

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **MOUNTS BAY SCHOOL**

Penzance, Cornwall

LEA area: Cornwall

Unique reference number: 112066

Headteacher: Mr R Mitchell

Reporting inspector: Ian Stuart  
19298

Dates of inspection: 14 – 18 May 2001

Inspection number: 230047

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Boscathnoe Lane Heamoor Penzance Cornwall
Postcode:	TR18 3JT
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr P Walke
Date of previous inspection:	29/04/96

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
19298	Ian Stuart	Registered inspector	English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements; How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? The adequacy of accommodation.
9646	Geraldine Osment	Lay inspectors *		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well the school cultivates pupils' personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
19727	Eric Langford	(* Because of illness, Mr Langford replaced Mrs Osment during the inspection)		
11508	Chris Griffin	Team inspector	English; Special educational needs	
23528	Andrew Bird	Team inspector	Mathematics	The adequacy of learning resources
8361	Malcolm Burley	Team inspector	Science	
4117	Elizabeth Morgan	Team inspector	Design & technology	
23080	Robert Isaac	Team inspector	Information & communication technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
27666	John Dockrell	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	The adequacy of staffing resources
29212	Melanie Smith	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
27407	William Stoneham	Team inspector	History; Vocational education	Assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic performance
22590	Robert Castle	Team inspector	Geography; Physical education	
16548	Don Gwinnett	Team inspector	Art & design; Music	
31135	Rachel Hobson	Team inspector	Religious education; Equal opportunities	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Mounts Bay is a comprehensive community school of 827 boys and girls aged 11-16; although numbers have been rising in recent years, it is somewhat smaller than an average size secondary school. The school is located in Penzance and serves the town and surrounding area, noted for their natural beauty and rich culture. However, the area is situated away from large centres of population, and the deeply rural and isolated nature of West Cornwall contains areas of significant economic hardship. The pupils come from a very wide range of backgrounds and circumstances, but, overall, there is a higher than average amount of social and economic disadvantage. The school has 128 pupils with special needs, which is broadly in line with the national average; however, the 29 with a Statement of Special Educational Need is higher than average for a school of this size. Only one pupil comes from an ethnic minority group; one pupil has English as an additional language. The proportion eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. The attainments of pupils on entry are broadly average, and cover the full ability range; there are few significant differences from year to year, or between boys and girls. The school has very strong links with its community, and has been oversubscribed in recent years.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Mounts Bay is a very good school. Most pupils achieve well. By the time pupils leave school, they do so with results that are, overall, above the levels that would be expected from their attainments on entry; in many cases, they are well above. An impressive feature of the school is the consistently good teaching; nearly 80 per cent is good or better, with nearly 40 per cent very good or excellent. The headteacher provides strong and very effective leadership, giving very clear educational direction to the school. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are very good; they respond well to the high expectations the school has of them. The school provides very good value for money, and there is a strong shared commitment to further improvement.

#### **What the school does well**

- Teaching is consistently good, with much that is very good or excellent.
- Standards are above national averages, with pupils tending to achieve better results than would be expected from their standards on entry.
- The school has very high expectations of pupils.
- The headteacher leads the school vigorously, with a very clear vision for its development.
- Pupils show very positive attitudes with very good relationships within a very well ordered environment and high standards of care and support.
- The overall ambience of the buildings and grounds creates a positive learning atmosphere.
- Provision for personal, social & moral education, careers and vocational education is very good.
- Provision for extra-curricular activities, especially sport, is very good.

#### **What could be improved**

- Despite very substantial improvements, provision for information and communication technology (ICT), particularly in Year 9, does not yet meet all statutory requirements.
- Not all subjects make effective use of assessment to help pupils achieve more successfully.
- As the school expands, the senior management team could be strengthened to cover the necessary monitoring and evaluation of its work, and its forward thinking.
- Standards and achievements in music are lower than those found in other subjects.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

At the time of the previous inspection in May 1996, the school was at the beginning of a period of very substantial change in its management, curriculum and financial stability, following the appointment of the present headteacher. There has been very good improvement since then. Standards of teaching and learning have improved further. Throughout the school, there is a purposeful learning environment, enhanced by tastefully decorated and well maintained corridors and classrooms, both with good

displays. Specific weaknesses in art, personal & social education and special educational needs have been addressed; those in ICT are largely resolved, though some weaknesses remain. There are much improved assessment arrangements at whole school level, though there are inconsistencies in the effective use of assessment information in some areas. Whole school planning is now very good, though subject planning, including monitoring and evaluation, is not yet a consistent strength.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	A	A	B	A	well above average    A above average        B average                C below average        D well below average   E

Over the last three years, the overall points score attained in the national tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3 have been above the national average in English, mathematics and science; there have been some variations between in the subjects in different years, with English well above in 2000. The trend has been slightly below the national trend. The results in 2000 show achievements above what would be expected from the same pupils' attainments on entry, with the boys achieving particularly well compared with boys nationally. Standards of work seen during the inspection reflect recent test scores. At GCSE, over the last three years, overall results have been well above the national average, with a trend above the national trend. Pupils in 2000 achieved above average results, having made good progress from their Key Stage 3 attainments, which were lower when compared with pupils in the two previous years. Their achievements, based on comparisons with schools in similar contexts, show results well above average. At the time of this inspection, pupils in Year 11 were taking examinations or on study leave; based on work seen and in lessons in Year 10, present standards in Key Stage 4 are above average, and pupils are on course to meet the suitably demanding targets set by the school. Achievement at Key Stage 4 is good, and particularly good in art, drama, English, history, geography, and food & textiles technologies.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Nearly all pupils enjoy school, and are interested and involved in its activities. Their standards in wearing school uniform are very high.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well in lessons and around school, including breaks and lunchtime.
Personal development and relationships	Very good between pupils and with their teachers. Many pupils are involved with extra-curricular activities.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance rates are broadly in line with the national average.

There are good opportunities for pupils to take responsibilities, with personal relationships a major strength of the school. Any problems, including instances of bullying, are dealt with speedily and effectively.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING



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

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

Teaching is satisfactory or better in over 97 per cent of lessons observed; it is very good or excellent in over 40 per cent of lessons. These proportions are higher than those found nationally. Teaching is unsatisfactory in less than three per cent of lessons. Teaching is good in nearly all subjects, including mathematics and science, with English, art, drama, history, personal, social & moral education and religious education being particularly strong; teaching is weaker in music. Some excellent teaching was seen in a wide range of subjects. Particular strengths of teaching are the teachers' knowledge and understanding, their high expectations of pupils, their varied teaching methods, and their management of pupils. As a result, the quality of the pupils' learning is good, and often better. They work very hard and concentrate very well in acquiring new skills, knowledge and understanding, showing much interest in their subjects. However, day to day marking is not always consistent across the school, and the pupils' understanding of their attainments and what they need to do to get better is variable, as the use of assessments in all subjects does not always match that of the best. Similarly, sometimes homework tends to be a continuation of classwork, rather than an opportunity to take learning further forward, particularly for gifted and very talented pupils. In these circumstances, there is potential for even higher achievement. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. Generally, the school meets the needs of all pupils well, including those with special educational needs.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. There is a wide and varied range of learning opportunities, with some notable innovations to meet individual needs. The distribution of time between subjects is an area for review by the school, and all statutory requirements for ICT are not yet fully met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good provision ensures that pupils with special educational needs make generally good progress, though a sharper focus on the least able readers would raise their achievements.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Only one pupil has English as an additional language.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Provision for the pupils' moral and social development is very good; provision for cultural development is good, and is satisfactory for spiritual development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Child protection and welfare provisions are very good, and procedures for promoting good behaviour are excellent. The monitoring of the pupils' personal development is very good.

The school has strong and effective links with parents, who, overall, are very positive about the school. The breadth and relevance of the curriculum are good, though the balance between subjects is uneven in some cases. Preparation of pupils for their life after school is very good, and the involvement of local and national organisations and industry in the school's work has led to some exciting and innovative developments.

#### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. Very good leadership and management by the headteacher have taken the school rapidly forward; good in many other areas, using particular individual strengths, but more variable in quality.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors have a very good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and of its development needs.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good overall. The teachers' 'learning forum' encourages discussion and high quality thinking about teaching methods; the new performance management arrangements will strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of teaching.
The strategic use of resources	Good. There is good use of resources, including special funding and other grants. Longer term financial planning for the school's educational priorities is a particular strength.

Despite new building and refurbishment, expanding numbers of pupils put pressures on the accommodation. However, imaginative redecoration and re-carpeting schemes, with some exciting use of displays, enhance the learning environment, though some areas still need updating. There is a good match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum; learning resources are adequate, though the number of books in the library is very low. The school's applications of the principles of best value are excellent.

#### PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school's high expectations of work and behaviour</li> <li>• The school's approachability when problems occur</li> <li>• The good progress that pupils make</li> <li>• The leadership and management of the school</li> <li>• The pupils' enjoyment of school, and the school's care of them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aspects of homework policy, especially the uneven distribution of homework</li> <li>• The lack of lockers for pupils</li> <li>• Sometimes, a lack of communication from the school about progress or changes</li> <li>• Less emphasis on sport, especially in the provision of extra-curricular activities</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the parents' assessments of the school's strengths. Most parents were very supportive of the school in their responses and warmly acknowledge its success, and their satisfaction with the education provided. Some of the concerns about the uneven distribution of homework are justified, with a need for teachers to keep to the homework timetable. Inspectors recognise the difficulties for pupils caused by the lack of lockers, but appreciate the practical difficulties of providing them; they urge continuing discussion of this issue. Inspectors acknowledge occasions when communications with parents have not been good, but believe that the overall quality of information available to parents is very good; they find no evidence to suggest that the school's strong sporting traditions are to the detriment of the very wide range of other activities.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. The school has comprehensive information about the standards of pupils at the beginning of their time at the school, including Key Stage 2 test results and the cognitive ability tests (CATs) taken by pupils soon after entry. An analysis of all available information indicates that standards on entry are broadly average. There are some variations from year to year, with, for example, the present Year 8 containing more higher attaining pupils. The standards of boys and girls are similar, but, in all years, the verbal scores are lower than the non-verbal and quantitative, a situation confirmed in the most recent Key Stage 2 tests which show higher standards in mathematics and science than in English.
2. By the end of Key Stage 3, the overall average points score in the national tests has been above the national average in each of the last three years, with a trend below the national trend. Taking this period as a whole, results in science have been higher than mathematics, which, in turn, have been higher than English, mainly because of a drop in English results in 1999. Indeed, English results in 2000 were higher than the other two subjects, with the English results, based on the average points score, well above the national average. In all three years, the boys have performed significantly better than boys nationally, with girls performing somewhat better than girls nationally. In relation to the pupils' attainments on entry, the 2000 results show good achievement in terms of educational value added. Compared with schools with similar numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals, the school's performance in all the core subjects is well above average.
3. At the end of Key Stage 4, the overall average GCSE points score obtained by pupils has been well above the national average over the last three years, with a trend that is above the national average. Unlike Key Stage 3, the gap between the girls' results and the boys' results is similar to the national gap, though there have been variations between the years. In 2000, the boys' results are above the national average, girls' well above, and above overall for all pupils. Nonetheless, achievement is good, and, compared with similar schools, the pupils' performance at GCSE is well above average. There are some variations in the relative performance between subjects in 2000, with pupils performing particularly well in history, geography and drama, and somewhat less well in Spanish, mathematics, science and English.
4. During the inspection, pupils in Year 11 were taking examinations or were on study leave, and were, therefore, not seen directly in their lessons. Inspectors did, however, as far as was possible, make judgements about standards of work at the end of Key Stage 4 from coursework and other sources, and were able to judge standards in Year 10 both in lessons and in the pupils' work. A full range of work and lessons was seen in Key Stage 3.
5. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards of work seen in English during the inspection are well above average. This represents very good achievement. Pupils are confident speakers and listen attentively, and writing skills are well above average. The accuracy and expression of higher attaining pupils really engages a reader's interest. It reflects the strong emphasis the teachers place on writing to make an impact. Middle attaining pupils lack the range of vocabulary but paragraph consistently and have reliable standards of spelling and punctuation. Some pupils with special educational needs achieve average and above average standards. Others, along with lower attaining pupils, produce work that is overall below average. Their speaking skills are average. Their writing is below average because of errors in spelling and punctuation. However, most make good progress in writing long pieces and try to organise their work into paragraphs. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards are above average, and standards of speaking and listening of Year 10 pupils are well above average. In course work high attaining pupils reveal high reading standards, and the writing skills of the higher attaining pupils are very strong. Their work is technically flawless. They use language powerfully and persuasively as was shown by one girl's piece on the purpose and effectiveness of education. Middle attaining pupils make good

progress. Short superficial pieces at the start of Year 10 are replaced by lengthy, well organised pieces during Year 11. There are clear improvements in spelling and punctuation accuracy. The writing of lower attaining pupils, including some with special educational needs, does not have the same depth as other pupils and there are more errors in spelling and punctuation. However, overall, special educational needs pupils progress well, some achieving high standards at Key Stage 4.

6. In work seen during the inspection in mathematics, standards in both key stages are above average. At Key Stage 3, the pupils' uses and applications of mathematics are satisfactory. Pupils can extend a concept and articulate their thinking through set tasks. The pupils' numerical skills are good although an appreciation of the power of estimation prior to using the calculator is not common. The pupils' knowledge and understanding of the rules of algebra are good. High attaining pupils in Year 8 are able to solve questions on Pythagoras' Theorem well ahead of national expectations and construct graphs of linear functions. Lower attaining pupils in Year 8 can solve simple linear equations involving brackets and evaluate algebraic formulae. The pupils' knowledge and understanding of shape, space and measurement are also good, as is their knowledge of probability and handling data. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to that of other pupils, particularly when being supported by a learning support assistant. By the end of Key Stage 4, knowledge and application of numeracy skills by the highest attaining pupils are well above average. The pupils' level of achievement when working with shape, space and measures is very good, and their achievements when handling statistical information are good. Lowest attaining pupils use such words as 'fair', 'certain' and 'likely' to demonstrate an understanding of the probability of single events, reinforcing their knowledge of number by reducing answers to their simplest form; like others, they are achieving well.
7. In science, by the end of Key Stage 3, standards are above the national average. This shows good achievement; pupils arrive with average standards and make good progress throughout Key Stage 3. Most pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of topics in all four attainment targets. A group of high attainers in Year 9 had very good knowledge about the causes of diseases, and were able to use this knowledge to discuss intelligently ways of preventing disease. An average to below average Year 9 group was observed persevering with the task of wiring, correctly and safely, a three pin plug, demonstrating good practical skills. A Year 8 group was seen carrying out competently and safely an experiment to determine the difference between inspired and expired air. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards are above average, though by a smaller amount than at Key Stage 3. Achievement at Key Stage 4 is less good than at Key Stage 3, partly because pupils study science for a smaller proportion of the week than is usual for the double science course. However, the highest attaining pupils have a comprehensive understanding of the science curriculum; their knowledge of scientific terminology is particularly good. Evidence from coursework investigations shows that they can apply the knowledge obtained over the key stage. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress at both key stages, and are achieving well; they are well supported by teachers and learning assistants.
8. In ICT, by the end of Key Stage 3, overall standards in work seen during the inspection are average; standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are also average. The pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall. They are achieving well in their work in individual lessons but, over time, they have significant gaps in their understanding of important aspects of ICT. Particularly in Year 9, the achievements of some pupils are below what they could be because ICT is not taught separately, and it is taught irregularly in other subjects, often by non-specialists: hence, the pupils' experiences and achievements are inconsistent. Sometimes, pupils with special educational needs make unsatisfactory progress because tasks do not always match their needs closely enough. However, generally, because of good teaching and the very positive attitudes of pupils, the progress and achievements of most pupils in individual lessons are good, even though, over time, their achievements remain satisfactory.

9. In work seen in most other subjects, standards at both key stages are above average. Standards tend to get higher as pupils move up the school, and, at Key Stage 4, the overall standard of much of the work is well above average. This represents good achievement at both key stages, with most pupils progressively raising their standards from the overall average standards on entry. Standards in religious education at Key Stage 4 are judged well above average. Standards in music are, however, below average.
10. Standards in drama are above average at both key stages and pupils are achieving well. At Key Stage 3, pupils respond seriously and perform with a wider range of skills and with better control than is normally seen. At Key Stage 4, they are knowledgeable about drama skills and incorporate them very effectively into their pieces. Work in art at Key Stage 3 is of good quality and above average standards, though limited time means the quantity is small and pupils do not have time to experiment or try out new ideas or approaches. The work of the Year 9 art club is particularly impressive, including several large-scale wall displays in the style of Escher. There is no difference between the work of boys and girls and pupils achieve well irrespective of their individual starting points. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards have considerably improved from a low starting point, and are now above the national expectations for this age group, with some pupils producing work that is well above average, with some very exciting pieces of work showing striking originality. In design & technology, design folders are of an above average standard in the depth of content, amount of work they contain, the quality of the ideas and the evaluation of the work across a range of subject areas. In resistant materials, graphics and electronics, pupils have innovative ideas that they are able to construct competently. They adapt their work as it progresses when necessary. Here design folders do not fully reflect the quality of the practical work. In food, design folders are of a well above average standard. Research is full and higher attaining pupils especially show mature understanding of the work they are doing and high levels of presentation skills.
11. Above average standards are also seen in geography. By the end of Key Stage 3, all except the lowest attaining pupils show a good understanding of environmental issues and start to understand different ways in which areas under threat could be conserved; the moral issues of conservation and sustainability are successfully developed. Pupils continue to achieve well at Key Stage 4, building on their earlier successes. All pupils in history at Key Stage 3 are developing a basic understanding of historical events and their factual knowledge is often good, with higher attaining pupils able to offer a clear analysis of the events studied. For example, Year 9 pupils have a good understanding of why the British government needed to enlist so many troops in 1914, and can also analyse the messages contained in contemporary source material. All pupils are developing a basic understanding of historical events and their factual knowledge is often good. Higher attaining pupils can develop their analysis and make links to socio-economic factors, such as unemployment. Standards in Key Stage 4 history are above, and frequently, well above average. All pupils are gaining a good working knowledge of history and many are able both to speak and write fluently about historical events. Their analytical skills of many pupils are well developed, and they can explain what happened and why. Achievement in history is good.
12. In modern foreign languages, standards of work seen during the inspection are above national average levels at the end of Key Stage 3 in French. In Spanish and German, where pupils are in only their second year of learning the language, they are accelerating towards the standards expected of first language learners because both teaching and learning are good. Pupils working towards the GCSE are above average. In both key stages, there is good achievement from all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, resulting from the high quality of teaching and the pupils' good attitudes to language learning. Standards in music at Key Stage 3 are below the national average; the pupils' achievements are, therefore, unsatisfactory because they come in with average standards and end up at the end of Key Stage 3 with below average standards. Pupils rarely sing, although some perform simple melodies on electronic keyboards with accuracy. Pupils who play band and orchestral instruments make good progress in their instrumental lessons and rehearsals, but do not always make sufficient progress in their class lessons, because they are expected to do what other pupils are doing rather than tackling more ambitious music. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards are slightly below what is expected for this age group, though most play instruments to a fairly advanced standard. The above average

standards reached by pupils in physical education at the end of Key Stage 3 represent good achievement by most pupils compared with their standard on entry. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, show competence in a range of activities such as athletics, tennis, netball, and football. Good achievement is continued in Key Stage 4, and standards are enhanced for many pupils through their involvement in extra curricular clubs, school teams and representative honours. For example, during the present school year, 35 boys and girls have represented the county at different sports, and the school has won about 30 county championships and tournaments across all sports in the last five years.

13. When pupils come into the school, their knowledge and understanding of religious issues is mixed; they achieve well at Key Stage 3, when measured against the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus and the overall levels of their prior attainment. Higher attaining pupils develop a quite sophisticated understanding of religious and cultural matters. Most are working at levels a little above those described in the Agreed Syllabus. With overall standards well above average, the pupils' achievements during Key Stage 4 are good, and often very good. Higher and middle attaining pupils write detailed, extended pieces, exploring their own response to ethical and moral issues. The work-related courses at Key Stage 4 concentrate on developing life skills. The outcomes in terms of boosting confidence, improving attendance, improving behaviour and improving employability are all good. In personal, social & health education, at both key stages, all pupils are achieving very well; they are very successfully developing their understanding of, and sensitivity to, many important and often controversial aspects of modern life and personal relationships.
14. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their standards on entry to the school. The school has a tradition of successfully entering more pupils for national tests at the end of Year 9 and GCSE in Year 11 than is the case in most schools. This reflects the high expectations teachers make of all pupils. In 2000 only a very small number did not achieve a pass in GCSE English and mathematics. Lesson observations and scrutiny of the pupils' work confirm that special needs pupils progress as well as other pupils. Most also make good progress on improving their reading and spelling because of well focused teaching. However, the weakest readers do not progress as well because they do not have enough lessons directed to their needs in suitably sized groups.

#### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

15. Most pupils have very good attitudes to school and their work; this was clearly reflected in interviews with pupils in which they expressed real enthusiasm for their school and said they would recommend it to friends. They showed a real sense of pride in being members of Mounts Bay School. They spoke warmly of the support they receive from teachers and fellow pupils. They think staff listen to them and their concerns. They believe that the school values their happiness and safety, and they had few complaints; almost all those interviewed felt that they work hard, and they welcomed the wide range of clubs, activities and visits. The overwhelming majority of pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to their work. The foundation on which these are built is undoubtedly the very good relationships, which pervade the life of the school, not only between the pupils and adults, but also amongst the pupils themselves. The strength of pupil teacher relationships is one important aspect of the many good lessons seen during the inspection; this creates a positive learning environment and contributes substantially to the progress pupils make.
16. The very good personal development of the pupils is illustrated by the way they involve themselves with the many opportunities offered by the school, particularly extra-curricular activities. In lessons, pupils are usually well prepared and organised, and work co-operatively together and show respect towards their teachers. For example, in a very good personal, social and health education lesson with a class of low attaining boys, dealing with contraception, the excellent classroom atmosphere enabled a difficult and sensitive topic to be discussed openly, seriously and without embarrassment, and took the pupils' learning and understanding forward quickly.

17. Pupils with special educational needs display very good attitudes to their work. In lessons, they talk with knowledge and enthusiasm about their work. In a Year 10 science lesson, for example, pupils explained clearly and politely their understanding of the tasks. The very good attitudes observed in mathematics are typical of what inspectors saw during the inspection. The pupils value the school's attempts to provide courses that suit their aptitudes and needs. Year 9 pupils spoke with a refreshing enthusiasm about their experiences on the Trailblazer course. The school aims to ensure the achievements of pupils with special educational needs are recognized through its reward procedures, although separate monitoring of this would help the school evaluate its effectiveness more accurately.
18. The pupils move around the school in a controlled way; they hold doors open for others and queue sensibly outside classrooms and in the busy canteen. All pupils show respect for the school buildings and there is very little litter around the site. They clearly appreciate being in a place where the quality of the environment, including the state of decoration in corridors, is high. Their standards in wearing school uniform are very high. There is a wide range of appropriate rewards and sanctions that pupils understand and feel to be fair. All pupils appreciate that awards are given for a range of strengths, not just academic ability. The introduction of 'colours' for success in a variety of aspects of school life, and not just sport, is a welcome innovation.
19. The rates of fixed period exclusions are relatively high. However, there have been no permanent exclusions for several years. The school works exhaustively to support the pupils before exclusion, but uses the sanction of both internal and external short term exclusion as part of its disciplinary structures. Given the care taken with pupils before exclusion, the present figures are reasonable. Certainly, the very good behaviour in and around the school, the absence of permanent exclusions, and the very well ordered, but friendly, atmosphere show that present policies are very effective, and are supportive of the pupils.
20. There are opportunities provided for the pupils to take responsibility for the life of the school. Year 11 pupils act as prefects, there are also sports representatives and captains, librarians and information communication technology representatives throughout the school. The school council is made up of tutor group representatives and is popular with the pupils as a way of being involved in school decision making. Many pupils extend their interests and skills in sport and other areas through the wide range of extra-curricular activities offered. A large number of pupils in Key Stage 4 complete the junior sports leaders' award, which gives them very good opportunities to develop their personal skills, and to introduce them to coaching and teaching in the primary schools. Many pupils complete homework successfully and they are encouraged to develop their independent learning skills through the use of the library, which is open after normal school hours to meet the needs of those for whom studying at home is problematic.
21. Attendance last year was in line with national averages and it is satisfactory. During the week before the inspection the rate of attendance was 91 per cent, similar to published figures. Registers are taken very promptly at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions and at the start of every lesson. The satisfactory rate of attendance is having a positive impact on standards.

#### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

22. The quality of teaching is better than that seen at the last inspection. Teaching is judged good overall, but the consistently high quality of most of the teaching, with much that is very good or excellent, is one of the strengths of the school. Teaching is satisfactory or better in over 97 per cent of lessons observed; it is very good or better in over 40 per cent of lessons, with 12 per cent, across a range of subjects, that is excellent. These proportions are higher than that found nationally. Teaching is unsatisfactory in less than three per cent of lessons. Teaching is judged very good in English and good in mathematics and science. It is also judged very good in art, drama, history, personal, social & moral education, and religious education. It is good in all other subjects, except music, where it is unsatisfactory. There is a very close link between the quality of teaching and the quality of learning, with the high quality of learning also reflecting the very positive attitudes of pupils in most lessons.

23. The teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach is a real strength in nearly all lessons. Their confidence in their subject results in learning that promotes good understanding. Similarly, their commitment to their subject leads to good learning. In many modern foreign languages lessons, for example, the foreign language is used throughout; in one excellent Spanish lesson in Year 9, the teacher's very fluent Spanish and excellent accent provided pupils with a very good role model, and there was an emphasis on correct pronunciation throughout the lesson. The whole lesson inspired pupils to want to extend their vocabulary, practise their skills, and to use Spanish as the normal means of communication, speaking it spontaneously. The teachers' planning is another strength of the best lessons. As a result, they have high expectations of the pupils, who, in turn, know what is expected of them and rise to the challenges presented. A Year 10 art lesson was highly successful because the teacher gave very clear explanations, demonstrated techniques, and used some excellent work from Year 11 to motivate pupils to reach similarly high standards; he referred to work on display around the school, which celebrated the pupils' efforts and achievements, and underpinned the high expectations if work is to be displayed. Pupils were treated as mature people, and the whole atmosphere of the class encouraged serious learning in a supportive but challenging way.
24. Most teachers use a variety of suitable teaching and learning methods to ensure that pupils maintain interest, apply themselves well and that the pace of the lesson is good. An outstanding religious education lesson combined a fine variety of methods with enthusiasm, energy and excellent relationships with pupils. The lesson was well broken up into units including demonstrating Muslim artefacts, speaking with great authority in Arabic, high quality questioning which took account of different abilities in the class, and plenty of different activities to involve all pupils, all of them very crisply timed to keep everyone working and on their toes. All of this led to great interest and a stimulating working environment, and hence to excellent progress and achievement. Work in the lesson led on to a research homework that gave good opportunities for very able pupils to take their learning further forward. This good practice is not found very frequently, and, much of the homework set in the school tends to be further work in the same area, rather than extending learning. Whilst the use of homework is sound and plenty is generally set, not all teachers exploit the potential of homework to provide different opportunities for different groups or individuals.
25. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is sound. Very good teaching in English means that the pupils' reading and writing skills develop well, but a shortcoming is the relative lack of a consistent approach to developing effective study and research skills in subjects. However, in some subjects, for example geography, design & technology, there is an emphasis on developing key vocabulary relevant to the subject; but this does not happen sufficiently in mathematics or ICT. Overall, the teaching of literacy across the curriculum is inconsistent and is an area for further development within the Cornwall Literacy Strategy. Many subjects make good use of numeracy in their teaching, but a whole school thrust to further develop the coherent teaching of numeracy skills is waiting for the Cornwall Mathematics Strategy for secondary schools; the school development plan includes references to developing whole school approaches to numeracy.
26. The teachers' management of pupils is very good, and this contributes significantly to their learning, enabling them to concentrate and work productively during lessons. It is rare for learning to be hindered because teachers have discipline problems. Occasionally, however, if the lesson is led too much by the teacher, it inhibits the pupils' independent learning, and, therefore, overall learning is less effective. Similarly, if there is an over-emphasis on a few activities, and particularly if these mean long periods spent listening or writing, many pupils become bored and their learning suffers.
27. The quality of day to day marking is generally good, though there are inconsistencies between and within subjects. Whilst many teachers mark work very thoroughly with good indications of how pupils can improve their standards, the pupils' understanding of their attainments and what they need to do to get better is variable. Similarly, the use of assessments in all subjects does not always match that of the best, and not all subjects make effective use of assessments to help



pupils achieve more successfully. For example, teachers do not use National Curriculum levels in modern foreign languages to inform pupils of their attainment or to challenge them to move on to the next level. In mathematics, procedures for the assessment of pupils are satisfactory but the quality and use of ongoing assessment is unsatisfactory. Pupils are unclear about marking criteria and how they can progress in terms of raising their level of attainment, and National Curriculum level descriptors are not used to monitor the pupils' progress nor to identify and respond to pupils' strengths and weaknesses. However, in food and textiles subjects, teachers involve pupils in setting their own targets; because they know what they need to do to get better, they concentrate on these targets, learning rapidly and achieving well. In art, the teacher tells pupils how to improve what they are doing and provides written assessments based on the levels in the National Curriculum. As a result, pupils are clear about whether they are meeting the expectations for their particular age. This helps them to have a good idea of their own progress and provides encouragement for them to aspire to higher standards.

28. In subjects across the curriculum, the teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Recent developments in communications have sharpened the subject teachers' knowledge and understanding of the type and range of needs they encounter. There are examples of teachers using knowledge about the pupils' learning needs to help them make good progress. A Year 8 science teacher used a range of mnemonics to help a pupil effectively understand the concepts of scientific terms in a study of the solar system. Well qualified learning support assistants make highly effective contributions to the pupils' progress. In a Year 7 French lesson, skilled support assistants ensured three pupils with statements of special education needs made very good progress because of the quality of their discipline, explanations and encouragement. They also helped other pupils to progress. Well focused support helped some Year 8 pupils with special educational needs to record their autobiographies successfully using software packages. A daily short lesson at the start of each afternoon's school, delivered by the support assistants, results in good progress in reading and writing. However, a small number of very low attaining pupils do not have enough small group teaching and their progress is not as good. The use of specialist learning support staff to teach English and mathematics has a positive impact on progress. A Year 7 lower set has written pieces far more substantial than pupils of their prior attainments normally do.

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

29. The quality of the curriculum offered to pupils is good, with some very good features. The school provides a varied and wide range of learning opportunities with some notable innovations to meet individual needs.
30. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is good. Most subjects offer a broad, balanced and relevant provision and make an effective contribution to the pupils' learning. Drama and art, for example, are planned in an exciting and creative way. The teaching of Shakespearean texts, as well as those of Blake, Brontë, and Bradbury, provide pupils with challenge and enriching experiences, which have a positive impact upon standards. The geography curriculum, like many subjects, provides pupils with high quality opportunities to learn more about the world. However, the provision of ICT does not yet meet statutory requirements; in Year 9 no time is given for separate ICT lessons, and, as yet, arrangements to ensure that all requirements are taught within other subjects are not secure. As a result, the experiences of pupils are very varied, and many do not receive their full entitlement, despite the good quality of some of the teaching. Furthermore, there is no analysis of the ICT curriculum to check where and what ICT skills are taught and learned, and this absence hinders the improvement of standards overall. There are weaknesses in the music curriculum; though it provides rich and varied opportunities for instrumental teaching and extra-curricular activities, it does not provide sufficient challenge for more talented pupils within lessons, and the pupils' experiences in some lessons are too narrow. The amount of time allocated to some subjects, including music and art, is below recommended times and national averages; there is evidence that, with more time, standards would be higher in these subjects.
31. The range and quality of the Key Stage 4 curriculum is good, and there are some particular strengths. In addition to studying the core subjects, pupils select from a wide range of other

subjects so that their overall programme is varied and broad; other subjects include, for example, a popular and successful media studies course. The physical education curriculum affords pupils the chance to take the subject at GCSE as well as junior sports leader courses. The religious education course meets the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus, and is a well-planned and valuable course. However, the allocation of time for some options is less than others, and the amount of time given to mathematics and science at Key Stage 4 is less than is found at most schools. There is some evidence that a lack of time is adversely affecting standards in some subjects. However, this is not the case in all subjects which have a lower than average allocation, and, overall, standards in the school are above average and the overall curriculum has very many strengths. Nonetheless, the distribution of time between subjects is an area for review by the school. The provision made for vocational education is good and is very good for work-related learning. In developing work-related learning, the school has been innovative and has succeeded in developing a most worthwhile package of courses. Vocational education is presently limited to a GNVQ intermediate course in information technology that is offered in Year 10. There are also firm intentions to extend this provision for the next academic year when a GNVQ course in manufacturing will also be offered. The planning for both courses is good and teachers have developed a range of very good modules for the information technology course, all of which pupils can use through the school's computer network.

32. The school is particularly effective in meeting the different needs of its pupils when they require more personal guidance and support. As well as academic courses, the school is a leader nationally in providing an alternative curriculum for those pupils for whom a full GCSE programme may be inappropriate. This programme, run in close conjunction with the Connexions Service, is highly effective in meeting their individual needs. It commences in Year 9, with additional courses available in Years 10 and 11. By working in association with the local Education Business Partnership, pupils have the option of extending their studies into Year 12 by enrolling at a local further education college. Teachers and personal advisors concentrate on developing the pupils' life skills and giving them extended opportunities to undertake work experience. The outcomes in terms of boosting confidence, improving attendance, improving behaviour and improving employability are all significant. Very good assessment procedures have also been developed so that course graduates can present potential employers with an informative portfolio of achievements.
33. There has been significant improvement in the overall provision for pupils with special educational needs since the last inspection, and it is now good. The school has successfully completed the process of moving from segregation to integration. As described above, parts of the Year 9 and Key Stage 4 curriculum have been tailored to address the preferred learning styles and aptitudes of some pupils, including many with special educational needs, through its vocational and work related courses, and effective liaison with outside agencies and institutions provides good progression into courses and accreditation after the pupils leave school. Individual education plans identify targets, though they tend to be vague and not consistently measurable. All teachers need to be more aware of the targets for pupils and how they can be pursued in their subjects. Curriculum materials are well matched to pupils on a set by set basis, but there was little evidence of teachers matching materials to suit the range of attainment and aptitudes within sets, and this is a development point. Learning support assistants are highly effective in ensuring pupils know and understand what they are doing. Although there is some well focused withdrawal work, not enough time is allocated to the needs of the weakest readers.
34. Whilst gifted and talented pupils have opportunities to develop their skills, because they are not identified as such, provision for them is less assured. In particular, opportunities for challenging extension homework tasks for individual pupils are not regularly provided. The strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are satisfactory, but they have not yet been monitored to determine how effective they are.
35. The curriculum is enhanced by a very effective, well-structured programme of personal, social and health education. This is taught in both key stages by a team of teachers with good specialist knowledge or an expressed interest in the subject. The programme is conducted through lessons

which are at times inspirational. It covers and often surpasses national expectations on raising awareness about sex education and drug misuse.

36. From Year 9, pupils have access to a very good programme of careers education. All pupils undertake useful work experience weeks in Key Stage 4. The school has good links with the college of further education and the college of higher education. This impacts beneficially on the overall quality of the curriculum as well as on standards achieved in classes. Links with the school's fifteen partner primary schools are effective and Year 6 pupils have some good opportunities to visit Mounts Bay to see classes, as well as to attend dramatic and musical performances; a number of Saturday morning activities is a notable feature of the programme.
37. The school has been awarded the Schools Curriculum Award and the Sports Mark Award regularly in recent years, particularly for its involvement of the local community. The contribution of the West Cornwall community to the school's curriculum is undoubtedly a significant strength of provision. The school's very good links with community organisations and local and national businesses have enriched opportunities to raise standards in design and technology, art, and English. The design and technology curriculum, for example, includes projects supported by national supermarket chains as well as the Prince of Wales' Youth Trust. Pupils have been involved in highly successful projects such as: the production of an attractive and well designed booklet of recipes entitled "*Canapés from Cornwall*" in association with a celebrity chef and a local hotel; the design of the Cornish County crest printed on pasties; and the design and baking of special breads in conjunction with a national retailer. These have achieved royal and national acclaim. Lessons in English and art are similarly enlivened by the visits of local artists, sculptors and writers. Parents have given informative talks to pupils about subjects such as mineralogy and helped with studies in motor vehicle maintenance. Pupils have designed swimwear and headgear in association with a local firm. The school holds a variety of after school events, which have included successful drama productions and events staged at St. Michael's Mount. In addition, pupils in each year group choose their own charity to raise funds for each year. All these examples, and many more, indicate the breadth and richness of the school's links with the community in its curriculum provision.
38. Pupils participate regularly in a broad range of extra-curricular activities. A few parents expressed concern that these were limited to sport but inspectors found no evidence to support that view. 25 per cent of pupils take part in a wide range of sporting activities but the school's very good extra-curricular programme does not stop there. The diversity of these activities, for example in computer clubs, French, Italian and art classes, enriches the opportunities to learn, as well as bringing variety to the pupils' social and cultural experiences. The school organises a good range of educational visits to places both near and far, providing particularly valuable experiences for pupils living in a relatively remote part of the country. In English, pupils have been involved in National Poetry Day, as well as travelling to see the Royal Shakespeare Company's performances at Stratford. The art department has arranged visits to the Tate Gallery, the Newlyn Art Gallery and others; Year 10 pupils have played a successful part in projects run in the Newlyn Gallery. The modern languages department has arranged exchange visits with pupils from other countries in Europe. In music, pupils are given good opportunities to perform in the wind band, the choir, and pop, classical and instrumental groups and have benefited from the skills, knowledge and experience in performance of the head of department. Year 11 pupils have made a visit to Ypres in France to consolidate their learning about the Great War. Pupils and teachers make educational visits to a wide range of places around the world increasingly via the school's fast links to the Internet. These are advantageous in that they are relatively inexpensive, fast, relevant and timely. The Year 7 residential experience is a further indication of the very wide range of opportunities open to pupils at the school.

### ***Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development***

39. The school provides good opportunities overall for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, and indeed there are pockets of particularly good practice in some subject areas.

Within this aspect of the school's life there are, however, areas where pupils get fewer opportunities to extend their personal development. Although there are clear policy statements, there is no overall whole-school planning, which means that opportunities to promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are not planned consistently across the curriculum. Spiritual education and multi-cultural themes, in particular, are areas for further development.

40. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory in general. It is particularly effectively promoted through religious education and history. In history, for example, Year 9 pupils are involved in an Internet search of the Commonwealth War Grave Commission site, and they find details of the graves of local soldiers who died in the First World War. This enables pupils to reflect quite profoundly on issues of mortality. In a religious education lesson seen during the inspection, Year 10 pupils who were learning about the hospice movement were asked to consider what a dying person might like to talk about. This allowed pupils to explore their own feelings about death. Other subjects, however, miss opportunities to encourage spiritual reflection and there is no concerted attempt to ensure that spiritual development takes place in all curriculum areas. Because of the use of the main hall for examinations, the regular pattern of assemblies and collective worship did not take place during the inspection, so no observations of this part of the school's normal activities were possible. A scrutiny of the record book of main assemblies taken by the headteacher and his deputy shows that most cover moral and religious themes of a broadly Christian nature, and provide opportunities for celebration and commemoration that encourage the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, pupils do not attend such occasions daily, and so the school does not fulfil the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. It states that limitations of space are the reasons why the requirement is not met.
41. Provision for the pupils' moral development is very good. Moral education is very well promoted through a variety of subjects, the personal, social & moral education programme and in other aspects of school life. In English, for example, pupils consider moral issues through literature, such as William Golding's 'Lord of the Flies' or 'Macbeth', and in mathematics, the principles that distinguish right from wrong are consistently reinforced. Many important moral issues are covered in geography, particularly on a wide range of environmental issues such as deforestation and the use of renewable and non-renewable fuels. There is a behaviour code that stresses the importance of the whole school community and the importance of valuing the individual. Teachers and other adults are very good role models, and the school is a strong moral community, based on the principles of right and wrong, and fair play.
42. Provision for social development is also very good. Opportunities arise in many areas of the curriculum and the provision is very effective. Many teachers include in their lesson planning chances for pupils to work together collaboratively. Some excellent work was seen in drama, for example, where pupils worked in groups sensibly and maturely. There is good partner and small group work in physical education and most subjects. The school council and the prefect system give pupils valuable experiences to develop self-confidence and responsibility, and participate in positive citizenship. The wide variety of sporting opportunities and extra-curricular activities available to pupils also promotes their very good social development, as do school visits and activities weeks. The attractive grounds, including specific areas where pupils can meet socially, encourage social interaction and the pupils' social development.
43. Provision for cultural development is good, though more mixed. English and drama make strong contributions to the pupils' cultural education. In art, pupils explore cultural influences from all around the world including European, Chinese and aboriginal traditions; similarly in geography, examples come from a wide range of cultural traditions from Brazil to Italy. However, there are other areas of the curriculum where opportunities are missed to promote cultural development as active planning to do so does not take place. Pupils have good opportunities to find out about aspects of our own cultural heritage, including Cornish culture, for example through visits to theatres and art galleries; the developing links with local art galleries are most commendable. But other cultural traditions within Britain are less well represented. Relatively little is done that enables pupils to study the wider aspects of life in a multi-cultural society and the multi-cultural nature of Britain today.

## HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

44. The school's procedures to ensure the pupils' welfare, health and safety are very good, as reported at the last inspection. This reflects a school aim that 'each learner should know that all learners are valued equally by the school'. During the inspection, staff and pupils showed very good health and safety awareness. Risk assessments are undertaken as a routine matter of school life; regular health and safety audits are carried out, with conclusions and recommendations being acted upon and reported to the governing body. The school has a good provision of qualified first-aid staff and very good arrangements are in place for the effective management and reporting of any injuries occurring to pupils during the school day. Good practice exists for the correct storage and recording of medicines brought into school by pupils and very good communication links ensure parents are kept informed and made aware of aspects of their child's health condition.
45. The school has a very good pastoral system based on year teams. Tutors, heads of year and a senior teacher have a commendable knowledge about the pupils' individual circumstances and the challenges they face which may affect their learning. Procedures for monitoring personal development are very good; these include the pupils' care and support records, which are well used by teachers to record relevant information. Child protection procedures are very good. Two very experienced heads of year are the named responsible persons. They have received appropriate training for this role, which is regularly updated; they also provides training for staff. There are sound procedures for monitoring attendance.
46. The procedures for monitoring and promoting positive behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are excellent. An effective system of rewards and sanctions is in place, which is applied consistently throughout the school, and pupils and parents are very clear that pupils know what is expected of them. Pupils are in agreement that bullying is not an issue in the school, and they are confident that any bullying is tackled sensitively and firmly by teachers and discussed in personal, social and health education lessons. They are also clear that racism and sexism are not issues in the school. The school's very good programme for personal, social and health education makes a very significant contribution to the overall provision for ensuring the pupils' welfare. Guidance on careers, health, sex and drugs education are all included.
47. Procedures for pupils with special educational needs are very good. Code of Practice requirements are followed. The learning support department maintains well documented records. Detailed information is kept about each pupil's progress in reading and spelling. However, there is no consistent overview of each year's progress and achievements with respect to progress in reading and spelling, achievements in public tests and examinations and involvement in school activities. Records of meetings and discussions are also thoroughly maintained. The department liaises well with outside agencies. Its work is supported well by the educational psychologist, agencies for the hearing and visually impaired, and medical and welfare agencies. There are effective links with feeder primary schools. The head of Year 7 and the special educational needs coordinator are well informed about pupils who will enter the school and attend relevant meetings for Year 6 pupils. On arrival, a well devised range of screening assessments identifies pupils with special educational needs and leads to appropriate subsequent action.
48. The school promotes an ethos of mutual respect and tolerance. It is committed to a policy of inclusion and this allows some pupils to remain in school despite significant behavioural problems. That the teachers and fellow pupils cope well with very little disruption is a testimony to their skills and fortitude. Ninety-eight per cent of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire are happy that the school is encouraging their children to become mature and responsible young people.
49. Procedures for monitoring and assessing pupils' progress are good overall. Various mechanisms are used at a whole school level for collecting assessment data. The school tests all pupils on entry to establish standards they have reached, and this information informs the school's

monitoring arrangements. Various other forms of internal assessment are undertaken annually in Years 7 to 10 and this information is conveyed to parents by means of written reports and consultation evenings. The mid year assessments are particularly useful in identifying pupils who are achieving below their potential; these pupils are closely monitored. Once pupils commence their GCSE courses in Year 10, they are issued with target grades and their actual performance in relation to their target grade is monitored. Where pupils are achieving grades that are below their targets, a system of pupil mentoring by staff has been introduced. This scheme is helpful in boosting the self-esteem of the identified pupils and has contributed to improved examination results. Assessment procedures are not utilised to provide mentoring to enable more talented pupils to aspire to even better results. In all years, the school compiles detailed assessment data that is issued to teaching departments.

50. The use of assessment data to guide planning is satisfactory. Detailed assessment information is available to subject areas, but its use is not of a consistently high quality. It is good in art, design & technology, English and history. In these departments, assessment data is well used to track the pupils' progress, and pupils are given relevant information about the standards they are achieving and how they might further improve their work. The marking of work in these subjects is also frequently thorough and helpful. In some other subjects, such as ICT, mathematics and music, assessment data is used less rigorously. In ICT, no formal assessment procedure exists in years 7,8 and 9, while in mathematics assessment procedures are not properly monitored and there is no centralised system of recording outcomes. Assessment procedures in music are imprecise; there is a lack of target setting and assessment procedures do not adequately identify what pupils should do to improve. Where these weaknesses occur, the potential of assessment information as a tool for improvement is underused.
51. The previous inspection report identified assessment as a key issue for action. Though the situation has improved and comprehensive mechanisms for recording and analysing assessment data now exist, the use of data is still not embedded at subject level with sufficient consistency. All subjects do not use assessment data effectively to help pupils to be more successful in their studies. A number of parents also believe that information available to the school is not adequately reported to them when, for example, their child's teaching group is changed.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

52. There is a very good partnership with parents, which is a strength in supporting the pupils' successful learning. Although there was a relatively low response to both the pre-inspection questionnaire and to the parents' meeting, overall, the vast majority of parents and carers expressed very positive views of the school. Nearly all agree that their children are working hard and making progress, and said that they feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems. They are particularly supportive of the school's high expectations of work and behaviour, their children's enjoyment of school, the care they receive, and the leadership and management of the school.
53. A minority of parents does not feel they are well informed about how their children are getting on, particularly if they are moved from one set to another. Whilst acknowledging that there may be shortcomings on occasions, the inspectors believe that the overall quality of information provided to parents is very good. Mid year assessment meetings between parents and teachers are well attended and help to keep parents aware of the progress their children are making, as well as identifying those areas that need further development. The school's pupil mentor initiative in Year 11 provides for the quality involvement of parents in working alongside teachers to help raise their child's attainment in subjects in which they are having difficulties. End-of-year progress reports are written in plain and easy to read language and provide good levels of detail about what pupils have experienced and achieved in each subject. However, some teachers do not always identify or include clear learning targets for the future. Generally, very good use is made of the pupil planner as a regular means of communication between teachers and parents. While a few parents feel the planners are not always regularly looked at by some teachers, most parents value the planner as a regular link with the form tutors and heads of year on their child's progress. Sixteen

per cent of parents who returned questionnaires said that their children do not get the right amount of work to do at home, though, at the meeting, none thought that too little was set. Some concerns about the uneven distribution of homework are justified, and the concerns need to be addressed. However, most pupils do use their planners to record their homework and form tutors monitor the planners regularly.

54. The learning support department maintains frequent and generally good contact with parents about the progress of children with special educational needs. Parents attend annual review meetings. Additional provision such as 'twilight teaching' is arranged in consultation with parents as is any other withdrawal provision.
55. There is good information provided for parents through good quality newsletters and the prospectus. However, the governors' annual report to parents does not contain a statement on how the governors monitor progress through the stages of the special educational needs code of practice. Meetings are held for the parents of children transferring from primary schools and on GCSE coursework for the parents of Year 10 students. There are some very positive opportunities for parents to be directly involved with school activities. Twelve regular parent helpers provide valuable support in the library and the some technology classrooms. A number of parents give freely of their time on a more ad-hoc basis providing support on out-of-school visits and in the contribution of their sporting expertise to help coach and develop the pupils' sporting skills. A great number of parents willingly involve themselves in the annual "activities week" programme organised by the school working alongside and supporting pupils in each year group, adding significantly to the quality of the pupils' experiences. The school also benefits from many parents and friends of the school who ably support and raise money for the school through the regular events organised by the small group of parents actively involved in the parent teacher association. Most notably is the annual fund raising event involving the staffing of St Michael's Mount for a day by volunteer parents and school staff.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

56. The previous report commented extensively on the fundamental changes in the management, curriculum and financial stability that were beginning to take place following the then recent appointment of the present headteacher. It noted that he was working extremely hard to provide the basis for a more systematic style of management and to establish a clear educational direction for the school. Five years later, the success of the school can be measured by many criteria, demonstrating the very good leadership and management shown by the headteacher. Following a period of falling rolls and a precarious financial position, which, amongst other measures, required the loss of two deputy headteachers, the school has strong finances for its future development, rising numbers, some new and refurbished buildings, well above average results compared with similar schools, well behaved pupils who are proud of their school, and numerous awards for excellence and good practice; it enjoys the confidence of parents and the community, and has been over-subscribed for the last three years. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good, but the school is not resting on its laurels. For example, the teachers' 'learning forum' is a notable innovation, initiated by the headteacher, that puts high quality thinking about teaching and learning at the heart of what it is doing, encouraging teachers in their fundamental role of skilled classroom practitioners. It is no coincidence that the overall quality of teaching in the school is high.
57. The leadership and management, then, of the headteacher are very good. Awards, such as Investors in Careers, Investors in People, School Curriculum Award, Investors in Education Business Partnership, and the Department for Education's Schools Achievement Award, are indicators of the quality of the school's leadership. The school's practice is underpinned by a sound philosophy and intellectual rigour, and it has had the confidence to welcome external scrutiny from management consultants. Another feature of the leadership and management has been the focusing of roles on the individual strengths of the senior managers. Those whose major strengths lie in administration and day-to-day management have tended to concentrate their main work in these areas. Whilst this is a good use of individual talents, the small size of the senior management team means that there are constraints on the resources available for developing

further the monitoring and evaluating of the school's work, especially teaching. As the school grows in size, this constraint becomes greater. An excellent feature of the learning forum is the opportunity it gives to teachers at all levels to share and discuss good practice; however, the fine tuning to teaching methods, that will improve the pupils' learning still further, also requires a more systematic approach to monitoring and evaluation. The new performance management policy does provide for this, but, to be sustained in the long term, will require much investment in time and expertise. There is also, at present, scope for more input into forward thinking and review of current practice in other areas of the school's work in order to build from the already strong position; spiritual and cultural development, literacy and numeracy strategies, balance within the curriculum, the use of assessment data, future strategies for ICT, and homework strategies and policies are examples of areas that would benefit from additional scrutiny. To do this, the school may wish to consider ways of strengthening aspects of its leadership and management, particularly at senior level.

58. Development planning follows a coherent pattern; there is an annual review process, and priorities for development are clearly established, initially at headteacher and governor level. The recent development plan is commendably brief, with one clear aim in each of the areas of curriculum, pastoral, community, buildings, and staff development; all are linked with current priorities. The new performance policy and arrangements are appropriate, subject to the proviso mentioned above. Staff development policies are sensibly an important part of the performance management arrangements.
59. There are many very good middle managers, including leaders of art, geography, history, modern foreign languages, religious education and science. Nearly all subject leaders provide good, effective and professional leadership, and are committed to raising standards. The school is also well served by its pastoral leaders, with heads of year working effectively together under a senior teacher. The caring nature of the school is one of its strengths, and this is much valued by pupils and parents. As at senior management level, one of the somewhat weaker areas is the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and of the pupils' performance. In many subject areas, there is a need for greater clarity and consistency in implementing policies, especially in target setting and monitoring. Often, there is insufficient time at present for teaching to be observed in a systematic way that would enable good practice to be shared more effectively. The management and organization of special educational needs are good, and the extensive training undertaken by learning support assistants a particular strength; this has resulted in a well qualified and highly effective team of assistants. The recently introduced 'child awareness' document has had a positive impact on the subject teachers' knowledge and awareness of the pupils and the nature of their needs; however, the promotion and evaluation of suitable teaching methods across the curriculum are underdeveloped.
60. The school is well served by its governing body. Members bring a varied range of experience and expertise, including finance, and have a strong sense of the school's role in the community. They are good at fulfilling their role as critical friends and can take a sufficiently independent view when necessary. Governors have a very good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and of its development needs. An experienced governor has recently taken on the responsibility for special educational needs; her experience and knowledge are already having a positive impact on procedures, especially on communications.

#### ***Staffing, accommodation and learning resources***

61. The school has an experienced and well-qualified group of teachers, many of whom have taught at the school for many years. This experience and stability ensure that systems and expectations are clearly understood by the pupils, and contribute to the good learning environment. This positive environment is also very supportive to new teachers joining the school, enabling them to quickly make a full contribution to maintaining and enhancing standards. At the time of the inspection, there are some long-term absences and subject leaders and other teachers are offering good support to the replacement teachers, although they are not all subject specialists; as a result, standards have not been seriously affected. Teachers have a heavier than average teaching timetable, and teach some very large groups, but there is little evidence of any adverse



impact on standards. However, the low allocation of administration time to some teachers with posts of responsibility, especially the new key stage curriculum co-ordinators, does inhibit the pace of development. The school makes excellent use of externally funded staff to work some older pupils, who have found difficulties with their work, and they are having a clear impact on improved attitudes. Overall, there is a good match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum.

62. Expanding numbers are putting increasing pressures on the accommodation; the current building programme will alleviate these pressures to some extent, particularly for history, and the refurbished accommodation for food and textiles subjects will soon be fully commissioned and provide very attractive accommodation to enhance learning. Recent refurbishment of art and ICT areas has also had positive impacts on standards. Very recently completed, the Sports Dome, funded extremely cost effectively from a number of different sources, is creating a very large indoor space for physical education, which is significantly upgrading the school's indoor facilities from the small gymnasium. There are some weaknesses in the accommodation. By far the most serious are the uninspiring and dated workshops, which lack facilities to display the pupils' work and do not have appropriate facilities for graphics work. These inadequacies have a detrimental effect on standards in these areas. Some other rooms, especially those used for mathematics, are cramped; whilst adequate, they reduce the range of teaching methods that can be used when full classes of older pupils are present. However, there are some fine features of the accommodation; the overall ambience of the buildings and grounds creates a very positive learning atmosphere. The site, inside and outside, is extremely well maintained; it is clean, and security and health & safety arrangements are first class, providing a very safe environment. The condition of corridors is excellent; they are most tastefully decorated with imaginative colour schemes, and are fully carpeted in high quality carpet, as are most classrooms. The quality of displays around the school, in classrooms, corridors and in the very attractive main entrance area is excellent. Outside, equally careful attention to the grounds, the provision of social areas with picnic tables, and delightful areas such as the environmental zone enhance the school's facilities. Despite the inadequacies, overall, the accommodation is very good; it gives the message that all who work in the school are important and deserve civilized conditions in which to work and flourish.
63. Learning resources that are available to the school are adequate. The school has addressed many of the issues raised in the last report and improvements since the last report are good. The proportion of the school's budget spent on learning resources in real terms is high in comparison with the national average. There has been considerable investment in improving ICT, and the quality of the new equipment is excellent, including networked satellite workstations in curriculum areas; however, there are still not enough computers to meet the school's needs, and computers need updating in some subject areas. There is adequate textbook provision across the curriculum to support teaching and learning. In religious education there is a good range of artefacts, videos and CD Roms, for research by pupils with different levels of attainment. In English, there is a good range of challenging texts and audio-visual aids, which impact positively on standards. In modern foreign languages, pupils have their own textbooks and there are separate course materials for lower attaining pupils which helps motivation and learning. In mathematics, the learning resources available are largely paper based and the lack of the latest graphic calculators holds back the pupils' conceptual understanding. Although there are an insufficient number of keyboards available to support a full class of pupils in music at Key Stage 3, the school's significant contribution towards the cost of peripatetic music provision is a valuable way, which is increasingly uncommon, of supporting talented musicians.
64. The library is managed very well. Computer records indicate an increase in the number of books loaned and the usage by a number of curriculum areas for the purposes of research has increased. Following a period of rationalisation, a recent audit of the existing book stock shows it to contain fiction and non-fiction books of high quality, suitable for pupils of all reading levels. However, the current book stock is very small, less than half the recommended minimum number of books per pupil nationally. Several curriculum areas have very few books to support research, revision or reading for pleasure. Whilst the present policy to use funds to replace 'tired' or highly used stock, and to better meet the needs of particularly gifted pupils is commendable, the overall

book stock needs to be substantially increased with both popular and recent publications if the library is support the school's literacy policy as much as it should.

### ***Efficiency***

65. Financial management is very good, and longer term financial planning related to the school's educational priorities is a particular strength. Some reserves have been built up for investment in priority areas, and the size of them is prudent rather than large. Overall, there is good use of resources, including special funding and special grants. Funding for special educational needs is used appropriately. Technology is effectively used to support financial management and day-to-day administration. The school's applications of the principles of best value are excellent. The work of the site manager ensures that contracts give very good value for money, and that what needs doing gets done quickly and efficiently. Much routine work is done very efficiently and effectively from the school's own resources, with the site technician playing an important and valuable role in this. The school is adept in maximizing resources and funds in ways that benefit the school and others involved in a variety of partnerships. An excellent example is the new sports dome, where funding has come from several sources, including the Lawn Tennis Association; the result is a facility of great value to the school and the community, providing outstanding facilities for tennis, and built at a fraction of the cost of a similar sized permanent building. A mutually beneficial arrangement with a security firm, in effect, provides with the school with 24 hour a day security at virtually no cost, again providing an example of very good value for money.
66. The school has a basic budget that is lower than average compared with schools nationally; it has carefully, over a number of years, strengthened its financial stability. Teachers tend to teach more, in larger sized classes, than in many other schools; on the other hand, they, support staff and pupils work in conditions much pleasanter than is found in many other schools. Pupils join the school with attainments that are broadly average overall, and have social and economic circumstances, which, taken as a whole, are more disadvantaged than average. However, pupils leave the school with results that are above, and often well above, average nationally, and well above average in comparison with schools in similar circumstances. The vast majority of pupils are extremely well behaved and keen to do well; they leave school, in the main, as mature and responsible young people. Relationships are very good, as is the personal development of pupils. Teaching is consistently good, and the school is very well led by a headteacher who enjoys the confidence of nearly all his staff, pupils, governors and parents. The school is judged to give very good value for money, and it has the capacity to improve its effectiveness still further.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

To improve further from its already strong position, the school should give consideration to the following issues. The numbers after each issue refer to the relevant paragraph in the report.

- (1) Ensure that all statutory requirements for ICT are met, particularly in Year 9 by:
  - a) identifying all strands of ICT that need to be covered, and how and by whom they will be delivered;
  - b) monitoring carefully the teaching of the subject whether taught in separate ICT lessons or within other subjects to ensure consistent experiences for all pupils;
  - c) establishing reliable assessment arrangements for ICT so that the standards reached by all pupils can be measured and their progress monitored.(8, 30, 127-132)
- (2) Improve the use some subjects make of assessment information by:
  - a) encouraging marking that clearly identifies the standards pupils have reached, and what they need to do to get better;
  - b) drawing on existing good practice in some subjects identified in this report to ensure that target setting becomes embedded in the work of all subjects, and that assessment is used to analyse the effectiveness of teaching.(27, 49, 50, 51, 53, 77, 78, 104, 110, 121, 125, 131, 135, 141, 147)
- (3) Explore possible ways of strengthening the senior management team by:
  - a) determining, as the school expands, how the necessary monitoring and evaluation of its work, particularly teaching, and its forward thinking, can best be achieved;
  - b) identifying other areas of the school's work which would benefit from additional input at senior level (such as those mentioned above and below), and determining how this input can best be achieved.(57, 58, 59, 61, 121)
- (4) Improve standards and achievements in music by:
  - a) identifying strategies that will improve standards;
  - b) providing the necessary support and structures that will achieve the necessary improvements.(12, 30, 138-142)

In addition, governors should consider including other areas for review when drawing up the action plan. These are: arrangements for, and the use of, homework (paragraphs 24, 34, 53, 90); strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy (25, 28, 34, 64, 81, 82, 88); the distribution of time in the curriculum (30, 31, 91, 100, 108, 109, 111, 142); whole school initiatives for the pupils' spiritual and cultural development (39, 40, 43).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	117
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	60

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
12	30	37	19	3	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	827	-
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	148	-

Special educational needs	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	29	-
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	160	-

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	91.8
National comparative data	91.3

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
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 pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	67	54	121

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	47	47	48
	Girls	48	37	36
	Total	95	84	84
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	79 (55)	70 (65)	69 (65)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	36 (17)	45 (42)	36 (32)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	50	46	47
	Girls	50	35	38
	Total	100	81	85
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	83 (77)	68 (69)	71 (64)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	49 (29)	42 (40)	34 (33)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

**Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4**

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	57	57	114

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	28	51	57
	Girls	36	52	55
	Total	64	103	112
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	56 (54)	90 (94)	98 (100)
	National	47 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	43.2 (43.6)
	National	38.4 (38.0)

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

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

**Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	0
White	823
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	2	0
Chinese	0	0
White	155	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

**Teachers and classes****Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	41.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.2

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	344

**Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	80
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**Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	27.6
Key Stage 4	22.3

**Financial information**

Financial year	2000/1
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	£
Total income	1959991
Total expenditure	1957491
Expenditure per pupil	2367
Balance brought forward from previous year	207000
Balance carried forward to next year	209500

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	830
Number of questionnaires returned	131

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	49	5	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	50	48	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	36	55	5	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	57	14	2	1
The teaching is good.	34	65	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	55	13	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	34	4	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	31	2	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	26	57	12	3	2
The school is well led and managed.	59	35	3	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	51	1	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	45	8	4	6

### Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Twenty-one parents sent in written comments, most of which gave reasons for their responses. The balance of comments was very positive; those with concerns nearly always gave praise as well. Concerns expressed in writing mainly related about the distribution of homework, the way the school works with parents, an over emphasis on sport, and the lack of lockers. The main areas of praise were the good teaching, the high expectations, the approachability of the school, the leadership and management, and the range of extra-curricular activities.



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

### **ENGLISH**

67. Pupils enter the school with average standards in English according to results in national tests and other assessments carried out by the school. Very good teaching and the pupils' positive attitudes lead to standards that are higher than anticipated by their standards on entry. A particular strength is the rigorous teaching with high expectations that the subject has established in Years 7-9. This is building a strong foundation for better achievement in Years 10-11.
68. In the 2000 national tests in English for 14 year olds the pupils' standards are well above the national average. They are also well above the average for pupils from similar backgrounds using the free school meal comparisons. Given the pupils' average standards on entering the school this represents very good achievement. Pupils perform better in their English tests than in mathematics and science. The proportion who reach the expected Level 5 or higher is well above the national and similar school average. At Level 6 or higher the pupils are above the national average and well above the similar school average. Boys outperform boys nationally. Taken overall, results from 1998 – 2000 have broadly average.
69. In the 2000 GCSE English examinations the proportion reaching grade C or higher is above average and well above average for similar schools. This maintains the above average standards of previous years although the percentage at C or higher did fall in 2000. More girls gain C or higher than boys. The gap between them is wider than in most schools. Overall standards based on average points score are average. Pupils tend not to do as well in English as in their other subjects. In the 2000 English literature examination the proportion reaching C or higher is average. Although the average points score is also in line with the national average this represents good progress against the pupils' prior achievement. Results in 2000 match those of 1999.
70. A member of the English department teaches media studies. Results in 2000 are above average both for A\*-C and average points score. Results have consistently been above average for the last four years. The subject is well taught and the pupils highly motivated.
71. In work seen during the inspection standards at the end of Year 9 are well above average for 14 year olds, maintaining the standards of the 2000 year group. Again, this represents very good achievement. Pupils are confident speakers and listen attentively. Higher attainers evaluate reading material successfully; they analysed quotations effectively to support their personal response when comparing Olivia and Viola in 'Twelfth Night'. Middle attaining pupils clearly explained the main characteristics of Sir Toby Belch and the motives of Macbeth. Writing skills are well above average. The accuracy and expression of higher attaining pupils really engage a reader's interest. It reflects the strong emphasis the teachers place on writing to make an impact. Middle attaining pupils lack the range of vocabulary but use paragraphs consistently and have reliable standards of spelling and punctuation.
72. Some pupils with special educational needs achieve average and above average standards. Others, along with lower attaining pupils, produce work that is overall below average. Their speaking skills are average. They understand the main events of a plot and use a limited range of quotations to illustrate a point. Their writing is below average because of errors in spelling and punctuation. However, most make good progress in writing long pieces and try to organise their work into paragraphs.
73. In Year 11 standards are above those expected of 16 year olds. Year 11 pupils were not in school during the inspection but the standards of speaking and listening of Year 10 pupils are well above average. In course work high attaining pupils reveal high reading standards. One girl dealt confidently with evaluating how Shakespeare heightens the audience's awareness of comedy in

'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. Another analysed Owen's poetry with perception, carefully explaining the impact of Owen's imagery. Middle attaining pupils reach average standards. They commented closely on language when analysing Hardy's Dorset dialect. The writing skills of the higher attaining pupils are very strong. Their work is technically flawless. They use language powerfully and persuasively as was shown by one girl's piece on the purpose and effectiveness of education. Middle attaining pupils make good progress. Short superficial pieces at the start of Year 10 are replaced by lengthy, well organised pieces during Year 11. There are clear improvements in spelling and punctuation accuracy.

74. The writing of lower attaining pupils, including some with special educational needs, does not have the same depth as other pupils and there are more errors in spelling and punctuation. Their analysis of reading is limited although some responded sensitively to the narrative in Roger McGough's 'The Identification'. Overall, pupils with special educational needs make good progress, some achieving high standards.
75. The English curriculum provides pupils with satisfactory opportunities to develop their work on computers. There was no evidence of the department contributing to the pupils' numeracy skills.
76. Standards are improving because of very good teaching and learning. The pupils' very positive attitudes and high standards of behaviour consistently establish a classroom atmosphere that enhances learning. Pupils also value and respect the specialist subject knowledge of the teachers. They know that the teachers' guidance is well informed and will help them improve their standards. The teachers' very high expectations lead to higher standards of work from the pupils. Right from Year 7 pupils are expected to produce substantial pieces about challenging texts. A Year 7 class has written well structured, lengthy and engaging accounts of events from 'The Odyssey'. A Year 7 lower set has written pieces far more substantial than pupils of their prior attainments normally do. These high expectations continue through the school. Shakespeare's texts - in full and in extracts - are frequently studied. Lively teaching methods stimulate and sustain interest. In an exciting Year 9 lesson, a group of lower attaining pupils responded with a serious maturity to their work on 'Macbeth'. Year 7 pupils were gripped by their teacher's punchy start to a lesson that looked at the genre of horror. They were totally absorbed in his narrative account. This enthusiasm proves to be infectious and challenging. A Year 10 group relished the chance to discuss different interpretations of Lady Macbeth as presented in a short video extract. Their discussions were enhanced because the teacher had ensured they had a very good understanding of the text and its language. In addition, teachers are very effective in targeting questions to specific pupils to ensure everyone is fully involved. Learning support assistants are well briefed about lessons and are very effective in providing support and expectation for special educational needs pupils. The marking of pupils' work is thorough and professional. Frequent use of National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades helps the pupils to be clear about their progress.
77. Lessons that were good rather than very good lacked the pace and urgency seen in the better lessons. Some opportunities to interweave effective methods from the literacy strategy were missed. This is a development point for the department. Although marking consistently points out what needs to improve it does not consistently reinforce what has been done well through precise comments.
78. The department is very effective with a strong team approach. It is well led and managed but some points require development. The department's development plan lacks precision in targets and monitoring. Systematic monitoring of lessons and exercise books is relatively recent. The department has not yet finalised its method for setting targets for pupils and frequently monitoring and reviewing progress to those targets, although this is a target in the current development plan. However, its baseline assessment for Year 7 pupils is an example of good practice and provides the foundation for better target setting. Resources are good and have a positive impact on standards. The challenging curriculum is a strength. The teachers convey professional enjoyment. No one rests on their laurels; the head of department was consistently eager to learn of good practice elsewhere to support development. There has been good progress since the previous inspection with an improvement in standards of learning and teaching.

## **Drama**

79. In the 2000 GCSE drama examination the overall point score is above average. The proportion gaining grade C or higher is also above average. This represents good progress when set against the pupils' results at the end of Year 9. Pupils perform better in drama than in most of their other subjects. Year 11 pupils were not in school during the inspection. Teacher estimated grades suggest their standards are above average. Standards of performance and evaluation are higher in the current Year 10 group and they are on track to achieve well above average standards. They are knowledgeable about drama skills and incorporate them very effectively into their pieces. They have an above average understanding of the impact of projection, gesture and staging. Standards are above average in Years 7-9. Pupils respond seriously and perform with a wider range of skills and with better control than is normally seen. Attitudes throughout the school are very good. Pupils in all years are receptive to constructive criticism from their teacher and from other pupils. Teaching is consistently very good. The teacher plans her lessons with a clear focus on what the pupils are going to learn and the skills they will develop. Her probing questioning enhances the pupils' evaluation of their performance. Pupils with special educational needs are fully included effectively in all lessons and achieve well. The lively lessons engage the pupils' interest so there are no problems with behaviour. A well established curriculum focuses with clarity on both the pupils' personal development and on their dramatic knowledge and skills. Drama makes a very good contribution to the school's extra-curricular programme and also develops good links in the community with primary schools. This is a very successful subject reflecting the teacher's skill, high standards and enthusiasm. The only points for development are the need to establish a broader multi-cultural focus to the work and for the teacher to have more professional development opportunities.

## **Literacy**

80. Standards of reading and writing are above average overall. Very good teaching in English leads to pupils making good progress. Although a sharper focus is needed to help the weakest readers make better progress, the overwhelming majority of pupils read fluently with efficient and effective comprehension skills. Most pupils write with above average standards of accuracy. The overall organisation and paragraphing of their writing are strengths.
81. Across the curriculum, provision for the development of reading and writing is satisfactory. There is a whole school literacy statement to guide progress. Many subjects, but not all, have a policy for the development of literacy. A recent evaluation by the school revealed inconsistency across subjects in their approach to literacy. There is no whole school coordinator or steering group. However, a document read during the inspection reveals that there is an awareness of the need for further and more rigorous development. A notable shortcoming was the relative lack of a consistent approach to developing effective study and research skills in subjects.
82. There is insufficient attention to literacy in mathematics. There is not enough emphasis on the promotion of key vocabulary. There is no evidence of the use of techniques such as writing frames to support extended writing for investigations. There is little evidence of teachers addressing spelling and grammar. In science, teachers check pupils' understanding of key terms. Incorrect spelling of technical terms are corrected. Pupils are helped with the planning of their investigations. In geography the teachers place a strong and effective emphasis on the development of key vocabulary of the subject. Mis-spellings are corrected and writing frames are used appropriately to help pupils produce extended work. History teachers miss some opportunities to encourage reading aloud but use questioning well to enhance understanding of the source material studied. A strength in history is the explicit way that extended written work is assisted by good attention to its planning. Year 9 pupils received clear and effective guidance to help them write their recruitment addresses in their study on the First World War. In design & technology there is a mixed picture. The use of a technical vocabulary dictionary helps to develop vocabulary. In a Year 10 food lesson there was very effective teaching of terms such as 'hyperactivity' and 'additives'. The schemes of work for food and textiles include clear targets for the development of vocabulary. This good practice is not established in all technology schemes

of work and lessons. There is not enough focus on key terms in information and communications technology. However, a good emphasis on drafting and redrafting results in improved accuracy. In art there is effective teaching of key words, note taking and extended research projects under the leadership of a recently appointed head of department. In physical education teachers promote key terms well such as the names of muscles and muscle groups. There is good practice in modern foreign languages. Teachers stress the importance of grammar. They improve the pupils' understanding well using methods such as tabulated information and definitions. There is a strong focus on correct spelling and improving dictionary skills. A reading scheme enhances comprehension. To support writing the teachers use writing frames, redrafting and writing for different purposes and audiences. There is not enough attention given to literacy in music.

## **MATHEMATICS**

83. In 2000, standards of attainment in mathematics are above average for all pupils at the age of 14 and broadly in line with the average for all pupils at the age of 16 when compared to the national average. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly in line with the national average. The pupils' achievements at the age of 14 in relation to their prior attainment are good. The pupils' achievements at the age of 16 in relation to their prior attainment at the age of 14 are satisfactory but with the likelihood of further improvement for the current year. This is because the quality of teaching overall is good and, in some lessons, very good at both key stages.
84. In 2000, the proportion of pupils at the age of 14 achieving Level 5 or above is close to the national average and well above average when compared to similar schools. The proportion of pupils at the age of 14 attaining Level 6 or above is above the national average and well above average when compared to the average for similar schools. Levels of attainment achieved by pupils are broadly in line with teachers' assessments. In comparison with the other core subjects, levels of attainment achieved in mathematics overall are not as good as English and science, with boys performing better than girls. In terms of average points scores for 2000, pupils' scores are above average in mathematics in comparison with the national average and well above average for similar schools. In 2000, average points scores in mathematics are similar to science but not as good as English. The pupils' achievements by the age of 14 in mathematics are good. Over the last three years the rate of improvement in attainment is better than that nationally, with boys performing better than boys nationally and girls performing less well than girls nationally.
85. In 2000, the proportion of pupils at the age of 16 achieving GCSE mathematics grades A\* to C is broadly in line with the national average for both boys and girls, with girls performing slightly better than the boys. The proportion of pupils achieving GCSE mathematics grades A\* to G is above the national average, with girls performing better than boys. Compared with the national averages, the average points scores for 2000 in mathematics are not as good as English and science. The pupils' achievements at the age of 16 in 2000 are satisfactory, when compared to prior levels of attainment for the same group of pupils at the age of 14 in 1998. Over the last three years the rate of improvement overall is broadly in line with that nationally.
86. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards of the work of pupils seen are above average. The pupils' uses and applications of mathematics are satisfactory. Pupils can extend a concept and articulate their thinking through set tasks; for example, Year 7 pupils investigated the use of negative numbers when working on temperature. Average attaining pupils in Year 9 constructed frequency tables from collected class data on siblings, comparing results against initial hypotheses and determining the validity of various representative values. The pupils' numerical skills are good although an appreciation of the power of estimation prior to using the calculator is not common. The highest attaining pupils in Year 7 have a good understanding of fractions, decimals and percentages. Lower attaining Year 7 pupils were observed using the correct vocabulary when successfully analysing the factors of numbers. The pupils' knowledge and understanding of the rules of algebra are good. High attaining pupils in Year 8 are able to solve questions on Pythagoras' Theorem well ahead of national expectations and construct graphs of linear functions. Lower attaining pupils in Year 8 can solve simple linear equations involving brackets and evaluate algebraic formulae for calculating the surface area and volume of solids.

High attaining pupils in Year 9 solve inequalities, simultaneous and quadratic equations, transforming the subject of formulae and using trigonometrical ratios correctly, when calculating the sides and angles of right-angled triangles. The pupils' knowledge and understanding of shape, space and measurement are good. Neat and accurate diagrams support the pupils' appreciation of transformation geometry. The pupils' knowledge of probability and handling data is good. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to that of other pupils, particularly when being supported by a teacher.

87. Standards of work seen by pupils at the age of 16, based on the scrutiny of work, are above average. This, as at Key Stage 3, represents good achievement. Knowledge and application of numeracy skills by the highest attaining pupils are well above average. For example, they investigated the velocity of a raindrop through trial and improvement. Average attaining pupils successfully practised their course work investigational skills. Lower attaining pupils investigated the relationship between speed, distance and time. The pupils' level of achievement when working with shape, space and measures is very good. The level of achievement by pupils is good when handling statistical information. For example, highest attaining pupils can construct cumulative frequency tables; average attaining pupils can compare experimental and theoretical probability. Lowest attaining pupils use such words as 'fair', 'certain' and 'likely' to demonstrate an understanding of the probability of single events; like others, they are achieving well.
88. The standard of literacy in mathematics is satisfactory. Investigative teaching approaches in lessons, involving pupils developing speaking and listening skills through discussion, are evident at both key stages. Reading and writing skills are reinforced through the selection of specific exercises and texts that endeavour to confirm pupils' conceptual understanding. The pupils' very positive attitude to learning creates an ethos where all feel secure in volunteering answers and opinions, which contributes significantly to how well pupils achieve. However, there is no literacy policy included in the mathematics department handbook and formal opportunities for developing literacy skills further through the scheme of work other than through coursework are at an early stage.
89. Achievement in mathematics is good at both key stages compared to the average levels of prior attainment on entry to the school. This is the case for all pupils including those with special educational needs. The subject specialists' high expectations of pupils coupled with challenging questions that engage pupils thinking and demand intellectual effort, contribute to raising the pupils' level of achievement. At age of 14, many pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding of mathematics are ahead of national expectations. The pupils' achievements in numeracy skills are good, without the formal application of the National Numeracy Strategy. Achievement in algebra, shape, space and measures, and handling data is good for pupils both at the age of 14 and in Year 10. The pupils' achievements in using and applying mathematics are satisfactory. Opportunities for extending the gifted and talented pupils are not evident in the scheme of work and lesson plans.
90. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall at both key stages, with some examples of very good and excellent teaching observed. Specialist teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are very good and are strengths of the department. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory. The teachers' planning is effective. Lesson objectives are shared with pupils, providing a clear purpose for the duration of lessons. The teachers' expectations of the pupils are very high, making good use of open and closed questions which challenges the pupils' thinking, involves conceptual development and deepens their understanding. Teachers encourage intellectual effort through small group work, independent learning and work at the whiteboard, enhancing the pupils' personal development; however, opportunities for extending the gifted and talented pupils in the higher order skills are not evident across both key stages. There are clear expectations of high standards and good behaviour and the focus is on work for the duration of lessons. Relationships between the pupils themselves and with the teacher are very good. Teachers use time very effectively to promote good behaviour and effective learning; for example, work for the lowest attaining pupils is broken down into 'bite' size activities to take account of their capacity to concentrate. Pupils' attitude to the subject is very good; for example, pupils are prepared to persevere with difficult problems. Resources are used well, but there is too much

emphasis on the published worksheet. Learning support assistants are employed well to support the learning needs of pupils with special educational needs. Homework of an appropriate standard is given regularly but lacks imagination and rigour to challenge the gifted and talented pupils. Opportunities for using homework as a preparation for future lessons and to meet literacy requirements are missed. Procedures for the assessment of pupils are satisfactory but the quality and use of ongoing assessment is unsatisfactory. Work marked by pupils is not monitored and homework is frequently without any recorded grades. Homework often lacks diagnostic and evaluative comment to support learning. Pupils at the age of 14 are unclear about marking criteria and how they can progress to raise their level of attainment. Poorly presented work often goes unchallenged. National Curriculum level descriptors are not used to monitor pupils progress across the key stage, to identify and respond to pupils' strengths and weaknesses and to inform curriculum planning and classroom practice. The pupils' knowledge of how well they are learning at the age of 16 is satisfactory with GCSE targets for improvement established early in Year 10.

91. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Achievements by pupils at the age of 14 are good given their prior levels of attainment on entry to the school. The department has made satisfactory progress in addressing the issues raised in the last inspection. Subject specialists work well together and there is a clear commitment to raising standards. However, schemes of work and the department handbook need revising and bringing up to date to support this ambition. As the school grows in size, there is need for greater clarity and consistency over policy. The subject's policies on literacy, numeracy and ICT, together with strategies for their implementation, need to be included in the handbook. Evaluation of the subject's performance through analysis of national data is satisfactory; however, better monitoring and evaluation of the pupils' performance regularly, and taking effective action, would give scope for improving further the progress the pupils are making. Accommodation is adequate although rooms are cramped when full classes of pupils at the age of 16 are in attendance. This reduces the range of teaching methods that can be successfully used, such as lead lessons using new technology to promote learning more effectively. The percentage of curriculum time available for pupils at the age of 16 is less than the national average offered by similar schools, reducing the teaching and learning momentum achieved with pupils at the age of 14. Posters and displays of the pupils' work in classrooms are very good. The subject has the capacity to build on its present success, supported through regular line management meetings, because it is receptive to change.

### **Numeracy**

92. The school is committed raising standards of numeracy. The school development plan includes references to developing whole school approaches to numeracy and employing additional ancillary support for lower attaining pupils' development of basic skills. The initial target is to complete the analysis of a recently conducted numeracy audit and highlight issues for action during this academic year. A numeracy statement is included in the school's policy documents and information has been shared with teaching staff to raise awareness. The school is prepared for the launch of the Cornwall Mathematics Strategy for Secondary Schools that will support the implementation of the national numeracy strategy in the school.
93. The standard of numeracy in a number of subjects is good. In ICT, pupils at the age of 14 make good use of interpreting collected data, establishing formulae and calculating outcomes when designing spreadsheets. In science, pupils were observed making use of measuring skills and reading scales when graphing the results of an experiment on the rate of diffusion of ammonia gas. In geography, pupils make very good use of graphs and pie charts when illustrating data collected on population growth and rainfall pattern. In modern foreign languages, pupils at the age of 14, interrogated their own computer generated graphs based on a class survey of family pets. In physical education, pupils collected, time, distance and speed information when completing a range of athletic circuit activities. Pupils at the age of 16 made good use of the rules of algebra applying taught skills to scientific evidence and establishing recognised formulae. In geography, pupils calculated the depth and cross section of rivers based on fieldwork-studies and scale drawings.

94. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in basic numeracy skills, knowledge and understanding and are able to benefit fully from the school's curriculum. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and those who receive additional support from learning support assistants is good, given their level of prior attainment on entry to the school. The calculator is used constructively in mathematics lessons to aid learning, but many lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs lack confidence in their numerical capability and rely on the calculator for many basic calculations when solving problems.
95. Subjects that make good use of numeracy are mathematics, science, information and communication technology, physical education, modern foreign languages and geography. The majority of departments include a numeracy policy with clear opportunities for developing numeracy in the scheme of work. For example, in modern foreign languages, reference is made to dates, currency conversion, distances, prices, bills, time and telephone numbers, reinforcing the target language and the use of number in the scheme of work.

## SCIENCE

96. In the 2000 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 the proportion of pupils reaching level 5 and above and the proportion reaching level 6 and above is above the national average, as is the average points score. The results are better than those of the past two years. This level of attainment is well above average when compared with schools having pupils from similar backgrounds. The performance of boys is very much better than that of girls. Results are a little better than those in mathematics but not as good as those in English.
97. In the 2000 GCSE examination in science (double award), the proportion of pupils awarded grades A\* to C is close to the national average. The average points score is just above the national average. It is better than the previous year but not as good as that in 1998. Results are better than those in mathematics but below those in English. The performance of girls is somewhat better than that of boys, but both boys and girls tend to do less well in science than in their other subjects by about the same amount. Almost all the candidates entered for the examination obtained grade A\* to G.
98. Observations in lessons and work seen during the inspection show that standards towards the end of Key Stage 3 are above the national average. Most pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of topics in all four attainment targets. They know, for example, about the solar system, about the diffusion of gases and about environmental issues. A group of high attaining pupils in Year 9 had very good knowledge of the causes of diseases, and were able to use this knowledge to discuss intelligently ways of preventing disease. Similarly, high attaining pupils in a Year 7 class used their understanding of habitats to extend their knowledge about how animals adapt to different environments. An average to below average Year 9 group was observed persevering with the task of wiring, correctly and safely, a three pin plug, demonstrating good practical skills. A Year 8 group was seen carrying out competently and safely an experiment to determine the difference between inspired and expired air.
99. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards are above average, though by a smaller amount than at Key Stage 3. The highest attainers have a comprehensive understanding of the science curriculum; their knowledge of scientific terminology is particularly good. A Year 10 class, for example, had a good understanding of the difference between alkanes and alkenes. They were able to draw structural formulae and knew about the cracking and polymerisation of hydrocarbons. Most pupils in another Year 10 class showed a sound understanding of insulators and conductors. They were able to plan an investigation to find out which materials were most effective in preventing the loss of heat. The lowest attaining pupils were limited in the amount of scientific knowledge which they were able to relate to the investigation; their notebooks also had several pieces of work unfinished. Higher attaining pupils were able to relate what they were doing to work on cooling curves which the teacher had covered at the beginning of the lesson. No Year 11 lessons were observed, but evidence from coursework shows that pupils can apply the scientific knowledge obtained over the key stage. An understanding of the way in which materials react with

each other enabled them to carry out investigations on rates of reaction. Knowledge of electricity allowed them to investigate the relationship between current voltage and resistance.

100. Achievement at Key Stage 3 is good. Pupils enter the school with average levels of attainment and good progress is made through years 7 to 9. Despite similar strengths and weaknesses at both key stages, achievement at Key Stage 4 is less good than at Key Stage 3. This less good achievement may be related to the lower than the national average time that is allocated to double science; whereas at Key Stage 3, pupils have similar amounts of science teaching to most others, this is not the case at Key Stage 4.
101. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Teachers are aware of their needs and give them good support when they are engaged in written and practical work. Learning support assistants also give good support; they are familiar with the lessons' contents and fellow pupils frequently help explain what they have to do. For average and higher attaining pupils, the standard of written work shows good achievement. Lower attaining pupils need to pay more attention to their presentation in order to understand more fully what they have recorded. The range of styles used for recording work in notebooks is limited; as a result, pupils are not given very much opportunity to be creative in their thinking. There is very little extended writing, and pupils do not use their imagination and are only infrequently encouraged to use charts and drawings to record their work. These factors mean that there are some missed opportunities for pupils to achieve to their fullest potential. The pupils' mathematical skills are sufficient to allow them to access fully all aspects of work in science. Most pupils are competent with a range of skills in using computers; as a result, they are able to collect and retrieve data and display it in a number of ways, and their understanding of graphs is enhanced.
102. The standard of teaching at both key stages is good overall. It is never less than satisfactory and often very good. The consistency of high quality teaching has been adversely affected in the past and at present from staff absences. However, relief teachers work very hard to ensure that the impact of these absences on the pupils' learning is minimised. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject; their ability to communicate their knowledge and love of the subject to pupils is an important way in which the pupils' learning is encouraged. Lessons are well prepared with clear objectives. These are shared with pupils at the beginning of the lesson ensuring that they know what they are expected to do; as a result, their learning is well focused on the lesson's objectives. Unfortunately the shortness of lessons often prevents teachers from consolidating the work satisfactorily at the end, so a valuable part of the learning process is missed in some lessons. Relationships with pupils are excellent, creating a very good atmosphere for learning to take place. Humour is a feature of many lessons, and praise, which raises the pupils' self esteem, is used to good effect. Learning and progress are good when pupils are presented with a range of activities to maintain interest. The way in which teachers plan and time the sequence of events to promote learning is a strength of the department. For example, in a Year 8 class containing pupils of average ability, an initial question and answer session revealed that pupils had a limited understanding of diffusion. After a brief discussion and clear exposition by the teacher, pupils observed and measured the rate at which ammonia gas diffused along a tube. After further discussion in small groups pupils plotted a graph of their results. The activities were structured in such a way that all pupils progressed towards a good understanding of the way in which concentration affects the rate of diffusion.
103. Pupils respond well when they are given an opportunity to be creative and take some responsibility for their own learning. For example, in another Year 8 lesson, following an investigation into the factors affecting the strength of an electromagnet, pupils prepared an illustrated presentation of their findings. When they spoke to the class about their findings they were admirably self critical and able to discuss their results with others. They gained, not only in their understanding of electromagnetism, but also in the skills of speaking and in self confidence. Throughout the lesson, learning was very good, related to the very good teaching.
104. Pupils conduct practical work competently and safely. Teachers, however, do not always take the opportunity to introduce investigative skills such as predicting, analysing and considering variables. Pupils are well behaved and many act in a very mature way. They are courteous to



one another and to adults. The marking of work is regular and follows the department's policy. Comments, however, do not always tell pupils what they have got wrong and what they need to do to improve. Procedures for collecting recording and analysing assessment information are very good. The information is not always used effectively to provide targets. Teachers are aware of the problems experienced by low attaining pupils and those with special educational needs; they successfully support them when they are doing written work to ensure that they understand fully what they have to do. Although a variety of strategies is used to meet the demands of different groups, work is not always adapted for individual pupils. Improvements to the quality of marking, to the effective use of assessment information and to the adaptation of teaching strategies for individual pupils will enhance further the pupils' learning and achievements.

105. The head of department provides strong positive leadership. Teachers work well together and share a good commitment to raising standards. Teaching is ably supported by two hardworking laboratory technicians. Through performance management, the quality of teaching is now adequately monitored, but the monitoring of written work and marking is less frequent. Resources are well used to enhance teaching and learning and, in most laboratories, displays of work create stimulating environment. The department's documentation is clear and informative in ways which help the teachers in their work.
106. The department has responded well to the previous report. Teaching strategies have been revised and improved. Lessons now have good pace and all pupils are involved. Marking and assessment policies have been improved and are used consistently, though marking still fails to give pupils sufficient information on the way to make progress. Some lessons still lack consolidation at the end. The department should continue to explore ways of improving standards at Key Stage 4 to match the value which is added at Key Stage 3.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

107. On entry to the school, standards of the pupils' artwork are below average as a significant minority have not had sufficiently regular art lessons in their primary schools. In the year 2000 GCSE examination, only one pupil was entered for the examination, and so it is not possible to analyse the pupils' achievements in art across the length of their school careers. However, standards in the GCSE examinations in the two years before this were well below average, and were a cause for concern. Pupils were not achieving as well as they should and their progress was poor. Following the arrival of a new head of department in January 2000, improvements have taken place. Significant numbers of pupils are now opting for the subject at GCSE level and the pupils' increasingly good achievements are evident across a range of arts media. However, some pupils are progressing from a low base since many of the older pupils did not benefit from well-structured programmes of study when they were younger in the school. Improving standards result from better planning, refurbished accommodation, better resourcing, good opportunities for extra curricular involvement and good use of homework to support work done in class. There is not a noticeable difference between the work of boys and girls, and pupils who have special educational needs achieve well as a result of the setting in Years 8 and 9, and from the helpful support of the art teacher. Higher attaining pupils are also well supported and achieve well. This is increasingly evident in the work of GCSE pupils who are now suitably challenged.
108. By the end of Key Stage 3, teachers' assessments show that pupils produce work of an above average quality, and this is confirmed by inspection evidence. However, despite many recent improvements and enthusiastic well-planned teaching, the amount of time for art is well below the national average. At this school, pupils have 50 minutes of art each week, whereas the average amount of time nationally is 75 minutes. As a result, whilst the pupils' work is of good quality, the quantity produced is small and they do not have the time to experiment or try out new ideas or approaches. Pupils in Year 9 have produced a cityscape based around the style of the architect Gaudi. This has been assembled as a group piece and displays very sensitive use of coloured pencil. Very good use of coloured pencil is also evident in Year 8, where pupils have produced portraits in the cubist style of Braque and Picasso. These make thoughtful use of tonal variation and colour highlights to maximum effect. The pieces look deceptively simple, but required careful

precision to achieve their effect. The work of the Year 9 art club is particularly impressive, including several large-scale wall displays in the style of Escher. There is no difference between the work of boys and girls and pupils achieve well irrespective of their individual starting points.

109. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards have considerably improved and are now above the national expectations for this age group, with some pupils producing work that is well above average. However, the amount of time given to art is below average and so pupils have to spend their own time in extra curricular sessions to be certain of gaining satisfactory examination grades. Year 11 pupils were not in school during the inspection. A scrutiny of their work shows some very exciting pieces. For instance, one pupil has produced an ornamental relief sculpture based on the work of the Japanese artist Hokusai, whilst another has created a number of eye-catching two and three-dimensional pieces based on the motif of the sun. These pieces not only show striking originality, but also show a good level of background research into the work of other artists and art movements. The majority of Year 11 pupils are set to attain A\* to C grades in the summer examination.
110. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in both key stages. The art teacher plans absorbing lessons that immediately engage the pupils' attention. As a result, pupils enjoy what they are doing and learn very well. The improved numbers opting for art at GCSE level show that pupils have enjoyed their lessons in Key Stage 3. The methods used by the teacher ensure that pupils learn very well. There is a lot of practical work, but this is based on good quality visual research. During the inspection, the teacher constantly reinforced the concept of "visual narrative", encouraging pupils to see the story behind the artwork. The teacher ensures that there are many examples of artwork that can be used to stimulate the pupils' own imagination and sense of enterprise. As a result, pupils are very clear about the style and conventions they are working with and concentrate successfully on what they are doing. In a Year 7 lesson, for instance, the pupils were very clear about how aboriginal people created their artwork. The class adopted similar tactics to produce their own effective pieces that convincingly reflected the style being studied. The teacher's management of the pupils' behaviour is very good. As a result, the pupils respect the teacher and are happy to learn in a calm atmosphere without disruption. The teacher tells pupils how to improve what they are doing and provides written assessments based on the Levels in the National Curriculum. As a result, pupils are clear about whether they are meeting the expectations for their particular age. This helps them to have a good idea of their own progress and provides encouragement for them to aspire to higher standards. All this helps their learning.
111. The new head of department is a very good leader and manager. He has implemented many improvements that are having a direct impact on rising standards. Aspects that interfered with the pupils' progress have been identified and resolved. For instance, there is better provision of computers that is helping pupils come to terms with the technology intensive nature of the modern arts industries. Improvements to the accommodation include the redecoration, some new furniture and the reintroduction of the use of the kiln. However, the main teaching room is small and cramps larger classes. The teacher has not allowed this to adversely affect standards. The range of resources has been improved so that pupils have better access to three dimensional media and complete a wider range of arts-based activities. The issues from the last inspection were not satisfactorily resolved until the arrival of the new head of department. The National Curriculum is now fully complied with and space and resources are more effectively deployed. However, the amount of time for art in both key stages is still well below the national average and this has an adverse impact on standards. In most ways, however, the department is showing considerable signs of improvement, pupils enjoy their lessons and standards are rising rapidly.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

112. When the GCSE results for the various subjects within design and technology are considered as a whole, results in 2000 are average for the A\*-C range and for the proportion awarded at least a G grade. However, the girls' results are well above average for both grade ranges. When subjects are considered separately, the results in food and textiles technologies at A\*-C are above average. Results in graphics are below average as they are in electronics. Results in all subjects, except

electronics, are above average in the A\*-G range. This means that almost all pupils achieve a pass in design and technology. Pupils overall tend to get similar grades in design and technology to those in their other subjects, but this hides the fact that girls tend to get results which are nearly half a grade higher while boys tend to get nearly a fifth of a grade lower than their other subjects. Again there are differences in subjects; pupils in food and textiles options tend to get results which are between a half and three-quarters of a grade higher than their other subjects. The pupils' results in food are significantly higher than would normally be expected from their attainments when they were 14. These results are lower than they have been in recent years; in 1999 and 1998 results were above average, but the pattern has been broadly in line with the national trend.

113. The standards of work seen during the inspection are above average at both key stages and the pupils' achievements are good in terms of the progress that they make over time. At Key Stage 3 pupils develop practical skills so that they are able to produce items in resistant materials which are accurately cut and shaped and which demonstrate skills such as soldering which are above average. Work with fabric is of a similarly high quality. Since no practical activities took place during the inspection, it is not possible to comment on skills in food, although pupils demonstrate an above average knowledge of basic ingredients and food preparation methods. Drawing skills are less well developed; freehand sketches are often on too small a scale and lack the clarity and detail to convey their design ideas. This does not enhance the quality of the folder work and applies to all aspects of the subject and to most pupils. However, design folders are of an above average standard in the depth of content, amount of work they contain, the quality of the ideas and the evaluation of the work. Pupils use computers in order to research, as in a control technology lesson, and to enhance the quality of their practical work, for example when designing and applying a logo for their fleece hats in Year 8. Higher attaining pupils are able to understand the importance of sequence of manufacture as demonstrated in flowcharts of the making process. Lower attaining pupils are able to use technical terms accurately and spell them correctly because of the subject specific word sheets given to them. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well especially when support staff are present. Boys and girls reach similar standards as the work is well matched to all their interests. The standards achieved are above average at Key Stage 4 and good progress is made over time. Practical course work is ambitious. Craft skills are well demonstrated and almost all pieces meet the specification set for them. Pupils understand how to model their ideas and then develop their designs. However, presentation and freehand drawing continues to be a weaker aspect of the subject and for many average and lower attaining pupils this reduces the quality of the design folders. In many subjects pupils use computers for research, analysis and presentation but do not reach the higher levels of computer skills. For example, there is some good use of computer generated embroidery designs in textiles. In resistant materials, graphics and electronics, pupils have innovative ideas that they are able to construct competently. They adapt their work as it progresses when necessary. Here design folders do not fully reflect the quality of the practical work. In food, design folders are of a well above average standard. Research is full and higher attaining pupils especially show mature understanding of the work they are doing and high levels of presentation skills.

114. Teaching is good at Key Stages 3 and very good at Key Stage 4; learning is good overall, and, at times, very good. Pupils respond well to the expectations of their teachers who are all subject specialists. Their very good technical knowledge enables them to explain things clearly, and their enthusiasm for their subjects and their high expectations also very positively help learning by creating a stimulating atmosphere. Basic skills are carefully taught with demonstration used to set standards, as seen in a food lesson when the teacher's technical expertise was apparent. Teachers have a good relationship with their classes, which, again, creates the right environment for learning. Pupils with behavioural special needs are so keen to be involved that they exercise great self-control; as a result, they learn well and make good progress. A range of activities is included in lessons. For example, in a Year 7 control lesson, pupils were involved in construction, experimentation and computer research. This retained interest and extended the more able, resulting in very good learning. Planning and preparation is particularly thorough in food and textiles subjects; therefore, learning by pupils of all levels of attainment is logical and detailed, and they make very good progress. Teachers of these subjects involve pupils in setting their own targets in Key Stage 3, which focuses them on their own achievements; because they know what they need to do to get better, they can concentrate on these targets, learn rapidly and achieve very well.
115. The subject is currently managed as separate design and technology and food and textiles departments. The particularly thorough curriculum analysis and planning documentation provided for the food and textiles teachers provides a model of excellence. Another remarkable feature is the work that links classroom work with industrial experience in its most practical form. Notable activities in recent years have seen co-operation with clothing companies, major food retailers and nationally known figures from the catering profession. This work has received local and national recognition. Monitoring of the work of the departments is not yet a strong feature although performance management arrangements are bringing plans for closer scrutiny into operation. Parents willingly provide support, including their expertise, in the classroom, for example in automotive engineering, and as consultants for course work.
116. The department has made good progress since the last inspection in those areas over which it has control. Constructive written comments are now widespread especially at Key Stage 4 and are raising the standards of the pupils' work. However, although the food and textiles rooms are currently being completely revamped, the workshop areas provide an uninspiring and dated environment, lacking facilities to display the pupils' work and devoid of appropriate facilities for graphics work. In order to ensure more consistent standards across the subject, consideration should be given to providing more practical guidance on completion of design folders and concentrating on the quality of presentation including skills in freehand drawing. It is possible for pupils to study two design and technology subjects at Key Stage 4. However, the courses available do not always match the needs of the pupils taking them. Further consideration should be given to the accreditation offered. The use of computers is now well integrated into the planned work at all levels including control and computer aided design.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

117. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils reach standards that are above average. This is confirmed by the teachers' own assessments. Pupils, at the end of Key Stage 4, also demonstrate standards that are above average, which is confirmed by the GCSE examination results. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A\* to C in the 2000 GCSE examinations is well above the national average with a significant proportion of A\* and A grades. Pupils tend to obtain better GCSE results in geography than those they reach in their other subjects. The results in GCSE examinations over the last five years show a good year-to-year improvement, except in 1999, although 1999 were above the national average. All pupils entered in 2000 gained A\* to G grades. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls.

118. In work seen during the inspection, the pupils' standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are above average; their achievements in relation to standards at entry are good. In Year 7, most pupils, including lower attainers, successfully master the basic skills of map work, scale and direction in relation to their immediate local vicinity. They can understand the reasons for the development of the town of Penzance and the majority can compare their findings with theories of town development. Pupils are able to present their work effectively using appropriate titles, keys and sketch maps. In map work, they understand the significance of contours and four figure grid references; many use six figure references successfully; the pupils' books show good evidence of this work. At the end of Year 9, all except the lowest attainers show a good understanding of deforestation and start to understand different ways in which areas under threat could be conserved; the moral issues of conservation and sustainability are successfully developed. Year 9 pupils show good knowledge about environmental issues, for example, global warming and acid rain. Their books demonstrate good understanding of the rainforest and how animals and plants are adapting to the shrinking forest. High attaining pupils understand the importance of their preservation for conservation issues and for supporting the different local cultures; this was particularly noticeable with Year 8 pupils studying Brazil. Year 9 pupils have a secure knowledge of coastal erosion and the associated formation of caves, arches and stacks being part of the process of headland erosion. Many pupils have first hand experience of this from living very close to such features. Pupils' numeracy skills are used to good effect in geography. For example, pupils successfully use data to draw graphs and bar charts representing features like temperature and rainfall in the forest and population growth. Overall both boys and girls, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in map work, use of keys, scales and observational skills. They learn the basic skills of geography and achieve well in Years 7 to 9, reaching standards at the end of Key Stage 3 above what would be expected from their attainments on entry.
119. Standards in work seen at the end of Key Stage 4 are above average, and pupils achieve at a good level in relation to their work in Key Stage 3, building on their earlier success. Average and higher attaining pupils in Year 10 can successfully categorise the types of farming to be found in different parts of the United Kingdom. They link aspects of physical, economic and human geography formulating their reasons for the different types of farming; they understand the importance of arable farming to an area like East Anglia. Low attaining pupils in Year 10 know the factors for the development of their local railway station; they very effectively evaluate the services offered by the station, making good cogent arguments for realistic improvements that could be made. Both literacy and numeracy skills successfully support the pupils' work in geography; they make use of pie charts to successfully plot data and show good use of technical words in their correct context. A small sample of Year 11 course work was scrutinised; this showed good achievement in relation to the pupils' prior attainment. Their work showed a range of methods used, including research at the records and press offices, interviewing older people, good use of photographs and maps, and the successful use of computers to enhance presentation including representing data. Concepts and the linking of different aspects of geography are developing well for most pupils in Years 10 and 11, though the improved development of the pupils' hypotheses in course work would further assist and improve their evaluations. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are well-integrated into lessons and receive good support by teachers, classroom assistants and their peers.
120. The quality of teaching and learning is good at both key stages; no unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Overall, teachers show a very good knowledge of geography and apply their knowledge well to promote the pupils' learning. For instance, in Year 9, very extensive knowledge of rivers and the area around Penzance helps to successfully extend and stimulate the pupils' learning of their local area. Learning is encouraged by the teachers' high expectations of the pupils' work. Probing and challenging questions are a very strong feature of the teaching of geography; pupils respond well, giving responses of high quality and at times, these even exceed the teacher's expectations. For example, very good questioning about Brazil probed the pupils' knowledge and understanding about the physical, economic and human geography; it showed pupils had a very good awareness of the different cultures of Brazil and the United Kingdom, and the different cultures that exist within Brazil. Teachers make good use of a range of resources to enhance their teaching, such as the use of a high quality video extract on the River Tees with

Year 9 pupils. This successfully reinforces learning on river development. On a minority of occasions, there are insufficient strategies of a practical nature to involve pupils in their learning. At times, the range of tasks is insufficient to meet the needs of the range of abilities in a class; as a consequence, some groups of pupils make less progress than others. However, teachers are sufficiently flexible in their teaching to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs; the support that teachers give is good. Overall, the pupils' behaviour, attitudes and relationships are good; this further enhances the pupils' learning.

121. The head of department shows very good leadership, vision and management; she is successfully developing all aspects of geography in the school. There is a good curriculum, which has breadth, balance and relevance. The planning of the curriculum is a strength as specialist teachers, new to the department, can fit in to the teaching situation with relative ease. This good planning makes for consistency in the teaching, and, consequently, in the learning of all pupils. The planned use of computers is effective, but limitations of access limit some investigative elements. The teachers make good use of their assessment information and other associated data in order to track the pupils' progress. Improvements in the consistency and monitoring of marking will assist further in the raising of standards. The monitoring of teaching takes place, but there is insufficient time for this to be undertaken in a regular and systematic manner that would enable good practice to be shared more effectively.
122. The department has made good progress since the last inspection; all the issues of the last report have been successfully addressed. There has been steady and sustained improvement in examination results, teaching and learning. The development of the curriculum and the associated schemes of work have further strengthened the subject. The geography teachers work closely as a team and they are very supportive to one another; they are all very enthusiastic and committed to the raising of standards still further.

## **HISTORY**

123. The results attained by pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2000, based on the teachers' own assessments, are in line with national averages, but with a significant minority above, or even well above, the national average level. The teachers' assessments also show that girls gain better results than boys and that girls' results are above the national average. The assessments made in 2000 are very similar to the outcomes in 1999. GCSE results in 2000 for grades A\* to C indicate that girls gain more higher grades than boys, but that the results for both genders are significantly above the national average. All pupils gained at least a grade E; thus, results over the range A\* to G, for all pupils, are significantly above average. Pupils tend to gain better results in history than they do in their other subjects.
124. In Key Stage 3, levels of attainment vary according to the setting arrangements, but are broadly average overall. All pupils are developing a basic understanding of historical events and their factual knowledge is often good. Higher attaining pupils are able to offer a clear analysis of the events studied. For example, Year 9 pupils have a good understanding of why the British government needed to enlist so many troops in 1914. They can also analyse the messages contained in contemporary source material. Higher attaining pupils can develop their analysis and make links to socio-economic factors, such as unemployment. All pupils are developing a basic understanding of historical events and their factual knowledge is often good. Standards in Key Stage 4 are above, and frequently, well above average. All pupils are gaining a good working knowledge of history and many are able both to speak and write fluently about historical events. The analytical skills of many pupils are well developed. They can explain what happened and why. For example, higher attainers can explain some of the successes of the League of Nations in the early 1920s, but, equally, they are aware that its influence was not long lived, and they can identify the seeds of the weaknesses. The vast majority of pupils is making at least satisfactory progress, with many making good, or very good, progress and achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. The previous inspection report commented on the lack of progress being recorded by some pupils with special educational needs. There is now no evidence of this; indeed, the achievements and progress of special needs pupils are as good as other pupils.

125. The overall quality of teaching is very good, though it is more consistent in Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. This high quality teaching leads to high quality learning, and, therefore, the high achievements of all groups of pupils. Many strengths of the teaching can be identified. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and this helps to enliven their lessons; this depth of knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject contributes significantly to the high quality of the learning. Planning is also very good ensuring that pupils are challenged and their learning taken forward. Written work set in lessons often involves a series of tasks that become progressively more detailed in terms of the answers required. Such careful preparation allows pupils to work at different speeds, but enables all pupils in the class to make progress and learn well. Such good teaching succeeds in interesting and motivating the pupils and behaviour in history lessons is very good. Another key feature is that pupils are constantly challenged; the success of this strategy is reflected in the quality of the oral and written answers. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on the Black Death, pupils used secondary sources to identify the principal culprit of the plague. A sequence of primary sources was then studied which suggested that the plague was an expression of God's wrath. Pupils then had explain why historical interpretations change over time. The learning in this lesson for all pupils was very good because of these very good teaching methods which interested them and demanded much of them, irrespective of their prior attainment. Very effective teaching methods were also seen in two Year 10 lessons on The League of Nations. Though different teachers taught these lessons, both used a series of contemporary cartoons to foster the pupils' analytical skills. The range of verbal answers provided was striking in terms of the high quality analysis offered, and this was matched by the quality of supporting written work. On the few occasions when teaching was not quite so demanding, the lessons tended to be more teacher centred. As a consequence, the pace of the lesson slowed, the challenges were less exacting and pupil involvement was less intense, and learning was less effective. In all years homework is regularly set and a strong emphasis is placed on pupils developing their writing skills. This strategy is successful and most pupils are able to produce thoughtful and well-presented work. The marking of the pupils' work is frequently good, though some work in Key Stage 3 is less thoroughly assessed; as a result, pupils do not know what they need to do to improve and sometimes do not achieve as well as they might.
126. History is a strong and popular subject and the department is very well managed. Schemes of work are thoughtfully planned, with suitable provision for the teaching of literacy, numeracy and ICT. Assessment procedures are also good and thorough, enabling the pupils' progress to be tracked and appropriate action taken if necessary. The previous report made some critical comments about the use of computers in the teaching of history. This criticism has been addressed, and many pupils in various years use the Internet for historical research. Such opportunities are very well planned. For example, Year 9 pupils research the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's site to glean information about the First World War. This work has been thoughtfully extended so that local and family history is incorporated into the tasks set. As a result, some pupils have been successful in tracing the burial sites of lost relatives. This work is not only highly successful in stimulating historical enquiry, but it also makes an excellent contribution to the pupils' spiritual development. The previous inspection identified history as a strong department. Since the publication of that report, the department has continued its effectiveness; many improvements have been made and, when the imminent move to new accommodation is completed, teachers will be able to develop further the range of effective teaching strategies they presently employ.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

127. Standards have been rising in recent years and are now broadly in line with those seen nationally at both key stages. However, some important gaps remain, and the experiences of pupils are inconsistent, still depending too much on chance factors. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000, the teachers' own assessments show pupils obtaining standards similar to national averages, with boys performing a little less well than girls. However, the absence of effective assessment procedures means that the reliability of reported levels of attainment cannot be assured. Nonetheless, standards have improved dramatically in the last three years. Present standards at Key Stage 4 are much better than past results at GCSE in recent years. In reality, in 2000, only three pupils took the GCSE combined information technology and business studies, and a further four took the GCSE short course in information technology; with such small numbers, no reliable statistical conclusions can be made about the 2000 results. The combined GNVQ/GCSE information technology course in the present Year 10 is much more popular, with over 40 pupils participating.
128. At the end of Key Stage 3, overall standards in work seen during the inspection are average; standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are also average. The pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall. They are achieving well in their work in individual lessons but, over time, they have significant gaps in their understanding of important aspects of ICT. Particularly in Year 9, the achievements of some pupils are below what they could be because ICT is not taught separately, and it is taught irregularly in other subjects, often by non-specialists: hence, the pupils' experiences and achievements are inconsistent. The attainments of girls are a little higher than those of boys, in work observed during the inspection. Higher attaining pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 make good progress, but make unsatisfactory progress in Year 9. Such pupils in Year 7, for example, are able to insert a banner headline, format columns and multiple images into a newsletter, and then proof-read and check spellings - all using a desk-top publishing program. At least a third of Year 7 pupils have had low prior attainments and experiences of using ICT in their primary schools, but their work develops well during the year, and they become able to run word processing applications. Pupils with prior average attainments in Year 8 can compare word-processing and desktop publishing applications to ascertain their fitness for purpose. Their past work contains some examples of spreadsheets, questionnaires and presentations – mostly of average quality. There was very limited evidence of specific ICT attainment in Year 9 because it is not taught as a separate subject, and its regular use in other subjects is limited to a few departments; however many pupils in Year 10 are clearly making up for time lost in Year 9. Sometimes, pupils with special educational needs make unsatisfactory progress. This is because they are given unexciting tasks, which do not match their needs closely enough. Occasionally, when teachers do not match work sufficiently to the needs of individuals, behaviour is unsatisfactory. When these occasions arise, the pupils' achievements are not as good as they should be. Overall, however, the attitudes of most pupils to learning and their standards of behaviour are good. Most listen attentively to instructions, concentrate well, react with enthusiasm, and handle resources with care because of the good teaching they receive. As a result, the progress and achievements of most pupils in individual lessons are good, and working on computers is a popular activity.
129. The overall contribution made by other subjects to the development of ICT skills is less than is seen in many schools, but is getting better. The English curriculum makes a satisfactory contribution to the pupils' skills in ICT. There are examples of good practice in design and technology; for example, in a Year 10 design and technology lesson, a pupil was able to write – and word-process - cogently and articulately about testing the health-conscious coating she had designed for a fish finger. Some other subjects also make good contributions to the development of ICT capability. In a modern languages lesson, pupils developed their fluency in creating slide shows for Spanish visitors using presentation software. In a Year 8 geography lesson, pupils collated data about Brazil, including text, photographs, images, maps and logos from electronic encyclopaedias, Internet websites and the school's networked Intranet. This work was only constrained in its outcome by the lack of a colour printer in the computer room. Pupils studying British history have extended their learning about the Great War by accessing the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's very good website. However, in general, standards in ICT are not



sufficiently improved by the use of computers in other subjects, particularly mathematics; nonetheless, the picture is improving as more teachers are given training. Further developments are constrained by the small amount of time available to the ICT coordinator to lead and manage the provision and teaching of ICT across the curriculum.

130. The overall quality of teaching is good; almost half the teaching seen is very good. Where teaching is most effective, both in separate ICT classes and as part of lessons in modern foreign languages, design & technology and geography, teachers know their subjects well and communicate their aims clearly. They prepare work and resources very carefully, explain concepts clearly, manage groups effectively, and maintain a quick pace throughout. As a result, learning proceeds rapidly. Pupils are not afraid to ask for help when they need it, knowing it will be provided quickly and knowledgeably. High attaining pupils in Year 10 have reached high standards in their design work due to well-informed, sharply focused teaching. Good teachers ask probing questions well and do not just accept the first answer pupils give. Pupils develop a healthy, analytical approach as a result. In the few lessons where teaching is less effective, it is because non-specialists lack sufficient guidance to support their teaching, and teachers do not cross-check rigorously what pupils have learned. Learning support assistants are not often used to support pupils in their computer work, but, when they are, they are well prepared; on such occasions, their impact on the pupils' learning is considerable. The in-service training and education programme in ICT, delivered by Mounts Bay's specialist teachers, is good, but, to raise the overall standards of teaching, it needs to be available to more members of staff.
131. The subject is led soundly by the head of department; however, she teaches other subjects for over half of each week. This means she has limited time to raise standards through monitoring the quality of ICT teaching, and through guiding non-specialists in using ICT in their subject lessons. The ICT scheme of work helps develop skills and knowledge in Year 7 and Year 8, but does not have a place to do so in Year 9. The school's planning and provision for ICT does not meet statutory requirements in Key Stage 3; the subject is not taught separately in Year 9, and non-specialist teachers are not monitored or guided sufficiently to ensure all aspects and skills are taught. Consequently, provision is variable and delivery of all the necessary strands of the subject cannot be assured for all pupils. The procedures for assessment are non-existent in Key Stage 3 and thus unsatisfactory. Teachers do not yet track the performance of pupils over time. Pupils have developed individual portfolios of their work in Key Stage 3, but they contain little assessment of quality. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to evaluate their own achievements, for example in whole-class sessions at the end of lessons. Most hardware resources are of excellent quality although a little limited in quantity. The lack of a colour printer in one of the computer suites limits standards of printed work. Plans are in place to upgrade computers in a number of departments such as science, and design & technology. Currently, the lack of sufficient computers means that some pupils have fewer opportunities than others to use computers. Increased provision is planned for the autumn and this should ease the "bottleneck" for teachers and pupils, and enable the good software resources to be used more effectively. Computers with CD ROM facilities and Internet access are available for individual research in the computer suites and around the school; these facilities have a very positive impact on the pupils' learning.
132. There is much still to do in this area of the school's curriculum. Insufficient training for teachers or the IT technician, too few up-to-date computers, and inadequate assessment have limited developments in the past. However, from a low base, the subject has made good progress since the last inspection, and shows a commitment to improve further. Teachers are developing a good degree of subject knowledge and this is having an increasingly positive effect upon attainment. Separate lessons of ICT have been introduced at Key Stage 3, although not yet for Year 9. An ICT coordinator has been appointed, although the time for her to develop that role is as yet limited. The school's equipment has received a major refurbishment in the computer suite, which is now being extended to assist teachers using ICT in other subjects. This gives room for optimism about the future.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

133. In the 2000 GCSE examinations in French, the percentage of pupils with higher grades A\* - C is above the national average for both boys and girls. These results show good progress and achievement in the subject since the end of Year 9. Both boys and girls tend to do well in French in comparison with the other subjects they take. The 2000 results show a marked improvement over the previous two years when results matched the national average. The results at grades A\* - C in German are well above national averages. In this year group, German was taken largely by higher attaining pupils and the results are in line with the expectations for this group. Although the percentage of these higher grades is lower than previous years, there has been consistently high attainment since the last inspection. For this year group, Spanish was offered largely to lower attaining pupils. At the higher grade levels of A\* - C, results are well below national averages with boys performing significantly less well than girls. Although the results are an improvement on previous years, the pupils' performance in Spanish tends to be below their performance in their other GCSE subjects. Very commendably, the school enters almost all pupils for GCSE, and, in 2000, more than 97 per cent were awarded a grade and so left school with certification in a modern foreign language.
134. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above national average levels for 14 year olds in French. In Spanish and German, where pupils are in only their second year of learning the language, they are accelerating towards the standards expected of first language learners because both teaching and learning are good. Pupils working towards the GCSE are above average. In both key stages, there is good achievement from all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, resulting from the high quality of teaching and the pupils' good attitudes to language learning. Pupils arrive at lessons prepared, settle quickly and are receptive and responsive to the teachers. There is a mature work tone in lessons with a clear focus on the tasks set. Pupils are very cooperative in pair-work where they work easily in boy-girl partnerships. One Year 8 group worked silently for a whole lesson to create the right environment for individual pupils to take a speaking test. These attitudes contribute to the high standards observed and the high levels of achievement. In all three languages, listening skills are good and reflect the teachers' use of the foreign language for the greater part of all lessons. As a result, pupils respond instinctively to classroom instructions. When speaking, nearly all pupils have the confidence to ask questions and to engage in structured conversations in pair work. In speaking, there is again a clear match between the intensity of language use by the teacher and the pupils' fluency. Speaking skills in French could be improved by increased challenge and firmer insistence on accurate pronunciation. Writing is satisfactory in both key stages; often, especially with higher attaining pupils, it is better. There are high levels of accuracy in practice exercises. By the end of Year 9 in French, pupils can write short letters to pen friends about themselves and their families. In Spanish and German, pupils produce simple dialogues. Pupils show creativity in producing attractive tourist brochures on Penzance with computer presentation or by presenting the brochure in attractive shapes such as a Cornish Pasty. There are some good examples of more extended writing in GCSE coursework but a number of repeated simple errors indicate that the correction policy is not always implemented consistently. Pupils of all years and abilities use computers well to complement and stimulate their study of language. Pupils produce charts to show the findings of surveys, and text for neat presentation. Pupils know how to prepare computer presentations and how to insert foreign accents and symbols.
135. The quality of teaching in all languages in both key stages is good; it is never less than sound but more frequently good or very good. The characteristics of this good teaching lead to equally good learning by pupils, irrespective of their prior attainments. All teachers have good personal language skills and teach largely in the foreign language. The availability of native speakers is a bonus for both teachers and pupils, because it ensures language used is authentic. As a result pupils are used to the speed and intonation of the foreign language and develop good listening skills. In several lessons pupils listen to recordings of the language being spoken at normal speed and are able to pick out key information. Teachers have good relationships with the pupils, so that several lessons can be a good balance between fun and learning. The pupils' enjoyment of their lessons contributes significantly to the success of their learning. Teachers know the pupils well as individuals and use this knowledge in planning the work to appropriate ability levels. In one

Year 10 German class, a sentence sorting exercise was offered at three levels so that the higher attaining pupils were challenged. In a Year 7 group where half the pupils had special educational needs, the new material was limited to give all pupils the chance to succeed. In this lesson the work of learning assistants working with individual pupils encouraged full participation by those pupils. Classroom control is firm but fair. Teachers make their expectations of behaviour clear and create an environment where good learning takes place. Teachers use a good variety of strategies and activities to stimulate interest and support learning. The department has bought new course books to provide more suitable material for some pupils. There is much good practice and teachers would develop their teaching skills further if they were able to benefit from observing each other teach. The languages teachers make very good use of computers to improve the pupils' motivation. In some groups, where the pupils' interest in language learning is limited, the preparation of computer presentations creates great interest in these pupils and the standard of their final work is of a high quality. As a further stimulus, some teachers have initiated e-mail links with French and German pen friends. All these techniques successfully promote good learning. Teachers regularly assess pupils and keep good records. Books are regularly marked with supportive comments but one weakness is that teachers do not use National Curriculum levels to inform pupils of their attainment or to challenge them to move on to the next level. There is no consistent requirement for correction and this results in many elementary mistakes being repeated, and thus hinders progress.

136. Management of the department is very good. The new head of department has been perceptive in identifying key aspects of teaching and learning for development, and has shown great energy and time commitment in converting targets on paper into departmental practice. She is well supported by an able team willing to share her commitment and the work. Already they have developed outline schemes of work to match new courses and new curriculum requirements. These schemes, when fully developed, will support teachers in their detailed planning. One of the key issues already addressed is that of the motivation of boys. In response, they have changed seating arrangements, introduced more computer programmes and conducted a survey of attitudes to decide on further modifications of language programmes. These changes have already led to constructive oral work in pairs and raised the interest of a number of pupils. The quality of teaching observed and the success of developments already in place are indicative of the department's capacity to succeed and raise standards still further.
137. The last inspection identified only minor weaknesses and the department has successfully addressed these. In order to sustain current progress the department would benefit from addressing the following issues: the completion of the draft schemes of work to make them working documents for daily lesson planning; the monitoring of teaching to ensure and identify good practice; the extension of its assessments and use of analysis in planning and target setting, and the standardisation of its marking and correction policies.

## **MUSIC**

138. On entry to the school, the standards of the pupils' musical understanding are average for their age. In the year 2000 GCSE examination, the proportion attaining grades A\*-C was below the national average, and in 1999 the proportion was well below the national average. Factors that cause pupils to perform below the national average have not been rigorously or accurately identified. For instance, in the departmental development planning, the end of year departmental review and the analysis of the examination results, factors that have caused results to be persistently below average have not been satisfactorily identified. By contrast, the standards of instrumental playing by pupils who have lessons from visiting teachers are high. Pupils who contribute to extra curricular rehearsals and performances achieve well.
139. By the end of Key Stage 3, the teachers' assessments suggest that a higher than average proportion reach or exceed the national expectation for this age group. Inspection evidence shows this not to be the case; standards are below the national average rather than above. The pupils' achievements are, therefore, unsatisfactory because they come in with average standards and end up at the end of Key Stage 3 with below average standards. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils

rarely sing, although some perform simple melodies on electronic keyboards with accuracy. Some higher attaining pupils successfully add left hand accompaniments to their tunes, selecting stylistic features that enhance the original melody. Pupils who play band and orchestral instruments make good progress in their instrumental lessons and rehearsals, but do not always make sufficient progress in their class lessons, because they are expected to do what other pupils are doing rather than tackling more ambitious music. In one Year 7 music lesson, for instance, three pupils who played the clarinet did the same work as all other pupils, with no recognition given to their particular skills. Whilst the pupils' compositions show an elementary sense of structure, they lack subtlety. For instance, pupils in Year 7 made up pieces based on rhythmic ostinato. This work was too easy for them; no use was made of melody, and pupils were not required to incorporate contrast between the parts. Pupils do not develop sufficient competence using computer-based applications because there is only one computer in the department. There is no difference between the achievements of boys or girls, and those pupils who have special educational needs make sound progress in Year 8 and 9 as a result of the grouping arrangements that place pupils with others of similar levels of attainment.

140. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards are slightly below what is expected for this age group. Most GCSE pupils have instrumental lessons and play to a fairly advanced standard. However, unsatisfactory progress in the composition and aural parts of the GCSE result in pupils attaining grades that are below their true potential. Year 11 pupils were not in school during the inspection. Tapes of the pupils' performances and compositions were listened to. These show that whilst pupils attain high standards of performance, their compositions do not use the structures of music in a sufficiently elaborate or convincing way. Compositions are often based on simple musical ideas, with little sense of musical development or ingenuity. Many pupils have a good grasp of musical theory that has been developed through having instrumental lessons from visiting teachers. However, they do not listen perceptively to music or use the language of music with awareness or discrimination.
141. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory in both key stages because there are recurring weaknesses in class music lessons. The music teacher is an able musician whose own skills are particularly evident when directing rehearsals and performances. In these circumstances, pupils respond well to the high expectations placed on them, and their musical learning clearly benefits from these ambitious demands. However, the principles of music are not clearly presented in class music lessons. In Key Stage 4, the teacher does not always have sufficiently high expectations of pupils, and so their learning is superficial. This results in unsatisfactory learning in the composition and listening elements of the course. The teacher's management of pupils is satisfactory in both key stages. The teacher has a good sense of humour and consequently manages to avoid poor behaviour from the pupils. However, the teacher is not always very clear when explaining what pupils need to do to improve. As a result, pupils do not learn in a focused way and therefore make insufficient progress. In a Year 7 lesson, for instance, there was little feedback to pupils on how to improve their group compositions and the teacher had not adequately marked folders containing written work. Pupils in some classes do not learn sufficiently from making music and there is an over-emphasis on listening to music and writing about it. As a result, many pupils become bored and their learning suffers. Most pupils behave well, even though they are not suitably challenged. They take care of the equipment and return items to their proper places at the end of lessons. The pupils' positive attitudes support their learning well.
142. The management of the department is unsatisfactory. As mentioned above, the teacher does not always identify aspects that will improve standards in either the department's development planning or in the annual reviews of the department's progress. However, the co-ordination and management of instrumental teaching and extra curricular provision is good. There has been insufficient response to some of the issues identified in the last inspection. The time available for music in both Key Stages is still short of the national average and there is still insufficient use of computers with pupils in Key Stage 3. All GCSE pupils are now taught in curriculum time, whereas at the time of the last inspection, they had to learn after school. However, standards remain below the national average.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

143. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards pupils attain at the age of 14 are above average for pupils of the same age nationally, confirming the teachers' own assessments in 2000. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils demonstrate standards that are also above average, which is similar to the 2000 GCSE examination results. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A\* to C in the 2000 GCSE examinations is well above the national average; all pupils entered in 2000 gained A\* to G grades. These GCSE results compare favourably with the results they achieved in other subjects; results show improvement over the last three years. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Many pupils in Year 11 successfully follow a certificated junior sports leaders course. Boys and girls also reach good standards in competitive sport in a range of extra-curricular and inter school sport; over 35 pupils represent the county at present, with five girls currently attending a centre of excellence for hockey and netball, and one boy has been selected for a place at an England centre for excellence for rugby.
144. The above average standards reached by the end of Key Stage 3 represent good achievement by most pupils compared with their standard on entry. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, show competence in a range of activities such as athletics, tennis, netball, and football. In games activities, pupils have a sound knowledge of the rules and appropriate skills to enable them to play successfully. Year 7 pupils know where the ball should bounce on court when making a tennis service; the majority makes successful attempts to serve over arm. When serving, some low attaining pupils have difficulty with the coordination of the toss of the ball and racket head. Pupils apply rules fairly, accepting the decisions of those who officiate. Year 7 pupils show a very good appreciation of safety requirements in athletic throwing events and adhere to them. In javelin throwing, they know there are two grips that can be used for throwing. By the end of Year 9 all groups of pupils know the effect of exercise on the body and understand some of the simple physiological changes that occur during warm-up. Many pupils effectively lead class warm-up sessions. High attaining pupils understand that the reasons for stretching are to minimise injury and maximise performance. They understand the importance of warm-up for both the legs and the arms as both have a vital role in jumping performances. Both boys and girls are fully involved in lessons. Planning, performing and the skills of observation, analysis and evaluation are successfully developed in the majority of lessons. The development and reinforcement of the pupils' literacy is brought about through the use of key words and good use of technical language. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 make good progress learning the basic skills of different aspects of physical education; they are achieving well.
145. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards reached by pupils in Key Stage 4 are above the level expected of the same age nationally. These standards are enhanced for many pupils through their involvement in extra-curricular clubs, school teams and representative honours. Although Year 11 were not present in school during the week of inspection, a sample of Year 11 GCSE course work was scrutinized; the work seen shows good achievement in relation to prior attainment across all groups of pupils. Pupils show good knowledge and understanding of the circulatory and skeletal systems and the effect that physical exercise has on the systems. Pupils make good use of computers to enhance presentation. All but the lowest attainers show a basic knowledge of sports injuries and the principles of treatment. Pupils very successfully develop their understanding and expertise in both theory and practical aspects working along side one another. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils successfully explained the difference between static, dynamic and explosive strength with good illustrations from a range of sports, though low attaining pupils did not fully understand the important concepts of power, dynamic strength and stamina within a range of sporting events and activities. Year 10 pupils successfully organize a mini athletic competition. Pupils refine and develop their skills in a range of athletic events such as static long jump, triple jump, javelin throwing and shot putting. Pupils make good progress and are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment as they build on the basic skills learned in Years 7 to 9. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are well included in lessons and receive good support by teachers, classroom assistants and their peers.

146. The quality of teaching and learning is good at both key stages. Teachers show good and sometimes very good knowledge and understanding of physical education. They apply this very successfully, which has a positive impact upon the pupils' learning. For example, in a Year 10 GCSE theory lesson, very good knowledge of training schedules challenged pupils in their thinking, and, as a consequence, extended their understanding. Teachers have high expectations of both the effort and behaviour of pupils, as shown in Year 10 athletics as pupils explore different sprinting techniques. The result of these high expectations is that pupils are keen to do well, and learn rapidly. Most pupils work hard and maintain their efforts and concentration. They persevere in order to produce their best results. During a Year 8 indoor athletics lesson, pupils, co-operatively in small groups, challenge and compete with one another constantly improving their performance, responding well to the well organised teaching which gives pupils much scope to use their initiative. Teachers make good use of questions and answers to reinforce the pupils' knowledge and understanding at the start of most lessons. This was well exemplified in a Year 10 GCSE theory lesson on training and a Year 9 lesson on sprinting. Overall planning and organisation are good; they ensure progression and continuity in lessons and from year to year, and thus promote good learning. Very good subject knowledge, effective planning and good relationships combine to ensure all pupils, including those with learning difficulties, make good progress in their learning. However, in a very small minority of lessons, there is an insufficient range of tasks and activities to cater for the wide range of abilities within a class, as was seen in a Year 10 lesson on high jumping. Teachers know their pupils well; they make effective use of the information from individual educational plans and, in most cases, adapt their teaching strategies to meet the needs of individual pupils. In all lessons throughout the age range, pupils with special educational needs are well included and make good progress in line with their peers.
147. The head of department shows good leadership and management of the subject; he gives good clear educational direction and receives good support from his colleagues. The physical education curriculum embraces recent national changes; however, there is now a need to review the programme and use of double lessons in view of the new and improved indoor facilities. Further updating of assessment procedures is needed to bring assessment in line with the latest assessment requirements. Numeracy skills give good support to learning; for example, in athletics, pupils very successfully time and measure one another as they participate in running, jumping and throwing activities. However, computers are not sufficiently used within the examination courses for the pupils' investigative work and in the administration of assessment; as a result, some learning opportunities are missed, and assessment is not used as effectively as it might to track the pupils' progress. The department offers a good and varied range of seasonal extra-curricular activities for all pupils. About a quarter of pupils regularly participate. This enhances the curriculum and provides opportunities to extend the more gifted and talented pupils. The 30 or so county championships and tournaments won by the school across all sports over the last five years illustrate both the opportunities provided, and the standards achieved, by the department. The monitoring of teaching is undertaken by the head of department. However, further development of regular and systematic monitoring of teaching is needed in order to share good practice and to raise the quality of teaching further.
148. The department has made good progress since the last inspection; many of the issues identified in the last inspection report have been addressed. There has been improvement in teaching and learning; as a consequence, standards have improved. Indoor facilities have now been significantly upgraded with the building of a very large indoor space for the development of indoor games; this newly opened facility should have a very positive impact on standards as it becomes an essential part of the school's facilities. The department works successfully as a team and it is strongly committed to the raising of standards still further.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

149. Standards at the end of both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are above those found nationally and above the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus. This is borne out through looking at the pupils' work and analysing performance data, including the results of the GCSE short course examinations. In 2000, 82 per cent of the year group took the short GCSE course, with nearly 60 per cent obtaining an A\* to C grade; these results represent very substantial achievement.
150. When pupils come into the school, their knowledge and understanding of religious issues is mixed, depending on which primary school they have attended. Pupils make satisfactory-to-good progress from the age of eleven to fourteen, and their achievement is good, when measured against the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus and the overall levels of their prior attainment. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve well and there is no discernible difference in achievement between boys and girls. All pupils learn about the principle beliefs of major world religions, and by the end of the key stage all have a basic understanding of such issues as the Hindu belief in reincarnation, or rites of passage such as Bar Mitzvah or confirmation. Higher attaining pupils develop a quite sophisticated understanding of religious and cultural matters. By the age of fourteen the majority of pupils are working at levels a little above those described in the Agreed Syllabus.
151. With overall standards well above average, the pupils' achievements during Key Stage 4 are good, and often very good. By the age of sixteen, higher and middle attaining pupils write detailed, extended pieces, exploring their own response to ethical and moral issues. Pupils on the GCSE short course concentrate on examining Christian and Muslim beliefs regarding such topics as 'Marriage and Family Life' and 'Matters of Life and Death'. Lower attaining pupils cover the same topics, writing less detailed, more straightforward accounts. By the end of the key stage most pupils are working at levels well above those set out in the Agreed Syllabus, with the highest attaining pupils achieving very high levels indeed. The pupils' writing is generally accurate, and the department emphasises the importance of using appropriate terminology, stressing the correct spellings.
152. Teaching is very good at both key stages. Strengths in teaching include the teachers' expertise and specialist subject knowledge, their use of questions to probe and push pupils to deepen their understanding and their enthusiasm and encouragement. In one lesson seen, a Year 8 class was looking at the symbols of Sikhism. The pupils made excellent gains in understanding Sikh cultural and religious practices because the teacher challenged them to think deeply. He showed pupils some religious artefacts and his specialist subject knowledge enabled him to explain their uses. The pupils were urged to respect these objects, and the pupils were engaged in a lively discussion. Pupils have very positive attitudes to the subject and they behave very well in lessons. These attitudes contribute to very good learning taking place. In discussions with pupils during the inspection, many felt that religious education is an important and valuable subject to study. There are very clear links between the very good teaching, the very positive attitudes, and the very high quality of the learning that takes place.
153. All pupils follow the GCSE short course and can opt to study the full course. Pupils successfully use computers either for research or presentation purposes in at least one unit of work in each year. The department makes some contribution to promoting literacy skills through use of key words and emphasis on spelling. The department makes an excellent contribution to the pupils' spiritual and moral education. In most lessons, teachers take the opportunity to encourage pupils to think deeply about important issues. The subject also makes a very good contribution to the pupils' knowledge and understanding of multi-cultural issues, through introducing pupils to different religious and cultural artefacts and by encouraging pupils to empathise with members of different faiths.
154. In the pupils' work seen, there is a lack of consistency in the teachers' marking, with some work only having very generalised comments written, which would not have helped pupils to know how they could improve their work. The use of assessment to set targets for individual pupils is also a developmental area for raising standards further.

155. The department is very well led and managed. The head of department has a very good sense of the direction in which the department is moving. He works very effectively with other members of the department and observes teaching in the subject, giving colleagues helpful feedback to improve their teaching. The head of department focuses on improving the pupils' learning, and he uses well-thought out strategies to help pupils to become reflective learners. He ensures that the subject is seen as important and that it makes a very significant contribution to the pupils' spiritual and moral development.
156. The department has maintained the standards, achievement and quality of teaching seen at the last inspection and has made good improvement in responding to the demands of the new locally Agreed Syllabus. It is well placed to improve even more.

## **VOCATIONAL COURSES, AND PERSONAL, SOCIAL & MORAL EDUCATION**

157. The provision made for vocational education is good and for work-related learning is very good. In terms of developing work-related learning, the school has been innovative and has succeeded in developing a most worthwhile package of courses.
158. Vocational education is presently limited to a GNVQ intermediate course in information technology that is offered in Year 10. The standards reached so far are broadly average, but pupils are achieving well in relation to the prior attainment. There are also firm intentions to extend this provision for the next academic year when a GNVQ course in manufacturing will also be offered. The planning for both courses is good and teachers have developed a range of very good of teaching modules for the information technology course, all of which pupils can access through the school's computer network. The good quality teaching is making a significant contribution to rising standards and the pupils' good achievements. Much thought has been given to the provision for work-related learning and the courses that are offered are most successful in offering interesting and valid options to groups of pupils who might otherwise become disenchanted with a traditional academic curriculum. The programme commences in Year 9, with additional courses available in both Years 10 and 11. By working in association with the local Education Business Partnership, pupils have the option of extending their programme into Year 12 by enrolling at a local further education college. These programmes concentrate on developing life skills and giving the pupils extended opportunities to undertake work experience. Although levels of attainment remain low, the outcomes in terms of boosting confidence, improving attendance, improving behaviour and improving employability are all good. It was not possible to see any teaching during the inspection, but very good assessment procedures have also been developed so that graduates from the courses can present potential employers with an informative portfolio of achievements.
159. The provision for personal, social and moral education is very good; it is a real strength of the school and makes a very significant contribution to all pupils' personal development, as well as preparing them well for life beyond the school. The programme of study is broad and balanced, and includes health education and careers education and elements of citizenship. Most of the course is taught by the head of personal, social & moral education; the quality of teaching is very good, with much that is inspirational. Many very good teaching strategies are used to engage pupils, including role-play activities, computer programmes and very good community links. The pace of lessons is outstanding and pupils are highly motivated. All these factors mean that the quality of learning is also very high, and all pupils are achieving very well; they are very successfully developing their understanding of, and sensitivity to, many important and often controversial aspects of modern life and personal relationships.