

**INSPECTION REPORT**

**THE SWEYNE PARK SCHOOL**

RAYLEIGH

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 131110

Headteacher: Mrs Kate Spiller

Reporting inspector: W Keast  
1522

Dates of inspection: 26 – 30 March 2001

Inspection number: 230985

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:	Sir Walter Raleigh Drive Rayleigh Essex
Postcode:	SS6 9BZ
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Peter Smith
Date of previous inspection:	The school has not been inspected before

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1522	W Keast	Registered inspector		The school's results and achievements. How well are pupils taught?
19798	J O'Keefe	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
22423	J Lovgreen	Team inspector	English	
1292	V Foster	Team inspector	Mathematics	
29742	P Fyans	Team inspector	Science	
2501	R Allison-Smith	Team inspector	Art	How well is the school led and managed?
2495	B Munden	Team inspector	Design and technology	
25073	S Jordan	Team inspector	Geography History	
10817	G Rayner	Team inspector	Information and communications technology	How well does the school care for its pupils?
2496	T O'Sullivan	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
11746	R Coulthard	Team inspector	Music Religious education	
30800	B Colley	Team inspector	Physical education Equal opportunities	
23880	O Hall	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
19122	A Hope	Team inspector		Resource base unit for hearing-impaired pupils

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Sweyne Park School is a mixed comprehensive school for 1081 pupils on the western edge of Rayleigh. The school opened in September 1997 as a result of an amalgamation of two existing schools. It is similar in size to most secondary schools. The number of pupils (15) from ethnic minority groups and the number of pupils for whom English is an additional language (9) are low. None of this latter group of pupils is at an early stage of learning English and needing particular help. Ninety-nine pupils are known to be eligible for a free school meal. This proportion (9.2 per cent) is below the national average. The school has a 24-place area unit for pupils with hearing impairment. The proportion of pupils on the special educational needs register (20 per cent) is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with statements of educational need (3.4 per cent) is above the national average. This includes the pupils in the unit. The needs of pupils, for whom the school involves external specialist help, relate equally to hearing impairment, emotional and behavioural difficulties and specific learning difficulties. The school is in an area in which selection takes place. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school, as shown by the results of national testing at the end of Year 6 and of the nationally standardised testing that the school undertakes, is below the national average. This has changed little in the last four years. The socio-economic context of the areas from which pupils are drawn is broadly average.

The inspection of this school included a detailed inspection of its provision for pupils with special educational needs.

### HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is very effective. The examination results achieved by pupils are above the national average and well above those of similar schools. Standards currently being demonstrated in Year 11 are also above national expectation. These high standards result from the good teaching which pupils experience and their own very good attitudes to school and to learning. The leadership and management of the school are excellent. The expenditure per pupil for the mainstream provision is a little above the national mean. The school provides good value for money.

#### What the school does well

- it provides excellent leadership and management
- it achieves high results in GCSE through good teaching and very good pupil attitudes and behaviour
- it provides very good extra-curricular opportunities and excellent opportunities for social development
- it cares for its pupils very well and has excellent procedures for monitoring and promoting and supporting pupils' academic progress and personal development
- it makes very effective provision for hearing-impaired pupils and integrates them well
- it works very well with its parents and provides an excellent quality of information for them

#### What could be improved

- the curriculum provision to meet statutory requirements, in Years 10 and 11, in design and technology and religious education

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

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

This is the first time that this school has been inspected. Since the amalgamation, the head has successfully merged the two groups of staff into a cohesive unit. Standards have risen over the last three years, the school has successfully gained several awards and a decline in pupil numbers has been reversed. The school is oversubscribed.

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

Results, in 2000, in the national testing at the end of Year 9 were in line with both the national average and the average for similar schools. Results in mathematics and science were above the national average and in line with that of similar schools. Results in English were in line with the national average but below the similar school average. On average, over the last three years, boys' and girls' results have been close to the respective national average. When compared to their attainment on entry to the school, this is good achievement.

Results at GCSE in 2000, in comparison with those of pupils who had gained similar scores at the end of Year 9 in 1998, were in the highest five per cent nationally. The high standards reached and the very good progress made from earlier attainment, represents very good achievement for this group of pupils. Results are improving year-on-year. Results in the different subjects of the curriculum were at least broadly similar to the national averages. They were significantly better in science, design and technology, drama, English language, geography, German, information technology, mathematics and physical education.

The school exceeded its targets of 45 per cent gaining five or more grades A\*-C and an average point score of 39.

The overall standards of work of pupils currently in Year 9 are broadly at nationally expected levels. They are above this in design and technology, information and communications technology, and science. This represents generally good achievement and very good achievement in German where pupils have only studied the subject for two years. Standards in the current Year 11 are above nationally expected levels in all subjects except in art, where they are at the expected levels. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in art and generally good in other subjects. It is very good in French and German for this group of pupils.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy coming to school, the majority are keen to learn and take full advantage of the educational opportunities provided.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Bullying is rare and pupils are confident that any instances will be tackled firmly and effectively.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is very good and relationships are excellent. Pupils readily take responsibility and they take advantage of the many opportunities available to support their social and moral development.
Attendance	Attendance is above the national average and improving. There were no permanent exclusions in the last year.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Ninety-eight per cent of teaching was satisfactory or better and forty-one per cent was very good or excellent. Two per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory. Teaching in English, mathematics and science was good. Teaching was very good in design and technology, French, German, drama and geography, and in history in Years 10 and 11. It was satisfactory in art, and in music and history in Years 7-9. It was good in all other subjects and years. All aspects of teaching were, generally, strong. The comparative weakness in art was due to insufficient use being made of assessment data to plan work which appropriately challenged all pupils in a class. The unsatisfactory teaching occurred in different subjects and was because pupils did not make sufficient progress in those lessons.

The skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught in English and mathematics, respectively. Literacy skills are well developed and practised widely across the curriculum. Opportunities to develop and practise numeracy

skills are limited, but this has been recognised by the school and will be the focus of development in the summer term.

Pupils work hard. They increase their knowledge, skills and understanding in all subjects at a rate which is at least satisfactory and often good and very good. They generate copious amounts of, generally, well presented work, often enhanced by the use of computers. Good teaching leads to good learning.

The organisation and teaching meet the needs of all groups of pupils, well. Those with hearing impairment or other special educational needs are well supported in mainstream classes. The needs of pupils who are particularly talented are well met through the system of sets and additional, extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils with identified behavioural problems or who are potentially going to underachieve have specific support programmes. Therefore all pupils achieve well.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum offers more than the National Curriculum requires and is enhanced by a very good provision of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Provision for the hearing-impaired is very good. Both groups of pupils are well supported in mainstream classes and are enabled to take a full part in lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The opportunities for pupils' social development are excellent. There are very good opportunities for moral development and good opportunities for cultural development. Those for spiritual development are satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. Procedures for child protection are well established. The monitoring, and subsequent support, of pupils' academic achievement and personal development are excellent.

The school works in close partnership with its parents who are regularly consulted and whose views are considered when developments are planned. Parents are kept very well informed about their children's progress, the work of the school and school events and pupils' successes.

The curriculum in the early years is widened by the study of drama and, from Year 8, a second language for all pupils. In the examination years, pupils have an open and wide choice of subject options which the school timetables well to allow a high proportion of pupils to study their first choice. A well organised course of personal, social and health education is well taught to all year groups. From Year 9, this includes religious education but does not allow sufficient time for the school to meet the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus in Years 10 and 11. The school does not meet the statutory requirement for all pupils to study a course in design and technology in Years 10 and 11, nor the requirement for all pupils to have a daily act of collective worship. The school currently offers little in the way of vocational or work-related courses, but curriculum provision remains under constant review.

The school offers a particularly wide and varied programme of extra-curricular activities, from foreign residential visits to subject support workshops. These support and enhance the taught curriculum and provide many opportunities for pupils' personal development, and particularly their social development.

The monitoring of pupils' academic progress and their personal development is very thorough. The frequency of formal, individual meetings between pupils and their form tutor or head of year, is exceptional. Targets are agreed between teachers, pupils and parents, and are regularly reviewed. Potential underachievement is rapidly identified and effective support plans drawn up.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership and management of the school are excellent. The headteacher has created highly effective teams of senior and middle managers who share a strong sense of purpose and direction. The headteacher's belief that the school is a place where both pupils and staff learn to review and evaluate their work is central to the success of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are generally very effective in fulfilling their responsibilities. They are knowledgeable and provide effective guidance in enabling the school to improve. Through detailed communications and regular contact with the school, they are very well informed and are aware of the school's strengths and the areas for development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. The extensive monitoring of how teachers teach and pupils learn is central to the work of the school and has led to a rapid improvement in standards.
The strategic use of resources	There are excellent plans and systems in place for ensuring that resources are used to best effect and support the targets and projects the school has identified.

The school is very well staffed and the quality and range of learning resources are good. Accommodation is very good, providing a stimulating learning environment, and enabling subjects to be beneficially concentrated in suited rooms. The induction procedures for new teachers are excellent. Professional development is extremely effective and very well focused to meet individual and school needs.

Governors have not ensured that statutory requirements are met for design and technology and religious education in Key Stage 4, or for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

The school regularly compares and reviews its outcomes against both external and internal criteria. Detailed, self-critical monitoring and review of the educational provision lead to well planned and supported development. Resources are used carefully, value for money is sought and outcomes, particularly of training, are evaluated. The school applies the principles of best value very well.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That the school expects pupils to work hard and achieve their best</li> <li>• That their children make good progress</li> <li>• That teaching is good</li> <li>• That the school is well led and managed</li> <li>• That they feel comfortable about approaching the school</li> <li>• That the school helps their children to develop and provides an interesting range of extra-curricular activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some parents expressed concern about the regularity and quantity of homework</li> </ul>

The inspectors agree with the parents' positive views of the school. Parental opinion on homework was equally divided between those who felt there was too much and those who felt there was too little. Some parents felt that their children do not always receive homework at a steady rate. They were agreed, however, that teachers generally adhered to the published timetable and that matters had improved over the three years of the school's existence. The evidence from the inspection was that appropriate homework, both in quantity and content, was regularly set.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

- 1 In this report, the term 'standards' refers to pupils' attainment relative to some clear benchmark, such as National Curriculum levels, or descriptions, at the end of a key stage. 'Above average' standards, for example, means that a higher proportion of pupils of a particular age are succeeding at or beyond the level set in the majority of schools. 'Achievement' on the other hand, reflects the accomplishment of pupils in relation to what you would expect of these particular pupils. The pupils' prior attainment, what they can already do, is the reference point for assessing pupils' achievement. Similar schools refers to those schools with a similar proportion of pupils known to be entitled to a free school meal.
- 2 The attainment of pupils when they come to the school, as shown by the results of the national testing in Year 6 and the results of the nationally standardised tests used by the school, is below the national average. The results of the testing the school carries out have been similar for the last four years.
- 3 Results, in 2000, of the national testing at the end of Key Stage 3 were in line with the national average and with the average for similar schools. Results in mathematics and science were above the national average, while being in line with the similar schools' averages. Results in English were in line with the national average but below the average for similar schools. Boys performed slightly better in mathematics and girls slightly better in English but, overall, the difference in the performance of boys and girls was similar to the difference nationally. On average, over the last three years, the results of boys and girls have been close to the national averages. When compared with their standards on entry, this represents good achievement.
- 4 In the GCSE results in 2000, the proportions of pupils who gained five or more grades A\*-C (62 per cent) and who gained five or more grades A\*-G (96 per cent) were well above both the national averages and the averages for similar schools. The proportion of pupils who gained at least one grade A\*-G (98 per cent) was above the national average and close to the average for similar schools. Based upon the average point score per pupil (42), results were above both national and similar schools' averages. Results in 2000, in comparison with those of pupils who had gained similar scores at the end of Year 9 in 1998, were in the highest five per cent nationally. Boys' results were well above, and girls' results were above, the respective national average. On average, over the last three years, results have been above the national average. Over the last three years, results have been gradually rising. The high standards reached from their earlier attainment, represents very good achievement for this group of pupils.
- 5 GCSE results in the different subjects of the curriculum were at least broadly similar to the national averages. They were significantly better in science, design and technology, drama, English language, geography, German, information technology, mathematics and physical education. When compared to all the subjects they studied, pupils made comparatively greater progress in science, design and technology, French, information and communications technology (ICT), mathematics and physical education, and comparatively less progress in art, media studies, English language and literature, geography, history and travel and tourism.
- 6 The school exceeded its targets of 45 per cent gaining five or more grades A\*-C and an average total point score of 39. These targets had been agreed with the local education authority and were derived from predictions based upon the results of the nationally standardised testing undertaken in Year 7.
- 7 From scrutiny of work and classroom observations, the standards being achieved by pupils currently in Year 9 are broadly similar to those nationally expected of pupils of this age and by the Locally Agreed Syllabus in religious education. They are above this expectation in science, design and technology and

ICT. When compared to their prior attainment, this represents good achievement in nearly all subjects. Achievement is satisfactory in English, music and religious education, but in German, where pupils have only been studying the subject for two years, achievement is very good. The standards of pupils currently in Year 11 are, overall, above the nationally expected level for pupils of this age. They are at the expected level in art. The standards being attained by these pupils, when compared with their earlier attainment, represents generally good achievement. Their achievement is satisfactory in art and is very good in French and German.

- 8 Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory achievement overall in relation to their prior attainment. At Key Stage 3, these pupils are making good progress in the additional literacy and numeracy programmes linked to *Successmaker* and in the paired reading scheme. In English, the pupils' speaking and listening skills are better developed than their skills in writing. Here, pupils find difficulty in extending their ideas beyond the personal. At Key Stage 4, pupils withdrawn for support make satisfactory gains because they receive individual and small group teaching to improve their literacy skills. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson they made good progress in planning and presentation through the use of information communications technology. Hearing-impaired pupils are well integrated and their standards and achievement are similar to those of their hearing peers. The few pupils for whom English is an additional language do not require additional support. A small group of gifted and talented pupils are appropriately challenged by the work in the higher sets and additional extra curricular opportunities.
- 9 Standards in literacy are satisfactory. When they start school in Year 7, pupils are lively and confident speakers. They tend to use colloquial language where more formality would be appropriate, but do listen well. Most pupils have the ability to read for information and with understanding, though few read aloud with sufficient volume or expression. Written work shows bright ideas and a good range of vocabulary, but basic skills, such as punctuation and, especially, spelling, are poor. Inspectors found that overall, pupils had good listening skills and were increasingly learning to discuss ideas using the correct vocabulary and Standard English. Enthusiasm to read aloud was too rarely matched by skill in interpreting meaning. Written skills have developed well, although the presentation and accuracy of some work was weaker.
- 10 Standards of numeracy are good. Pupils acquire their numeracy skills in their mathematics lessons. Pupils have opportunities to collect, analyse and present data in geography and science. In history, they draw graphs to illustrate data, for example of inflation in Germany between 1914 and 1923. In textiles in Year 9, pupils use graphs to present the results of surveys. In physical education, pupils estimate distances. Geography fieldwork provides a range of opportunities for measurement. In food studies, pupils in Years 7 and 8 weigh and measure ingredients. Overall, pupils have limited opportunities to apply their numeracy skills in other subjects across the curriculum. This has been recognised and the school plans for a focus on numeracy next term.
- 11 Pupils' standards in ICT skills are good in both key stages. An essential skills course in ICT in Year 7 provides an effective foundation for pupils to make early and fast progress from the modest overall level of capability with which they enter the school. All other opportunities in Key Stage 3 to develop and apply ICT skills take place in the context of the subjects. A well-planned cross-curricular scheme of work is generally implemented well. The school is aware of the need to improve its provision of the measuring aspect, and has purchased equipment and arranged staff training so that this can take place during science lessons. The school is aware that a small minority of pupils in Key Stage 4 do not have a systematically guaranteed provision of opportunities to work with computers, and is exploring ways of addressing this, including a pilot course for GNVQ key skills in ICT.

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

- 12 Pupils clearly enjoy coming to this school and have very good attitudes to their work. In the majority of lessons seen, pupils' attitudes were good or better and in some cases excellent. Pupils are very motivated and want to do well. In lessons they maintain concentration well and listen carefully to the staff and to each other. They are very responsive to questioning and they are able to talk confidently about their work. Behaviour is generally very good in classrooms and around the school. Despite some narrow corridors in the building, pupils move around the school safely and sensibly. Bullying is rare in the school and pupils are very confident that, should it occur, it will be dealt with very firmly by the staff. Pupils are courteous and friendly and always willing to help visitors in the school. They are mature and respond very well to any opportunities to take responsibility. The school council members, who are elected by fellow pupils, take their role very seriously and they confidently present pupils' concerns and suggestions to the school's senior management.
- 13 Pupils with special educational needs have good attitudes to study and enjoy activities that help them understand the tasks set by teachers and learning support assistants. The majority are keen and interested and are willing to read and listen to stories. Behaviour is very good because pupils are supported well in structured, progressive and achievable tasks that motivate them and help them gain confidence.
- 14 Relationships within the school are excellent and are a real strength. In personal and social education lessons, where sensitive issues such as death are being dealt with, pupils listen carefully to each other and treat everyone's responses with respect. Pupils and staff are supportive and considerate to each other. In physical education lessons, pupils perform well in teams. During lessons, most pupils are considerate to teachers and work very well together in pairs and small groups. During lunchtimes, some Year 10 pupils give up their breaks to support pupils in Year 7 who are having difficulty with reading. This has a very positive effect on both their confidence and reading skills.
- 15 Attendance in the school is good, overall, and well above the national average. These figures have been steadily improving. Punctuality is good and pupils are aware of the procedures if they do arrive late. Registers are taken promptly and efficiently and lessons start on time. There were no permanent exclusions in the last year. The proportion of pupils excluded for a fixed period is similar to that in a third of schools nationally.

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

- 16 The quality of teaching and learning are good and of a similarly high standard in both key stages. Ninety-eight per cent of lessons were satisfactory or better, and forty-one per cent were very good or excellent. Only two per cent of the 151 lessons observed were unsatisfactory. The teaching was good at all levels, but the highest concentration of good and better teaching was in Year 10, and the lowest in Year 7.
- 17 There are significant strengths throughout the teaching. Teachers have good, and frequently very good, subject knowledge. This enables them to give clear explanations, skilfully use questioning to probe and extend pupils' understanding and introduce a wide range of examples in lessons. This was noted especially in design and technology, geography, French and German. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well throughout the school. Teachers have developed a thorough and methodical approach to planning lessons that encourages an efficient response from pupils. Careful preparation is a strong feature in most lessons. It was very strong in science, English, geography, French, German and design and technology, and in history at Key Stage 4. Teachers share learning objectives, that is what it is expected pupils will learn from the work, with pupils at the beginning of each lesson. They usually begin with lively question-and-answer sessions that recall or establish a topic and set a good pace for the lesson. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. The good pace of lessons was a regular feature in English, and teachers set effective deadlines to stimulate the pace of work in most subjects.

- 18 Teachers support individual pupils well when they are working. This is particularly effective when it is done unobtrusively to preserve the studious mood of a lesson, as was observed in modern foreign languages and religious education. Lesson objectives are reviewed towards the end of lessons in most subjects, so that pupils can effectively consolidate what they have learned. Where worksheets are used, these are of a high quality in both content and presentation throughout the school. There is generally good use of computers across the curriculum. Pupils used them effectively and independently for research, for example in religious education and personal, social and health education. A good variety of teaching methods is employed, for example in physical education and mathematics, but some opportunities were missed for pupils to exercise independence and responsibility for their own work in ICT. Good use of paired and group work was noted in geography and religious education, and good collaborative working in English and drama.
- 19 Homework is well used and carefully set, for example in music and religious education and modern foreign languages, and is either a worthwhile extension of what has been done in a lesson or a useful preparation for the following lesson. Teachers have valuable data on each pupil's attainment, which helps them to plan suitably challenging lessons. This was clearly done in music, mathematics and modern foreign languages, but information from assessment was insufficiently used in art to set different challenges for pupils of differing levels of attainment. However, written feedback from teachers was carefully targeted towards improving pupils' learning in some art lessons. Marking is regularly and carefully carried out in all subjects according to the school's scheme. Due regard is paid in assessment to pupils' individual targets. In Key Stage 4, marking is clearly related to GCSE requirements. Marking was very good in design and technology in Key Stage 4. Where in-class support is available, teachers manage it well, but there is a shortage of learning support assistants in science and ICT in some lessons which involved pupils whose behaviour was challenging. Communicators who support pupils with hearing impairment work very effectively, particularly in music and English, and usually so in science.
- 20 There were no common weaknesses within the teaching. In the three lessons judged unsatisfactory, which were in different subjects, the teachers' expectations of the pupils were too low and pupils did not make sufficient progress.
- 21 Literacy skills are well taught in English and effectively practised and developed across the curriculum. Care has been taken to ensure that the literacy initiative is not over-identified with English teaching, nor seen as an emphasis on spelling and handwriting. All staff accept that effective teaching requires good literacy teaching. The display and use of *key words*, to develop vocabulary and accurate use of terminology, is consistent across the school. Teachers, in many subjects, plan speaking and listening tasks to stimulate thinking and understanding. Quiet reading is a regular part of tutor time in Key Stage 3. Numeracy skills are well taught in mathematics and are consolidated, through use, in subjects across the curriculum. That these opportunities are currently limited has been recognised by the school and plans are in place for this to be a training focus in the summer term.
- 22 Overall, teaching in English is good. Careful planning and clear explanation of aims with reference to the criteria for success, ensure that pupils know what they are doing, why they are doing it and how it will be assessed. This leads to good learning. Teaching in mathematics is good. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to give clear explanations, to develop and build on pupils' suggested strategies in class and to plan lessons well that build upon pupils' previous learning experiences. Pupils' learning, as a result, is good. In science, teaching is good. Teachers use questioning very well to probe pupils' understanding and to encourage them to extend their scientific skills. Pupils respond well to the very high expectations of their teachers and so their learning is good.
- 23 Teaching, and the subsequent learning, in the other subjects of the curriculum are satisfactory or better.

- 24 Teaching in art is satisfactory, and sometimes is good. It is particularly effective when teachers demonstrate different techniques or show examples of work by other pupils, and when challenging questioning requires pupils to look more closely or think deeply before giving extended answers. Weaknesses in teaching relate mainly to long and short term planning and assessment. Most pupils learn satisfactorily. The very good teaching in design and technology, particularly in food and textiles, leads to good learning. Very good subject knowledge enables teachers to plan in detail and use their good assessment procedures to provide individual support. Teaching in geography is very good. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and a good balance between teacher input and pupil activities ensures that pupils are responsible for their own learning. This development of independence in their learning and their own perseverance, contribute to the very good learning which occurs.
- 25 Teaching in history, overall, is good. It is very effective in Key Stage 4. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic. As a result explanations are clear and interesting. Teachers respond to pupils' questions with insight and knowledge. Pupils' learning is also good. The good teaching in ICT leads to good learning. Work is explained well, so that pupils are clear about their tasks, and questioning is used well to allow pupils to practise and test their developing knowledge and understanding. Teaching in both French and German is very good at all levels. Teachers' lively and motivating approach, good use of target language, very good preparation and resourcing of lessons, and the brisk pace and challenge, result in very good learning. Teaching in music is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and is good in Key Stage 4. Clear explanation of learning objectives lead to purposeful engagement with tasks and developing independence in learning. Lack of pace in some group activities led to a slower rate of progress.
- 26 Very good teaching in drama leads to very good learning. Teachers plan, organise and manage classes very well: they explain detailed lesson objectives, structure lessons carefully to balance activities, and allow pupils some independence within a disciplined environment. Teaching in physical education is good. Teachers' good subject knowledge results in clear direction and well planned lessons. Learning is good as pupils improve their performance through careful observation and assessment of one another. Teaching in religious education in Key Stage 3 is good, and sometimes very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and explain topics at an appropriate level for the pupils. Good use of time allows opportunity to consolidate and review what has been learned at the end of the lesson. The good level of individual support contributes to the good learning.
- 27 The teaching meets the needs of boys and girls, and of higher-attaining pupils, well. The quality of teaching and learning, overall, for pupils with special educational needs is good. Teaching for the lowest sets in Years 7 and 9 is most effective in English. Teachers have a clear focus on the planning and teaching of basic skills for the lower-attaining pupils in most subject areas. It is most effective in the additional literacy and numeracy lessons observed where teacher and learning support assistant work effectively as a team to improve pupils' spelling and mental arithmetic skills. Staff have very good relationships with pupils and know them well. A particular strength in the learning development department is the varied and practical approach to teaching that staff use to help pupils learn and raise their self-esteem. For example, in the additional German support lesson for Year 10 pupils, the effective use of overhead projector, key words and pictures improved their oracy and extended their vocabulary because the activities planned were challenging and enjoyable. Lower-attaining pupils are successfully encouraged to use ICT to present English assignments; however, hand writing skills are weaker for a few pupils. As a result, they produce less extended writing. Learning support staff effectively record day-to-day incidents and achievements of the pupils they support. However, progress is inconsistently linked to key skills.

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

- 28 The curriculum is broad and well balanced in Key Stage 3. Pupils study the full National Curriculum with drama and a course in personal, social and health education (PSHE). All study a second foreign language from Year 8. In Years 10 and 11, the school continues to offer a broad curriculum, designed to provide a balanced and challenging education. In addition to a basic core, pupils choose freely from a wide range of options. Equality of opportunity and access to the curriculum are very good: a very high proportion of pupils obtain their first choices. The higher-attaining pupils are enabled to fulfil their potential through the setting system and opportunities to study three separate sciences and two languages. Principles of social and educational inclusion provide a strong philosophical underpinning for the curriculum. The performance of boys and girls is carefully monitored.
- 29 The school has only nine pupils who have English as an additional language. None is at an early stage of language acquisition or requiring support in English. The attainment and achievement of this group of pupils are consistent with those of their peers.
- 30 The quality and range of learning opportunities for pupils with special educational needs, overall, are satisfactory. There are strengths at Key Stage 3 in the paired reading, additional literacy and numeracy learning opportunities through *Successmaker* ICT programmes, and the effective provision, through pastoral support plans, for pupils with behaviour difficulties. Low-attaining and special educational needs pupils benefit appropriately from the low numbers in teaching groups and the way in which learning support is organised to ensure that the maximum number of pupils receive help in English, mathematics and science. However, opportunities for pupils with special educational needs and lower-attaining pupils in Year 10 to opt for work-related, modified courses are limited.
- 31 A successful innovation in the curriculum this year has been the introduction of special ‘Curriculum Days’ in which each year group spends a day engaged in extended and intensive activities based on one subject. Year 7, for example, worked on “Treasure Island”, while Year 10 explored the theme of suffering. It is proposed to expand the number of these events next year.
- 32 The school has developed very effective strategies for promoting pupils’ literacy skills. A survey of current practice has stimulated much debate and sharing of good ideas. Much professional development has taken place and more is planned. All staff accept that effective teaching requires good literacy teaching. This is effectively demonstrated in many ways. The display and use of key words to develop vocabulary and accurate use of terminology is consistent across the school. Teachers in many subjects plan speaking and listening tasks. Pupils read aloud in, for example, geography, science and design and technology. Opportunities to plan and give talks about project work are increasing. Teachers use more imaginative ways of presenting lessons. For example in history, poetry is used in the study of The Great War and extracts from *Animal Farm* to understand the history of the USSR. Poetry is encouraged in science, as are research skills. Group discussion is used particularly effectively in modern languages and science. The literacy initiative is co-ordinated by a senior teacher so that it is not over-identified with English teaching, nor seen as an emphasis on spelling and handwriting.
- 33 There are effective strategies for teaching numeracy skills. Pupils acquire their numeracy skills in their mathematics lessons. The mathematics department has responded to the key messages of the National Numeracy Strategy. Three-part lessons, often with a mental mathematics starter, are being taught in Year 7 and in some other years. At Key Stage 3, pupils have the opportunity to develop their numeracy skills through the use of an integrated learning system. Overall, pupils have limited opportunities to apply their numeracy skills in other subjects across the curriculum. This has been recognised and the school plans for a focus on numeracy next term.
- 34 Pupils’ academic and personal development are strongly supported by the very good extra-curricular programme *Education Extra*. This offers a wide range of sporting, musical and other activities such as mathematics and language clubs, pottery and textiles work and special clubs and workshops for

pupils with hearing impairment. Study and homework support sessions are offered in all years. Gifted or talented pupils undertake special research-based projects with individual mentoring from teachers. Outcomes are presented to governors and senior staff. Year 8 pupils take part in the BP Challenge, undertaking environmental projects. National and international visits are made in English, science, art, languages (including work experience in Germany) and religious education.

- 35 Provision for PSHE is good. The taught course is well planned and covers key issues such as sex, drugs, alcohol, health education and an introduction to careers education in Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4, topics such as AIDS, choices in post-16 education and parenthood are covered. In a cross-section of sessions seen during the inspection, teaching, pupils' learning and their attitudes and response to the course were good.
- 36 Overall, the provision for careers and vocational education is satisfactory. The provision for careers education is good. A well planned programme of lessons is taught in Year 9. All pupils benefit from three weeks' work experience in Year 10. The careers library, which includes audio-visual and computer resources, provides helpful support to pupils. The school provides pupils with good access to balanced advice and guidance from the local authority careers service and local providers of education post 16. The provision for vocational education is minimal and the school recognises that this would benefit from further development. The ASDAN course is used in tutor time, from Year 9, to provide useful vocational perspectives. GCSE courses in travel and tourism, media studies and business education have good potential to make further contribution but, as yet, they are not co-ordinated within a coherent vocational education programme. A GNVQ course in ICT key skills is being piloted.
- 37 The school has developed very good community links which contribute well to the curriculum in many subjects. This has resulted in the *Curriculum Award* achieved by the school. Participation in the *BP Challenge* supports science and pupils' personal development. Pupils participate in locally organised art competitions. Visits are made to a number of local businesses to support work in many subjects. For example, design and technology students visit local supermarkets and ICT students visit to learn how computers contribute to the creation of a local newspaper and the operation of a car factory. Visitors support work in English and PSHE, and run writing, music and drama workshops.
- 38 The school maintains very good links with partner institutions. Those with the primary schools from which pupils transfer are excellent. Detailed information is obtained about the prior attainment and needs of incoming pupils, which is used very well to develop targets and provide strong individual support. Very good opportunities are provided for pupils to visit the school during their last year at primary school, to take part in a range of workshops, including music, design and technology, art, science and ICT. Valuable support is given to primary teachers. A number of schools have recently been helped in setting up computer networks and primary teachers have visited the school for ICT training. There is a good knowledge of the opportunities provided by local colleges, which enables the school to provide strong guidance to the majority of its pupils who wish to continue with their education after the age of 16.
- 39 Despite these many strengths, there are some important weaknesses in the curriculum. In Key Stage 4, the school does not comply with the statutory requirements to teach religious education by meeting the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus, or to ensure that all pupils study design and technology. Because of this, the curriculum overall is unsatisfactory.
- 40 Overall, the school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Spiritual awareness is developed satisfactorily. The school has provided a small *quiet room* which is available to pupils and which is regularly staffed through links with the local church. Pupils' development of self-knowledge is good. In art, pupils observe and reflect upon a good range of artists' work. In drama lessons, pupils are encouraged to portray, handle and respond to a range of different emotions. During a PSHE lesson on death, pupils were able to consider and compare the ways that



different cultures and religions deal with this issue. Religious education makes satisfactory provision for spiritual development in Key Stage 3. Pupils are given many opportunities for reflection, particularly when considering the *Thought for the Day*. The school does not provide the statutory daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

- 41 Moral development is very well promoted. The school sets a strong moral code and all staff provide very positive role models. Pupils are constantly made aware of the difference between right and wrong and are expected to consider difficult issues. For example, in an English lesson pupils discussed whether it was wrong for a poor father to steal for his children. In history, many opportunities are taken to consider moral issues. For example, some very good work was completed on opposition groups, purges and show trials when considering 'totalitarian Russia'. In art, pupils interpret their views and ideas on moral themes through their own work.
- 42 Excellent opportunities are provided for pupils to develop socially. Social themes are thoughtfully covered in assemblies, with their messages carried through to tutor times. In geography, pupils study environmental issues which cause tensions, for instance, water resources and deforestation. In many lessons, small group work is a strategy which is used effectively to get pupils working supportively together. Residential trips, both at home and abroad, make a major contribution to this aspect of pupils' development. Through music and drama, pupils have frequent opportunities to perform together in concerts and productions. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility as soon as they join the school. For example, Year 7 pupils are given the task of running the school shop at lunchtime. Pupils in every year have the opportunity to represent their form on the year council and, maybe, their year on the school council. The school council undertakes a major, funded project each year. Displays in classrooms and around the building are of a very high quality, promoting care for others and the value of learning, as well as of pupils' achievements.
- 43 The opportunities for pupils' cultural development are good. Examples include, the wide range of literature studied in English and the good coverage of important festivals in the world's main religions in religious education. In design and technology, pupils draw upon ideas from other cultures for their designs, for example the Chinese writing used in a Year 9 textiles project. The provision for visits and trips is very good and includes a range of museums and art galleries, as well as trips to France and Germany. However, the school has yet to develop a whole-school approach to presenting multicultural issues to pupils.

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

- 44 The school has very good procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare. There is a high commitment to this aspect of the school's work. A child protection policy is fully in place and is in line with local procedures. The designated member of staff is well known by staff and pupils. All new members of staff receive training and there is regular updating for all staff. The policy of keeping tutors with a form as it progresses through the years, enables tutors to develop a good knowledge of their pupils. Good liaison is maintained with the different local authorities from which pupils come. The knowledge that the school has about pupils who are cared for by people other than their parents, and its procedures to support these pupils and ensure that they are fully included in the opportunities provided, are major strengths. A similar quality of support for pupils who are themselves carers is being developed. Day-to-day working practices ensure a safe and secure environment for both staff and pupils.
- 45 Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress and personal development are excellent, and underpin the very good educational support and guidance that is given to pupils. Very detailed, individual records are developed, starting from the information provided by pupils' primary schools. The very good procedures for regularly assessing pupils' attainment and progress contribute to these records. Subject teachers have full access to these, so that they are in a very strong position

to compare how well each pupil does in their own and other subjects. Very good use is made of new technologies to maintain and analyse this information. The information is used well to place pupils into sets, monitor progress, identify relative underachievement and inform parents, and it forms the basis for target setting and review sessions.

- 46 Heads of year play a key role. They co-ordinate effectively the monitoring of both the academic and personal development of pupils in their year. They meet, at least once a year, with each pupil to set targets and review the progress that has been made. Parents are invited to these meetings and the school goes to great lengths to hold them at times which are convenient to the parents. Additionally, each pupil has at least two planned profiling meetings with their tutor in which work and progress are discussed. These procedures are further strengthened in Years 10 and 11 with more detailed work reviews. Pupils causing concern are identified and the school has very effective procedures to guide and encourage improvement. Governors are used very well as external mentors in this programme. There is a very high level of sharing of targets and strategies with pupils and parents. The school ensures that pupils have a similarly high quality of guidance in their personal development. Pupil planners, as well as being an administrative tool for pupils, contain guidance to support the development of learning skills. Pupil records, and the guidance given, make detailed reference to all aspects of development and progress, including behaviour, relationships, effort, confidence and how pupils respond in different working contexts. The ASDAN programme is developing strongly as a context for personal development and achievement.
- 47 The quality of welfare and care for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Identification and assessment on entry is effective, and individual education and pastoral support plans have appropriate targets to help pupils improve their learning and behaviour. Realistic targets are effectively linked to key skills for pupils who have statements and those on Stage 3 of the register. However, targets for pupils on the lower stages of the special needs register are insufficiently subject specific. Regular staff bulletins are effective in keeping teachers aware of issues relating to pupils with special educational needs. Requirements of statements are effectively implemented so that pupils have their entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum. Annual and transitional reviews fully meet statutory requirements.
- 48 Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are excellent. Behaviour is generally very good and this reflects the strong emphasis placed upon reinforcing and rewarding good behaviour. Younger pupils respond well to the system of merit stamps. As these accumulate, they can be redeemed for items, such as pencils, from the school shop. The gold award system is particularly valued by older pupils, who recognise its contribution to their records of achievement. Positive messages and feedback are constantly emphasised through notice boards, assemblies and awards ceremonies and by form tutors in tutor periods. When instances of poor behaviour do take place, there are well-established procedures, known to all staff and pupils, for recording, referring and responding to them. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. Very little bullying, or intolerance on racial or other grounds, takes place. The school is able to monitor effectively, without needing to give it a prominent emphasis, and promote tolerance with a light touch, through positive messages. However, all pupils are clear that intolerance will not be accepted.
- 49 Although attendance levels are good, the school accords an appropriate level of priority to its procedures for monitoring and improving this. These are good. Class teachers check attendance diligently and maintain good records. Weekly truancy checks are made by senior managers. Pupils identified as potential truants are made subject to additional checks. The school works closely with the local authority education welfare officer to tackle an identified small core of persistent, or extended, absentees.

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

- 50 The school has worked hard to foster the very good links it now has with its parents. That parents are very satisfied with the education and care their children receive came through clearly at the parents' meeting and in their responses to the questionnaire. The school communicates frequently, and in many ways, with parents about their children's progress and any potential concerns. Parental consultation informs the school's planning process. The headteacher is available, on a regular daily basis, to see parents without appointment. This is unusual but very good practice.
- 51 Once a year, parents are invited to reviews of their children's progress with heads of year and targets are agreed. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are well informed and supported and most attend their children's annual reviews. The range and quality of written information for parents is outstanding. Weekly, the school's popular newsletter, *The Sweyne Park Times*, is sent home. This provides a range of information on school developments and, in particular, the achievements of pupils. The school brochure is both informative and attractively presented. At each key stage, parents receive a very detailed booklet advising them of the work to be covered in each subject area. Annual reports are clearly written and give targets for pupils to aim for. Some parents would prefer to receive these earlier than immediately prior to the consultation meeting. Staff at the school strive hard to handle any complaints from parents promptly and efficiently and most parents have been very satisfied with the school's response.
- 52 Parents are very supportive of the work of the school. They regularly help in the school and on outings. The small, but very dedicated, committee of the Parents' Association regularly organises fund-raising and social events, but attendance at these is variable. Parents contribute well to their own children's learning at school and at home through the home-school agreement and by checking and signing the pupil planners. These provide a very useful liaison between home and school.

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

- 53 The headteacher provides excellent leadership. Under her leadership, and in a comparatively short period of time, the school has gained a well-earned and respected place in the local community. The management of change has been achieved through inspired leadership, where aims and purposes are shared openly and agreed by all. The aims for high academic and personal standards permeate the day-to-day work of the school and interactions with pupils. Parents think highly of the headteacher, her vision for the school and the ethos she has established.
- 54 The combination of excellent teamwork and a shared commitment to success have brought about a rapid improvement. The delegation of responsibilities to senior staff has proved very effective. Rotating the roles and responsibilities between team members, not only provides good career and personal development for individuals but also provides very effective communications and teamwork.
- 55 A very strong and accomplished senior management team, whose individual skills have been very effectively deployed, shares a common purpose and direction, and works to ensure that all staff contribute to, and are part of, the success of the school. Regular business meetings of the senior team deal efficiently with day-to-day issues and review the progress of pupils whose work or behaviour give cause for concern. Senior staff have a strong presence in the school and are known and respected by pupils. Their presence and interactions with pupils serve as a constant reminder of the value the school places on harmonious, inclusive relationships. Pupils have been involved in setting priorities for improvement to the building and in shaping the extra-curricular provision. In these ways the school is fostering pupils' social responsibility and encouraging them to share in its success.
- 56 The impact of these and similar strategies has been to create a friendly and caring school, where individuals are respected and most pupils are keen to learn. The school makes very effective

provision for pupils who attend the resource base unit for hearing-impaired, enabling them to have equal access to the curriculum alongside hearing pupils. Effective working relationships have been established with pupil referral units and local primary schools. The values and actions that underpin the school are inclusive and sharply focused towards overcoming the barriers that mar the development of some pupils.

- 57 The quality of departmental management is good or very good in most subjects, including English, mathematics and science. In all subjects, other than music, there is thorough and systematic monitoring of teaching and of pupils' work and progress. In art and history departments, where management of the subject is satisfactory, both are improving and benefiting from the support of senior staff. The religious education course in Key Stage 4 does not meet the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. This is a significant weaknesses in the curriculum at Key Stage 4 and the management of the subject, therefore, is unsatisfactory.
- 58 Overall, leadership and management in the learning development department are good. This has resulted in the caring, sensitive and organised learning atmosphere within the base. Links with senior management and governors are positive. The amount of time for the special educational needs co-ordinator to monitor the development of the department is limited. This restricts opportunities to meet formally with the Key Stage 4 modified course co-ordinator and learning support staff. The links between this department, the resource based unit for hearing-impaired pupils and the developing behaviour support programme currently lack cohesion.
- 59 Governors carry out their roles very effectively. They hold the headteacher in very high regard and have an excellent professional working relationship. In most respects the governors fulfil their statutory duties very well. There is appropriate oversight of the delegated budget and the governing body exercises its responsibilities in allocating discretionary elements of teachers' pay. Performance targets have been agreed, by the governors, for the headteacher and review meetings have been arranged. The headteacher has agreed targets with leadership team.
- 60 The governing body meets regularly and has a suitable number of committees. They carry out their responsibilities conscientiously, hold meetings with staff and parents as necessary, and monitor the work of subject departments and heads of year. Very effective use is made of examination data to track academic success. Each governor spends at least one day in the school each year observing teaching, and meeting heads of department. The visits provide opportunities to ask teachers challenging questions about their work, and the work and behaviour of pupils, and to monitor the impact of their decisions on spending. They carry out their role of critical friend very professionally. Contact with the school, and informal as well as formal meetings with parents, help governors gain a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school that are then used to inform future development priorities.
- 61 However, governors have not taken steps to ensure the school is fulfilling its statutory obligations for the curriculum with respect to design and technology and religious education at Key Stage 4, and the provision for a daily act of worship for all pupils.
- 62 The school rigorously monitors and evaluates its performance and acts on its findings. This is excellent practice. Central to the success of the school is the headteacher's belief in the school as a learning institution where individuals are valued and their personal and professional development is an investment that will benefit everyone. Her priority has been to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and an extensive programme of classroom observations has been put in place to help bring this about. Weekly training sessions are led by the senior member of staff for professional development and training, and teachers from a range of subjects have played a leading role. These meetings have helped in creating a climate of openness in which individual strengths and weaknesses can be shared. Evaluation of teaching is something everyone does as part of their daily routine.

There is a high level of professional debate that encourages teachers to analyse and reflect on the impact of their teaching on pupils' work. All training events are evaluated to ensure that the best available provision is being secured. The Investor in People award has been achieved by the school in recognition of the excellent management and development of staff. The improved standards in pupils' achievements, and the high proportion of good and very good teaching seen during the inspection, are indications of just how successful this work has been.

- 63 The highest priority is to promote and bring about improvements in academic and personal standards. As a means of achieving this longer term aim, the detailed planning and development of the school is clearly expressed in the current development plan and reflected in the actions that have been taken. The school has identified staff who have proven skills in managing pupils' learning. They act as role models for those needing support or who feel they could benefit from seeing others teach. A cycle of observations and review meetings, where target-setting and development activities are identified, have been highly successful in picking-up on individual strengths and weaknesses. All staff have identified targets against which their performance will be reviewed. Interim meetings with line managers track the progress they are making towards achieving them. Some of these targets are not sufficiently specific and would benefit from being more explicit about the intended impact of actions on standards.
- 64 A fully operational monitoring system enables teachers, tutors, and year heads to set appropriate academic and personal targets for pupils. The school goes to considerable lengths to evaluate how well it is achieving its objectives and what can be done to tackle weaknesses. It regularly consults with staff, parents, pupils, and members of the local community. Very effective use is made of the information that it collects to re-focus resources.
- 65 Financial planning is excellent. Extensive consultation leads to a comprehensive development plan with carefully thought out priorities, to which spending is linked. This has allowed access to and use of ICT to be rapidly increased, and for there to be an increase in staffing. Future priorities are already costed. Spending is thoroughly checked by departments, the finance manager and senior management team, and the governing body. Specific grants are very effectively used. Administration is very efficient, freeing up teacher time to concentrate on improving the quality of lessons. Systems for staff development are of high quality. A wide and intelligent view of value for money, stimulated by frequent analysis of how spending has improved standards or quality, reflects the excellent application of principles of best value.
- 66 The school is fully staffed with suitably qualified and experienced teachers in all subjects. However, as the only music specialist, the head of department has a heavy burden of teaching and extra-curricular activities as well as seeking to develop the subject. There is a suitable gender balance amongst those with posts of responsibility in the school. There are excellent procedures for inducting newly qualified teachers and other teachers new to the school. Newly qualified teachers have a suitably reduced timetable and mentors who effectively support them within the department. The school accepts students undergoing initial teacher training and its excellent systems for training these students have been used by the Local Education Authority as a model of good practice. The quality of this involvement has proved advantageous in maintaining the school's good level of staffing. Levels of support and maintenance staff are satisfactory.
- 67 The teaching accommodation is very good as a result of the substantial rebuilding which took place at the school's foundation, through amalgamation, in 1997. The grouping of subject rooms assists the organising and sharing of resources and good liaison between teachers. Minor weaknesses exist in the limited room available for graphics in design and technology, and that some drama is taught in a demountable classroom with limited resources. The very good quality of the general learning environment is enhanced by a high standard of display throughout the school, which both mirrors and stimulates the school's drive for high standards. The premises are well maintained and pupils treat the

accommodation with respect. Well-tended gardens make the approach to the school's main entrance attractive. The playing fields are of a good size, but drainage problems have prevented their use for sport for much of last winter.

- 68 Resources for learning are good in quality and range, but there are some deficiencies in tools, equipment and materials in design and technology. The ratio of pupils to computers, at 5.8:1, is very favourable. Teachers use computers effectively to devise worksheets of high quality. A qualified librarian organises the library as a valuable resource for pupils. The book stock is slightly below the recommended level, but the number and quality of the books are being improved as funds permit. Plans for the further development of the library are contained in a very good development plan. The use of the library, which is open from before until well after the end of school, is carefully monitored and pupils receive good guidance in using it. It provides good opportunities for pupils to use computers. Very good liaison between teachers and the librarian ensures effective use is made of the library's resources during lessons and for projects.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

69 In addition to the developments already planned, to further improve the standards and the quality of education provided the governors and staff should:

- (1) Meet the statutory requirements, for pupils in Years 10 and 11, to provide them with a religious education course which meets the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus and that they all should follow a course in design and technology unless application to modify this requirement has been approved.  
(*para 39, 111, 117, 178, 179, 181*)

In addition, the governors and school should consider addressing the following less important, but significant, issues in their action plan: providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils (*para 40*); improve standards and achievement in art in Key Stage 4 (*para 7, 17, 109*); improve standards and achievement in music in Key Stage 3 (*para 25, 66, 164, 166*); greater uniformity in assessment practice in history and geography with more information given to pupils as to how they might improve (*para 122, 130*); provide more time for SENCO and head of HI unit to monitor classroom practice and to liaise together (*para 58, 74*); make targets for pupils on lower register stages more specific and link progress with key skills (*para 27, 47*); increase opportunities for pupils' spiritual development (*para 40*); develop policy for promoting multi-cultural awareness (*para 43*); provide pupils with special needs outside the lower English sets with as precise guidance for written tasks as they receive for oral tasks (*para 82*); seek to support the music department through the appointment of an additional specialist (*para 66,167*).

## **THE RESOURCE BASE UNIT FOR HEARING-IMPAIRED PUPILS**

- 70 The provision for hearing-impaired (HI) pupils is a very effective feature of the school. The base, a Local Education Authority provision, was established prior to Sweyne Park School and moved, in its entirety, to the new school when it opened. It is funded for 24 pupils and at present is attended by 25 pupils across the whole school. All HI pupils are very effectively included in all aspects of the school life. It is well staffed, although the head of base was absent for the duration of the inspection.
- 71 Pupils with a hearing impairment demonstrate a wide range of ability, but a few have additional difficulties and all have statements of special need. There are no disapplications of the National Curriculum and all statutory requirements are met. Progress is monitored through annual statement reviews of targets, school assessments and regular meetings, discussions and liaison with subject teachers. The outcomes are effectively used to inform planning. Teachers and support staff have high expectations of the pupils who are fully involved in classroom discussions and activities. The classroom support for the pupils is very effective and on the whole, support staff are utilised and deployed effectively. Support staff tend to support the same pupils across the curriculum and this ensures secure knowledge of the pupil's communication needs. Withdrawal sessions are carefully planned and the content decided, following consultation with subject teachers and the pupils themselves. Careful records are kept of the content of these sessions and the progress made by the pupils: they are managed by teachers of the deaf and indicate an effective use of time and resources.
- 72 Pupils with a hearing impairment are included whenever possible in the mainstream classes and are encouraged to attend extra-curricular events, often with support staff in attendance. Pupils are given the opportunity to attend all school outings and are fully accepted by their peers.
- 73 The base is well staffed with experienced, enthusiastic and committed staff who have excellent knowledge of the pupils' needs and their family circumstances. Good links with parents are maintained, albeit often by telephone, and the majority of parents attend review meetings. Relationships are excellent and, as a consequence, pupils are confident and well motivated and the majority have high self-esteem. There is a clear vision within the base for future developments and improvement. The teacher-in-charge and his deputy give clear direction and manage the budget effectively. All the base teachers have an additional qualification to teach deaf pupils, and support staff are trained in post. Most of these teachers contribute to awareness training of mainstream teachers annually.
- 74 Communication within the base is good and regular meetings take place. However, minutes are not always maintained and links with the learning development department are not yet formalised. A very comprehensive and useful department handbook, individual education plans and pupils' profiles are all of a high quality. There is insufficient monitoring of support in the classrooms, but support staff keep useful lesson notes.
- 75 The accommodation is very good and centrally situated in the school. Some rooms could be improved with more soundproofing. The base is well resourced and the provision of ICT equipment is very good.
- 76 Excellent links are maintained with outside agencies, resulting in regular visits from speech and language specialists and audiologists. Staff in the base liaise closely with the peripatetic HI education support service. Good links have been built up with primary schools, the specialist careers officers and local providers of further education.



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	151
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	53

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
10	31	33	24	2	0	0

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

### *Information about the school's pupils*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1081
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	99

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	37
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	216

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	9

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	41
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	23

### *Attendance*

#### **Authorised absence**

	%
School data	7.3
National comparative data	7.4

#### **Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.1

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

### *Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3*

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	110	100

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	49	78	74
	Girls	75	65	69
	Total	124	143	143
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	60 (64)	68 (59)	68 (50)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24 (17)	42 (29)	35 (14)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	65	82	59
	Girls	81	71	61
	Total	146	153	120
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70 (74)	73 (66)	57 (65)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	36 (43)	43 (41)	26 (16)
	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	97	106	203

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	56	93	93
	Girls	70	102	105
	Total	126	195	198
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	62 (48)	96 (97)	98 (98)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	42 (39)
	National	38.4 (38)

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

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	6
Chinese	4
White	1064
Any other minority ethnic group	3

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	75	0
Other minority ethnic groups	1	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)	66.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.4

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	22
Total aggregate hours worked per week	584

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	68.8
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	25.2
Key Stage 4	21.0

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	3010062
Total expenditure	2955402
Expenditure per pupil	2842
Balance brought forward from previous year	15612
Balance carried forward to next year	70272

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1081
Number of questionnaires returned	485

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	37	49	10	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	46	6	2	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	32	57	7	1	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	55	15	4	1
The teaching is good.	38	56	3	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46	37	13	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	31	4	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	30	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	42	41	11	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	53	40	2	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	43	49	4	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	47	43	5	1	5

### Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Approximately eight per cent of parents included comments on their questionnaire returns. Almost half these were very positive about the school and its work, in particular, the high expectations, progress made and the handling of unacceptable behaviour. Other comments were of an individual nature and tended to be made by just one respondent.

### Other issues raised by parents

Most parents at the parents' meeting were very satisfied with the school. They felt that the school was doing everything it could to motivate pupils and ensure success. They were particularly pleased with the school's approach to behaviour and the positive attitudes and values that it promotes. There were some comments regarding homework, for example that some pupils received too much and others too little, but no clear opinion was noted.

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

**ENGLISH**

- 1 Results, in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2000, were average compared to schools nationally and similar to those of the previous year. The results were below the average for similar schools and lower than those in mathematics and science. Boys performed less well than girls. The proportion of pupils at the higher levels was slightly smaller than nationally, and teacher assessments showed a tendency to be over-generous at these levels. The standards of work of pupils currently in Year 9 are similar to those expected nationally. Pupils are above average in terms of the range of their spoken and written vocabulary, their skill in spoken tasks, their ability to understand what they read, and their response to literature. Pupils are less successful in the precise use of speech, expressiveness in reading aloud, accuracy of spelling and other conventions in writing, and the structuring of writing which is not descriptive.
- 2 English results at GCSE have risen. In 2000 they were above average in English language. They were close to average in media studies and in English literature where the school enters a higher proportion of pupils than nationally. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C and A\*-G has risen in all three examinations. A smaller proportion of pupils, than nationally, gain the highest A\*/A grades in English language. Despite these good results, pupils made relatively less progress in English than in the other subjects they studied. Boys performed better than girls in English language but similarly in literature and media studies.
- 3 Judged by their work in lessons and from a scrutiny of their written work, the attainment of the pupils at present in Year 11 is above the national average. Higher-attaining pupils are able to analyse themes and compare such writers as Hardy and Dickens in sustained essays using well controlled phrasing. Pupils of average attainment study a good range of topics and texts, but they are more at home with creative personal writing or commentary than with writing about theme and style in literature. In the latter their writing is more mechanical than crafted, and quotation is sometimes over-used. Most pupils, however, can show good understanding of plot and character. Lower-attaining pupils are always able to communicate in writing, usually in interesting fashion, but the style is often too chatty.
- 4 Compared to their previous attainment, pupils' achievement in English is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. When they enter the school in Year 7 standards are close to the national average, their better oral skills compensating for deficiencies in writing. Progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 3. Pupils learn to work hard and produce copious amounts of written work. They gain the confidence to study works of literature, including those of Shakespeare, and to respond to characters and issues. There is insufficient emphasis, however, on technical accuracy in writing. This, coupled with a tendency by teachers not to translate clearly some success criteria into practice, leads to some average- and above average-attaining pupils not demonstrating their abilities consistently in their writing.
- 5 The discrepancy between oral and written work narrows at GCSE, progress in Key Stage 4 being good. Teachers ensure that tasks and language are appropriate to pupils' levels of attainment, and that pupils know exactly what they need to do to achieve success. A low-attaining Year 11 class gave confident and sensible explanations to the teacher's questions about an extract from Simon Armitage's autobiography. Their ability to explain words like 'inevitable' and 'dilapidated', and the teacher's stress on why particular vocabulary might have been used, helped them to gain insight into the author's purpose. The written work which resulted was of good quality.
- 6 Pupils with special educational needs make similarly satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 and good progress in Key Stage 4. Although setting helps, these pupils outside the bottom sets in Key Stage 4 do not receive similarly precise guidance before tackling written work to that they receive in oral tasks.

At GCSE they make better progress because teachers very carefully explain the purpose of work and the reason for certain approaches, and encourage empathy: “Get into Steven’s mind”, as the teacher urged a class studying an article about a blind man and his relationship with his guide dog.

- 7 Overall, quality of teaching was good. The teaching observed was very good. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen; half the lessons were very good or outstanding, and four fifths at least good. However, work in pupils’ books and files shows teaching, over time, to have been good, though better at GCSE than in Key Stage 3. Teachers plan lessons carefully and in considerable detail, and invariably explain the aim of the lesson very clearly so that pupils know what they are doing and why. In the best lessons, there is clear reference to the criteria for success so that pupils know the focus which is being assessed and can respond accordingly.
- 8 Pupils, even those with the potential for misbehaviour, are very well managed. Teachers vary tasks within the hour lesson, so that pupils’ attention and involvement are maintained. The quality and pace of much class discussion are a strength of the teaching, often extending ideas and vocabulary quickly, and reinforcing specialist terms. For example, the teacher of a Year 9 class studying *On Foot through Africa* introduced words such as ‘clique’ and ‘universality’. Pupils went on to consider why there seemed to be such a parallel between the attitudes of teenagers in an African village and their own, and what a black African stereotype of the author might be, and how that could come about. Insight, sense and sensitivity were the hallmarks of the lesson. Written work is regularly and helpfully marked, and particularly good and precise advice is given by teachers to help further progress to be made. In Key Stage 3 such advice is insufficiently linked to National Curriculum criteria and, on occasions, there is too little attention to the accuracy of written work, resulting in some careless work that does not fulfil its potential. Whilst homework is regularly set, many tasks lack inspiration and ‘extension’ exercises rarely provide adequate work at a more demanding level. The effectiveness of a very well planned lesson for a higher-attaining Year 7 class was limited because the teacher’s instructions became vague: pupils were told to ‘make notes’ but were not told what type or where; they were asked to discuss ideas in groups, then stopped after less than two minutes.
- 9 The result of the good standard of teaching is good learning by pupils, particularly at GCSE level. Pupils learn to use speech to think through ideas, and drafting of written work to improve its quality. They have a very good idea of their level of achievement, and where improvements need to be made. Regular encouragement to use ICT for research or presentation, and the detailed study of media and literature are strong features.
- 10 Pupils’ attitudes to English are good. They generally behave very well, and their relationships with each other and with teachers are excellent. The result is lessons which are calm, enjoyable and productive. Whoever speaks is courteously listened to, though a tendency by some pupils to speak too quietly in class discussion results in some superficial listening. Books and files show much effort and pride and are further evidence of the mature attitudes of pupils. In group work, some pupils have too low an expectation of their role, spending too much time on marginal tasks whilst other members are expected to do the lion’s share.
- 11 The English department is a good and improving one. The leadership and management are good. It is very well organised. There is a strong sense of unity and teamwork. Schemes of work are very detailed and of high quality. The department makes a very good contribution to pupils’ personal development through its emphasis on literature, discussion and group work,. The range of extra-curricular activities, including poetry and drama workshops, theatre visits, poetry and public speaking competitions, and curriculum days is excellent. Resources and accommodation are very good and display is excellent, all adding significantly to the very positive atmosphere in the department.

## **MATHEMATICS**

- 12 Results in mathematics, in the national tests at the end of Year 9, improved from the previous year. In 2000, they were above the national average but were average in comparison with similar schools. Pupils' performance in mathematics was similar to that in science but better than in English. On average over the last three years, results have been close to the national average and boys have done better than girls by a wider margin than nationally.
- 13 The standard of work of pupils currently in Year 9 is in line with the national expectation. Higher-attaining pupils use algebraic and graphical methods to solve simultaneous linear equations in two variables. Average-attaining pupils interpret graphs and diagrams, including pie charts, and draw conclusions. Lower-attaining pupils identify symmetries of various shapes.
- 14 The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C at GCSE is increasing. In 2000, the proportion of candidates gaining A\*-C was significantly above the national average, as was the average point score per pupil. Pupils made relatively better progress in mathematics than in their other subjects. Boys outperformed girls, and both boys' and girls' results were significantly above the national average.
- 15 The evidence from scrutiny of the pupils' work and from lesson observations is that Year 11 pupils' attainment is above the national expectation. The highest-attaining pupils use trigonometry to work out angles and lengths of plane figures and also sketch graphs of trigonometrical functions. Average-attaining pupils construct cumulative frequency curves and interpret the results. Lower-attaining pupils solve linear equations. All pupils carry out investigations in mathematics, including pieces of coursework, as part of the GCSE requirement.
- 16 When pupils enter the school in Year 7, their standards are below average. When compared to their earlier attainment, pupils' achievement in mathematics is good at both key stages. For example, in a higher Year 8 set, pupils learned to recognise which polygons would tessellate, consider a general rule, develop their understanding of properties of polygons and calculate interior angles of regular polygons. In a lower Year 10 set, pupils carried out an investigation of 3-D shapes which led to the relationship between the numbers of faces, vertices and edges.
- 17 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress at both key stages. Additional adult support which they receive has a positive impact on their progress as does the setting of pupils from early in Year 7, with more sets than tutor groups. Hearing-impaired pupils are able to play a full part in lessons. High-attaining pupils made good progress, for example in Year 11 where they derived the gradient function from first principles.
- 18 Overall, the teaching observed was good in both key stages.. The quality of teaching ranged from sound to excellent. Teachers' subject knowledge is a strength and has a positive impact on the quality of learning, as in a Year 10 lesson on forming simultaneous equations where the teacher gave clear explanations and built on pupils' suggested strategies. Effective lesson planning is also a strength and most lessons build suitably on pupils' previous learning experiences. Occasionally too much time is spent revisiting work which pupils have mastered earlier and this limits their rate of progress. This tends to happen when teachers rely too heavily on the published textbook rather than the scheme of work. Teaching was effective where teachers employed a range of appropriate teaching styles. In a lower-attaining Year 9 group, pupils worked in a range of groupings in a lesson on planes of symmetry. Teachers use time within the lesson efficiently. Learning objectives are written on the board, but learning is less effective where they are not emphasised and where pupils are unclear about what they are supposed to be doing. The setting and marking of homework on a regular basis is a strength and constructive comments enable pupils to know how they can improve.
- 19 As a result of the good teaching, pupils' learning is also good. Pupils show interest in their work, as in a low Year 8 set, where pupils learned to measure in metric and imperial units. Pupils are mostly focused and remain on task. Pupils work confidently and are able to explain their working, for



example in an upper Year 8 set where they explained their strategies for reaching a target number. In some lessons, where the lesson is mostly teacher-directed, pupils have limited opportunities to develop as individual learners.

- 20 Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good overall. Relationships are very good. Pupils collaborate well when given the opportunity. They take particular care over their written work. Occasionally pupils have difficulty in sustaining concentration and there were isolated examples of pupils demonstrating challenging behaviour.
- 21 The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The leadership ensures a clear educational direction and the work of the department is effectively monitored. Schemes of work are well thought out and comprehensive in their subject coverage. At this stage of development, they are not yet fully referenced to National Curriculum levels and opportunities for the use of ICT. Setting arrangements contribute to the good progress which pupils make. Extra-curricular provision is a strength and includes opportunities for enrichment as well as support for revision and homework. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are very good. Systems include a database containing extensive data with pupils involved in monitoring their own attainment and progress. The quality of accommodation and of display provide a very good learning environment. Resources to support learning are very good.

## SCIENCE

- 22 Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 have risen since 1999. In 2000, they were above the national average and in line with the average for similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels were above the national and similar school averages. Pupils' performance in science was similar to that in mathematics and better than that in English. Girls outperformed boys by a small margin. On average over the last three years, there has been no difference between boys' and girls' performance, and results have been close to the national average.
- 23 The standard of work in the current Year 9 is above national expectations. Pupils are very attentive and respond well to the very high expectations of their teachers. High-attaining pupils react very well to challenging lessons and are enthusiastic learners, as in a lesson on chemical equations when pupils were keen to predict the probable products when metals react with oxygen and acids and to turn their predictions into equations, using formulae. Average-attaining pupils are very good at acquiring knowledge and understanding of a variety of topics. They identify the position of elements in the periodic table and relate this to their properties. They understand reactivity trends in the table and use them to predict chemical behaviour. Lower-attaining pupils calculate resultant forces. They know word equations for photosynthesis and offer simple explanation of such processes. The majority of pupils are keen to work at a good pace. However they go off-task if the pace of the lesson is slow or too teacher-dominated. The variety of learning needs in some average-attaining groups presented a challenge to teachers when no support staff was available.
- 24 GCSE results in science rose in 2000 to above the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was significantly above the national average and the proportion gaining at least grade G was also above the national average. Pupils made relatively greater progress in science than in their other subjects. Both boys' and girls' results were significantly above the national average with boys slightly outperforming girls.
- 25 The evidence, of the pupils' work and the lessons observed, shows that Year 11 pupils' attainment is above the nationally expected level. High-attaining pupils are very attentive and responsive to their teachers. They demonstrate an extensive knowledge of the topics they are revising and use models to explain phenomena. In a lesson on the nervous system, pupils made connections between key words and processes and used group discussion, including with the teacher, to identify strengths and

weaknesses in their understanding of the topic. The course work of high attaining pupils is of a very high quality, demonstrating pupils' ability to discuss theoretical considerations relevant to the experiments they are designing. Average-attaining are good at acquiring knowledge and explaining simple phenomena. For example, in a lesson on heat transfer, they explained why hot air rises. Lower-attaining pupils have good records of their work showing that they use their knowledge to explain, in simple terms, how new materials are made and the life processes of living things.

- 26 When compared to their earlier attainment, pupils' achievement in science is good. When pupils enter the school in Year 7, their standards are below average. From this low baseline, pupils make good progress in both key stages. For example, all pupils in a Year 7 class studying acids and alkalis knew the meaning of the colours on the pH scale and could explain what neutralisation meant. They were very well behaved and carried out and recorded a practical investigation on the pH of soil efficiently. In another Year 7 lesson, on reproduction, all pupils showed an increasing understanding of the human reproductive system. The setting arrangements after Year 7 enable different groups to achieve at appropriate levels. In a high attaining group in Year 8, pupils were able to make predictions about the products of a chemical reaction, and about half the set were able to understand the general word equation for neutralisation. In a low attaining set, pupils were able to build on prior knowledge they had about food chains. They increased their knowledge of key words and, with the added help of a support teacher, were able to identify energy transfers in food chains, and one pupil offered the definition that 'a predator is a consumer that eats another consumer'. In Year 10, the top set is entered for three separate sciences. In a chemistry lesson for this set, pupils had a very good attitude to their work. They could relate fractions in a fractionating column to boiling points and could explain the viscosity of fractions in terms of structural formulae. Lower-attaining pupils are entered for a Certificate of Achievement in science. In a lesson for this set on human reproduction, pupils responded well to questions based on a video about childbirth and showed that they had remembered certain stages in the birth process, such as fertilisation and foetus.
- 27 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because the setting in Years 8 to 11 enables teachers to match more easily teaching method to learning need. In a mixed ability Year 7 lesson, this was achieved through a variety of worksheets. Well used classroom support enables pupils with hearing-impairment to work alongside pupils of similar attainment. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, the support teacher helped two pupils, in a higher set, in different ways to support their preferred learning styles. As a result their achievement was good.
- 28 The quality of teaching and learning were good in each key stage. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which enables them to set up a variety of learning experiences to match pupil needs. Pupils respond well to the very high expectations their teachers have of them. Teachers are very good at using questions to probe pupil understanding and to encourage pupils to extend their scientific skills. They plan their lessons very well, sharing their learning objectives with the pupils so that they can check their learning at the end of each lesson. Teachers manage their classrooms very well, working within the very good relationships that exist between teachers and pupils. On occasion, there is some lack of pace, too much teacher talk and inconsistencies in marking. Teachers include tasks such as sequencing, word-explanation matching exercises, creative writing opportunities, word searches, and key word displays into their work to develop the pupils' scientific literacy. Opportunities to practise plotting and interpreting graphs, calculations involving formulae and balancing chemical equations develop pupils' numeracy skills. Word processing is used for projects and presentation and CD-ROMs in the library are used for revision. Other aspects of ICT are underdeveloped. Recently purchased data-loggers have yet to be brought into operation.
- 29 Pupils' behaviour in science is very good. Pupils carry out practical work safely and understand the need for sensible behaviour. Their attitude to their science lessons is good, particularly in Key Stage 3 where they respond very enthusiastically to questions and are excited by opportunities for experiments. Higher-attaining pupils respond very well to challenging work.

- 30 The management of the science department is good. A very good team spirit, committed to pupil success, has been developed over the last three years. Very good monitoring of teacher and department performance leads to an openness that allows the department to make best use of its many strengths. The very good monitoring system ensures that all pupils know the level at which they are performing and how they might improve. Teachers make very good use of their resources and are very well supported by the team of technicians.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

- 31 The results of the 2000 teacher assessments, for pupils at the end of Year 9, were slightly above those reported nationally. The standard of work by pupils currently in Year 9 is broadly in line with expectation, with a significant minority of pupils attaining higher levels. Pupils achieve well, given the below average standards when they come into the school. By Year 9, pupils have a sound working knowledge of different materials and media. For example, in one class pupils made some carefully observed drawings of vegetables as part of the early research and preparation for their final designs. They had been looking at the work of Andy Warhol but, when asked, few could pass an opinion on his work or suggest possible reasons as to why he chose to create works of art from everyday images and artefacts. They were more knowledgeable about the three- and four-colour silk-screen printing process they were using to realise their design for a soup can label. The possibilities for over-printing became clearer as they worked, and pupils saw how the effect could be utilised in their designs. Most recognised the need for careful cutting and alignment of the stencils and became more skilful and accurate as they worked. Pupils worked independently, making informed decisions about colour, composition and lettering. Pupils with learning or behavioural difficulties achieved well and were given satisfactory support by class teachers or other adults working alongside them. Recently introduced changes to the way pupils use their sketchbooks - making notes, collecting and organising their ideas and practising their drawing and design skills - have begun to have an impact and are leading to higher standards of research, investigation and independent learning. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the work of artists, craftspeople and designers and the major influences on their work, are less secure. In particular, higher-attaining pupils do not express themselves confidently, in speech or writing.
- 32 In 2000, GCSE results were in line with the national average. They have been similar to the national average in recent years. Although no pupils attained the highest A\* grades, a high proportion gained A and B grades. Overall, pupils made comparatively less progress in art than in their other subjects. The evidence of pupils' work and the lessons observed shows that the standards of pupils currently in Year 11 are in line with nationally expected levels. However, there is evidence of some underachievement of a small number of Year 11 pupils whose attitudes, lack of motivation and absence from school, seriously limit their chances of success in examinations. In Year 10, standards are higher. Research and investigation shows greater depth and more rigorous explanation and critical thinking. This leads to higher standards of preparation for the work that follows. Examples of mixed media work, based on a visit to the London Docklands for example, shows a thoughtful mix of painting skills and effects, together with different print techniques. Some pupils choose to explore moral and social issues through their work – the effects of pollution, and the decision-making of architects and designers on the living and working spaces they create. Achievement overall is satisfactory, and in Year 10 it is good.
- 33 Overall, the quality of teaching and learning were satisfactory and sometimes good. Teachers have good subject expertise and this is used effectively to plan activities. Visits to museums, galleries and places of interest are very successful in giving pupils first-hand experiences from which they develop their own personal responses. Nevertheless, a minority of pupils struggle with this approach and rely too heavily on books or other secondary source materials. The quality of work displayed in the department and around the school is excellent. It helps to raise pupils' expectations and encourage them to recognise the range of experiences on offer in the department. Where teachers demonstrate different techniques, or show examples of work by other pupils, the teaching is particularly effective.

In some lessons, skilful questioning helps to consolidate pupils' knowledge and understanding. Where this was most effective, the questions were challenging and required pupils to look more closely or think deeply before giving extended answers. Where the teacher gave pupils too much information, or expected only one or two word responses, pupils tended to lose concentration and the pace and energy for learning wane. Art is taught in tutor groups in Key Stage 3. These groups are comparatively large for a practical subject however, teachers manage and organise practical activities very well. Technical assistants and learning support assistants provide effective help and support to pupils. Weaknesses in teaching relate mainly to long and short term planning and assessment. The considerable information that is available on pupils' potential achievement is not used rigorously enough to plan appropriate work, with the result that some higher-attaining pupils do not achieve the standards of which they are capable. The purposes of the work set, the expectations for learning and what will be assessed are not always made sufficiently explicit to enable pupils to use the information to evaluate their progress themselves, and modify their work.

- 34 Management of the subject is satisfactory. This is an improving department with several important developments in the early stages but which are beginning to have an impact on raising standards. The quality and use of sketchbooks have improved, and pupils now have a clearer idea of what teachers expect them to be used for. Portfolios contain some computer-generated work, but this is at a very early stage and is not planned for all year groups. Recent staff training has been undertaken to help make this possible. Other developments include the standardisation of National Curriculum levels, good quality records to enable teachers to track pupils progress year-on-year, and the development of subject documentation.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

- 35 The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above those reported nationally in 2000. However, evidence of the inspection indicates that these assessments tended to over-estimate what pupils achieved. The standard of work of pupils currently in Year 9 is above the national expectation. Standards are higher for both food and textiles technology because the curriculum is very well structured and very well taught. Standards are lower in resistant materials and the time allocated to teaching this area is limited. Pupils develop good levels of knowledge and understanding about materials and ingredients, and how they should be used safely. They use well the range of research and recording techniques that they are taught. Regular self-evaluation of their work is very effective in developing pupils' understanding about the choice of appropriate materials or ingredients in their development ideas. Modelling and making activities employ a range of skills and techniques, and pupils use a good range of technical and descriptive language when evaluating their very good practical work. Pupils of all abilities achieve well as they follow the highly structured courses, but over-direction in some projects provides insufficient opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their capability for independent learning.
- 36 GCSE results in design and technology have improved. In 2000, results overall were significantly above the national average for the proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C grades, and the proportion gaining at least a G grade was above the national average. Results for food technology and textiles technology remain significantly above the national average and, in 2000, those in resistant materials rose considerably, to be above the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades was well above the national average, and was slightly better for girls than boys. Pupils made greater progress in design and technology than in their other subjects.
- 37 Current work in Years 10 and 11 indicates that standards are above the national expectation and are better in food and textiles than graphics and resistant materials. The structured approach, used by teachers to address course work, is enabling all pupils to access the requirements of the examination well. In the better folders, such as in Year 11 textiles and food technology, the quality of research, analysis, and development and evaluation of ideas is very good. Pupils develop knowledge and skills,

and understand how materials and ingredients can be used safely, effectively and sometimes creatively in the development of their own ideas. Presentation of work is often very good and there is good use of computer-generated work in all subjects. Course work is weaker in resistant materials because pupils are less committed to their work.

- 38 When compared to their earlier attainment, pupils' achievement is good throughout the school. In Year 7, pupils produce scones to their own design and use good planning and preparation skills. Year 8 pupils develop knowledge quickly and apply their mathematical skills effectively when using a computer programme to model electronic circuits. In Year 9, pupils apply their knowledge about the safe use of appropriate ingredients to produce a snack meal for an identified group. High quality cushions and covers are made using a variety of surface decoration techniques, following detailed research into fabrics and use of computers to study Chinese symbols. Boys and girls show considerable interest in using a computer programme to produce a three dimensional drawing before making very good scale models of their individual bedroom designs. In Years 10 and 11, achievement is good overall but varies considerably between subjects and individual pupils. Achievement is lower for less committed pupils in graphics and resistant materials. In Year 11, pupils produce extensive, high quality folder work when investigating food products and fabrics. They use this knowledge very effectively in developing their own ideas for products and then, as a result of detailed evaluation, apply their knowledge to high quality solutions that address the original specifications. Pupils are good at producing questionnaires, recording results of surveys and presenting the results of research and investigations. However, some pupils taking graphics and resistant materials are slower to engage in their class work and achievement is more limited. Overall, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and pupils of lower prior attainment, make good progress because they apply their technical abilities well.
- 39 Overall, teaching is very good. It is always satisfactory or better and it is frequently very good or excellent in food and textiles lessons. Teachers have a very clear understanding of the requirements of the National Curriculum and examination work, and this enables them to focus their work throughout the school. All teachers have very good technical knowledge, which is reflected in demonstrations and individual support of pupils. Overall, planning is very good. In the majority of lessons, time is used very well and teachers' expectations of behaviour and performance are very high. Pupils are managed very well and a range of teaching methods is used very effectively. For example, in a food technology lesson, pupils' attention was well focused before watching a video recording about commercial mass production. Their understanding was consolidated through effective questioning and then by setting a group exercise on the evaluation of a related product. Technical language is developed well through oral and written work and computer generated work is being included in the research and presentation of pupils' work. Good assessment procedures include very good support and discussion with pupils about their work. In Key Stage 4, the regular assessment of pupils' work, with written comments, very effectively enables pupils to improve their work. The very good teaching leads to good learning.
- 40 Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Almost all pupils settle to work quickly and there is a positive culture for learning in most lessons. Pupils respond very well to teachers' high expectations of behaviour and are keen to do well in their work. Most concentrate very well in lessons and many spend considerable time and effort outside lessons improving their work. The success of lower-attaining pupils is a result of the effort and concentration that they put to their work.
- 41 In Key Stage 3, design technology courses provide satisfactory access to the National Curriculum. Programmes of work are being developed well, but the lack of time allocated for working with resistant materials is restricting coverage of certain aspects of the required programmes of study. In Key Stage 4, not all pupils take a design technology subject, and therefore statutory requirements are not met. Leadership and management are good, with close co-operation between teachers. Teachers are working hard to adapt to changes in staffing and in the time available for design and technology in

the curriculum. A very positive approach to monitoring the development in the subject leads to planning for improvement. Effective use is made of current staffing. Although aspects of learning resources are good, for example the increased access to computers, the lack of sufficient suitable consumable materials is affecting the curriculum being taught. The subject is making an effective contribution to the development of pupils' ICT skills.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

- 42 The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were in line with the national average. This was lower than in previous years but reflects a more rigorous and accurate determination of levels. This is confirmed by the scrutiny of previously-completed work. The standard of work of pupils currently in Year 9 is in line with national expectations. Through the frequent use of atlases pupils develop a very good knowledge of location. Their enquiry work shows their ability to pose relevant questions, carry out investigations and suggest solutions. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the places, and of the physical, human and environmental themes studied. While they have a good appreciation of the links between human and physical aspects, as seen in Year 8 pupils' work on flooding, their understanding of how physical processes shape the land is insecure. Pupils make good progress in acquiring mapping skills but do not have enough opportunity to practise these.
- 43 GCSE results in geography have shown a consistent improvement over the past three years. In 2000, results were significantly above the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C rose and was well above the national average; however, the proportion gaining at least grade G fell to below average. The number of pupils entered for examination has fallen as a result of changes in the system by which pupils choose courses at the end of Year 9. Pupils made relatively less progress in geography than in their other subjects. Girls outperformed boys by a narrower margin than that reported nationally.
- 44 The evidence of pupils' work and the lessons observed shows that Year 11 pupils' attainment is above the nationally expected level. They produce fieldwork investigations of a very good quality, building on the enquiry work of Key Stage 3 to test hypotheses and proffer solutions. Pupils work hard to complete a good quantity of work of an appropriate standard. They describe the interactions between physical and human processes and show their awareness and understanding of world issues, as demonstrated in the work of Year 10 pupils on population. Here, as well as applying a wider range of skills in the interpretation of data, they are aware of the demands of different groups and the resulting pressure on the environment. The relative weakness in pupils' understanding of physical processes at Key Stage 3 is no longer evident.
- 45 When compared to their earlier attainment, pupils' achievement in geography is good at Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because teachers have a good understanding of their requirements and match the activities to these. For example, when Year 7 pupils learned about the measurement of wind-speed and the 'Beaufort Scale', terms were explained carefully and a framework provided for their written work. Where available, as in the case of a Year 9 lesson on National Parks, learning assistants make a very useful contribution to pupils' progress, including those with impaired hearing.
- 46 The teaching at both key stages was very good. In Key Stage 3 there were examples of exceptional teaching, for example, Year 8 pupils used data to support their understanding of the difference in wealth between Northern and Southern Italy. The very good subject knowledge of teachers was evident in the quality of explanation and response to pupils' questions. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils and ensure that they are responsible for their own learning through providing a good balance between teacher input and pupil activities. Learning is good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4. Pupils are expected to use subject terms accurately, these are listed in books and rehearsed through questioning when opportunities arise, as seen when Year 10 pupils revised their work in preparation for an examination. This is one way the department is striving to improve literacy

skills. The promotion of numeracy skills through the teaching is satisfactory. However, the variety of tasks given provides insufficient opportunities to practice constructing and interpreting statistical diagrams. The teaching makes a significant contribution to the social, moral, cultural and spiritual development of pupils. Year 11 pupils sat in awe and wonder as, with the use of the television and very good exposition, they revisited some of the places and processes studied previously. There are inconsistencies in the quality of marking and the recording of assessments and, though there is good practice, this is unsatisfactory overall. Pupils are not provided with sufficient information as to how they might improve their work.

- 47 Pupils respond very positively to the challenging teaching and enthusiastic delivery of the teachers. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good. They are interested in topical issues, including hazards, as well as other places and people. Pupils make very good progress in developing those skills necessary for greater independence in their learning, and persevere to complete their assignments. Effective use is made of ICT in the teaching, and pupils have many opportunities to apply and extend their skills. There are, however, a significant minority of pupils who do not take sufficient care over their written work, including graphs and diagrams; this results in weaknesses in their understanding.
- 48 The department has achieved considerable improvement over the past three years and standards are improving. The evolving schemes of work are comprehensive and promote continuity and progression in the teaching and learning. A good range of high quality resources has been built-up and the very good accommodation is enhanced with excellent displays of pupils' work. The well-qualified team of teachers has worked hard to achieve the high quality teaching observed and to encourage independent learning. The head of department provides very good leadership and effective management. The departmental team has a clear view of where further improvements might be possible and is well placed to continue to improve and to raise standards.

## **HISTORY**

- 49 The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were above those reported nationally. However, the evidence of the inspection indicates that these were inaccurate, tending to overestimate what the pupils had achieved. The standard of work of pupils currently in Year 9 is in line with national expectations. Pupils have a knowledge and understanding of the people, events and changes studied. They use historical terms accurately and have a secure understanding of when events occurred and in what sequence. All pupils can describe the characteristic features of particular periods and higher-attaining pupils are able to analyse these. Pupils develop effective overviews of the topics and can make links between periods. As a result of the greater emphasis on enquiry work, pupils are better able to pose questions and make effective use of sources. Their understanding of cause and causation is underdeveloped, as is their appreciation that events may be interpreted differently.
- 50 GCSE results in history have improved over the past three years. In 2000, the results were above the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C rose, and all pupils gained at least grade G. However, the average point score per pupil was below the national average. Pupils made relatively less progress in history than in their other subjects. The department is addressing this by re-scheduling the course, increasing the practice of examination questions and providing more feedback to pupils as to how they might improve.
- 51 The evidence of the pupils' work and the lessons observed showed that Year 11 pupils' attainment is above the nationally expected level. They have a very good understanding and factual knowledge of the units studied and, as seen in a lesson on '19<sup>th</sup> Century Reformers', are able to explain and analyse the reasons and results of changes.

- 52 When they enter the school in Year 7, standards are below average. When compared to their earlier attainment, pupils' achievement in history is good at Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress in studying the required periods and developing their subject skills. In Key Stage 4, pupils progress in the use and evaluation of sources, and assessing interpretations of events, is particularly marked and their achievement is good.
- 53 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because teachers have a good understanding of their requirements and, with the aid of learning assistants, support their learning well. As a result their achievement is good. In a Year 7 lesson, resources chosen for the study of conditions in the medieval town could be usefully interpreted by all, including those with poor literacy skills, and all pupils made good progress. This careful match of task to need is not consistent through all years.
- 54 Overall, the teaching observed was good. Teaching was satisfactory in Key Stage 3, and it was very effective in Key Stage 4 as teachers have a clear focus on examination requirements and the criteria for success. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic, as a result explanations are clear and interesting, and they respond with insight and knowledge to pupils' questions. For example, a Year 8 group sat 'spellbound' as a teacher drew on their responses to tell the story of Mary, Queen of Scots. Teachers question pupils skilfully to check and extend their understanding of facts and difficult ideas, as seen when Year 10 pupils revised 'Stalin's Russia'. This lesson also showed the objective and sensitive way in which controversial issues are dealt with. The teaching makes a very significant contribution to the pupils' social, moral and cultural development. In a Year 9 lesson on the First World War, pupils were aware of prejudice in the accounts written and the promotion of the achievements of certain racial groups over others. The monitoring of pupils' progress is very good. The only significant weakness observed was in the day-to-day assessment of pupil's work at Key Stage 3. Though there was some good practice, there was too much variation, a lack of method and precision and not enough information given to pupils as to how they might improve.
- 55 As a result of the good teaching, pupils' learning is also good overall. Most important are their developing ability to work independently and willingness to persevere in completing enquiry work. They respond well to the challenge of the teaching; they want to know more, they are attentive and capable of sustained concentration. Relationships in the classroom are very good and behaviour is good. Some pupils take insufficient care in the presentation and organisation of their work which, as a result, is very untidy and spoiled by careless errors.
- 56 Much progress has been made over the past three years. The schemes of work provide clear guidelines that support the very effective planning of lessons. Teaching and learning are enriched by visits and curriculum events. Examples include the Year 9 visit to the battlefields of the First World War and the Year 7 'Medieval Day'. A good range of high quality resources has been built-up and the very good accommodation is enhanced with excellent displays of pupil's work. The department is aware of the opportunities available through the use of ICT and is making purposeful progress in this area. In a lesson where Year 11 pupils revised their work, using 'cut and paste' exercises, their response to the good teaching was excellent and all, including those with poor literacy skills, made very good progress.
- 57 The department is ably led and effectively managed with the line manager continuing to provide good support. The team work well together and the development plan reflects a clarity of purpose and an awareness of relative weaknesses. The department has both the capacity and commitment necessary to achieve further improvement.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY**

- 58 In 2000, the results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above those reported nationally. The overall standard of work of pupils currently in Year 9 is above national expectations



and many are progressing well towards even higher standards. Pupils are strongest when using computers to handle and communicate information. In creating presentations in which they successfully combine text, pictures, tables, charts and sound, they follow good procedures in testing and refining their work. They use a spreadsheet to analyse information about costs, in order to find a break-even attendance figure and suggest the optimum ticket price for a school disco. In one mathematics lesson, half needed help with basic techniques when entering figures into a spreadsheet and using these to create charts and graphs.

- 59 The subject is very popular and successful at GCSE, with results improving each year. The school provides two GCSE options, information technology and information systems. The results, in 2000, were significantly above the national averages in both subjects. All pupils gained at least a grade G. Pupils made relatively more progress in these subjects than in their other subjects.
- 60 The evidence of the pupils' work and lessons observed shows that Year 11 pupils' attainment is above national expectations and suggests that, when they have finished their current programme of revision for the forthcoming examinations, they will be able to match last year's attainment at GCSE. This is most noticeable in pupils' use of computers to handle and communicate information. Work, in which advertising material was created to promote a riding school, shows good awareness of the intended audience and effective procedures for testing and refining. Pupils' very good skills were demonstrated, for example, in their project on promoting a speedway; here the range of tools and approaches considered, and the process of choice and development, were explained in detail. All pupils explain their work well in written reports; those of the highest-attaining pupils are distinguished by their level of organisation, detail and depth.
- 61 When compared to their earlier attainment, pupils' achievement is good at both key stages. When they enter the school in Year 7, standards are slightly below average. From this modest baseline, pupils make good progress. For example, they quickly learn how to use database tools to carry out simple sorting and searching tasks, to create a range of charts to present spreadsheet information and to integrate text and pictures. Before the end of Year 7, almost half show good skills in presenting their work, interpreting spreadsheet information, creating simple calculations to answer questions, and developing more complex database searches. A few are able to create macros to simplify commands and to attach these to buttons in the spreadsheets. Those pupils who go on to study the subject at GCSE maintain and further improve the high standards that they take forward from Year 9.
- 62 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. As a result their achievement is good in both key stages. Almost all learn how to use word processors, spreadsheets and databases, competently. With the help of learning support assistants, they keep up well with the general level and pace. The most able pupils also make good progress and those who go on to take GCSE courses succeed in achieving the highest grades.
- 63 Overall, the teaching observed was good; in Years 10 and 11, it was sometimes very good. In both key stages, tasks are planned effectively to promote progress, and work is explained well, so that pupils are clear about their tasks and the procedures to use. However, teachers do not always ensure that all pupils are paying full attention in order to take full advantage of this. Good subject knowledge enables teachers to provide GCSE groups with strong guidance on meeting examination requirements. It enables them to question well, providing pupils with good opportunities to practise and test their developing knowledge and understanding. Teachers have good awareness of the specific needs of their pupils and support these well, so that the great majority make good progress. Problems and misconceptions are quickly identified and addressed by individual help and, where necessary, by repeating explanations and demonstrations to the whole class. Pupils are regularly encouraged to make choices and challenged to improve their work. For example, Year 11 pupils were encouraged to discuss the improvements shown in samples drawn from the class. When available, support staff are used well. This was particularly effective in a Year 7 lesson, where the department's technical support

assistant provided a practical demonstration, leaving the teacher free to explain, question and observe how well pupils were understanding what they were being shown.

- 64 The department is aware that it needs to develop the range of opportunities it provides for pupils to develop their numeracy and literacy skills while using computers. However, some helpful examples were observed in the lessons and work samples seen. Year 7 pupils considered how to present various types of numerical field when constructing a database. Pupils in Years 9 and 10 learnt how to create spreadsheet calculations in order to analyse information. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils were asked to read a lengthy document on screen, which provided a good opportunity to practise skimming and scanning. Through being encouraged to improve their work, pupils are well supported in developing their redrafting skills.
- 65 As a result of the good teaching, and their own very good response to this, pupils' learning is good. Pupils show high levels of effort, perseverance and concentration. Pupils work well together and are keen to answer questions and take part in discussions. They take good advantage of opportunities to choose software and techniques to address their tasks.
- 66 The subject is very well led and managed. The development of the role of ICT is high in the school's priorities and this is fully reflected in the contribution of those with whole-school and departmental responsibility. The curriculum has been developed well, a very good level of high quality resources and accommodation have been provided and teaching is well planned, monitored and supported. GCSE courses in business studies and design and technology provide good opportunities to apply and reinforce capability in working with computers. In both key stages, there is a good level of provision of opportunities to use computers in the other subjects, with English, design and technology, geography and history having particular strengths. These qualities have had a clear impact upon the standards that the school achieves in its ICT courses.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **French**

- 67 Results of teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2000 were slightly below the average reported nationally. Girls' results were in line with the average, but boys' results were significantly below. These results were an improvement on 1999 figures, which were significantly below the national average for both boys and girls. The evidence of the inspection indicates that standards are now higher as a result of improved teaching. Standards of work of pupils in the current Year 9 are in line with the national expectation. Pupils' listening skills are well developed and they speak confidently. Their written work is satisfactory in the breadth of topics covered and in the development of grammatical knowledge and competence, but pupils do not produce enough extended writing on topics of personal interest. Their reading supports the development of the other skills, but they do not read enough general material for information and pleasure. Pupils' attainment when they enter the school is below average. Their achievement and progress in Years 7 to 9 are good. In a Year 7 class, for example, pupils quickly acquired new language on finding their way round a French town and showed a good capacity to retain and apply it. In a Year 9 class, pupils worked confidently in a range of verb tenses and used authentic French television schedules in meaningful discussion.
- 68 GCSE results in 2000 were in line with the national average for similar schools. Boys performed a little better than girls. These results were an improvement on the previous year. Evidence of the inspection indicates that the improvement will be maintained, as staffing difficulties which affected pupils' learning have been overcome. Standards of work of pupils in the current Year 11 are above the national expectation: pupils use their language skills well in combination, with particular strengths in speaking and writing on topics such as fashion, work experience and job applications. Pupils' achievement and progress in Years 10 and 11 are very good. Their work becomes more demanding in Year 10, following their less challenging experience in Years 7-9. They respond well to the current

high quality and consistency of teaching. In Year 10, for example, pupils in a higher-attaining set worked intensively on GCSE role-play tasks, showing levels of skill which already corresponded to high examination grades. Pupils in a lower-attaining set effectively reinforced their learning on the topic of domestic jobs and pocket money, using all their language skills.

## **German**

- 69 Standards of work of pupils in the current Year 9 are in line with national expectation. This reflects their very good achievement in German, which they began in Year 8. Pupils in the current Year 9 are able to work confidently in a range of verb tenses, showing, for example, well-developed speaking skills in conversations and sketches on the topic of illness. Their written work is accurate, but, as with French, they need more opportunities to write at length for their own purposes. Pupils in Year 8 show the ability to acquire new language quickly and apply it enthusiastically through language games.
- 70 GCSE results have improved over the past three years. In 2000, they were significantly above the national average. Boys and girls performed at similar levels, whereas, nationally, girls outperform boys. Standards of work of pupils in the current Year 11 are above the national expectation. Pupils' skills are well developed, with particular strengths in speaking and extended writing. Their achievement and progress are very good in Years 10 and 11. The rate of progress established in Years 8 and 9 is well maintained, to the extent that performance in German overtakes that in French. In a Year 10 high-attaining set, for example, pupils undertook fluent discussions of leisure activities, having read a technically challenging text. In a similar Year 11 class, pupils demonstrated high levels of grammatical knowledge which they applied through speaking and writing about daily routine. Inspection of their written work showed high quality writing on a good range of topics from accident reports to letters of complaint. Pupils' listening and reading skills are well developed.

## **Modern foreign languages**

- 71 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in languages: this is supported by the setting system, the use of suitable teaching materials and a sympathetic approach based on the principle of giving all pupils an entitlement to language study. This was particularly well illustrated in a Year 11 French class, where pupils with hearing impairment and some of lower-attainment successfully developed their listening skills through tackling a GCSE examination paper. Higher-attaining groups include those pupils who are regarded as gifted and talented.
- 72 The quality of teaching, in both French and German, is very good at all levels. In two thirds of lessons seen, teaching was very good and occasionally excellent. In no lesson was it less than good. The high quality and consistency of teaching have been major factors in the improvements in standards in languages. This high quality is characterised by a lively and motivating approach, with most teaching done through the target language; by the very good preparation and resourcing of lessons (including the use of the Internet and authentic materials), and the brisk pace and challenge, notably with higher-ability groups; and by the generally very good management and encouragement of pupils, particularly those of average and lower attainment. Teachers' expectations of pupils of all levels of ability are high: they are given plenty of opportunity to practise their languages independently and to apply their learning in meaningful and interesting contexts. Marking and assessment are detailed and give pupils clear guidelines as to how to improve. There is a clear focus on progression through the National Curriculum and on examination requirements. The teaching results in good learning in Key Stage 3 in French and very good learning in French in Key Stage 4, and in German.
- 73 Pupils' attitudes to language study and their response in lessons are very good. They speak willingly and enthusiastically, work well in pairs or groups, and are able to maintain their effort and concentration well. Older pupils, in particular, really aspire to improve their skills, asking constructive questions and showing well-developed skills of analysis of points of language and a determination to be

successful. Relationships with their teachers and with each other are very good. Pupils of all ages and levels of attainment show a high level of motivation.

- 74 The languages' curriculum is good: pupils have equal access to French and German and can study either or both at GCSE: an increasing number of able and enthusiastic pupils are opting for both languages. Much work is underway on curriculum planning and the development of schemes of work. Assessment is closely linked to the National Curriculum levels of progression, and information is freely shared with pupils to enable them to evaluate their own progress. Currently, the new National Curriculum programmes of study are not sufficiently clearly integrated into the schemes of work.
- 75 The department is very well managed: a committed and cohesive team has been established. This has made a significant impact on standards and on the status of languages in the curriculum. An indication of the pride teachers take in their work, and that of their pupils, is the very high quality of display in all language classrooms and public areas in the department. This is a successful department which has the capacity to improve further.

## **PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Drama**

- 76 Drama is taught to all pupils in a weekly lesson in Years 7 to 9, and is an increasingly popular GCSE option. GCSE results have been above the national average for the past three years. In 2000, with a large number of pupils with a wide range of ability entered, results rose and were well above the national average. A quarter of the candidates gained the very highest A\*/A grades and the 90 per cent A\*-C pass rate was the highest of any subject in the school. Pupils made relatively greater progress in drama than in their other subjects.
- 77 The work of pupils at present in the school, judged in lessons and from a scrutiny of their work, shows attainment to be above the nationally expected level in Year 9, and well above average in Year 11. Practical and performance skills are better than written skills, although the amount and quality of writing and its range are good. By Year 9, pupils have covered a good range of topics, often relating to social issues, self-awareness, and multicultural awareness, by studying the experience of the native inhabitants of North America. They write readily and honestly, being comfortable with terms such as 'tension' and 'freeze frame'. In contrast with their discussion work, however, many pupils are not adept at written evaluation.
- 78 Evaluation skills improve at GCSE where most pupils summarise and analyse practical theatre. This shows their very good level of thinking about what they are doing, exemplified by the power and sensitivity of their performance. Pupils in a Year 11 group, a number of whom had potential behavioural problems, were hugely supportive of each other and controversial issues were presented in a powerfully moving and insightful fashion.
- 79 When they enter the school in Year 7, pupils have an awareness and ability in drama which is close to the national average. Their achievement is good and they make good progress in all years, soon learning to plan and discuss their work, and to accept the opportunities and responsibilities of working in groups, often mixed gender. A Year 7 class made good progress in sharing ideas and coming to group decisions before presenting them, because the teacher developed with them the idea of how a previously happy community would react to being divided by a wall. In a very successful lesson on creating tension and atmosphere, excellent questioning by the teacher enabled pupils to explain how groups they had watched had created effects. Technical terms were very well used in most lessons. Such very good learning is possible because of the quality of the teaching.

- 80 The teaching observed was very good in both key stages because of its consistency and skill. Teachers plan, organise and manage classes very well. They explain detailed lesson objectives, structure lessons carefully to balance activities, and allow pupils some independence within a disciplined environment. This allows pupils with special educational needs to flourish. The progress and learning of all pupils is very good. In a class containing some pupils with special educational needs or low confidence levels, pupils quickly created good quality scenes to explain in flashback what had happened prior to the events in the poem *The Identification*. In general, teachers make too little use of brainstorming to stimulate a range of ideas. Expectations of behaviour and achievement are high, and demanding written work is regularly set, and usually very thoroughly marked. Some tasks encourage too much generalised writing, and in some cases books have not been adequately marked to reflect the effort which pupils have made. Particular strengths of the teaching are the use of specialist terms to help pupils' understanding, and the very high quality of question and answer sessions in class. Relative weaknesses seen included allowing pupils to be too quiet or turned away in performance, not consolidating work as a whole class after group activities, and not encouraging different approaches to tasks by pupils of different attainment.
- 81 Pupils have a very positive attitude to drama, many putting considerable thought and energy into both lessons and homework. Most are responsible and mature, working very co-operatively with teachers and other pupils. Behaviour is always very good, sometimes excellent. A number of younger boys have difficulty restraining their tendency to show off when in groups. Their behaviour does not seriously deteriorate, but they do lose a focus on the purpose of the task.
- 82 Very good management by the head of department has resulted in an effective balance between creativity and discipline in pupils' performance, and their acceptance that planning and evaluating practical work is as important as the performance itself. Teachers follow a scheme of work that is of exceptional quality. The assessment system is very good. Results are shared with pupils, and advice given about how to improve; this informs pupils how to set their own targets for progress. Drama clubs, productions in school and for primary schools, and workshops combine with the way the subject is taught to make a strong contribution to pupils' personal development. Whilst accommodation is good, it is too varied, ranging from an excellent drama studio to some lessons in the hall which can be disturbed by nearby activities or preparations for assembly.

## Music

- 83 The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were in line with those reported nationally. The standard of work of pupils currently in Year 9 is in line with national expectations. They are strongest in performing, as demonstrated in class ensembles. In these, pupils performed a version of Pachelbel's Canon in 6 parts on keyboards, one pupil to a part. Performances were secure and indicated a confident working knowledge of the basic elements of music, such as pulse, rhythm and texture. One or two performances included additional parts added as a result of improvisation; this practice is an effective way of developing composing skills. One version, with an additional part for saxophone, was particularly successful. Pupils' skills in composing are satisfactory overall and pupils are familiar with the elementary aspects of musical literacy, such as the treble stave and basic note values. Their musical knowledge about composers and different eras in music, however, is limited.
- 84 Numbers taking GCSE in music are too small for valid comparisons with national statistics to be made. Results are good, in themselves, and pupils achieve at least as well in music as in their other subjects. All pupils have achieved at least grades A\*-G in the past three years. In 2000, six out of eight pupils (75 per cent) gained the higher grades, which was well above the national average. In 1999 and 1998, results were just below and just above the national averages respectively. Contrary to the national trend, boys have outperformed girls over the last three years, but by only a narrow margin.

- 85 The evidence of pupils' work and the lessons observed shows that Year 11 pupils' attainment is above the nationally expected level. Pupils do best in performing. They are encouraged to develop their own musical strengths and performing interests. Their accomplishment and experience as performers vary considerably. The group includes a singer who accompanies himself on guitar and who pursues an active performing career in the community. Others are talented instrumentalists and singers who practise hard and give polished performances. Most show well developed skills in composing. They understand technicalities, such as cadences, modulation and syncopation. In examples seen, pupils had written well for the chosen instruments, and maintained a consistent and distinctive style throughout each piece. Work is carefully presented, almost always using traditional notation. However, pupils' knowledge of the characteristics of different styles of music, such as baroque compared with classical, was vague.
- 86 When compared with their earlier attainment, pupils' achievement in music, in Key Stage 3, is satisfactory. When they enter the school in Year 7, many have had limited musical experiences and standards are below average. From this baseline, they make satisfactory progress. For example, in Year 7, pupils confirm their understanding of rhythm and meter by compiling rhythmic dialogue, as between a waiter and customer, and begin to set their words to simple melodies. By Year 8, they devise contrasting rhythmic patterns to combine as accompaniments, for example to the song, *Kumula Vista*. Pupils develop their understanding of the basic rudiments of music, thoroughly, through practical activities. By Year 9, they understand the 12-bar blues style and use the chord structure as the basis of their own compositions. Progress and achievement in Key Stage 4 are good. This is because the teaching is more consistent.
- 87 From the information available about each pupil's previous attainment, teachers are able to plan work which challenges all pupils appropriately. This enables pupils with special educational needs to make achievement comparable with all other pupils in Key Stage 3. They are fully involved in all practical activities. Pupils from the hearing-impaired unit are very well supported in class. They are able to participate fully and their progress is good.
- 88 Overall, the teaching observed in Key Stage 3 was satisfactory and in Key Stage 4 it was good. In all lessons, teachers explained the objectives clearly so that pupils were able to begin the various tasks purposefully. The very good standard of accommodation and the carefully prepared task sheets increased the efficiency of all lessons. Teachers easily maintained discipline at all times, and provided a good level of individual support for pupils and groups. This enabled pupils to learn independently, and they were keen to refine their work, particularly in Key Stage 4. Teachers carefully set relevant homework. Time was generally well used, although some group activities lacked a little pace as deadlines were not clearly set. Overall, pupils' learning was satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good, sometimes very good, in Key Stage 4. The teaching in Key Stage 3 included some that was very good and a small amount that was unsatisfactory. Where the teaching was unsatisfactory, the pupils did not make enough progress because the pace of learning was too slow.
- 89 Pupils behave well in lessons and have positive attitudes to work. They are trustworthy when dispersed for practical work. They listen to each other's performances with interest and evaluate them constructively. Pupils in Year 7 were inefficient in group work, but were effectively re-focused on the task by the purposeful intervention of the teacher. Those preparing for GCSE have very positive attitudes to work and are very enthusiastic.
- 90 The scheme of work in Key Stage 3 provides pupils with good opportunities for developing the required skills and understanding. They gain familiarity with a wide range of musical styles. Just occasionally, pupils' interest wanes as a result of too little variety of activity throughout the hour. The scheme of work in Key Stage 4 reflects well the GCSE requirements and accommodates the strengths and interests of all the pupils. Assessment criteria are carefully linked to GCSE criteria in Key Stage 4, and satisfactory progress is being made towards introducing the levels of attainment from

Curriculum 2000 into assessment in Key Stage 3. The curricular activities provide very good opportunities for pupils' social and cultural development. A very good range of extra-curricular activities supplements these opportunities. More than a hundred pupils learn instruments at the school, and varied instrumental and choral ensembles give regular concerts. These activities are well supported and appreciated by parents. The school's musicians have very good links with feeder primary schools and regularly perform in them.

- 91 The head of department works tirelessly to develop and extend the provision of music in the school, and is well supported through a purposeful line-management system. Four other teachers contribute to the subject in Key Stage 3. As the only specialist teacher, the head of department has a overly heavy workload to co-ordinate and develop teaching, to monitor the other teachers formally and to provide extra-curricular activities. Overall, therefore, the staffing is unsatisfactory.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

- 92 The results of teacher assessments in physical education at the end of Year 9, in 2000, were above those reported nationally. The evidence of work seen during the inspection suggests that these over-estimated what pupils achieved. The standard of work of pupils currently in Year 9 is in line with national expectation. A new assessment programme has been introduced which allows teachers to assess attainment levels more accurately and consistently. Pupils are strongest in dance and gymnastics: in Year 8 lessons pupils showed their understanding of different techniques when developing sequences of movement in an appropriate response to the tasks set by the teacher. Pupils are less successful in athletics. For example, Year 7 pupils forgot the techniques they had learned once competition was introduced.
- 93 GCSE results in physical education have improved since the school's inception. In 2000, the results were significantly above the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was well above the national average, and the proportion gaining at least a grade G was also above the national average. Pupils made relatively more progress in physical education than in their other subjects. More boys than girls chose physical education; the girls outperformed the boys by a smaller margin than nationally.
- 94 The evidence of the pupils' work, and the lessons observed, showed that Year 11 pupils' attainment is above the nationally expected level. They do best in practical work; in one Year 11 lesson, pupils successfully practised recovery and resuscitation skills in a land-based exercise. High-attaining pupils make accurate analyses when observing and are able to give useful feedback. Low-attaining pupils do not fully understand the importance of body position in giving direction to the shot in badminton. Pupils do less well in theory work in which they show less interest; pupils generally view the subject as being essentially practical.
- 95 When compared to their earlier attainment, pupils' achievement in physical education is good in both key stages. From a low baseline in Year 7, pupils make good progress. For example, in Year 7 athletics, pupils do not relate preparation and technique to better performance; by Year 9, pupils understand the links between preparation, safety, technique and performance. Higher-attaining pupils improve performance times by applying techniques, while lower-attaining pupils achieve less well because, for example, they do not fully apply basic sprint techniques. In Year 9, pupils know the rules of badminton and the parameters of the court for singles and doubles play, but are unsure of correct body and racket position in the smash shot. High-attaining pupils achieve continuous rallies and manage the drop shot; low-attaining pupils were not so consistent, because their weak body position was affecting their shots and placement. By Year 10, pupils are more confident in their play and choice of shots. High-attaining pupils demonstrate the importance of body position, racket angle and choice of shot for winning shots and effective placement.

- 96 Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress due to the efforts of their teachers. They are aware of the needs of their pupils and they give clear explanations. Information and instructions are supported by gesture and demonstration, and teachers re-emphasise key learning points. This assists the learning of all pupils but particularly lower-attaining and hearing-impaired pupils. In a Year 10 badminton lesson, while high-attaining pupils were given targets to achieve, the apparatus was modified to allow low-attaining pupils greater chances of success whilst practising their overhead shots.
- 97 Overall the teaching observed was good in both key stages. It was particularly effective in Year 10, where the teachers have a clear focus on the examination syllabus requirements and the criteria for success. Teachers have good subject knowledge and give clear direction; lessons were well planned. Teachers question pupils well to check their understanding. By Year 10, GCSE pupils observe one another, record these observations and give feedback to make improvements. This analysis helps in improving the performance of all, and particularly assists the weaker players. A relative weakness was observed in the extent to which some pupils have been taught a basic understanding of body mechanics, and an understanding of why and how techniques are successful. For example, some pupils, particularly low-attaining pupils, do not understand why their shots go adrift in badminton. They understand body balance, but not how to stand to get the variety of shots they need. In athletics, pupils do not realise how arms moving across the body, or feet moving outwards, take them off the direct path so necessary for successful sprinting. The good teaching results in good learning at both key stages. Key words are prominently displayed and other examples of literacy development are evident in most lessons. Use of numeracy skills was observed in several lessons where recording, estimating, timing and counting were used.
- 98 Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Pupils respond well to challenging teaching. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, pupils were encouraged to increase their mobility around the badminton court by executing a passing exercise in limited space. This exercise demanded skill and thoughtful manoeuvre, and pupils worked well together for success. Pupils' learning was assisted by them being given opportunities to initiate warm up activities or direct tasks. Pupils are sometimes inattentive in lessons when the teacher's attention is focused for too long on one group to the detriment of others.
- 99 The opportunities available through the curriculum are enhanced and supported by the very good extra-curricular programme. Pupils respond positively to these opportunities, and activities at lunchtime were particularly well attended. The programme includes inter-form team matches, some organised by pupils, and the school has strong teams in several activities. These opportunities made a significant contribution to pupils' social and moral development.
- 100 The leadership and management of the department are good. The current planning reflects the evaluation of effectiveness which has been undertaken. Teachers have started to record the strengths and weaknesses of their pupils more accurately, and to use the data available to assist with assessment. Nevertheless, teachers currently remain overgenerous in their assessments. In Key Stage 4, where the curriculum is led by the requirements of the syllabus, procedures for assessment, recording and reporting are appropriate. Accommodation is very good: the school benefits from a large, and well equipped sports hall, a gymnasium, swimming pool and fitness room, as well as outdoor courts for netball, basketball and tennis. The water logging of the playing fields is a restriction. Practical facilities are used to their best advantage, but no designated room is available for teaching theory lessons. Teachers have a clear view of further possibilities for development and improvement and are updating their documentation.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

- 101 The standard of work of pupils currently in Year 9 is in line with the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. The allocation of time for religious education in Year 9 is low, because the course is



part of the provision for personal, social and health education, to which one weekly period is allocated. The religious education component consists of one topic, 'Stages in Life'. In the limited time available, pupils gain substantial insights into religious rites and ceremonies associated with each stage in life. They gain a good understanding of birth ceremonies in major world religions. They develop a good understanding of the rights and responsibilities connected with the coming of age in different societies. They give their own written views, for example on the validity of modern marriage, and carefully evaluate differing views on current issues, such as adoption through the Internet.

- 102 When compared with their earlier attainment, pupils' achievement is satisfactory over the whole key stage because of the limited allocation of time in Year 9, but good in individual lessons. When they enter the school in Year 7, standards are below average. From this low baseline, pupils achieve well in Years 7 and 8. They learn to distinguish between religion and mythology, and they learn basic facts about the world's major religions. From an early stage pupils' own views are developed, for example when they consider the values promoted by the Ten Commandments in Christianity. Informative workbooks help pupils to gain a satisfactory factual knowledge. Pupils also write in these books. Written work is less substantial than often found nationally, particularly that of higher-attaining pupils. The volume of written work tends to be limited by the space available in the workbook. Overall, religious education makes a satisfactory contribution to developing pupils' literacy. Pupils use computer skills purposefully in religious education, for example in Year 7 when researching the development of Islam. Below-average pupils, and those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress, but they have some difficulty in giving their personal views other than very briefly. Hearing-impaired pupils make good progress because of the well-managed and attentive support they receive.
- 103 The quality of teaching and learning were good in Key Stage 3, and sometimes very good. Teachers share clear objectives for each lesson with the class and manage time well, so that there is an opportunity to consolidate and review what has been learned at the end of the lesson. This enables pupils to work with a clear sense of purpose and to use time efficiently. Teachers have good subject knowledge and explain topics well for the pupils. The good level of support for individual pupils helps them to learn effectively. This help is quietly given so that it adds to, rather than detracts from, the studious atmosphere in lessons. Sometimes the questioning of pupils is at an obvious level and does not extend the speaking skills of all pupils or challenge above-average pupils with sufficient rigour. In a very good lesson on the early life of Buddha, pupils developed elementary research skills well by selecting information about different events from a carefully prepared information sheet. They turned their findings into dialogue and presented them in a lively way to the class. The teacher generated a strong sense of purpose by imposing strict deadlines on the work and confirmed pupils' understanding of how events led Siddhartha Gautama to become 'The Enlightened One'.
- 104 Pupils behave well in religious education lessons. They work together constructively, but in Year 7 their collaboration was not very efficient. They were very trustworthy and purposeful in Year 8 when independently using computers.
- 105 The scheme of work covers statutory requirements well in Years 7 and 8. Pupils develop their understanding and knowledge in a good variety of tasks. The curriculum is supplemented by a visit to various places of worship in Year 8. The time allocated for religious education in Year 9 is inadequate. For example, in one lesson observed, designated as religious education and dealing with bereavement, there was too little reference to religious attitudes to be considered a valid religious education lesson. However, the overall provision in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. It is unsatisfactory in Key Stage 4 and is poor in relation to the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. There was insufficient evidence, therefore, to make any judgement about standards, achievement, teaching or learning in this key stage. Despite the careful day-to-day organisation of the subject and good teaching, the management of religious education, therefore, is unsatisfactory.

## **KEY STAGE 4**

### **BUSINESS STUDIES**

- 106 The school provides a course leading to GCSE business studies. In 2000, too few pupils were entered to enable firm statistical comparisons with national standards to be made. However, the achievement of A\*-C grades has been steadily improving since the course was introduced, with just over half securing this level in 2000. Almost all pupils secure at least a grade G. One lesson was observed during the inspection. In this, the quality of teaching and learning were good, as all pupils made at least satisfactory progress and for most it was good. Work focused on learning some general principles and applying these to a case study that each pupil developed about a fictitious company. All used a computer to word-process this, and worked with a high level of fluency and independence. The teacher effectively supported this work, achieving a good balance between providing help and further encouraging an independent approach. The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils were very good. They showed high commitment to their work and considerable maturity in working with minimal supervision, selecting and using a range of sources and discussing work in small groups.

### **COMMUNICATIONS STUDIES**

- 107 GCSE communications studies is a popular option. Some higher-attaining pupils combine it with GCSE drama in the time normally allowed for one option. Whilst this affords an unusually rich experience it can result in underachievement by some pupils, notably girls,. In 2000 the proportion entered for GCSE was three times the national average. The results were in line with the national average and were an improvement from the previous year. Two lessons were observed during the inspection. The quality of teaching and learning were very good. New ideas were well and clearly introduced, and pupils expected to use specialist language such as plot, narrative and setting. Very good relationships were observed; all pupils knowing that their ideas and opinions would be valued. Pupils' recorded work shows that they have made effective use of ICT. Pupils are encouraged to examine, and come to conclusions about, wider social and moral issues, such as money suggesting power, and the influence and image of the tobacco industry. The subject makes an effective contribution to their personal development.

### **TRAVEL AND TOURISM**

- 108 The school provides a course leading to GCSE travel and tourism. In the 2000 examination, results were below the national average. One lesson was observed during the inspection. In this, the quality of teaching and learning were good. Activities provided well for the needs of pupils, in providing an opportunity to answer written questions against the clock, and indicating the key areas to concentrate upon in preparing to tackle a pre-release examination paper on holiday destinations. The teacher applied his subject knowledge effectively in asking questions that enabled pupils to test and extend their knowledge and understanding. Good attention was given to ensuring that key terms were defined and fully understood. The response of pupils was good. They showed high interest and willingness to participate in answering oral questions and completing written tasks, and most pupils sustained this throughout the lesson.