive attitudes to learning and take an active interest in lessons and other aspects of school life. They are articulate and contribute openly their opinions and perceptions about the work in hand. They frequently speak with sensitivity and insight about these matters; examples were seen in drama and in religious education. In religious education, for example, students put forward well-reasoned arguments about the treatment of the murderers of Jamie Bulger.
22. Behaviour in and around the school is good. Students are polite and courteous; they respond sensibly to questions and take trouble when asked for help. They show respect both for the views of others and for property. Behaviour in the great majority of lessons is good with many examples of very good behaviour observed. On a few occasions when teaching is less challenging or not sufficiently well targeted to students' needs these high standards are not maintained.
23. The incidence of exclusion is lower than that seen in similar schools. The school uses exclusion with care and seeks to develop constructive plans to remedy the underlying problems.
24. The school, with external support, is working hard to further develop and improve its policies and practices with regard to the management of behaviour in a few classrooms and in the general life of the school. Evidence indicates that this is indeed beginning to bring about yet higher standards and the school is to be encouraged in its approach.
25. Relationships throughout the school are good; staff know students well and are supportive of

them.

26. No examples of bullying or oppressive behaviour were seen or reported during the inspection. Students and parents express confidence in the school's ability to deal fairly and speedily with any such instances which may occur.
27. The school has a programme of personal and social education which is used in all year groups. Whilst much of its content contributes positively to students development the school is aware of the need to review its structure and organisation in order to improve the quality of students' learning.
28. The students' level of attendance is good being above that for similar schools nationally whilst unauthorised absence is broadly similar to such schools. The school has satisfactory procedures for dealing with any cases which may occur, these include links with the appropriate education welfare service. Registration procedures are well handled, speedy and unobtrusive. Teachers also maintain class records of those present in each lesson. Sessions and lessons begin on time and in an orderly manner.
29. The previous report found this aspect of the school's life to be well developed. It is clear that steady progress is being made. The very good attitudes to learning seen together with the high levels of good and very good behaviour are contributing significantly to students' development
30. These aspects are a strength of the school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

31. The quality of teaching is good and has a positive impact on learning. It is a strength of the school. In 98% of lessons observed, teaching was satisfactory or better. In three out of ten lessons at Key Stage 3 and four out of ten at Key Stage 4 teaching was very good or excellent. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection. Good teaching was seen in all subjects and year groups and is a significant factor in accounting for the positive attitudes of students towards their learning.
32. At the time of the previous inspection, teaching was often unsatisfactory in design and technology and music. Currently, teaching in design and technology is good at both key stages and in music is very good. These improvements in teaching make a significant contribution to the standards achieved and the progress students make in these subjects.
33. The good teaching has its basis in effective planning and in teachers' confidence, knowledge and understanding of their subject. Even though there is a little non-specialist teaching, subject knowledge is good. Teachers try not only to ensure improved academic results but also to foster a sense of enjoyment in learning. The best lessons are well structured and are often imaginative and adventurous, for example in geography, music, mathematics and science. In science students are given opportunities to relate information on global warming and acid rain to social, political and economic issues. This imaginative approach adds relevance to the science studies. In art, teachers use flair and their own work to inspire students. In music, teaching is dynamic and forward moving. In almost all lessons there is an orderly and purposeful atmosphere where good relationships flourish and there is effective use of praise and a concern for the individual needs of students. There is a good sense of pace in the best lessons, which results in all students being challenged appropriately, for example, in mathematics, modern foreign languages and physical education. The more able are well supported by a range of differentiated approaches, for example in modern foreign languages where differentiated written materials are planned for named students, in physical education where planning includes tasks to match students'

capabilities and include appropriate challenge. In geography, appropriate resources are matched to the ability of students and a variety of tasks maintain students' interest, whilst in history resources are well deployed to support and extend students' learning. In a beginners German class good use was made of cue cards and prompts. This good teaching has a very positive impact on students' learning and personal development. Students are required to collaborate, listen to each other's views and support one another. This teaching contributes to the development of students' very good attitudes to their work and prepares them well for further study Post-16.

34. In art, history, information and communication technology and science particularly good use is made of learning support assistants for students with special educational needs. The contribution made by learning support assistants (LSA) is outstanding overall. Teachers and assistants work well together and are very effective in helping students to make progress in lessons. In science teachers and learning support assistant's plan support activities included in students' science Individual Education Plans. Students with special educational needs are taught by a variety of methods, including in mixed ability groups, often with very effective LSA support. Teaching methods are effective, relationships are very good, special educational needs staff very competent and caring and, in general, students are making good progress. This is considerably enhanced by the very positive attitudes the students have to their work and the commitment to them and their learning given by teachers and by LSAs and other support staff.
35. In the majority of lessons students' written work is frequently checked and written comments are often added. There are some good examples of constructive and diligent marking which includes comments to help students understand how to improve. Marking is particularly good in English, geography and history when comments inform students about their strengths and weaknesses and the next steps of their learning. This practice is not shared throughout the school. In some subjects marking tends to place undue emphasis on effort and presentation rather than more focused advice.
36. A minority of parents expressed concerns about homework arrangements. Overall however it is well used both to reinforce and to extend students' knowledge. For example, in history in a Year 8 class some students used their classwork to plan written work and others researched the meaning of words to be used in a subsequent lesson. In art, homework is seen as a relevant and natural extension of classwork. Homework is usually set regularly.
37. Overall the teaching of literacy skills is effective. In addition to English, a number of other subjects make a contribution to students' literacy skills but the pattern is uneven across the school. In history, writing frames are available in the class to support students' written work, but their use is too uneven for them to be consistently helpful. Where they are used standards of writing in history rise. In geography, there are good examples of writing skills being developed effectively to enable students to write about geography in a range of ways including imaginative writing. This broadens the range of students' written work in the subject and helps to raise standards.
38. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy is acknowledged as the foundation for learning. In recognition of national initiatives currently taking place in Key Stages 1 and 2, teachers from the English department have been to partner primary school to observe the literacy hour taking place. This teaching contributes to the development of students' very good attitudes to their work and prepares them well for further study Post-16. This has been important professional development for staff and the school is currently preparing its own whole-school literacy policy to foster improvement in educational standards. The aim is to have the policy operating by September 2001, to be ready for the start of the national initiative.

39. Appropriate time is spent in developing basic numeracy skills but not in a way that is dull or repetitive. As a consequence students are able to use their skills in other subjects and apply them in context, for example students in geography were able to model data using Excel, when investigating the siting of iron and steel works. In information and communication technology students set up databases, produce graphs and analyse their result.
40. On the rare occasions when teaching was less than satisfactory it was as a result of the inadequate matching of work to students' needs resulting in a reduction in learning particularly for the more able.
41. In some subject areas, lessons seen started with a clear statement of objectives which were revisited at different points in the lesson. However, this is not consistent across the school and the good practice has not been shared. When this was done well, for example, in geography and physical education, students were in no doubt what was required of them and standards were high. However, in some lessons, objectives were related more to lesson content than to the development of students' skills. Teachers did not always exploit the value of a consolidating plenary where students' review their learning and assess their success during the lesson and teachers use the information to plan subsequent lessons. In English good plenaries clarified learning and contributed to raising standards.
42. Currently the use of information and communication technology in teaching, particularly at Key Stage 4 is very limited and is not impacting on students' learning. There is an emphasis on word-processing and is very dependent on individual teachers' information and communication technology skill.
43. There is a clear connection between the quality of teaching and the quality of learning and most students across both key stages make good progress in their learning both in lessons and over longer periods of time. The good progress has contributed significantly to improving standards particularly at Key Stage 4 in 2000. The great majority of students work hard and show high levels of interest and concentration. They are almost always keen to succeed and respond positively to praise and encouragement. All these factors contribute positively to standards of attainment.

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

44. Changes that have taken place in the school's curriculum provision in the years since the previous inspection have gone a long way in tackling weaknesses identified at that time. The 1996 report stated that students benefited from a broad curriculum appropriate for all ages and abilities. However, in Key Stage 3 there was insufficient time allocated to art, design and technology, music and physical education. In Key Stage 4 there was insufficient time for science. There was also insufficient time for religious education across both key stages. Statutory requirements were not met in relation to design and technology, information and communication technology and music.
45. Time allocations in Key Stage 3 for art, design and technology, music and physical education have been reviewed together with those in science in Key Stage 4. There is now sufficient time in these areas and this has had a positive impact on the overall quality of provision. The time allocation for religious education has not changed and there is still insufficient time across the key stages to adequately fulfil the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. Other changes to the organisation of art, music and design and technology have had a positive impact on the quality of provision. Though statutory requirements in music are now fully met there is still some non-compliance in relation to design and technology and information and communication technology though not to the same extent as in 1996. In relation to design and technology the curriculum

planning does not meet the statutory requirements in relation to computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture in Key Stages 3 and 4. In information and communication technology the curriculum in Key Stage 4 is not fully compliant with statutory requirements. Although some subjects are using information and communication technology this is not as yet sufficiently co-ordinated to ensure appropriate coverage for all students.

46. The school fits its curriculum into a weekly cycle of thirty 50-minute lessons. This arrangement makes effective use of time and ensures that students do experience most areas of the curriculum at least once a week which helps the continuity of their learning. The 50-minute periods generally contribute positively to the quality of educational provision, students' learning and the efficient use of time. The physical education department experiences some difficulty working in this timeframe. When lessons are grouped to form longer blocks of time this generally contributes to effective learning, for example, in the case of design and technology. There are occasional instances of students having some difficulty in sustaining their concentration for such extended periods of time. Overall at 25 hours per key stage, there is an adequacy of curriculum time.
47. In Key Stage 3 students receive a broad balanced experience of all the National Curriculum subjects and religious education. History and geography are provided through modular arrangements which though imposing some constraints on planning and delivery provide sufficient time overall. All students are taught drama. Significant numbers of students study two modern foreign languages. Those who do not study an additional language have some "EXTRA" lessons that provide opportunities for students to reinforce their skills by applying them in real life situations. In addition students receive appropriate guidance on health and sex education and in Year 9, careers education within a programme of personal and social education.
48. In Key Stage 4 the majority of students follow nine full GCSE courses. The curriculum contains an element of choice for students and effective procedures have been established to advise them on choices. The core curriculum which all students are required to study comprises the following GCSE subjects; English and English literature, mathematics, science [double award], French and a technology subject. A range of other subjects are offered as options. Students are encouraged to choose a humanities subject from amongst their options. Additional breadth in the options is provided by a course in countryside stewardship and the recently introduced general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) in art and design course. Additionally students are required to follow courses in information and communication technology, personal and social education, religious education and physical education. These do not lead to formal qualifications.
49. Through these arrangements students substantially maintain a suitably broad, balanced educational experience in Key Stage 4 that also takes some account of personal preferences and needs. The school tries to balance the wishes of students and their parents. There are inevitable constraints imposed by funding, the staffing and curricular restrictions of a small school and the imperative of running courses with reasonable numbers. As currently organised there are restricted opportunities for a few students. There is no information and communication technology GCSE course available in the current options, although one is planned for next year. A few students in Year 11 attend additional lessons at lunchtime or after school to enable them to pursue an examination course in information and communication technology. A religious education GCSE course did not run this year due to lack of numbers.
50. There is good access to the curriculum for all. Restrictions are minimised. Students are advised that as the art and design GNVQ is offered at intermediate level only it is aimed at students who would be expected to achieve higher grades at GCSE. Only students who have taken German in Years 8 and 9 can take the GCSE course. For those students with special educational needs there is access to the full curriculum. Overall provision for students with special educational

needs is very good in both key stages. Anyone who could gain at least a G grade at GCSE is able to be entered. The school has enabled several students with special educational needs to achieve GCSE success. Certificates of Achievement are available in some subjects [e.g. history] for students who could not gain a GCSE. Some students usually those with a statement of special educational needs take an Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) course as a Key Stage 4 option. These students are directed to this after discussions with them and their parents.

51. The countryside stewardship course is taken by students of all abilities including some students with special educational needs. This course although acknowledged to be successful, innovative and well planned - does not currently give students a qualification that has a place in the nationally recognised qualifications framework.
52. The few disapplications to the National Curriculum are handled appropriately. There are examples of financial support being provided so specific students can participate in school visits. Traveller children are well supported and enabled to progress well. Although there is equality of access for all students to information and communication technology in Key Stage 3 this is not so at Key Stage 4 and as a consequence, students do not have opportunities to continue to improve their skills.
53. Curriculum development and planning is effectively steered by the senior teacher with responsibilities in this area. She is well informed by, and involved in, a number of supportive networks. There is evidence of productive curricular collaboration with other educational establishments. Liaison with primary feeder schools ensures that issues of continuity and their smooth transition from Year 6 to Year 7 are addressed. Liaison Post-16 is good and students are well prepared for the next stage of study.
54. Decisions about changes to the curriculum are made in a consultative manner. Governors are kept well informed and appropriately involved. Parents are also kept well informed through published curriculum plans. Currently, the school does not fully monitor and evaluate the impact of key curriculum decisions, for example the effect of grouping students to inform the future planning of curriculum provision.
55. The school is well aware of the gender issues in a community containing more boys than girls. There is imbalance between the sexes in some groups and options, but inspection evidence suggests this does not impact on the quality of provision or success of students in such groups.
56. The school provides support in a range of subjects of the curriculum for the on-going development of students' literacy and numeracy skills. Examples were seen of the use of writing frames [for example in history] and the application of mathematical skills [for example in a budgeting exercise that was part of a leaving home project produced by Year 9 students in their "extra lessons"]. Information and communication technology is not used adequately or consistently across the curriculum in Key Stage 4 to enhance and support students' learning which does limit students experiences. There is, however, particularly effective use of information and communication technology in geography lessons. The school recognises as priorities in the current development plan the need for whole school policies on the coherent development of numeracy and literacy across the curriculum and the development of information and communication technology provision.
57. There are a wide range of extra curricular activities which are shown through available analysis to be well supported. This range includes sporting clubs and events, music and drama practices, lunchtime clubs relating to a range of subject areas including information and communication technology, mathematics, residential experiences and trips. These enhance and enrich students'

learning experiences and sustain positive attitudes to school. Established and developing links with the community and local industry effectively support the curriculum.

58. A sound programme of personal and social education is in place for all year groups. The current programme provides elements of sex health and drugs education. It is delivered by tutors through weekly lessons. The programme is currently and correctly being reviewed and revised to reinforce continuity and progression in what is taught, to accommodate citizenship and update the materials used. Within the current programme a structured careers element is included. Facilities and provision for careers are good. The careers programme provides effective support for making options choices, applying for jobs or college places and provides access for all students to work experience and relevant careers information. Personal and social education and careers programmes are effectively supported by a variety of outside agencies [such as the police, careers service] and local industry.
59. Students have notebooks in which to record their homework. The school has established a programme for homework in all year groups. Despite some inconsistencies in the amount and quality of homework seen overall it does make a positive contribution to students' learning.
60. Overall, the provision for the moral, social and cultural development of students is very good. These aspects are integral to the aims of the school and are strongly represented in its everyday life. These judgements are similar to the last inspection.
61. Provision for moral education is very good. Opportunities are taken in English, history, religious education, and geography to explore the moral dimension within aspects of the subjects being studied. In responses to studying the poetry of Wilfred Owen for instance, students wrote short stories about incidents in the First World War which contained a moral dimension. Moral aspects of life are consistently reinforced in the daily life of the school and students know the difference between right and wrong and teachers have clear expectations of them. These clear expectations about moral behaviour are reflected very positively in the behaviour of the students. Personal and social education lessons deal with responsible action and moral choices. Students' behaviour and relationships in lessons is almost invariably very good. In English, drama, religious education and personal and social education, opportunities are taken to study personal relationships and moral issues. The personal and social education programme is ongoing throughout the key stages and does include input from the local police with regard to drug awareness and abuse. There is as appropriate moral discussion in the learning support area, for example, in relation to attitudes to others
62. Provision for social development is also very good. Students respond well to the expectations of them. They work very successfully in groups and help each other. Such group work fosters mutual help and collaboration. Students show care and concern for others. Students with special educational needs are well supported in lessons. Individual Education Plan targets are frequently related to the development of social skills such as communicating appropriately with peers. Fieldwork, trips, clubs and visits help to develop social confidence. There are some opportunities to take on responsibility within the school. A school council meets regularly. In some subjects, such as English, students are guided towards more independent learning. Personal and social education is designed to promote key aspects of students' development and to explore social and moral issues, such as drug abuse, and raises questions of personal relationships and social issues. In history, geography and other subjects, students learn about society and develop notions of citizenship. The school has a rich extra-curricular programme. Students benefit from cross-curricular trips, regular theatre trips and visits to places of historical interest, from residential visits and trips abroad, and a variety of activities after school including music, the mathematics club and sports. Social concern can be seen in English where senior citizens are invited to watch drama productions and are entertained by the students afterwards.

63. Provision for cultural development is very good, with strengths in the wide range of activities including visits abroad related to modern foreign languages and provision in English, drama and music. Cultural provision is helped by musical concerts, successful dramatic productions, the art club, and the study of the work of other artists. Students become acquainted with multicultural aspects of life in Britain and are aware of the problems of prejudice, including racism in society. Issues associated with specific cultures such as that of the travellers' community are discussed when appropriate.
64. In contrast provision for the spiritual development of students is less good. The school still does not meet the statutory requirement for a daily act of worship. There are limited opportunities to develop an insight into values and beliefs, self-knowledge and spiritual awareness. Although a small positive contribution is made in some subjects where notions of self-worth are considered, such as English and drama, religious education and science, overall provision throughout the wider curriculum is limited. The learning support area does make a significant contribution to the development of self-esteem and consideration of self in students with special educational needs. Religious education conveys some knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other world religions, but offers only a limited insight into spiritual values. Assemblies do not have a significant spiritual dimension.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

65. The school shows a high level of care for its students. Students are well cared for in a safe and secure environment. The school provides a welcoming atmosphere for students and those entering Year 7 felt that they had been made at home in the school. The school provides effective forms of support for students if they need help through their tutors. This is a well-organised system managed jointly by the heads of upper and lower school. There are regular meetings where all members of the team are able to exchange information and plan policy and the result is that school's procedures for monitoring and supporting students' personal development are effective.
66. Students have confidence in the system and appreciate the good pastoral support that is available from staff. They feel that there is always someone they can turn to in the school for guidance and support. For their part, all staff know the students well and take care to understand their personal circumstances. They want them to succeed and work hard to help and support them. Issues of oppressive behaviour are rare and are quickly and effectively dealt with. The school council provides a forum for students and staff to discuss matters that affect them and is well organised by the head of lower school. There are representatives from each tutor group and the group functions effectively. This enables students to gain insights into the complexity of organising and managing the institution and to make proposals and take action to improve and enrich the life of the school.
67. The school is very effective in promoting good behaviour. Relationships between staff and students are very positive and are based on mutual respect. Students show concern for each other and relationships are open, positive and caring. The school has a range of rewards for work and effort, which are celebrated at year and whole-school assemblies.
68. Child protection procedures are good, and the school has a designated teacher for child protection who has received training. Regular information is received from the local area child protection committee. Training for staff is planned to take place shortly and they are kept well informed on appropriate procedures. Good working relationships have been established with external health and social agencies.

69. The school keeps detailed records of the condition of the fabric of the building and the surrounding grounds. A detailed risk assessment survey is carried out annually and a comprehensive record is kept. The term of office of the governor responsible for health and safety has expired and a new governor for this area is due to be appointed at the next meeting of the governing body. There are some issues of safety in school. In the food technology room cookers present a potential hazard, as there are no flat surfaces directly adjacent to put hot containers on. Additionally, the information and communication technology room needs better ventilation to provide better working conditions. Around the school there are a number of uneven surfaces. The school is well aware of these but is hampered in addressing them by other pressing issues with the building. The flat roof has been an on-going source of problems that require constant attention.
70. The school has a well-equipped medical room for medical examinations or cases of sickness, and in emergencies the school is well covered by a good number of qualified first-aid staff. A record of accidents is carefully maintained.
71. As in the last inspection, attendance figures are above those for secondary schools nationally. Registers are marked at the beginning of every lesson and normally students arrive at school punctually and are at lessons on time. The exceptions to this are usually due to the late arrival of buses delivering students. In these cases, students sign in at the school office to record their presence in school. Registers are marked at the beginning of each lesson and there have been improvements since the last inspection and school procedures now conform to Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) guidelines. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory, though the present paper system makes it a time consuming process to gather attendance data for analysis or to check the attendance of individual students quickly.
72. The procedures for supporting students' academic progress are satisfactory. Teachers are always available in cases where students need help with their work. There are effective self-assessment procedures for students across the curriculum. Students have many opportunities to assess their own progress across the curriculum. These are linked to target setting and designed to help students focus on specific areas of a subject to help them. Assessment and target setting is very effective in English and is an important contributory factor to the level of attainment which students achieve. Work is marked regularly and generally teachers' comments indicate where students need to focus their efforts to improve their work. There are also good examples of marking which show why a piece of work has been particularly successful. Reports to parents give clear information about students' attainments and also include a commentary by students themselves on their work. The school provides opportunities for parents to discuss their child's work with staff and there are effective procedures for keeping parents informed about curriculum issues. Careers guidance is effectively managed and the school maintains good links with higher education institutions.
73. The school is less successful in using the information it has about students' performance to plan their schemes of work. Currently there is a large amount of data available, but its systematic use by departments is limited. The school is at a formative stage of using school, national and comparative data to build an information base that can inform and support the further improvement of teaching and learning by observing lessons and monitoring students' work. In English and science work has been done to monitor teaching and learning. This is particularly true in science where feedback from end of module tests about their progress enables students to set targets from improvement. This information has been used to guide forward planning and improve the quality of teaching in those subjects, but this strategy is not used universally across all departments. These issues are recognised by the school and are contained within the school's present development plans.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

74. There is a high level of parental satisfaction about the way in which the school works with them; they feel that teaching is good and that the school is helping students to make very good progress. They feel that the school is approachable and that any concerns that they raise are dealt with effectively.
75. Statutory requirements for the reporting of students' progress to parents, including the arrangements for those whose children have special educational needs, are met. There is a structured programme for reporting which is linked to meetings between teachers and parents to discuss progress and development. A small number of parents who responded to the parents' questionnaire felt that they would welcome more information about progress. The annual report is detailed and contains not only information about each student's academic progress in all subjects, but comments about personal development. Opportunity is also given for students to contribute their own observations. In addition space is given for parents to comment on these matters. The school also provides a shorter interim report together with formal meetings providing opportunities for parents to meet with teachers to discuss their child's progress. The school also welcomes contact from parents on an informal basis.
76. Examples of good practice in the written reports were seen where in addition to recording progress and development to date, clear advice was given as to what the pupil should do next to make further progress. In addition parents are notified termly about the work to be undertaken in all curriculum areas.
77. Through informative newsletters, parents are kept well informed about the school's activities. Routine administrative matters are also well handled.
78. The school prospectus is detailed and informative and meets requirements, as does the annual report provided by governors to parents. The school takes considerable care to consult parents on a variety of matters about its work, and seeks to have regard for the views expressed. An example of this was related to the development of the code of conduct which was drawn up in consultation with parents.
79. Whilst a small number of parents express the view that the school makes insufficient use of homework, evidence seen during the inspection shows that the school makes appropriate and effective use of it to reinforce and extend students' learning. Parents support, value and make use of the student notebooks.
80. The school provides a wide range of activities outside the classroom both during the school day and otherwise. These are very well supported by students who value the opportunities offered. These include not only trips in support of curricular activities but also residential visits both in this country and abroad. A small number of parents did not feel that the school provided sufficient opportunities in this area. Inspection evidence indicated that for a school of this type and size, extra-curricular opportunities are both sufficient and varied and that the school makes effective use of them to support learning and personal development.
81. The school is well supported by its Parents' Association who have consistently provided resources to enhance the schools activities. Of particular recent note has been support to develop drama facilities which is having a very significant impact on students' attainment. Other examples include support to replace stage curtains in the hall and the development of information and communication technology facilities. Parents have also supported the school in practical ways by carrying out work to improve decoration within the school.

82. The previous report commented favourably on the school's approach to these matters. Evidence from this inspection indicates steady improvement. This aspect is a strength of the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

83. In the previous report the management of the school was reported as sound and the governors described as supportive. There was good day to day financial management and control. The school provided sound value for money. The lack of longer term strategic and budget planning and clear evaluative criteria in the school's development plan were also noted. There have been a number of significant improvements in aspects of the leadership and management of the school, and previous strengths have been sustained.
84. The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are particularly effective in a number of respects. There are well established aims and values that are clearly reflected in the work of the school. All members of the school community including the headteacher, governors, staff, students and parents are quite clear about what the school stands for. Current aims have been arrived at following extensive consultation with parents. The aims and values relate clearly to the students and are supported by a range of policies. They provide direction for the work and planning of the school. There is a clear statement on equal opportunities for all students in the school's prospectus. The realisation of equal opportunities is an important part of whole school and team planning. The success achieved by traveller children and those students with special educational needs is a testament to the school's commitment to equal opportunities and social inclusion. Promotion of the highest academic standards through the school's work is implied rather than explicitly stated in the wording of the school's aims. This aspect of the school's aims still lacks measurable objectives that would provide a clearer basis for evaluating the work of the school in maximising students' attainment. There is confidence in the leadership of the school on the part of parents. Governors express confidence in the headteacher and senior management team. The headteacher has maintained his collegiate approach to decision making and remains sensitive to the needs of staff. Day to day management and administration are good.
85. School planning processes now reflect a longer-term view as well as providing some coherence between school, team, and individual plans. A range of relevant and realistic priorities have been identified for the school. Within this range of plans there are some inconsistencies in the precision of targets, success criteria and the detail relating to timescales, resource implications, monitoring and evaluation arrangements.
86. The leadership and management provided by senior teachers and team leaders also contribute positively to the work and development of the school. Tight budgetary constraints linked to the fact that there is currently no deputy headteacher in the school's management structure means that the two senior teachers carry significant whole-school responsibilities. The current part time secondment of one of the senior teachers intensifies the recognised need for very careful prioritisation of activities and equitable allocation of responsibilities at all levels of management. Though there are some variations across the school, team leadership of subject departments and teams is generally good. In some cases such as learning support, geography, art, English and mathematics team leadership is very good. It is excellent in music. Meetings for team leaders and the regular senior management team meetings are purposeful and positively contribute to the consultation and communication systems within the school. There are, however, weaknesses in the management structure that limit the impact of the work put in by staff with management responsibility. Some staff are unclear about how teaching and learning in some areas is to be monitored and what they should do with the findings. They are also not clear about the extent to which they and members of their team are accountable for results in their area. Although there have been significant improvements across a range of whole school aspects and specific subjects since the last inspection, the rate of progress has been variable.

87. As at the time of the previous inspection, governors continue to support the school very effectively and show substantial commitment to it. Governors are aware of their statutory obligations and keen to ensure they and the school fulfill them. There remain a few examples of non-compliance with statutory arrangements relating to design and technology, information and communication technology and collective worship, although the scale and number of such infringements is significantly less than at the time of the previous inspection. Governors collectively possess a range of expertise which is used well especially in the work of various committees and in establishing links with specific areas of the school. Governors have taken responsibility for and effective action in relation to improving identified areas of weakness e.g. the unsatisfactory subject areas of music and design and technology. They set great store by effective communication and consultation with parents and play an important part in shaping and maintaining the direction of the school.
88. There have been positive developments in monitoring and evaluation practice in some areas of the school. However, systems for whole school self-review are currently underdeveloped, and consequently fail to impact sufficiently on the work of the school. Consistently rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teaching through systematic classroom observation has not yet become embedded into the culture of the whole school. However pockets of good practice do exist, for example some team leaders have introduced a programme for monitoring teaching and learning. The use of data to review school performance has not yet reached a stage where thorough, systematic analysis is contributing fully or equally in all subject areas. This impacts on the setting of challenging targets and the raising of standards across the school. Monitoring and evaluation processes are not yet providing a sufficiently effective means for the school to identify and disseminate best practice. Priorities need to be generated as a result of evaluative information about strengths and weaknesses derived from more rigorous, formal and consistent school self review processes. The school has recognised the ways in which performance management arrangements can contribute to this aspect of the school's work and relevant developments are underway. Arrangements for monitoring and induction of new staff are in place.
89. The governors, headteacher and bursar exercise careful oversight, management and control of spending. The governors' finance sub committee meets regularly to discuss plans and review spending patterns. Effective steps have been taken to reduce a budget deficit. Governors have worked hard and imaginatively to tackle serious financial problems and to supplement the school's modest resources in a variety of ways so as to allow for higher levels of expenditure in certain areas [e.g. staffing] than otherwise would have been the case. Decisions on spending are appropriately linked to educational priorities. The last auditor's report was positive and has been acted upon. Spending decisions are evaluated in relation to the impact they have on students, e.g. the decision of governors in consultation with parents to keep class sizes small. Special grants available to support travellers' education are used very effectively as demonstrated by the attainment of these students. Best value principles are well understood. They have been implemented particularly in relation to consultation with parents regarding levels of spending on staffing and other issues. In addition competitive quotes have been obtained before agreeing cleaning and catering contracts or commissioning work on repairs and maintenance. There is growing use of information and communication technology in administration. The use of information and communication technology to analyse assessment data and monitor students' academic progress is developing. The school recognises this weakness.
90. Governors' efforts in raising additional funding have enabled the school to maintain its level of spending on staffing in difficult financial circumstances to ensure that classes remain as small as possible. Staff are appropriately qualified, well deployed and matched to the needs of the

curriculum. The amount of non-specialist teaching has been reduced since the previous inspection. Staff training has been severely constrained by financial pressures until recently but is now related closely to the school's development planning processes and priorities. More systematic classroom observation than currently occurs is necessary to evaluate the impact of professional development and training on teaching practice and students' learning. Spending on administrative support staff is below average for similar schools. Such staff effectively contribute to the smooth running of the school's communication, financial and record keeping systems. The range of learning support assistants and non teaching staff associated with the school are making a positive contribution to improving students' achievement and quality of educational provision. They are valued and supported.

91. There are shortcomings in accommodation that have an adverse impact on students' learning and attainment in art, music, design and technology, mathematics, learning support and physical education. New facilities for learning support and music will be operational in the near future. Accommodation is well used. Within the tight financial constraints that prevail the school endeavours to keep up with essential repairs and maintenance. Parents make a significant contribution to a planned programme of basic redecoration. Despite this the general state of the accommodation is not very conducive to the school's aspirations for its students or the quality of the environment it wishes to provide. Accommodation is well used by the local community particularly in the evenings.
92. Despite recent increases and additional allocations to subject departments spending on learning resources remains low when compared with similar schools. The school operates a bidding system to distribute resources to subject areas. Resources are still only just adequate in a range of subjects. Resources are inadequate and adversely affect students' attainment and learning in modern foreign languages, design and technology and English. The ratio of students to computers is in line with the national average.
93. Though the annual funding per student received by the school is comparatively low, overall levels of achievement are above those expected for their age. Students' attitudes are very good and the quality of teaching and learning is good. The school is effective and has significantly more strengths than weaknesses. Overall improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory or significantly better in certain aspects and subject areas of the school. The school now provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

94. Langtree is an effective school. In order to improve standards further the governors, headteacher and staff should:-
 1. Establish more rigorous, consistent and effective whole school monitoring, evaluation and review procedures as part of a regular cycle of self review by:
 - effective use of data to inform target setting, strategies to raise standards and the tracking of students' progress (paragraph 88, 133, 251);
 - effective implementation of established policies (paragraph 86, 167, 213, 216, 251);
 - systematic identification of current strengths and weaknesses to inform identification of relevant school and team priorities and development planning (paragraph 85);
 - clearer identification, recognition and dissemination of best practice within and between teams in the school (paragraph 88, 227).

2. Develop management structures so as to ensure:
 - an increased focus on monitoring and evaluation by managers at all levels (paragraph 72);
 - better defined line management functions (paragraph 86, 88);
 - delegation that is more clearly founded on accountability for identified outcomes (paragraph 86).

3. Improve the identification and communication to students of what they are expected to learn in lessons so that:
 - students are aware of what they should know, understand and be able to do by the end of each lesson (paragraph 41, 206, 223, 249);
 - students are consistently challenged (paragraph 40, 140, 163, 164, 184, 197);
 - students are able to reflect on what they have learnt as individuals and as a class (paragraph 41);
 - teachers are able to evaluate the success of their lesson and thereby inform the planning of subsequent lessons (paragraph 41).

In addition to the key issues above, the following points should be considered for inclusion in the school's future plan for action:

- the strategies to meet statutory requirements for information and communication technology, design and technology and collective worship (paragraph 42, 45, 87, 163, 166, 205);
- defining and implementing ways in which students' spiritual development can be promoted across the curriculum (paragraph 63).

95. PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	131
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	48

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9	27	37	25	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	467	N/a
Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals	15	N/a

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	20	N/a
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	78	N/a

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.5
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.0
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

		Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year		2000	50	39	89
National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science	
Numbers of students at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	38	39	42	
	Girls	35	31	32	
	Total	73	70	74	
Percentage of students at NC Level 5 or above	School	82 (61)	79 (72)	85 (77)	
	National	63 (64)	65 (62)	59 (55)	
Percentage of students at NC Level 6 or above	School	56 (33)	51 (45)	47 (46)	
	National	28 (28)	42 (42)	30 (23)	

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science	
Numbers of students at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	30	35	42	
	Girls	31	30	32	
	Total	61	65	74	
Percentage of students at NC Level 5 or above	School	69 (68)	73 (56)	83 (78)	
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)	
Percentage of students at NC Level 6 or above	School	40 (34)	54 (24)	57 (49)	
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)	

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

		Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year		2000	46	46	92
GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G	
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	34	45	45	
	Girls	34	46	46	
	Total	68	91	91	
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	73 (73)	97 (97)	97 (97)	
	National	49 (47.9)	88.8 (88.5)	95.5 (95.0)	

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	45.2
	National	39 (38)

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

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	432
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	7	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	27.8
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.8:1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	287

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.2
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Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	1028848
Total expenditure	1114795
Expenditure per pupil	2461
Balance brought forward from previous year	-39373
Balance carried forward to next year	-12107

Average teaching group size: Y7– Y11

Key Stage 3	23.5
Key Stage 4	20.1

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	467
Number of questionnaires returned	192

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	50	5	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	40	52	4	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	65	3	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	54	16	1	2
The teaching is good.	37	56	5	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	44	17	1	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	29	8	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	34	4	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	36	44	13	4	3
The school is well led and managed.	49	44	3	2	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	44	47	5	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28	46	12	3	11

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

ENGLISH

96. The attainment of students in English at the end of Key Stage 3 is well above the national average. Performance over the last four years shows results to be well above national averages and improving. In 1999 results were close to the national average, but the test results for 2000 show a marked improvement. This year a high number of students (82%) achieved the nationally expected level of Level 5 and above compared to 63% nationally. These figures confirm the upward trend since 1997. Over the last four years there has been consistent improvement in results, with the exception of 1999. In 1997 72% of students attained the expected level compared with 82% this year. Results have also been above those of similar schools over the last four years, with the exception of 1999.
97. At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results in English and English literature at grades A*-C have also improved, although with some variations. In 1997 under 60% of students obtained A*-C grades in English. In 1999, results in English were similar to national averages with 62% of students obtaining A*-C grades, whereas the figures for 2000 show a considerable improvement as 75% of students obtained A*-C in English and 72% did so in English literature, the same figure as last year. These results are significantly above the national average and higher than those for similar schools.
98. The work seen in classes during the inspection broadly matched the results in the most recent tests and examinations. There were instances however of work of a very high standard, particularly in speaking and listening and in writing at Key Stage 4. During the inspection standards achieved by boys and girls in their lessons and written work were very similar.
99. Standards in speaking and listening are very high. Students are confident and articulate. They show insight into discussion and are able to articulate complex ideas well. They listen to other students and show high levels of social skills in discussion. At the end of Key Stage 3 students can discuss ideas, receive the opinions of others and modify their own views as a result of discussion. By the end of Key Stage 4 students show high levels of negotiating skills and committee skills when working in groups. These outcomes are somewhat better than those found in the last inspection.
100. Standards in reading are above national expectations and are similar to those in the last inspection. Many students are enthusiastic readers. They read widely and enjoy the opportunity to read aloud, which they do with accuracy, fluency and understanding. They read a variety of different kinds of material confidently and can interpret written material well. The reading diary developed by the school is effective in enabling students to reflect on their reading in a structured way and share their experiences with others on occasions.
101. Standards of writing seen during the inspection were above national expectations and are better than those seen during the last inspection. Narrative writing in particular is of a high standard. Students are able to draw on their experience of literature to improve their standards of writing. A Key Stage 4 student produced a short story of exceptional quality using the poem '*Strange Meeting*' by Wilfred Owen as a starting point. A student in Key Stage 3 wrote a very effective narrative entitled the '*The Break In*' demonstrating excellent pace and balance, the effective build-up of tension and sense of humour. Standards in other forms of writing are also good. In aspects of media and moving image, students demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of how the nature and purpose of media influences content and how form, layout and presentation

contribute to the overall effect. In some cases attainment was less good. Lower attaining students had difficulty in writing sustained pieces and there were some instances of the presentation of work being less well done.

102. Students are confident in using information and communication technology and are able to edit work and use word processing to produce work with high standards of presentation, which are appropriate to the purpose and audience.
103. Students make good progress in English. This is because they are effective learners. They enjoy the subject and show high levels of commitment in lessons. Students work well collaboratively. When teachers employ direct teaching strategies they listen attentively and work hard at the tasks they are set. This is better than at the time of the last inspection.
104. Students with special educational needs make good progress. In lessons they are given work which is tailored to their needs. Learning support assistants are deployed well in English lessons and are included in the process of planning lessons and topics. They are clear about the support they are to provide and this assists students in achieving well in relation to their abilities. Students for whom English is an additional language also attain good standards.
105. The range of opportunities open to students enhances standards in English. Work produced following a writers' weekend at one of the Oxfordshire Outdoor Education Centres was of a very high standard.
106. The quality of teaching is better than at the time of the last inspection. Eighty per cent of teaching seen was good or better and 45% was very good or excellent. This is because teachers are well prepared for their classes and are enthusiastic about English. They transmit their enthusiasm to students and have a good knowledge of the material they are to teach, prompting and encourage students to succeed. Teachers use a good mixture of methods appropriate to the subject matter being taught. Direct instruction and collaborative learning are very effectively used to enable students to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding.
107. Teachers ensure high levels of challenge for students and they respond by making good progress across both key stages. In a Year 11 group for example, students studied a section of the film 'Witness' as part of the media and moving image section of the National Curriculum. The teacher's detailed knowledge of the film enabled the students to focus closely on the significant aspects of the film's opening. Opportunities for discussion of what they had seen, coupled with the teacher's challenging questions required the class to bring everything they knew to the task and moved understanding forward at a good pace, producing attainment of a high order. In a Year 7 class the teacher used 'hot-seating' to explore the motives of two central characters in the class novel 'The Bailey Game'. This was very well conducted and enabled the class to see a range of alternative decisions that the characters might have made. This was followed by the construction of a dialogue, building effectively on the first part of the lesson and standards were high. The learning objectives of lessons are always shared with students, but they are not always set out in terms that the students understand. Often lessons conclude by the teacher reviewing what has been learned by students and this clarifies learning and helps to raise standards.
108. Overall the teaching of literacy skills is effective. In addition to English, a number of other subjects make a contribution to students' literacy skills but the pattern is uneven across the school. In history, writing frames are available in the class to support students' written work, but their use is too uneven for them to be consistently helpful. Where they are used standards of writing in history rise. In geography, there are good examples of writing skills being developed effectively to enable students to write about the subject in a range of ways including some

imaginative writing. This broadens students' experience and helps to raise standards. Work involving literacy skills is less systematically used by most teachers in other subjects.

109. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy is acknowledged as the foundation for learning. In recognition of national initiatives currently taking place in Key Stages 1 and 2, teachers from the English department have been to partner primary school to observe the literacy hour taking place. This has been important professional development for staff and the school is currently preparing its own whole-school literacy policy to foster improvement in educational standards. The aim is to have the policy operating by September 2001, to be ready for the start of the national initiative.
110. In drama lessons students are presented with many opportunities to improvise and work in role and to discuss and review their own performance and that of others. Drama is fully integrated into the English curriculum. The standards achieved by students in drama lessons are good. They can use a variety of dramatic techniques effectively, to convey action, character and tension. They appreciate how the structure and organisation of scenes contribute to the dramatic effect. In a Year 10 drama lesson the students were able to reflect on their performance and improve it when preparing GCSE material based on '*The Loner*' by Julie Holder, by changing the balance of the dialogue between the characters.
111. Teaching in drama is good. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject matter. In a Year 7 class the teacher used three different kinds of poem as the stimulus for a dramatic presentation. The students were challenged to adapt their performance to very different types of poem. These ranged from the witches' first scene in '*Macbeth*' to a limbo poem, symbolising the coming out of slavery by passing under the bar, to a train poem. The teacher required students to use very different presentational techniques and enabled them to achieve high standards.
112. Joint planning and activities between the art and English departments are effective. During the inspection a group of artists visited school to work with older students using masks. This project with the art department and is an example of the effective collaboration that occurs in the school. The departments organised the sessions and had planned follow-up work, making masks and using them in drama activities. Work seen was of a high quality.
113. Assessment is very effective in English and is an important contributory factor to the level of attainment which students achieve. This aspect of the subject has improved since the last inspection where there was judged to be little formal monitoring of students' work. Students' work is marked consistently and effectively. Marking identifies for students the ways in which their work needs to improve by clearly identifying strengths and weaknesses. Marking also enables students to see why their work is good by pointing out where it is successful. Students set themselves targets as a result of marking, and this helps them focus on specific aspects of their work, enabling them to improve. Led by the subject leader, teachers analyse the data available in the subject and are able to draw comparisons between the performance of individuals and groups within the school. They also analyse the school's results against national figures and have details of each student's performance, which they use for setting students targets in English.
114. A significant factor in accounting for the effective work of the English department is the dynamic leadership of the team leader. Improvements since the last inspection include a consistent approach to planning and assessment. Each element of the programmes of study has been woven into an effective programme of teaching and learning, enabling the students to achieve high standards. The team leader has drawn up detailed and comprehensive documentation. This covers both the administrative details which are necessary to run the

department effectively and curriculum guidance which provides a solid basis for effective lesson planning. Coverage of all aspects of the English curriculum is included, with useful guidance on content, materials and approaches.

115. The department has an effective development plan that focuses on the improvement of teaching and learning. The development plan has detailed objectives with named personnel and financial allocations to each target. The subject leader has also been responsible for introducing a programme of monitoring teaching and learning in conjunction with the English Adviser from the local education authority. All teachers have been observed in lessons and the information gained has been used to plan improvements. Other departments are due to follow this lead and this will enable the school to draw up a comprehensive picture of its strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning. Since the previous inspection the department has addressed all the issues which had been raised.
116. Professional development is acknowledged to be an important factor in improving the quality of teaching. The team leader or her representative attend the termly Local Education Authority heads of English conference.
117. Currently, resources for the subject are adequate, but there are insufficient novels available in school. The English department is committed to encouraging home reading with all students. The Community Library on the school site, run by the Oxfordshire Library Service, provides a valuable learning resource but cannot cater for the range of reading required by the statutory programmes of study. More novels are needed to enable school to cater fully for the range required by the National Curriculum and to fulfil its aims of developing independent recreational reading with all students.

MATHEMATICS

118. Standards in mathematics are above national averages. This is an improvement overall on the findings of the previous inspection.
119. In national tests for 14 year old students, conducted at the end of Key Stage 3, results in recent years have been well above the average for all schools and at least inline with those in similar schools. The performance of boys and girls in these mathematics tests have been broadly similar, as is the case nationally at this level.
120. In lessons observed at Key Stage 3, standards were at least in line with those expected nationally and in many cases well above. Standards of numeracy are generally good; skills are kept sharp by regular and inventive start of lesson activities which students enjoy and their performance is impressive. Standards at both Key Stages 3 and 4 are supported very significantly by the use of modern technology; students use computers and graphical calculators to work at a greater pace and often achieve greater depth of study than would have been possible otherwise.
121. Appropriate standards are reached by students across the full ability range; those with special educational needs receive both appropriate support and challenge in their lessons whilst the standards achieved by the more able are raised by some imaginative lesson planning and a variety of extra-curricular enrichment activities.
122. The improvement since the last inspection in students' performances at GCSE, as measured in the proportion of passes at grades A*-C, had been relatively slight up to the summer of 2000 when 60% of students passed at grade C or above, an improvement of 15% on the previous year.

123. Standards in lessons observed at Key Stage 4 indicate that this recent improvement is being consolidated and built upon; able students are able to use deductive logic in developing an understanding of proof and to apply their knowledge of algebra to transforming functions of a single variable. As in Key Stage 3 standards of numeracy are generally good, scrutiny of students' work shows that they maintain appropriate levels of accuracy making good use of a calculator when appropriate, this latter being very carefully monitored and commented on through their teacher's marking.
124. A small number of students currently in Key Stage 4 have gaps in their understanding of earlier work which could, without careful diagnosis and remediation through a revision programme, jeopardise their future examination success.
125. The quality of teaching in mathematics is very good and represents a significant strength of the school; this improvement since the last inspection reflects the strong influence provided by the personal example of the current subject leader.
126. In the lessons observed, teaching was never less than satisfactory and was good, very good or excellent in two thirds. Teachers' planning was imaginative, made good use of time and excellent use of available resources.
127. There is a clearly developing common approach to planning with the result that students are interested in and often excited about their work. Appropriate time is spent in developing basic skills but not in such a way as to be dull or unproductively repetitive; for example, a Year 7 group working on simple functions and mappings generated input and output tables with a graphical calculator in a fraction of the time and at much greater depth than would otherwise have been possible. Very good use of potential 'down' time – (such as when registers are being taken or books given out) is made to set students challenges or puzzles – differentiated by level of difficulty to give access to all. All of these and more are approaches which are being shared and successfully developed across the department as a whole.
128. Students display a very positive attitude to their work in mathematics, behaviour in lessons is very good and the quality of teacher-student relations equally so.
129. The previous inspection report commented that "*cramped accommodation in one of the three classrooms restricts student' learning and progress*". This remains the case and no progress has been made on this issue; the ability of the teacher to meet the needs of all students is significantly affected by mobility restrictions when the room (one of two identical rooms in a temporary building) is full.

SCIENCE

130. Students' performance in Key Stage 3 statutory tests for 14 year olds, over the last three years 1997-2000 have improved. There is no significant difference in the attainment of girls and boys. In 2000 students' recently confirmed results in standard assessment tests at the end of Key Stage 3, indicate that the proportion of students achieving Level 5 and above was well above and for Level 6 was broadly in line with the national comparison and very high in comparison with the average for similar schools.
131. Results at GCSE have improved over the last three years. In 1999 students' GCSE science performance of 59.5% A*-C grades overall was significantly above the national average A*-C by 11.5%. Girls achieved proportionally more A*-C grades than boys by 25%. In 2000 students' GCSE science performance was 73% A*-C overall, well above the national A*-C comparison by 22%. Girls and boys achieved equally well.

132. Throughout Key Stage 3 students are provided with opportunities to work in groups at practical and project work. They are suitably extending their knowledge of materials, living things and physical processes. Student-student relationships are a strength. They are supportive of each other in their work. Teachers ensure that students' social skills drive learning. Students are provided with activities where they co-operate, share ideas and support one another. They are systematically encouraged to exercise care for themselves and each other. Those with particular interest and enthusiasm for a topic motivate and help sustain the concentration of their peers.
133. Throughout Key Stage 3 most students demonstrate above average levels of attainment in their lessons. Practical skills are well developed and all students can use a range of laboratory equipment safely and with confidence. Teachers insist on, and model safe working practice. Students heed safety precautions. Students are encouraged to adopt mature and caring attitudes towards the live creatures that they are studying. Students' responsible approaches to practical work, developed methodically by teachers, support their learning.
134. In Year 7 students' prior knowledge from Key Stage 2 is consolidated and built upon. Students in a higher attaining set watch attentively, carefully prepared and well presented teacher demonstrations of the particulate theory of matter. Students are asked to guess the time it would take to count a trillion trillion atoms, the number in a speck of dust. Questioning which supports students in explaining the reasons behind their answers develops their thinking skills and plays to a strength of many students who are confident and articulate speakers. Calculations of the number of lifetimes it would take to count the atoms in a speck of chalk dust exercises their numeracy skills as well as their imaginations. Awe and wonder make learning memorable. Role-plays in which students act out being atoms in a solid, liquid and gas similarly make learning accessible and interesting and employ a kinaesthetic learning style. A middle Year 7 set engages practical work enthusiastically to investigate energy transfers. Safety practice is well modelled by the teacher and students' practical skills are developed systematically. The technician provides effective support which improves students' confidence in using apparatus.
135. Students in all groups benefit from opportunities to hypothesise, predict, plan experiments and make decisions about how to record and present findings. Learning support assistants are deployed effectively to support the safe practice of students on the register of special educational needs who are involved fully in these activities. Worksheets are well designed and help ensure that most students tackle the learning activity at an appropriate level to further their skills and understanding. Students in all groups demonstrate advanced skills in explaining their ideas orally and in writing. These are not always exercised sufficiently in lessons. Overall, there are too few opportunities for speaking and writing descriptions and explanations in order to further develop students' literacy skills, imaginations and powers of analysis and description.
136. By the end of Key Stage 3 students have made good progress, they know an impressive range of scientific facts, are able to express their understanding within everyday contexts, and have investigative skills in line with or above the national expectation.
137. In Years 10 and 11 students carry out investigative work, listen carefully to high quality teacher expositions, and make high quality presentations to their peers. End of module test marks provide feedback to students on their progress, boost motivation and encourage students to set personal targets for improvement.
138. Year 10 students are practically exploring the effects of heat radiation by accurately recording thermometer readings from tubes of hot water using temperature sensors connected to data loggers. All students made good progress and are engaged with the exercises at a level

appropriate to their understanding and investigative skills. In Year 10 students are extend their understanding of the respiratory system whilst the teacher encourages them to maintain neat notes and diagrams which will provide a supportive revision resource. However, opportunities were missed to ask a cross-section of students to explain their ideas and uncover their misunderstandings.

139. By Year 11 the majority of students, boys and girls, demonstrated above average attainment in relation to the course requirements. Students exercised their capabilities relating to researching information on global warming, acid rain and ozone layer depletion, from the internet, and synthesised and analysed it in relation to social, political and economic issues. This imaginative teaching approach adds relevance to students' science understanding and develops their key skills and citizenship competencies.
140. The teaching seen across the subject was mostly good, some is very good and it was never less than satisfactory. Teachers know their subjects well and have established effective working relationships with all student groups. Lesson planning is thorough. Learning objectives are well defined and appropriately pitched to the majority of students in the classes. However lesson plans do not always specify a range of targets for the full range of abilities, and the learning objectives are not always shared with students at the beginning of the lesson in order that they are clear about expectations about what they will learn. Thorough lesson planning helps the good pace of lessons. Work is sometimes insufficiently matched to students' abilities which reduces the level of challenge for high attaining students and support for those on the register of special educational needs. The scheme of work does not include sufficient examples of how activities can be made accessible to students across the full range of attainment.
141. The good relationships between staff and students promote effective learning in all lessons. Students, when provided with the opportunity, are willing to share their ideas in class discussions and are supported in doing so through teachers valuing their contributions. Students show interest in science and work with a sense of purpose to acquire new knowledge, often independently of their teacher. All are willing to talk about what they have done. Students with special educational needs take a full part in lessons and are adroitly supported by learning assistants. Their interventions are often improved through the teachers' planned support activities written in the students' science Individual Education Plans. However, students of all abilities are not able to identify their own particular strengths and weaknesses. Individual targets for improvement are not consistently set in marked work.
142. The department's reports to parents support students' reflection on their learning and their setting of personal targets for improvement. These are linked to the science National Curriculum giving students a clear idea of their progress. This represents improvement from the previous report. Teachers' comments on the reports provide practical guidance regarding how students can continue to improve their science skills and understanding.
143. There is sufficient accommodation to meet the demands of the current science curriculum. However rain water and condensation regularly wet the floor of the corridor under the glass roof. This can represent a significant health and safety hazard and steps should be taken promptly to eliminate the problem. The learning resources for science have been improved in line with recommendations made in the previous report. Information and communication technology is integrated effectively into lessons in both key stages to support and enrich their science learning. This is an improvement in practice since the previous report. Development of information and communication technology resources and strategies has been planned and monitored through an effective departmental action plan. The department makes good use of the information and communication technology resources available. The display work in laboratories is of a very high standard, it is well used by teachers and reinforces students' understanding of

key concepts in both key stages.

144. The team leader provides good leadership and has clear views as to how the department can further improve. This is as a result of systematic monitoring of teaching and learning within the department. Subject staff understand their roles and their contribution towards the team's effectiveness. The technician is well qualified and experienced. She makes a valuable contribution to the work in science, as do the learning support staff who work alongside students on the register of special educational needs.
145. Steps are being taken to improve schemes of work in Key Stage 3. The department is working to implement a coherent system of tracking individual students' progress. This includes target setting on the basis of national assessment data, and involving students in actively monitoring their achievements, to identify areas to target for improvement. Additionally staff observe each others' teaching and share good practice. The department is continuing to develop strategies to ensure that assessment informs future planning. These developments should continue to support teachers and all students in improving their learning and continue to raise standards of achievement.

ART

146. At Key Stage 3, the majority of students do well in art when compared to others of the same age and ability. The great majority of students reach expected levels, and many are working beyond expectations. Most students make good progress.
147. Students exhibit proficiency in painting, drawing and working with mixed media, and they are able to experiment with less familiar materials with assurance and flair. Students are less confident in ceramics and three-dimensional design, and they are provided with insufficient opportunities to work with a computer in their art lessons. Drawing from observation is of a very high standard. Students are very good at research and evaluation, and are able to talk about their work and the work of others with confidence.
148. Standards at Key Stage 4 are substantially higher than the national average for GCSE. Students have gained 90% A*-C grades for the past two years, although attention needs to be given to raising the attainment of more able students. Boys do as well in art as girls. Drawing skills are well developed, and research and design skills are good, but particularly strong in painting and mixed media. There is a lack of high quality three-dimensional work at GCSE. Sketch and workbooks are exemplary, and show sophisticated skills in critical studies, research, experimentation and investigation.
149. Standards of achievement are very high in GNVQ art and design. All work seen was of at least a pass standard, and the majority of students are working at merit and distinction levels. In a project on surface pattern around the world, GNVQ students make references to Islamic and Far Eastern cultures and reinforce their work in mathematics in their construction of tile designs. Students for this course also display particular strength in the use of the computer. There is little evidence of large scale and group work at either key stage which does impact on standards of attainment.
150. The quality of teaching in the majority of lessons seen was very good and never less than good and has a significant impact on learning and standards of attainment. Two very well qualified and enthusiastic teachers cultivate a rigorous collegiate atmosphere, often team teaching, monitoring one another's work and sharing good practice. Most lessons are well paced, showing good classroom management and efficient deployment of materials, presenting students with a rich variety of tasks and stimulus material. Teaching is lively and energetic, and techniques are

demonstrated with flair and expertise. Teachers make effective use of their own work in inspiring their students. Teaching and learning are less effective when the pace relaxes. When pace is good lessons are delivered with rigour and sense of purpose - striking a balance between reactive individual pupil support and whole class interaction. Concentration wanders for some students towards the end of a double or triple art lesson, when a continuous art session lasts 100 minutes or longer.

151. The employment of a technician provides a valuable departmental resource, and classroom support assistants are deployed effectively, especially when working with special educational needs students. All students respect each others' ideas and work, and teachers sensitively deal with the complete ability range, creating a stimulating, supportive and caring learning environment.
152. Display throughout the school and department is exemplary as a celebration of pupil achievement. It is well used by teachers and students to enhance learning.
153. Students enjoy art and their efforts are praised and valued by peers and staff. Homework is set frequently and seen as a relevant and natural development of work done in class, although Year 7 students are restricted in not completing art home work until the second half of the autumn term - reflecting a whole school policy.
154. Attitudes and behaviour are outstanding, and the positive departmental ethos is a credit to the school. Students are settled, enthusiastic and compliant, and highly confident independent learners. There are hardly any incidents of disruption or un-disciplined behaviour.
155. Department schemes of work are appropriate, highly detailed and well constructed. They do not as yet take enough account of the new National Curriculum or link with clearer assessment objectives, which would make them more useful to teachers. Methods of assessment are generally effective. Students' progress is effectively tracked across Key Stages 3 and 4, and examination students are given appropriate and challenging targets. Monitoring progress from Key Stages 2 to 3 needs attention. Department staff have not investigated methods of viewing selected students' Key Stage 2 work and assessment profiles, thus developing links with partner primary schools.
156. Opportunities for working with other subjects, particularly in the other expressive arts subjects are insufficiently explored, although there is some successful joint planning between art and English which extends students' experiences.
157. Standards of achievement have improved considerably since the previous inspection, particularly at GCSE level. Students at Key Stage 3 have increased curriculum time - two 50-minute lessons per week are now adequate in meeting National Curriculum requirements.
158. Art department accommodation is poor and is inappropriate for the demands of specialised subject teaching. Teaching and learning are interrupted by noise from adjacent rooms, and one art room acts as a student thoroughfare and the only access to a design and technology workshop. There is a lack of adequate storage space, especially for large-scale and three-dimensional work and insufficient space for art administration and information and communication technology developments. The department is generally well resourced, but the art library is sparse, heavily augmented by the teachers' own books and periodicals which does impact on students' experiences. Cleaning is poor, and atmospheric dust is a potential health hazard.
159. Learning is enhanced for all students through a variety of art trips and field visits but artists'

residencies and links with external agencies do not expose all students to the work of others.
The after school art club is effective in raising standards.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

160. There has been a significant improvement in standards in design and technology since the previous inspection when standards were judged to be unsatisfactory at both key stages. Observations indicate that standards are now at least average and sometimes above average at Key Stage 3. The results of statutory assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 were well above the national average. The recently confirmed results in 2000 are broadly in line with the national average. Girls attained approximately the same levels in 1999 and 2000 but there was a significant drop of more than the national trend in the performance of boys. There is some underachievement.
161. In Key Stage 4 students achieve well above the national average. The GCSE results in the last three years are consistently well above average and there is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.
162. All students work safely and confidently and with increasing accuracy when using tools and equipment. In Key Stage 3 students develop a knowledge of materials and tools. By Year 9 students use a range of materials including food, textiles, wood, metal, plastics to design and make quality products. As they move through Key Stage 4 the student's knowledge and understanding improves and they are able to design and make more complex products that are linked to their own interests. Year 11 students are able to explain and evaluate what they have learnt through the processes of designing and making their individual coursework project. Lower attaining students and those with special education needs are better at practical making skills than designing. Designing skills have improved since the time of the previous inspection and this is linked to a more systematic approach to teaching designing across the design and technology subjects. Students are able to communicate their design ideas using a range of media including graphical skills and modelling.
163. Students use their knowledge of design and technology skills well to support the designing and making aspects of the course. In lessons students listen carefully and when given the opportunity speak with confidence. They develop and use a design and technology vocabulary. Students develop numeracy skills through the accurate measurement of materials when marking out materials for modelling and the manufacture of products. Although many students use computers to support their research work this is largely a homework activity rather than integrated into design work within lessons. The requirement to use computer aided design and computer aided manufacture (CAD-CAM) is not available to students. There is some underachievement of the most able students particularly at Key Stage 3.
164. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages and is a considerable improvement on the previous inspection. Teaching makes a significant contribution to the standards achieved and the progress students make as they move through the school. Teachers give good individual support to the students which often includes accurate and informed feedback about their practical work which values students efforts and raises levels of motivation. Teachers have good subject knowledge that is used to develop students' skills, knowledge and understanding of design and technology in a way that sustains their interest. Routines are well established and classroom organisation and management are effective. Teachers have high expectations of students' work and behaviour, which enables many students to work without close supervision. Teaching meets the needs of most of the students including those with special educational needs but on occasions is not ambitious enough to challenge the more able students by extending their knowledge, skills and understanding particularly in the rigorous self evaluation and development of their design work. The department documentation includes guidance on matching the work to the different needs of students but tends to rely on teacher support and intervention and only occasionally provides alternative tasks to extend the higher attaining students. Teachers generally mark work

regularly with very helpful feedback that on occasions identifies areas for improvement. However, the targets for improvement are not sufficiently recorded and monitored.

165. The design and technology subject area is well led and managed. Staff are working well as a team to raise further the attainment of the students. The team has been effective in dealing with most of the areas of weakness identified in the previous inspection report and is aware of most of the current strengths and areas that need to be improved. The departmental development plan identifies key weaknesses including improving the analysis and use of data, the lack of CAD-CAM and some health and safety hazards in the food technology area.
166. There is effective and on going review of the curriculum. The curriculum for Years 7 to 10 meets most of the requirements of the National Curriculum but there are shortcomings in the use of information and communication technology including the requirement to use computer-aided design and computer aided manufacture. The Year 11 curriculum does not meet statutory requirements as less than half of the students choose a technology subject under the option system. The school has dealt with this situation by ensuring that from September 2000 all Year 10 students are following a GCSE course in design and technology.
167. There is some analysis of assessment data and targets have been set for GCSE examination groups. There is, however, insufficient systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning to identify and disseminate good practice and to address key areas of weakness in order to further improve students' experience in the subject and their standards of attainment.
168. The accommodation poses some limitations. The resistant material technology room lacks sufficient designing capability. Students often have to use woodworking benches to do their design work and this adversely affects the quality of their work.

GEOGRAPHY

169. Overall, attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is above national standards and well above for Key Stage 4.
170. By the end of Key Stage 3 results in teacher assessments indicate performance broadly in line with national standards. In 2000, 58% of students were assessed as achieving Level 5 or better. However, the attainment of girls was seen to be better than boys. The teachers' judgements of the performance of boys and girls have fluctuated over time. Attainment was assessed to be well above the national standard in 1998, and then, well below in 1999. As a consequence there is no significant trend or comparison. Such variation resulted largely from teachers' insufficient knowledge and understanding of the levels defined in the geography National Curriculum. This issue has now been addressed. A clearer understanding of end of key stage expectations now informs planning and has a positive impact on the content, structure and focused expectations for topics, individual lessons and assessments. Therefore, the 2000 result is a more accurate measure of attainment. However, lesson observation, audit of work samples and discussions with students show attainment to be currently above national standards within the key stage. Taken together, this evidence indicates that standards have been maintained well since the time of the last inspection.
171. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment at GCSE is well above the national standard. In 2000, 80% of candidates gained an A*-C grade compared with 58% nationally. The performance of boys and girls is similar and this is better than national trends. In 1997, at 55% the attainment of candidates was slightly above national expectations. This figure fell significantly below, to 35%, in 1998. Significant improvement has been maintained, year on year, since 1998. Currently, in lessons students are attaining at a level above that expected for their age. At the time of the

previous inspection attainment was judged to be consistently above national averages. With the exception of the 1998 figure, this standard has been maintained and exceeded by 2000.

172. In both key stages, lower attaining students and those with special education needs achieve appropriate results matching their ability. Much credit for this is due to the support of caring teachers and to the focused and greatly valued work of learning support assistants.
173. In both key stages most students gain a good understanding of places and environments. Most students have a very good factual knowledge and a secure understanding of key concepts. For example, in Year 11 students can describe and explain a range of features and issues when studying a quarry extension planning application, while in Year 7, they make very good comparisons between Woodcote village and another settlement. Across both key stages, many students are extremely articulate and use correct geographical vocabulary well, both in their confident oral contributions and writing. A particular strength of learning in geography is the students' ability to set questions that guide their learning and in setting appropriate investigations to find answers to those questions. Reasoning and analytical skills are very good. The interpretation of secondary sources such as photographs, maps, graphs and text is outstandingly good for most students. In Year 9, these skills support students when they select factual and accurate information about a less economically developing country of their choice. Using mature and technical vocabulary students articulate well the key characteristics of their chosen country, such as Kenya, Chile and Eritrea, and demonstrate that they can draw sketch maps of these places, well.
174. In both key stages students' key skills are developing very well. The written work of students with special educational needs in both key stages continues to be weak. However, work that is carefully matched to their ability, along with guidance provided by learning support assistants and the use of specific resources such as writing frames, help provide a context for improving these skills.
175. For all other students there are many opportunities to develop their literacy skills. Students are given many opportunities to contribute orally in lessons. Very high expectations are set by teachers for students to listen attentively, and for extended writing. For example, students in Year 7 write very detailed accounts of 'The Life of a Raindrop' that are both factual and imaginative. Also, they engage in effective persuasive writing when they 'Encourage someone to come and live in Woodcote'. Students in Year 8 report the results of a modelling enquiry to British Steel. In addition, extremely high expectations are set for the presentation and content of GCSE coursework assignments, in Year 11.
176. Numeracy is well supported. In both key stages, data handling skills are particularly well developed. For example, most students in Year 10 can make effective use of their observing, measuring, recording, collating, graphing and analysing skills and draw appropriate conclusions during investigations of rivers on Exmoor and in Lynmouth, North Devon. Students in Year 8 model data, using Excel, when investigating the siting of iron and steel works.
177. Opportunities to develop students' information and communication technology skills in support of their learning in geography lessons are very good. This is a strength of the department. Very good use of information and communication technology is made to support and enhance teaching and learning in many geography lessons, across both key stages. The use of information and communication technology is well planned by teachers and as a consequence students make good gains in the acquisition of geographical knowledge, understanding and skills. For example, students in Year 10 use the 'Encarta' electronic encyclopaedia well, to research information on Italy to support their investigation on 'Patterns of Development'. Students in Year 8 use 'Power Point' presentation softwares very well to share what they know and understand about

earthquakes and their impact on environments and people. Students in Year 9, copy, paste and redraft text electronically when preparing information sheets that highlight the characteristic features of their chosen country. These accounts are supported well by images copied and pasted from 'Encarta' and strategically placed on the page to enliven the text. In this most students are very proficient.

178. A quiet and calm atmosphere in geography classrooms provides an effective learning environment where students feel valued, secure and interested in their learning. This has a positive impact on the quality of learning in lessons. Students' responses to their work are good. Teachers establish and maintain good relationships. As a consequence, students behave well, are courteous and trustworthy. They show respect for each other and equipment, such as computers and geography resources, they value the oral contributions other students make to class discussion and work well together in pairs and small groups. Students respond well to set routines and the structure of geography lessons. They work well independently and collaboratively when required. Students respond well to the challenge set by teachers. They are well aware of what they have to do and apply themselves purposefully to the opportunities for them to show initiative and take responsibility. For example, when Year 9 are expected to construct a comparative study for countries of their choice and in Year 11, where students investigate a range of secondary sources to establish the location factors influencing the siting of the Nissan plant in Washington, County Durham. As a consequence of all this, achievement seen in lessons is currently very high and short term progress is good.
179. Overall, teaching is very good. In both key stages teaching was seen to range between good and excellent. No teaching was seen to be less than good. This has a strong impact on learning. Teachers are knowledgeable and lessons are well planned. A particular strength is the consistently good enquiry approach where effective questioning challenges what students know and the high teachers' expectation that students can question for themselves. The best lessons are characterised by the use of a range of appropriate resources that are matched to the ability of students and a variety of tasks that maintain students' interest and concentration throughout. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection report and has been effective in raising standards further.
180. Documentation has been revised to adopt and adapt the new Key Stage 3 schemes of work, from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. This has been done well. A particular strength is the way both geography teachers structure individual lessons, identify what students will do at the start of the lesson, pausing and reflecting on progress at intervals throughout the lesson and providing sufficient time for very effective consolidation of short term learning gains. Assessment procedures are developing well. Marking is particularly good. Both teachers keep marking up to date and celebrate success. Written comments are made to purposefully inform students of weaknesses in their work and to the next steps in their learning.
181. The geography area is lead by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable team leader who has been instrumental in providing stimulating and exciting geography experiences for all students. Since the last inspection very good and effective leadership by the subject leader for geography has ensured that the issues raised have been considered and effective action taken. Good progress has been made in providing effective challenge for all, including that of more able students. Book resources, though still small in range, are used well. Very good use is made of maps and photographs. Particularly good use is made of the local area and more distant locations such as Little Wittenham Nature Reserve and Yenworthy as stimulating and purposeful outdoor resources to observe, measure and use primary sources. Materials produced by teachers these resources are very effective. Overall, the quality of learning resources in this subject area has improved.

HISTORY

182. Overall, standards in history are in line with national expectations and are consistent with the findings of the last school inspection. Standards at Key Stage 4 are above average which represents an improvement since the last inspection report. At Key Stage 3 standards are in line with national expectations.
183. At the end of Key Stage 3 the percentage of students judged by their teachers at or above the national target Level 5 in 1998 was well above the national figures. In the past two years the percentage of students attaining at or above this Level 5 has been well below the national averages. The percentage of girls achieving at or above Level 5 has been higher than boys. In 1999, both boys and girls attaining at or above Level 5 have been below corresponding figures for students nationally (2000).
184. From the evidence of lesson observation and students' work, standards are variable but are generally in line with national expectation. Higher attaining students can produce well structured, analysed pieces of extended writing using historical terminology with confidence and understanding. They can also analyse the relationship between different causes of events and how they combined leading to events such as The Great War. There are occasions when some higher attaining students do underachieve. Students on the register of special educational needs attain standards commensurate with their ability and prior learning. They can make simple notes from textbooks and apply their knowledge and understanding to make informed decisions. With support they can identify and briefly explain reasons why events occurred and with what results.
185. Over the past four years the trend in students attaining the higher grades A*-C in GCSE has been variable falling between being well below to well above the national averages. The small numbers of students being entered for the examination can in part, explain this variation. Over the same period, all students entered for GCSE have attained a pass grade within the A*-G range, producing a pass rate consistently above the national average. The percentage of boys attaining the higher grades has been consistently below that of girls. Compared to the national results the performance of both boys and girls has varied from well above to well below national figures.
186. From the evidence seen in the inspection week, students in both Year 10 and Year 11 are attaining standards that, in the majority of cases, are in line with or above those nationally. There are no obvious differences between the performance of boys and girls.
187. Higher attaining students can write at length using terms and dates accurately, drawing upon a breadth and depth of historical knowledge in order to analyse causes, compare and contrast historical sources whilst gauging their reliability to help make informed judgements about people and events in the past.
188. Lower attaining students can write at length drawing upon historical knowledge and understanding to assess the importance of people and events, they can detect bias in historical sources but some find it difficult to gauge how bias impacts upon the value of a source for its historical reliability.
189. In both key stages the majority of the students present their work in a well-organised tidy fashion. At the last inspection this was an area judged to be in need of improvement. Standards evident in the present students' work represent the good progress that has been made.
190. The standards of behaviour in both key stages are good sometimes very good. Relationships between students and between students and staff (including the learning support assistants) are

consistently good. The majority of students sustain concentration in most lessons even when they find the tasks difficult or when the teacher's explanations are overly long. On the rare occasion when behaviour and concentration were not so positive, the teacher's explanation lacked clarity and group tasks were too drawn out. For example, in a Year 8 mixed ability class the teacher hastily explained a card sorting activity and gave no time limit as to when the task should be completed. As a result some students took the opportunity to misbehave whilst waiting for the teacher to go over the instructions. Other students became increasingly engaged in non-productive chatter as the time went on which meant that the progress planned by the teacher was not realised.

191. Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory, reflecting the standards observed at the last inspection. At Key Stage 3 teaching seen was satisfactory overall but varied between satisfactory and unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 4 teaching was good.
192. Marking is a strength of the teaching within history. Evidence from discussion with students and scrutiny of their work confirms that it is done frequently. Teachers make effective use of written comments to identify what the student has done well, and what needs to be done in order to improve. It is linked with the national standards laid down in the National Curriculum and GCSE examination syllabus. It is particularly effective in helping students make progress when it is linked with target grades to be attained at the end of the GCSE course, a factor evident in the Year 11 GCSE history group.
193. Students make good progress when teachers explain what is to be learned in the lesson through class discussion and question and answer sessions. Progress is more apparent when this discussion is followed by carefully planned use of resources that are well deployed to support and extend the learning of all students in the class. This was evident in a Year 10 GCSE group studying the Treaty of Versailles. Following clear instruction of what the students were going to do, the teacher provided resources offering differing levels of support and help to each student depending upon their learning needs. This enabled the majority of the class to select relevant information and then helped them to organise it to produce a piece of extended writing. The teacher also made effective use of the learning support assistant who spent time with students with statements of special educational needs discussing and explaining each stage of the task.
194. From the evidence seen, homework is often well planned to link with and extend classroom learning, for example, in a Year 8 class studying poverty in the Tudor period. Some students were asked to plan their written work on poverty using the class work and support sheet whilst others were asked to research the meaning of words like alms, pauper and vagrant that would be used in subsequent lessons.
195. All teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. This is well used to develop the students' understanding of past times and events. For example, in a Year 9 class studying the effects on Industrialisation in the 19th century the teacher was able to describe town conditions for the students and use this information to question and lead a class discussion on why things were so poor.
196. Teaching is less effective when the teacher spends too long giving the class instructions and explanations with the result that the students do not make the progress at the rate expected. This was evident in a Year 7 class working on the Feudal System. The activity for the class had three discrete components leading to small groups preparing and presenting their findings back to the whole class. Discussions with the students following a lengthy explanation by the teacher revealed that they had difficulty in remembering all that was expected of them and thus they needed to seek further clarification before undertaking each task.

197. From an examination of students' work and evidence from classroom observation, it is clear that some teachers, on occasions, do not extend the learning of the higher attaining students in their class, a feature also evident at the time of the last inspection. Students' exercise books in Years 8 and 9 reveal tasks that ask students to colour photocopied sheets of the inside of a Catholic and Protestant church and to copy a diagram from a published text illustrating the growth of industry in the 19th century. On these occasions there is little to suggest how these activities enhance the learning of students. In a Year 9 class studying ways of tackling poverty in the 19th century, the more able students had little difficulty in completing the set tasks and planned opportunities to extend their thinking were not apparent.
198. The team leader has produced a departmental development plan that clearly identifies priorities for improving the quality of teaching and raising the attainment of groups such as the more able students. However, the plan gives no clear indication of a planned, systematic process of monitoring these developments that builds upon the work the department has already done, or of evaluating the effectiveness of the strategies to be carried out.
199. There is a clear Key Stage 3 scheme of work based upon the guidelines and format of the Qualifications Curriculum and Assessment (QCA) model. This identifies progression for all students across the key stage and what teachers should expect of all students within each study unit. However, there is no reference to the use of information and communication technology to support the teaching and learning of history. Evidence from the inspection week and the subject development plan confirm that this is an area needing significant improvement.
200. The department has made satisfactory progress towards developing assessment so that it provides a comprehensive method of providing feedback to students to assist in the raising of attainment, an area for improvement following the last school inspection. There are clear guidelines, linked to the whole school policy, together with a range of systems designed to give the student more involvement and understanding in their learning. Conversations with the students indicate that many do not yet fully understand these systems and how they aid their learning. Similarly, some targets set for students are vague using terms like "concentration" with little or no guidance to the student of what this means in terms of learning. Consequently, improvements have not yet had full impact on helping to raise attainment.
201. The school has made good progress in reducing the number of non-specialist teachers in Key Stage 3 since the last inspection report.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

202. Overall, standards of teaching and learning in information and communication technology have shown improvement since the previous inspection, especially in Key Stage 3 where the introduction of a discrete weekly lesson for each class in Years 7, 8 and 9 is a significant factor. There has been some improvement in the use of information and communication technology in other subjects in Key Stage 4 but not enough for it to have had a significant impact on standards. In Key Stage 3 standards in information and communication technology are slightly above national averages in Key Stage 3, but below national averages in Key Stage 4. There is no systematic programme for teaching information and communication technology in Key Stage 4 to ensure that all students make progress in line with their capabilities. Several subject teams have begun their personal development in information and communication technology and there is growing usage across the curriculum.
203. At the end of Key Stage 3, two-thirds of students are attaining Level 5 and above with half of all students reaching Levels 6 and 7, well in line with national data. Assessment at the end of the key stage in 2000, was based mainly upon students' attainment in information and communication

technology within mathematics with some input from their work in English, geography, and science. Recently confirmed 2000 results are lower than the previous year, there is an increase in students attaining at Levels 2 and 3, with a corresponding reduction at Level 5. This was partly due to teachers' insufficient knowledge of information and communication technology curriculum levels. Appropriate action has since been taken to standardise teachers' assessments with national standards. Girls are attaining better than boys at Levels 2, 3 and 6, they are broadly equal at Level 5, and boys attain better at Levels 4 and 7.

204. Throughout Key Stage 3, students are encouraged to develop their own ideas whilst applying skills, knowledge and understanding to a number of real-world contexts using a range of software. Many Year 7 students have had limited prior experience in primary school. They are making good progress and are now achieving Level 4 using a wide range of the tools and enhancements for 'Power Point' presentations. In Year 8 students achieve Levels 5/6 using 'Power Point', send work via e-mail and conduct critical evaluations with a view to the improvement of work for an specific audience. Year 9 students are benefiting from their discrete course in information and communication technology. They conduct a survey, set up a database and carry out complex queries, integrating their results and graphs into a text document, although their skill in setting out a formal business letter could be better. They have good keyboard skills.
205. In Key Stage 4, information and communication technology is taught only through its use in other timetabled subjects, as at the time of the previous inspection. There is insufficient evidence from lessons, but scrutiny of students' work displays around school and reports from other inspectors show an emphasis on word processing, with some students also producing well presented science coursework with combined text, spreadsheets and graphs. Overall attainment is at Levels 3/4, well below national expectations for information and communication technology. Students with special educational needs preparing an information processing module for the Award Scheme Development and Network (ASDAN) youth award scheme are successfully meeting the standards required for the Bronze Award, and some students are making satisfactorily progress towards the Silver Award. Overall, achievement of skills, knowledge and understanding of information and communication technology is not high enough. Information and communication technology opportunities lack co-ordination. Students have insufficient opportunity to make progress where they are too dependent upon the subject options they have chosen and an individual non-specialist teacher's information and communication technology skill.
206. Teaching seen in Key Stage 3 information and communication technology lessons ranged from satisfactory through to excellent. Teaching is having a strong impact on learning. The majority of teachers plan and organize their lessons well, and encourage students to generate work based on their own interests as well as research from a range of sources. The majority of teachers provide appropriate approaches for students of different abilities. These include small group and one-to-one demonstrations, and a high level of individual support with positive encouragement. A particular strength is the use of learning support assistants for students with special educational needs, and the information and communication technology technician who provides additional support for an inexperienced non-specialist information and communication technology teacher. In half of the lessons seen, although planning was sound, in practice the activities were not sufficiently matched to students' abilities and some students struggled to keep up with the majority of the group and failed to make adequate progress. In a minority of lessons the aims were presented as tasks to be completed rather than learning to be achieved. The QCA published schemes of work are being implemented in Years 7 and 8. Successful teaching is developing innovative and motivating contexts for work. For example, in Year 7 the whole class views a selection of their 'Power Point' presentations and provides oral feedback to each other highlighting successes and areas for improvement. In Year 8, students send work to each other for evaluation using e-mail. However, the girls are more conscientious and produce

comprehensive and effective evaluations as required, but the boys are too easily satisfied with one-line comments and waste time in unnecessarily re-organizing the appearance of their work. In Years 7 and 9 there are no significant variations in achievement between girls and boys.

207. Across the Key Stage 3 curriculum there is effective use of information and communication technology in geography, mathematics and science. In mathematics good use is made of the computer and graphical calculator across both key stages and in geography Year 10 students use 'Encarta' well to research information to support their work on 'patterns of development'.
208. In Key Stage 3 the majority of students have positive attitudes to learning, they enjoy information and communication technology and are developing skills of independent learning through the amount of personal responsibility they can bring to the subject and its presentation. In a minority of lessons students lose concentration only when they find the work too demanding.
209. The majority of students in Key Stage 3 are making good progress with information and communication technology, especially those with special educational needs and throughout Year 7. Special educational needs students can explain how they gather information and use text and graphics with 'Power Point' and confidently show how they do it. Students across the key stage are articulate and knowledgeable about their work, and are quick to learn new skills. On several occasions, more able students gave support to their peers when asked, this was well received and it helped reinforce their own learning.
210. Literacy is well supported. In lessons, students are given opportunities to speak to the whole class, and to practise evaluation techniques on other students' work both orally and in writing. One boy in Year 7 used software to demonstrate how to send work via e-mail, and he spoke confidently and articulately to the whole group. Students watched intently and then carried out the procedures correctly. Students have questioned other people and are preparing to write a report on the pros and cons of using genetically modified foods for their information and communication technology/geography project. Others are reporting on the advantages and disadvantages of re-siting a steel factory; they analyse information and use word processing to present their findings. Less able students when they gather information from web sites or CD-ROMs tend to copy large amounts and do not make effective use of the material in their decision making. There are planned opportunities for numeracy in Year 9 when students set up databases as a result of their surveys, and produce results graphically, making an informed analysis of their work.
211. There is a new co-ordinator and an information and communication technology technician. Rapid progress is being made on developments in Key Stage 3. Strategies for teaching and learning in Key Stage 3 are setting a firm base for further improvements. A staff needs analysis has resulted in in-house training for word processing and the use of spreadsheets. The current programme will introduce the use of the scanner and digital camera.
212. The information and communication technology committee is focusing on information and communication technology input by all subjects. It is attended by members of senior management, information and communication technology co-ordinator and subject leaders, who have produced an audit of planned information and communication technology input from all departments based on the demands of Curriculum 2000. This work has not yet impacted on standards of attainment at Key Stage 4.
213. A strategy has not yet been developed for the effective monitoring and evaluation of the subject's performance or to diagnose the department's strengths and weaknesses. The use of pupil performance data from Key Stage 2 is not used to ensure that prior attainment is built upon or as information to identify departmental priorities and students targets. This has an adverse

effect on learning.

214. There are two recently well-equipped rooms with state of the art computers and software. The lunchtime information and communication technology clubs are well attended. Here students continue with class work, complete coursework for a variety of subjects and make investigations from the World Wide Web. These developments are having a significant impact on attainment. There is strong demand for an accredited information and communication technology course in Key Stage 4 and as an interim measure the school has introduced a GCSE in information technology for a small group of well motivated and knowledgeable boys. With limited staff support, delivery is mainly through self-supported study. As yet the impact on standards has not been evaluated. The school is in the early stages of planning for the provision of information and communication technology as an accredited course from 2001 to ensure equality of access for all students.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

215. Standards in modern foreign languages remain good in relation to the national picture; in a number of respects they have improved since the previous inspection. Previously good levels of attainment have been maintained with improvements to be seen in French across the ability range. Resources have been improved; dictionaries purchased and these are beginning to be used in the classroom to develop students' study skills. There are moves afoot to incorporate information and communication technology opportunities more explicitly into schemes of work; the possibility of making use of e-mail contacts abroad is already contributing positively to students' enthusiasm and motivation. Some work has begun on using performance data to raise standards, which so far has succeeded in providing the department with more firmly rooted evidence of students' attainment and potential. One beneficial outcome has been the targeting of prospective highest attaining students in Key Stage 4 for special focus, partly through additional emphasis on the more formal aspects of grammar.
216. On the following fronts, however, improvements have been slower than expected. There is inadequate use of and access to good quality information and communication technology facilities to help learning in the subject. Similarly the poor state of repair of essential listening equipment deprives students of important opportunities to work independently. The use of performance data is not yet well enough established as an effective tool for improvement planning. Monitoring of classroom practice (particularly with a view to raising students' performance in areas of relative weakness and ensuring consistency of their classroom experience) is only at a very early stage. Although many of these development points figure in the current departmental plan, they should be afforded greater priority in practice, in the quest to move a good department forward to a position of a very good one. Overall the extent and rate of improvement are satisfactory and the department is clearly capable of sustaining and continuing to raise standards in the future.
217. At the end of Key Stage 3 standards in both French and German are above the national average; students of higher ability who study German from Year 8 attain good standards despite the restricted time allocation over the key stage. In this key stage boys' performance is noticeably weaker than that of girls. This is partly the result of their slower progress in the first foreign language in Year 7, which determines setting for subsequent years. Fewer boys are therefore in upper sets for foreign languages in Key Stage 3. Those who are in upper sets match the girls in performance on the whole.
218. All students learn the basics of the foreign language during Years 7 to 9. They gain a grasp of simple everyday words and phrases, which they can understand and use in short conversations. Although their understanding of the language develops at a satisfactory rate over this period, they

do not get enough intensive and sustained oral practice overall. As a result the key skill of speaking is not as strong for most students as it should be by the time they move to Key Stage 4. On the other hand, they have a reasonable grasp of major points of grammar and syntax, and many students can write interesting and well structured letters and accounts in French or German on topics of personal interest, such as reports on holidays, using the past tense, seen in Year 9. Individual exercises of this type, completed at home, frequently incorporate digital imaging and graphics, using information and communication technology skills in a real context, as in a description of the layout of a pupil's own house and bedroom, also in a Year 9 class.

219. By the end of Key Stage 4, students are attaining high or very high standards overall. In French there has been a rising trend since the previous inspection (with the exception of 1999, when the dip in results mirrored lower general school performance). Results have generally exceeded national averages on all measures and in recently confirmed results in 2000 this increased level of attainment was by a very significant margin. In German consistently high standards have been maintained throughout the period, well above national averages. A particularly good feature of the department's results is the relatively high proportion of students in the school who are, by choice, dual linguists and obtain higher grades in both languages. Furthermore, boys are well represented in this group of higher attaining students.
220. Virtually all students leave school at 16 with a graded result in a foreign language and the proportion of the whole cohort who attain higher grades is well above the national figure of around 41% (in 2000). The performance of the highest attaining students (A*) does not yet quite match national results in French, but does in German. Lower attaining students and those with statements of special educational needs achieve appropriate results, matching their ability. The support of learning support assistants in the classroom has a beneficial impact on the ability of these students to make progress.
221. During Years 10 and 11, most students make at least satisfactory progress in listening and speaking. In written work, those in higher sets extend their grasp of grammar and produce sound and, at times, impressive pieces of work in the foreign language, written for a range of audiences. Many examples of this are on display for all to see in the languages classrooms and adjoining corridors. Some work completed by Year 11 German students is particularly mature, for example, students present arguments on current issues which incorporate a full range of structures, tenses, vocabulary and idiom. As in Key Stage 3, however, rather too many students do not appear confident or fluent in the language without the support of prepared notes.
222. Overall the teaching of modern languages is good; in both languages there are also examples of very good teaching. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen. A major strength of teachers is their highly effective use of the foreign language in the classroom, setting a climate where use of the language provides both an authentic context and, on occasions, a challenging focus for higher attaining students. For example, explanations of grammatical points seen in Year 11 French and German lessons were expertly conducted by teachers who adapted exactly their own level of language to the needs of their students to ensure full understanding and to facilitate pupil confidence about participating fully.
223. All lessons contain a variety of activities and methods and provide experience in all four language skills. Whereas planning for individual lessons is always thorough and includes detail of differentiated written materials for named students, sometimes stated learning objectives are not sufficiently clear or are related more to lesson content or to teaching points, rather than to the development of students' skills. This indicates some lack of focus on learning outcomes. Teachers invariably employ an appropriate range of resources, for example worksheets, games, cue cards and other prompts and pictures. Cue cards and prompts were seen to be particularly successful in promoting effective group work in a beginners' German lesson; elsewhere grids to

support survey activity during the lesson on families (Year 7 French) and household tasks (Year 9 French) were instrumental in encouraging appropriate student-student dialogue, and high levels of student interest and enjoyment. Other examples of good practice regularly seen in class include pair-work, opportunities being given for students to 'present' their work orally to others and students re-interpreting previously heard information in the language. A Year 9 French group of lower attaining students managed well the task of manipulating verb forms and some students in a Year 8 group of similar ability were able to retell details of a proposed journey to France, using prompts displayed on a screen.

224. Generally lessons proceed with fine pace, time planning is very good and classroom management is positive. Lessons are not interrupted by the occasional need to keep less motivated students on task; teachers are adept at maintaining momentum while exerting additional influence on individuals and retaining good relationships with students. Students are encouraged with praise and patience; teachers invariably use their own time to good effect, helping individuals and responding quickly to resolve any emerging learning difficulties. Overall, expectations are appropriate, although there is some evidence that in Key Stage 3 French the capabilities of some higher attaining students are under-developed. In German expectations are always at a very high level and generate a highly committed student response.
225. Students quickly grasp new concepts, aided in the main by the clarity of the teacher's presentation, and they consolidate their learning at a rate appropriate to their ability. Generally concentration levels are high and students are willing to make real efforts to understand new material. They work productively in class, rarely seeking to waste time or disturb others. Tasks are completed within the time set and students co-operate with each other readily, helping each other learn. Some students, particularly the higher attaining students in Key Stage 4, actively extend their learning through intelligent and creative use of known language and through personal research. However, the ability and confidence to make links between known and new material is not often to be seen among students of average and lower ability, some of whom rely too much on their teacher. These students have relatively few opportunities to experience lessons where they work outside a very prescribed framework which causes them to be nervous of acting independently and unsure of their own capabilities.
226. Students' attitudes towards the subject area are positive on the whole; an increasing number are participating in the biennial exchange with the partner college in Normandy and many are excited by the prospect of direct e-mail contact with their French or German peers in the near future.
227. Standards in modern languages are helped by the good, experienced leadership and management of the subject area. The department is fortunate to be staffed by well-qualified and committed specialists, each of whom has many personal and professional strengths. Further work to share and build on existing good practice, to use performance data to aid development planning and to monitor and evaluate subject performance across the department are the steps most likely to have a significant influence on raising standards to even higher levels for all students.

MUSIC

228. Since the previous inspection the quality of music provision has improved markedly, and music is now a very successful subject.
229. There has been an improvement in standards, with a developing profile of achievement in both key stages. In particular, there is clear evidence of the department encouraging students to build on their good prior attainment at Key Stage 2. Recently confirmed results at GCSE in 2000 (71% A*-C) were above national averages. Predictions for future GCSE examinations indicate a continuing trend of higher than average results.

230. At Key Stage 3 standards range from average to very high. In a Year 7 class students demonstrate considerable prowess in singing, displaying skill in the gradation of dynamics and three-part singing. This work shows attainment at well above national expectations, at National Curriculum Levels 5/6. In a Year 9 class students show strong competence in the different aspects of presenting a "performance", including students singing, presenting the findings of a research project, and describing the details of the computer-assisted notation of a tune and accompaniment. In Key Stage 4 standards are uniformly very high.
231. Overall, music teaching is of high quality. The department is well led, with an energetic and skilful head of department, assisted by teachers with fine musicianship and communication skills. There is a particularly good use of teacher questioning which encourages students to develop their own thinking. Teaching is constantly adaptable, and there is a clear understanding, and implementation of matching activities to students' abilities. The department pays close attention to the care and requirements of students on the register of special educational needs, for whom Independent Education Plans are provided. More able students are set specific challenges. In Key Stage 3 teaching quality seen ranged from satisfactory to excellent. In Key Stage 4 the range was from very good to excellent. Work at both key stages illustrates the department's adventurous and varied approach to the curriculum, which is dynamic and motivates students and improves standards. Planning for achievable outcomes is very good. The department's handbook is a good, practical working document. Lesson content is good and appropriate, with the needs of all students being fully met. The quality of vocal and instrumental teaching is very good, with tuition being available in strings, brass and woodwind. Guitars, and some extensive drum tuition, are unusual features. The school is now a centre for Guildhall drumming examinations.
232. The quality of learning in lessons seen at Key Stage 3 ranged from satisfactory to excellent. This very good teaching was evident in Year 7 where student's worked hard to imitate the excellent vocal modelling of the teacher and produced some outstanding singing as a result. In Key Stage 4 learning is uniformly very good with students in Year 11 producing some imaginative compositions. The overall response to music in both key stages is very positive, with students responding well to the high levels of encouragement and the learning opportunities provided. Students are proud of their achievements and creativity in music, both as performers and as composers. High-quality extra-curricular work is in place and is well supported with students' displaying high levels of achievement in individual and group music making. More than 170 students are involved in instrumental and vocal lessons (which, at 40% of the school population is several times the national average). Parental involvement in the department's recent tour of Ireland and in the organisation of a major concert in the Hexagon, Reading, has been significant. Students' behaviour is generally very good, and it is excellent in Key Stage 4. Students make considerable progress at both key stages. The department makes a fine contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social education, and the inclusion of soul and gospel singing is a good example of its imaginative approach to cultural inclusiveness.
233. Improvement in music since the previous inspection has been dramatic. The music curriculum now meets fully statutory requirements. The former deficiencies in teaching have been comprehensively addressed. A proper time allocation has been made for music, and resources have been improved. A wider repertoire of music to be studied and performed has been introduced and includes a strong multi-cultural element. Composition and analysis are now embedded in the curriculum with students showing an ability to adapt established techniques to their own work. Singing is a particularly strong feature. Information and communication technology has been introduced and students regularly use music technology as part of their studies in music. Careful monitoring of students' progress in music is now a regular feature, and the department uses well its limited but adequate resources. The only area of deficiency is that

of accommodation which is still inadequate, especially in the matter of soundproofing. The school is currently addressing this issue, and a new music suite is due to open in February 2001.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

234. Overall standards in physical education are above national expectations. Good progress is made in both key stages by students of all abilities, including those with special needs. At the end of Key Stage 3, teachers' assessments show overall standards in physical education at least at the national average with many students achieving standards well above average. Observation of lessons during the inspection confirmed the accuracy of teachers' assessments and revealed that students frequently achieved high standards as a result of the perseverance and practice of teachers, combined with skilled, knowledgeable and effective teaching.
235. By the age of 14, students have acquired knowledge and understanding and have developed skills in a range of activities. Students achieve in games and dance, for example, in rugby students demonstrate that they can effectively transfer skills gained in isolated practices into the game situation. Similarly in dance, simple dance sequences of quality were being created. There is no significant difference in standards which boys and girls achieve. These standards show an improvement since the previous inspection.
236. Since the previous inspection GCSE results in physical education have shown consistent levels of improvement. In 2000 at the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results in physical education were above the national averages; 88% achieved grades A*-C and 100% achieved grades A*-G. The department's prediction for 2001 is that students' success should be equally high. The uptake of students studying the GCSE course has increased, although it attracts many more boys than girls. In GCSE groups, students have learned to refine their techniques in selected activities and are beginning to acquire a sound knowledge of the requirements of fitness and the ways to test it. Many opportunities arise for students to progress through planned and progressive programmes of study. When students are encouraged to evaluate their work, they offer informed opinions of their own and others' work, developing the skills of movement analysis. At the age of 16, students have made good progress in a range of activities including badminton, where attacking and defensive shots have been improved, in dance and netball where a growing tactical awareness has been developed.
237. The overall quality of teaching is good in both key stages, with some very good lessons seen. Schemes of work are well structured and show progress in lesson to lesson and across the key stages. Individual lessons are effectively planned and objectives are clearly defined and shared with students. Students are in no doubt what is required of them. Teachers leave time for students to review their work during the lesson. Students reflect on their progress against lesson objectives so enabling appropriate targets for improvement to be identified for the next lesson by both the teacher and students. This is very good practice. Detailed explanations and clear expectations are a feature of every lesson. This practice generates students' interest in the activity and assists them to learn.
238. Teachers are confident, highly motivated specialists who have secure knowledge and understanding of their subject. In all lessons teachers' knowledge and expertise has a positive, significant influence on learning. They are effective in planning and organising tasks that are well paced, match students' capabilities and contain appropriate challenges. Both teachers effectively use a variety of teaching styles in the same lesson, ranging from whole class direct tasks, to group work and individual tuition. At Key Stage 4 students are given opportunities for independent learning and for applying their knowledge to new situations. More opportunities for students to discuss their work are introduced and teachers contribute well to the development of students' literacy skills, through their use of technical language in their question and answer

sessions.

239. When opportunities arise, students enjoy taking responsibility, for example, through creating dances, evaluating a partner's performance or devising attacking and defensive strategies in soccer, netball or badminton. Relationships are of the highest order and are the platform from which high quality teaching and learning spring. Discipline is firm but relaxed, promoting high motivation and good order. It allows teachers opportunities to concentrate on certain groups while others remain purposefully engaged. Emphasis on safe practice is a feature of all lessons. Students' consistency of uniform dress is to be commended and is an outcome of the perseverance of teachers' demands, to retain high quality standards. The number of non-participants is extremely low and they are gainfully employed as coaches, referees or observers, with appropriate work sheets provided.
240. Students' attitude to learning is very good across the key stages and this has a positive effect on learning. They arrive on time, change quickly and readily engage in the tasks presented. Their interest and enthusiasm are clearly evident across all age groups. In all lessons seen, there was a high degree of co-operation displayed by students who are well behaved, motivated and concentrate on the tasks presented. Students were generally seen to be capable of persevering and working hard. In all activities where expectations were high they rose to the challenges. They respond quickly to questions and show confidence in demonstrating to others what they can achieve.
241. The department is led by an enthusiastic and effective team leader who is well supported by his team. Together they make a very strong team which is committed to delivering a balanced curriculum. Substantial documentation has been developed collectively; this provides a very good basis to support teaching and learning. Arrangements for assessment recording and reporting are in place, including pupil assessment. The outcomes of assessment were used to plan lessons. A systematic monitoring of assessment procedures, units of work and programmes of study, has taken place and now has to be adapted to meet the new national requirements for levels in physical education. Time allocation for the coverage of National Curriculum programmes of study in Key Stage 3, only just allows for the end of Key Stage descriptors to be achieved. At Key Stage 4 it is more appropriate. Information and communication technology is not used extensively to enhance teaching and learning.
242. The school has an equipped hall and sports hall so that indoor facilities are adequate. Playing fields are good and drain remarkably quickly, though there is concern over the surface conditions on the tennis courts.
243. Since the previous inspection sustained progress has been made. Teaching and learning have improved and serve the needs of the students well. Planning is detailed, effective, co-ordinated well and expectations made very clear. The over emphasis on, and access to, certain parts of the curriculum referred to in the last report, has been dealt with.
244. A comprehensive year round programme of extra-curricular activities is a very strong feature of the department; this serves to enhance students' social development as well as their practical skills. The programme provides open access clubs, team practices and matches. The programme attracts a high percentage of boys and girls who have achieved successes in local, district and county competitions. It represents a substantial commitment of time by the physical education staff. The variety, regularity and quality of this additional provision have positive effects on students' attainment and attitude and makes a considerable contribution to the life and ethos of the whole school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

245. Standards of attainment overall are in line with national expectations. Students' attainment in the GCSE examination is above or well above national averages and has been so since the previous inspection. On the basis of the work seen during the inspection, the standards currently being attained in both the GCSE option and the core provision for the subject are in line with national expectations.
246. The standards attained by students at the end of Key Stage 3 are also in line with national expectations. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve standards that are in line with all other students.
247. At Key Stage 3 students are able to see the underlying meaning in a passage of religious scripture and make sensible comments about its importance, for example, in the way Solomon's wisdom was displayed in the story of the two women and the baby. In both key stages students are able to formulate views on moral issues and appreciate their own prejudices. They discuss complex moral and religious questions in an open and thoughtful manner: in part of one lesson at Key Stage 3, students put forward well-reasoned arguments for the way in which the murderers of Jamie Bulger should be treated. Sometimes, in both key stages, students' factual recall of the beliefs and practices associated with religious faith is more secure than their understanding of the impact of religion on believers' lives.
248. The achievement of most students in both key stages is appropriate when their prior attainment is taken into consideration. Girls outperform boys in written work. The achievement of students with special educational needs and those with statements are generally satisfactory at both key stages.
249. Teaching is sound overall and based on a strong commitment and subject expertise from the team leader. The team leader encourages open discussion on issues raised in class and challenges students' views in a reflective, non-judgemental manner. Lessons are carefully planned. A range of teaching strategies is used to promote students' thinking and homework is set regularly and is relevant to students' needs. Although teaching has several strengths there are some weaknesses. The focus when studying religions can be too heavily biased towards knowledge of belief rather than understanding the influence on believers' lives. Objectives for lessons are not explicitly stated in students' terms and plenary sessions at the end of lessons do not draw together the learning that has taken place in a coherent manner. Students are presented with the opportunity to engage in extended writing, but they are not advised on how to structure these activities. Students' enquiry skills are also underdeveloped.
250. Overall, students make sound progress in their learning. In the previous inspection report student progress was judged to be good. The majority of students show interest in the subject, work at a good pace and make gains in their knowledge of the beliefs and practices of religions. In a small number of cases with some boys at Key Stage 4, concentration can waver, engagement with the work in hand is limited and as a result learning is adversely affected.
251. Since the previous inspection, the subject leader has been making steady progress in a number of areas, including the adoption of a number of new teaching and learning strategies and the acquisition of a greater variety of resources. He has also established a monitoring system to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning. It is important that senior management should work with him to establish a coherent approach to monitoring and evaluation that ensures that regular observation, feedback and development take place for all staff teaching the subject.
252. Two matters were identified in the previous report as requiring attention; namely, insufficient

time allocated for the subject at Key Stage 3 and the lack of access to information and computer technology (information and communication technology) as a teaching resource. The amount of time provided for the subject at Key Stage 3 remains the same as at the time of the previous inspection. The department has begun to encourage word processing skills, and use of the internet and to acquire software for use in lessons: information and communication technology development needs to continue and to be given greater emphasis in the future.