

INSPECTION REPORT

THOMAS KEBLE SCHOOL

Stroud, Gloucestershire

LEA area: Gloucestershire

Unique reference number: 115727

Headteacher: Mr Chris Steer

Reporting inspector: Jan Allcorn
1068

Dates of inspection: 25th - 28th February 2002

Inspection number: 242896

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 to 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Eastcombe
Stroud
Gloucestershire

Postcode: GL6 7DY

Telephone number: 01452 770301

Fax number: 01452 770093

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Colin Hassall

Date of previous inspection: February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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1068	Jan Allcorn	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities	School's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9334	Jenny Mynett	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
30046	Ross Parker	Team inspector	English Special Educational Needs	
19528	Roland Portsmouth	Team inspector	Mathematics and numeracy strategy	Assessment
27050	Val Blackburn	Team inspector	Science	Accommodation and resources
17556	Michael Miller	Team inspector	Art	
12721	David Riddle	Team inspector	Design and Technology	Staffing
3555	Carol Emery	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
20649	John Flinn	Team inspector	History and Geography	
29806	Jose Marshall	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	Work-related curriculum
30675	Helen Rudeforth	Team inspector	Music	
1085	John Laver	Team inspector	Physical education and literacy strategy	
4372	Ralph Fordham	Team inspector	Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
10010	George Wallace	Team inspector	Mathematics	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Thomas Keble School is a small but rapidly growing 11-16 comprehensive school with 552 boys and girls on roll. Most of the pupils come from Eastcombe itself, the surrounding villages and the town of Stroud five miles away. Other pupils come from a wider area. Pupils are from a range of backgrounds and, although the proportion of pupils claiming a free school meal is below average, there is some rural poverty. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school has improved in recent years, but is still below average overall. Nearly a third of local children gain places at the two local grammar schools and as result the school has fewer pupils in the upper ability ranges than one would expect to find in a comprehensive school. The school also has an above average number of pupils with special educational needs and a well above average number of pupils with a statement of need. This is because the school has both the commitment and the facilities to integrate pupils with disabilities and particular learning needs. Few pupils come from ethnic groups other than white and no pupils currently have English as an additional language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Thomas Keble is a good and effective school and has a high commitment to each individual pupil doing the best he or she can. As a result, pupils make good progress throughout their time in the school, both academically and personally. Pupils achieve standards better than expected from their overall below average attainment on entry to the school. In summer 2001, pupils achieved their best ever results in National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds and at GCSE with overall performance in line with that nationally. Teaching is good and pupils behave and respond well, both in and outside lessons. The headteacher provides very good leadership and is well supported by his senior staff and governors. This, with good quality management and commitment from all staff, ensures continued improvement in the school's work. It is reflected in the school's recently successful bid to become a specialist technology college. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The clear leadership of the headteacher and the good management of the work of the school by all staff create a positive learning environment.
- Teaching is good and as a result pupils achieve well for their abilities.
- Pupils show interest and enjoyment in their work, behave well and get on well with each other and their teachers.
- The support, care and guidance given to pupils are strengths of the school.
- The management of programmes of work for pupils with special educational needs is very good and ensures they achieve well.
- The work related curriculum in Years 10 and 11 successfully meets pupils' learning and personal needs.

What could be improved

- Whilst pupils make good progress overall in English, their formal writing skills are still too low, especially in Years 10 and 11.
- Assessment of pupils' progress and the setting of targets for improvement are not consistent nor accurate enough across all subjects to ensure work is always set at the appropriate level.
- The standards reached by boys in national tests for 14 year olds and at GCSE are not as good as those of the girls and the gap is widening.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

At the time of the last inspection, Thomas Keble was an improving school. It has very clearly continued to be so under a new headteacher, with significant progress in the last few years. Overall improvement has been good. Results in National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds and at GCSE have reached national averages. Teaching is now good. Key areas for development at the time of the last inspection have been addressed well. A broader curriculum is in place that fully meets the needs of all pupils. The work related curriculum is particularly successful in Years 10 and 11. Opportunities for pupils to develop information and communication technology skills are much better, although not all subjects use computers as much as they could. Assessment procedures have improved, but these

are not yet fully effective in all subject areas to ensure future work is always set at the appropriate level.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			Similar* schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	D	D	C	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

**Similar schools are schools in areas where the most able pupils go to grammar schools and which have an equivalent proportion of pupils with free school meals.*

The trend for improvement in national test results for 14 year olds and at GCSE is better than that nationally and in summer 2001 the performances of pupils matched national averages. They were better than those nationally for pupils in areas where the most able go to grammar schools. Given their overall below average attainment on entry to the school, pupils achieve well for their abilities. The school's targets at GCSE and for 14 year olds were at least reached and mostly exceeded in summer 2001.

In National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds in summer 2001, pupils' performance in science was above that nationally, in mathematics it was in line and in English it was below. The improved results in science follow a complete overhaul of the science curriculum in the last three years. Overall, girls did better than boys, as they do nationally, but the difference in performance was slightly greater than that nationally.

At GCSE in summer 2001, although overall performance matched the national average, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more of the higher A*-C grades was just below the national average. Nevertheless, this was close to the average for similar schools. Of the three core subjects, pupils did best in science with the proportion of A*-C grades matching the national figure. In English they were somewhat below and mathematics just below. Those pupils who take English Literature do well because teachers provide clear writing frameworks to help them express their ideas. In summer 2001, pupils did best in information and communication technology, business studies and design and technology. They did least well in French, geography, mathematics and English Language.

During the inspection, standards observed in lessons and through the scrutiny of pupils' work were in line with those expected nationally. Pupils make good progress. In Year 9, pupils' attainment is in line with that expected nationally in mathematics and science and close to the average in English. For all other subjects it is at least in line with that expected nationally. For 16 year olds, standards are at nationally expected levels in most subjects. They are above average in Spanish, art and history. In English language they are below because pupils' writing skills are not sophisticated enough and in religious education because there is insufficient time to cover the Agreed Syllabus. Information and communication technology skills are above average for pupils in Years 7-9 and for those taking the GCSE course. They are average for other pupils in Years 10 and 11. This is because not all pupils have sufficiently clear opportunities to practise and develop their skills in other subjects of the curriculum.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress due to the very good support provided for them. Pupils speaking, listening and reading skills are at national levels, but writing skills are below expected levels, particularly for older pupils. Numeracy skills are satisfactory overall and sufficient to support pupils' work in other subjects, such as science and geography, well.

ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils' very positive attitudes contribute significantly to the good progress they make. Pupils enjoy school and work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils behave sensibly around the school and well in lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils are sensitive to the needs of others and get on well with each other. They actively organise and support events to raise money for different charities. Parents state that pupils, who have been unhappy in other schools, settle well at Thomas Keble and make friends easily.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Good	Good

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

Teaching is good. Just over a quarter of that observed during the inspection was very good or excellent. It was good in nearly all subjects, very good in information and communication technology and satisfactory in music. Very few unsatisfactory lessons were observed. Most teaching is well planned and clearly structured. This, with the pupils' very positive attitudes to their work and the good relationships between teachers and pupils, leads to good learning in lessons. Hence, pupils achieve well. Where teaching is best, pupils have demanding tasks that encourage independent thought and lead to real depth of understanding.

Teachers manage pupils well and have high expectations of behaviour. Homework is regularly set and makes a good contribution to pupils' learning. Where teaching is occasionally less successful, the management of pupils' behaviour is not always good enough. Sometimes work is not pitched at a level that matches pupils' learning needs. It is either too difficult or not hard enough. This occurs mainly when teachers' assessments of pupils' previous learning are not accurate enough to inform their planning.

A particular strength of the school is the very sensitive and good support provided for pupils with special educational needs, either in lessons or in small group work. Support teachers and support assistants contribute significantly to the good progress pupils with learning difficulties, disabilities or behavioural problems make.

The teaching of literacy skills is satisfactory. It would be better if all staff more consistently implemented the National Literacy Strategy. The teaching of numeracy skills is good and pupils are now more confident in working with numbers, both mentally and in their written work.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The work related curriculum for 14-16 year olds is a particular strength and prepares pupils well for further study or an appropriate job. Religious education does not fully meet statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11, because of insufficient time.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The support and guidance given to these pupils helps them to achieve good results for their abilities in national tests and examinations.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The school very effectively helps pupils to understand right from wrong and develops their concern for the disadvantaged well. Pupils have good opportunities to appreciate what books, the theatre, art and music contribute to society. However, they do not have enough opportunities to understand fully the multi-cultural society in which they will live. Pupils' spiritual development, whilst satisfactory, requires further thought. There is no daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well indeed. Well-established procedures help pupils to settle happily into a secure environment. Heads of school and form teachers

	know pupils well, monitor both their academic and personal progress and provide good support for them.
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HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very good leadership and is well supported by his deputy. Management of the work of the school is good overall. It is very good for heads of school, but variable for heads of department. It ranges from very good in art, design and technology, history and special educational needs to a few departments, such as English and music, where aspects of the work need clearer leadership.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Well. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They provide good practical support through ensuring appropriate funding and accommodation are available for the delivery of the school's priorities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Standards are well monitored, as is teaching. Good consultation with parents and pupils provides other valuable information. However, not all staff with responsibilities use information on pupils' performance effectively enough yet to identify the action to take for further improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory overall. Financial management is very good. The school is particularly good at obtaining funding for its activities from national initiatives. It ensures good value for money through consultation with staff, parents and pupils, comparing its results with similar schools and the clear monitoring of expenditure.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well all the staff know their children • The leadership of the school and the good progress their children make • The support the school gives to pupils with special educational needs • The wide range of extra-curricular activities available • The good contact with parents • Their children like school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More healthy food available at lunchtime • The amount of homework set

(52 parents attended the meeting for parents and 269 parents returned the questionnaire. 552 were sent out.)

Parents, who attended the meeting for parents and those who responded to the questionnaire, are very pleased that they have sent their children to Thomas Keble. Even the small number of parents who raised some concerns is still happy that they have sent their children to the school. Inspectors agree strongly with the parents' very positive comments about the school being a happy and caring place, where, because of its small size and the commitment of staff, their children are very well known. Most of the few parents who expressed concerns about homework thought there was too much on occasions. Inspectors judged that homework was appropriate in time and quality and made a good contribution to pupils' learning. Catering arrangements have already been reviewed.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Overall standards are in line with those expected nationally and represent good improvement since the last inspection. Pupils achieve well given their below average attainment on entry to the school in Year 7. Results in national tests for 14 year olds and at GCSE are improving at a faster rate than for other schools nationally. In summer 2001, performance in both these examinations was the school's best ever. It reached the national average and the school exceeded its targets both at GCSE and for national tests in mathematics and science for 14 year olds. The school's results are above national averages for similar schools in areas where, like at Thomas Keble, the most able local pupils go to grammar schools. They match those of similar school's with an equivalent proportion of free school meals.
2. Over the last three years, performance in national tests for 14 year olds in mathematics and science has improved significantly. In English, performance has been more variable, ranging from above average to below average and until the last two years not significantly different from that in the other two core subjects. In summer 2001, results in science were above the national average and those in mathematics in line. The improvement in results in science is the result of a complete overhaul of the science curriculum in the last three years. Results were less satisfactory in English where overall performance was below the national average, but inspection evidence suggests pupils' actual attainment was close to the national average. Test results were considerably below the school's assessments. A re-mark increased the level awarded to most pupils in the sample, but the school was unable to obtain a full re-mark. Girls do better than boys in all three subjects, as they do nationally. However, the gap is currently wider than that nationally and reflects the lower attainment of boys, particularly in literacy, on entry to the school.
3. In other subjects, in summer 2001, assessments for 14 year olds were considerably above those nationally, except in information and communication technology and physical education where they were in line. Inspection evidence, however, suggests that these assessments, except those for information and communication technology, modern foreign languages and physical education, are not sufficiently accurate and that attainment was average.
4. For current 14 year olds in Year 9, overall standards are in line with those expected nationally. In the core subjects (English, mathematics and science), attainment is average overall in mathematics and science, although few pupils attain at higher levels. In English, it is close to the national average, but pupils' writing skills are weak and lower the overall standards achieved. In other subjects, standards are in line with those expected nationally, except in information and communication technology where pupils have above average skills. Pupils make satisfactory progress in music and good progress overall in all other subjects. Where pupils' progress is sometimes satisfactory rather than good, the better use of assessment to plan work to match pupils' previous achievements would result in greater improvement. Standards in music would be improved by better lesson planning to get the best out of the tasks set.
5. At GCSE in summer 2001, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes (A*-G grades) was close to the national average. This represents good achievement for these pupils as nearly two thirds of the pupils entered the school in the lower ability ranges. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more of the higher A*-C grades was just below

the national average, but nevertheless represents at least sound progress for the small group of most able pupils in this year group. Results in most subjects at this level compare well with those of similar schools.

6. In the core subjects, the pass rate for science and English was in line with that nationally, but just below in mathematics as a smaller proportion of pupils took the examination. Results are best in science where the proportion of pupils achieving the higher A*-C grades was close to the national average. For mathematics it was just below, but significantly below in English. Nevertheless, the progress made by the pupils throughout Years 10 and 11 in these three subjects was at expected levels and better than that of pupils in schools in areas where selection for grammar school takes place. Local authority figures indicate that since Year 7, overall progress in English has been good given the pupils below average verbal reasoning skills on entry to the school.
7. In other subjects, in summer 2001, pupils did best in business studies, information and communication technology, and design and technology. They did least well in geography and French and also English language and mathematics. Both boys and girls who took English Literature did well and girls did particularly well in science. Over the last three years, pupils' results have been consistently better in science and design and technology and slightly lower in French and mathematics. In other subjects, performance has varied. Lower attaining pupils taking the ASDAN¹ course achieve very well for their abilities.
8. The standards achieved by pupils currently in Year 11 are in line with those expected nationally overall. Pupils have made good progress since entering the school and achieve well. This is due both to the good teaching they receive and their own positive attitudes towards learning. In science and mathematics, standards are in line with national expectations, but below in English. The below average attainment in English is due to pupils' insecure writing skills, which adversely affect their performance. Those pupils taking English Literature, however, achieve better, because the clear writing frameworks provided by teachers enable them to express their views on the books they have read well. Attainment is better than average in art, history and Spanish. It is below the level expected in religious education because not enough time is given to cover the locally Agreed Syllabus. Although overall standards in information and communication technology are in line with those expected nationally, they are above average for those pupils taking GCSE in information systems. Other pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not always have sufficient access to computers to build on the good specialist teaching they receive in Years 7-9 and this hinders their progress.
9. Most pupils develop their literacy skills at a satisfactory rate in relation to their below average attainment on joining the school. By the time pupils are in Years 10 and 11 they can read literary texts with a good grasp of character, motivation and the writer's intention. Lower attainers, in particular, have developed their speaking and listening skills so that they can talk effectively in semi-formal situations. The great majority of pupils are also effective listeners. Pupils express themselves well in subjects such as science and art, where teachers place a good emphasis on the use of appropriate terminology. Pupils' below average writing skills can adversely affect their performance in a number of curriculum subjects, for example the theory element of GCSE physical education. Nevertheless, when clear structures are provided for writing at length, such as in GCSE history and geography courses, pupils communicate their ideas satisfactorily.

¹ ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) is a course with vocational elements in which pupils can be certificated at bronze, silver, gold and platinum levels.

10. Standards of numeracy throughout the school are sufficient for pupils to access all areas of the curriculum. In information and communication technology lessons, pupils use formulae in spreadsheets to produce charts, graphs and diagrams with confidence. They use competently a range of calculations in science, tabulating experimental data and plotting graphs. In geography, pupils analyse and display data, but this aspect of the work requires further development. Pupils use prices, dates and times in modern foreign languages. Younger pupils practice French vocabulary by playing number games. Drawing and measuring skills are used competently in design and technology.
11. The impact of the school's involvement in the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has been at least satisfactory for improving pupils' literacy skills and good for their numeracy skills. Pupils use number facts more confidently, both in their mental and written work. However, too many pupils' writing still shows limited use of words and the incorrect use of grammar. The special programmes, for pupils who just failed to reach the nationally expected level in their primary schools, have been effective in both areas in helping these pupils make progress in their learning.
12. Pupils are confident users of computers. They can search the Internet, word process and use computers to control machines. In mathematics, pupils use calculators confidently and appropriately. GCSE physical education pupils make PowerPoint presentations to their classmates. Pupils gain above average information and communication technology skills in specific timetabled lessons. With more access to computers in all subjects of the curriculum, pupils' skills would be even better by the time they leave school.
13. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs, which includes pupils with learning difficulties, behavioural difficulties and with disabilities, is good. Pupils with disabilities and those with other learning difficulties are able to master the important concepts in each subject area because they are well supported. Those with behaviour difficulties make less progress initially as they adjust to the demands of mainstream classes. As they get older within the school's supportive environment they make equally good progress. Although it has identified the highest attaining pupils, the school has yet to track fully that these pupils have sufficiently demanding work in all lessons. Overall, these pupils make sound progress, but on occasions, the narrow range of the tasks set in some lessons, limits what these pupils can achieve. The school has very few pupils from other ethnic groups. These pupils' progress is well monitored through the school's monitoring arrangements for all pupils. There is no evidence that they perform less well than other pupils.
14. Girls currently do better than boys in national tests and examinations, with the gap wider than that nationally in summer 2001. Whilst both boys and girls results have improved overall since the last inspection, the improvement in the girls' results has been more consistent and better than that for boys. The school recognises this. Its analysis of last summer's results showed underachievement by a group of boys in national tests for 14 year olds. These boys now receive individual counselling and a working party has been set up to raise the achievements of boys. The English department has investigated boys' preferred learning activities through questionnaires. Teachers are appropriately using the results to review their ways of working. In most lessons during the inspection no significant differences were seen in the progress of girls and boys. Even where sets contain more boys than girls, teachers usually manage this situation well for both groups of pupils. However, in Years 7-9, where there are significantly more boys than girls, learning in a very few lessons during the inspection was badly affected by the behaviour of the boys when they predominated in the group.

15. The school appropriately monitors pupils' progress. It is beginning to use effectively measurements of pupils' progress to identify underachievement and to set targets. However, because the assessment of pupils' progress against National Curriculum levels by subject teachers is not yet consistent and accurate enough, teachers do not always have sufficiently good records of where pupils are and what they can achieve. When this is addressed, pupils will have the opportunity to achieve even higher standards, especially the more able. Nevertheless, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. Pupils' attitudes to school are very good. Parents are pleased by the way the school helps their children to become confident and responsible and the good attitudes and values it promotes through the high expectations of staff. Most pupils have very positive attitudes to school and work hard to improve their performance. Pupils enjoy school. They talk about, 'the close community - everybody knows each other... it's really friendly and they all mix here'. They feel, 'teachers are very friendly and approachable... they give advice and help you when you don't understand things'. Some felt the work was easy; others commented that 'you get pressure here, but it's fair'. However, a small minority of pupils does not take their work sufficiently seriously. These pupils do not attend school regularly or work hard enough in lessons. Most lessons are interesting and involving with tasks well matched to pupils' ability levels and pupils are enthusiastic, well motivated and eager to contribute. Pupils are very supportive of the clubs and other activities in the school. Many participate in the extra-curricular activities or attend the 'catch-up' club. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the many sporting activities and clubs that they can join, 'from trampolining and dance to robot club'.
17. The standards of behaviour in and around the school are good. Parents are pleased by the way the school promotes good standards of behaviour. The inspection team was impressed by the general standard of behaviour around the school, particularly during the wet and windy lunch and break times when the pupils were forced to remain inside. However, pupils do not take sufficient care to place their rubbish in the bins provided at these times. The large amount of litter left for the caretaker to sweep up sometimes delays the start of the next lesson in the hall. Whilst most pupils behave well and form supportive relationships with each other and their teachers, a small number of pupils can sometimes exhibit challenging behaviour and be a disruptive influence in class. Most lessons are however well managed and include the appropriate implementation of the school's behaviour strategy, such that incidents of poor behaviour are usually effectively contained.
18. The school works hard to ensure there is an absence of oppressive behaviour, including bullying, sexism and racism. Pupils feel that the school provides a safe and happy environment. They report few incidents of bullying and know who to go to if there are problems. The small number of pupils from other ethnic groups is well integrated into the life of the school. Through the successful development of personal support programmes, the school has been very effective in retaining pupils who have been excluded from other schools. However, the number of pupils excluded from the school has risen since the last inspection. Last year there were 25 pupils with fixed period exclusions and one boy who was permanently excluded. However, these figures are equivalent to those of similar sized schools.
19. Pupils with special educational needs show very good attitudes to learning. In a Year 10 English class, pupils approached a formal discussion maturely when assessing

different children's books. They listened attentively to each other's views, even though this required skills and self-confidence, which they had only partly acquired. Another small group with behavioural difficulties were led skilfully to forget their preoccupations and to engage with a reading task that stretched their skills. One boy in Year 7, who is making good progress in overcoming his reading difficulties, showed real determination and curiosity when faced with unfamiliar sounds and letter formations. Those who use wheelchairs are highly motivated and the level of support available means that their disability need not be an obstacle to learning.

20. Relationships in the school are very good, both between staff and pupils, and amongst the pupils themselves. The school has focused on developing a very inclusive community enabling those with special educational needs or disabilities to be fully involved and integrated into school life. Pupils value each other's contributions. There are many opportunities for pupils to work together. In dance and drama lessons, small groups were seen collaborating well with their improvisations; pupils worked well together in science, making and using a pinhole camera; and during trampolining club, pupils helped with the bouncing to enable a girl to practise a new routine. This friendly and supportive atmosphere promotes a good working environment and makes a positive impact on learning. However, lessons do not always have sufficient opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. They are sometimes too dependent upon teachers for their ideas and conclusions.
21. Pupils respect each other's opinions, values and beliefs. They listen carefully to each other in the tutor time and personal, social and health education (PSHE) sessions and are happy to talk about their views and feelings. Pupils also show concern for the disadvantaged. Each year group identifies a charity they wish to support that year and organises their own fund raising activities. Pupils willingly take advantage of the many opportunities the school provides for them to undertake responsibilities around the school, for example acting as librarians or prefects. The prefects are generally well respected and have many duties around the school, including monitoring behaviour in the corridors or helping out in the 'catch-up club'. A number of Year 11 pupils have been successfully trained as peer-mentors to help the Year 7 pupils when they join the school. Through the school council, pupils express their opinions about aspects of school life and take an active role in the decision processes of the school. Pupils report that they have a budget and have implemented new ideas, such as the drinks machine and rubbish bins: 'little things, but they are important'.
22. The levels of attendance in the school are satisfactory and broadly in line with national averages. They have remained constant at 91.6 per cent over the last two years. However, this is a slight decrease on that reported during the last inspection. Despite the school's continued efforts to improve the attendance levels in the school, this is having no impact for a small minority of pupils. The lack of attendance on a regular basis of these pupils has an adverse affect upon their education and standards of attainment.
23. Punctuality to school in the morning is not as good as it could be with a significant number of pupils arriving late on a regular basis. This is usually the result of the late arrival of the buses, particularly on one of the public service routes. During the course of the day, pupils are generally prompt into lessons. Very good systems monitor attendance and any potential truancy. Form tutors use effectively the registration time at the start of the day to build rapport with classes, sharing the thought for the day, passing on contact messages and reviewing pupils' diaries.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

24. Teaching is good throughout the school. In no subject is it less than satisfactory and in most subjects, including English, mathematics and science, it is good. It is particularly good in specialist information and communication technology lessons and on the ASDAN course. During the inspection, teaching was good or better in eight out of 10 lessons observed and very good or excellent in just over a quarter of these. Otherwise it was satisfactory, except for the very few occasions when it was unsatisfactory. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.
25. A strength of the teaching is the careful planning of lessons. Teachers make pupils fully aware of what they are expected to learn during the lesson. Introductions to new work use well-thought-out questions to reinforce previous learning. These lead logically onto new ideas that are well delivered. As a result, pupils make good progress in their learning. For example, in a Year 10 English literature lesson, the class teacher structured very clearly work on the role of Watson as the narrator in a Sherlock Holmes story. Aided by good questioning from the teacher, pupils organised their thoughts well and in the subsequent discussion identified successfully the reasons why the author used this method of telling a story.
26. The very best teaching has high expectations of what pupils can achieve. This is not only in lessons for the highest attainers, but also for pupils with particular learning needs. Whilst teacher directed discussion and interpretation of information is effectively used in most lessons, in the best lessons, pupils are given greater opportunities to work in groups and discuss and interpret for themselves the information provided. This works because of the high quality and presentation of the information provided for pupils. An outstanding example of this was in a Year 9 science lesson. The teacher used an article from a scientific journal to set up group discussions on the ethical issues involved in human cloning. Well judged use of the article encouraged pupils to rise to the challenge set to them. The pupils' responses were mature and showed excellent understanding.
27. The atmosphere in classrooms is particularly good. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and pupils themselves work hard and are keen to learn. As a result, pupils take very good advantage of the good teaching they receive, especially when the teachers make lessons interesting and fun. In a Year 9 French lesson, a small group of pupils with a range of learning difficulties showed enjoyment and willingness to succeed when describing the rooms of a house in French to their classmates. This was very much due to the liveliness, encouragement through praise and good range of activities leading up to this task provided by the class teacher. Similarly in a Year 7 bottom set in mathematics, the teacher kept the pupils interested and motivated by using short practical activities and an element of competition in mathematical games.
28. Where lessons are less successful, work is not always sufficiently well matched to pupils' learning needs. This was particularly noticeable in a Year 7 English lesson. Because pupils' achievements in primary school were not taken into account, the work was too easy and too little new learning took place. Occasionally, the teachers' management of pupils' behaviour is not good enough. In most lessons, pupils behave well, but in a few lessons in Years 7-9 during the inspection, teachers spent too much time dealing with pupils' behaviour to the detriment of other pupils' learning. In two instances a contributing factor was large classes containing a significant number of boys and sometimes a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. These classes are the result of the school's banding and setting arrangements for drama, music and physical education. However, in an excellent Year 7 dance lesson, with considerably more boys than girls, the teacher effectively motivated and involved all

pupils, such that from limited dance experience at the beginning they moved to performing their own imaginative group dances by the end. Whilst occasionally causing difficulties in some subjects, the setting by ability benefits the learning of all pupils in subjects such as science, mathematics and modern foreign languages.

29. Overall, during the inspection little evidence was seen in lessons of boys dominating the learning or participating less well than girls. Most teachers ensure all pupils participate equally by ensuring all are involved in question and answer sessions. In some lessons, teachers could think more carefully about grouping arrangements, such as mixing boys and girls together and ensuring they work together effectively.
30. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught. In small groups or individual sessions, staff have a very good knowledge of their needs and have devised sensitive and imaginative strategies to respond to them. They devise games, offer rewards and give clear feedback about the progress that pupils make. There is a good level of subject expertise, so that small groups in mathematics, English or modern foreign languages have the benefits of close attention, but still cover the skills that they are entitled to learn. In mainstream classes, teachers support pupils with special educational needs well and adapt work to support their learning needs. They work well with support staff. Learning support assistants ensure that pupils are not distracted by low level tasks, or language that they do not understand, and so enable the pupils to concentrate on the main ideas and learning taking place. In design and technology lessons, worksheets are adjusted to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. However, sometimes the vocabulary and language used in design and technology, and also in geography, is still too complicated and needs further adjustment. In history, support staff adapt questions to meet the needs of different groups and then help pupils with special educational needs to feed back their findings.
31. The quality of teaching of the National Literacy Strategy in Years 7-9 is satisfactory overall. It is good where teachers adapt the structure of the lesson sensibly, using the starter activity as a briskly paced exercise to establish a purposeful work atmosphere. They then adapt the development of the main activity and closing session stages to take account of the needs of particular groups of pupils. On the occasions where teaching is less effective, teachers use resources too unimaginatively, do not sustain pupils' concentration, or have too low expectations, especially of able pupils. The teaching of pupils in the Year 7 groups using the progress units is effective in improving the literacy skills of lower attainers. In other curriculum subjects, such as design and technology, science and the humanities, there are good opportunities to write and to present oral reports. In mathematics, the National Numeracy Strategy has had a positive effect on the teaching of number. It has given lessons a better structure and pace. Specific materials, to support the learning of pupils just below the level expected nationally, are effectively used to raise these pupils' standards. Strategies are beginning to be well used with older pupils. Teachers are gaining confidence in the use of computers to support pupils' learning, but they are not used as well as they might be in all subjects, for example mathematics, history, geography and music.
32. Teaching is best for older pupils in Years 10 and 11, where the target setting and mentoring of pupils are more effective in giving both teachers and pupils a clear knowledge of what they need to do to improve standards. Whilst still good for younger pupils, teachers are not yet sufficiently accurate enough in assessing what pupils know and can do in each subject to make sure that their teaching fully meets pupils' learning needs; in particular to consistently stretch the most able pupils. Good practice occurs in art, English, history and modern foreign languages. In other subjects, teachers are not yet clearly matching what pupils can do to National Curriculum levels. Nevertheless, teachers conscientiously mark pupils' work and the school marking system is used well.

Most teachers make appropriate comments on what pupils have achieved, identify errors, give corrections and make suggestions for better future work.

33. Homework is regularly set and makes a good contribution to pupils' learning. Teachers ensure pupils clearly record it to make sure they know what is expected of them. A few parents felt that the amount was not enough and some too much. Pupils expressed no particular concerns over the amount of homework set and generally, inspectors considered homework was well targeted and administered.
34. The school has had a clear focus on improving teaching and learning in the last few years and this has resulted in better teaching throughout the school. There has been appropriate in-service training, the development of good guidelines on classroom practice and regular classroom observation by heads of department and senior staff. However, the outcomes, whilst valuable for individuals, are not yet used sufficiently to inform any future changes in working practices.

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

35. The quality and range of learning opportunities provided by the school are good. The extensive learning support and clear recognition of the needs of all pupils regardless of race, gender, disability or ability are strengths. Since the last inspection, the curriculum has been under review and most areas for improvement identified at that time have now been addressed. Sufficient time is now allocated to information and communication technology, although not all subjects fully deliver the required skills to all pupils in Years 10 and 11. The improvement in schemes of work has added to the development of pupils' learning. In Years 10 and 11, a wider choice of subjects has broadened pupils' opportunities and experiences. Double science, vocational courses such as the well received ASDAN youth award and the GNVQ in leisure and tourism, Spanish as a third modern language and GCSE information systems and catering courses have all been introduced successfully.
36. However, the setting and banding arrangements have created difficulties in some subjects. These difficulties are to some extent due to the need to use staff as effectively as possible in a small school. Nevertheless, the high proportion of boys and pupils with behavioural difficulties in some groups in Years 7-9, has on occasions had an adverse effect on the progress made by pupils. The timetable currently does not give enough time to physical education and in Years 10 and 11 to religious education to allow these subjects to deliver fully, or in depth, the required curriculum elements. This lowers the standards achieved. Religious education does not meet statutory requirements for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
37. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. It clearly follows the recommendations of the Code of Practice² and is beginning to incorporate the new requirements as appropriate. Wherever it is practical, pupils have access to the full range of curriculum activities provided by the school. Teachers work with support staff to ensure that pupils can grasp the central ideas in the subject and support staff often undertake reading or writing tasks so that pupils are not distracted from the crucial concepts. Each teacher can use the pupils' individual education plans to design an

² Code of Practice – this gives practical advice to schools and local education authorities about their responsibilities and tasks to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs receive the most appropriate help to further their learning and personal development. This is a statutory duty under the 1993 Education Act.

appropriate strategy. These contain very clear information about individual needs, what has worked in the past and the immediate targets for each pupil. When support is available for individual pupils because they have statements of special needs, arrangements are usually made to create a small additional group. This gives additional social contact to the pupil with the statement and ensures that the school gets the best value out of all the additional resources. When careful assessment shows that pupils will not be able to benefit from a mainstream lesson, then appropriate special arrangements are made, with a tailored programme to meet the pupils' personal needs.

38. The school has been part of the pilot for the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and both are having a positive impact on improving pupils' basic skills in Years 7-9. The impact is better in mathematics lessons than English lessons because there is more consistency in teachers' application of the teaching approaches promoted. The material available for pupils, who enter the school with below the expected levels in the National Curriculum tests for 11 year olds, is effective in helping these pupils to improve their skills. The strategies are also beginning to influence teaching positively in Years 10 and 11. Whole school policies exist for literacy and numeracy and working groups promote these skills across the curriculum. However, many departments do not yet have a policy in place to reinforce numerical skills in their subject area.
39. The range of extra-curricular activities is good and has grown since the last inspection. The inclusion of clubs for Spanish, German, the use of computers including Internet access, drama and science, together with study support sessions in mathematics, history and geography, all help to raise achievement by using time productively. Many such sessions in Years 10 and 11 target and prepare particular groups for examinations. The many sporting activities and wide range of enrichment activities, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award, trampolining, dance, drama and music, together with support in information and communication technology, the library and the learning centre, add to pupils' personal and skills development. At the time of the inspection, pupils were in rehearsal for the school's production of 'The Boyfriend'.
40. Provision for work-related education, including careers education and guidance, is very good. Careers education is well co-ordinated and all pupils obtain very good advice and guidance. This is an improvement since the last inspection where careers education was a key issue for further development. Good opportunities exist for pupils to experience the world of work. For example, in Year 9, pupils spend a day with their own parents at their place of work and in Year 10, all pupils undertake two weeks of work experience of their choice. The ASDAN youth award is a valuable addition in providing opportunities for pupils for whom the academic curriculum is not appropriate. Pupils gain knowledge of the world of work and acquire practical skills and insight into future employment. The care taken by teachers and support staff, in making work placements for pupils, ensures that employers remain very positive about the award.
41. The school has very good links with the community and other schools and colleges. They make a significant contribution towards pupils' learning. Strong links are maintained with local industry. Sponsorship of a science project by British Oxygen, Stroud Education & Business Partnership and the environment agency has been developed through the school's successful application for technology status. The school's facilities are well used by the local community. Parish groups, scouts and guides, the Women's Institute and doctors all use the school. The school runs education seminars for parents on issues such as drugs awareness and on topics such as information and communication technology, homework, coursework and learning strategies. The school is, rightly, proud of its international dimension. The International School Award is a clear recognition of the work done in the school to enhance pupils' knowledge of the world. The school is also involved with schools in France, Poland and

Spain in a Comenius curriculum project that explores the local landscape through artistic responses.

42. Links are good with the 25 feeder primary schools and staff liaise effectively to ensure the smooth transition to secondary school. The same applies to the effective partnership with further and higher education institutions; Cirencester College, Stroud College and Keble College, Oxford. The Stroud pyramid consortium of local schools enables the school to take a wider view of developments in curriculum subjects. In addition, the school's successful bid for technology status was made in partnership with another local school.
43. The school makes good provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A well-planned programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) makes a significant contribution to this aspect of the school's work. It is taught partly by specialist teachers through weekly lessons and also by form tutors in tutor time. It covers a broad range of topics, such as rights and responsibilities, citizenship, decision-making, bullying and records of achievement as well as the statutory requirements for sex and drugs education. The involvement of form tutors in the programme strengthens the care and guidance provided for pupils. Plans to include citizenship are well advanced and will be incorporated by September 2002. There is provision for self-assessment, review and action planning that is well structured and challenging. The PSHE lessons seen during the inspection were generally good. They enabled pupils to explore a wide range of moral and social issues.
44. Provision for students' spiritual development is satisfactory overall. Assemblies take place once each week, for each year group, and for the school as a whole. Whilst promoting appropriate moral and social messages, they rarely provide an act of worship, although one assembly did provide an opportunity for reflection. Due to the recent increase in the number of pupils, the school can no longer hold a whole school daily act of worship for all pupils everyday of the week. To meet this requirement there is a *thought for the week* programme operating during tutor time that is linked to assembly themes. However, this does not ensure the school meets the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship.
45. There is some evidence of planning in departments for pupils' spiritual development, but this is inconsistent and lacks structure. Nevertheless, opportunities for the spiritual development of pupils do occur in some subjects. Religious education makes a good contribution. Pupils are encouraged to consider and respond to questions about the meaning and purpose of life. They learn respect for the values and beliefs of others. In English, the study of literary texts invites empathy with certain characters. The understanding of feelings and impulses in studying Macbeth assists pupils to develop and give expression to their own innermost thoughts and feelings. Opportunities for pupils to reflect on their experiences are also evident in geography, history and art. However, many opportunities are missed in most subjects to develop this aspect of the curriculum.
46. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. Opportunities are targeted largely through the PSHE programme. Topics such as values and family life, equal opportunities, police liaison and vandalism, discrimination, prejudice, and ethical issues, such as human rights, provide a sound curriculum for the discussion of important social and moral issues and the development of appropriate attitudes and values. They help to foster independent thinking.

47. The school has clear expectations of students knowing right from wrong and students respond very well when unacceptable attitudes and behaviour occur. The headteacher and staff are excellent role models for pupils. Assemblies make a significant contribution to this area. One assembly observed was the presentation of a cheque to the Nehemiah trust for work with traumatised ex-boy soldiers in Sierra Leone. Pupils have raised significant amounts of money for this, and other charities. Their active concern for the disadvantaged is very strong. The school council provides good opportunities for pupils to develop their communication skills and to make important contributions to the life of the school. Work experience in Years 9 and 10, activities weeks and year group social events all make significant contributions to pupils' self-confidence and social skills.
48. Several subjects contribute well in the promotion of pupils' moral and social development. In religious education, pupils are able to respond to aspects of morality using their knowledge of religious and ethical issues. They explore feelings, develop attitudes and values and form judgements very well. In history and geography, pupils are able to reflect on the wider consequences of their choices and actions through the examination of environmental issues and medical ethics. In science, pupils were observed to explore and discuss in groups very maturely the advantages and disadvantages of cloning. In history, the exploration of life in different societies enables pupils to draw important comparisons with life today. Teachers' very good relationships ensure an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding. The prefect system and peer mentoring enable pupils to exercise social responsibility and develop communication skills. In addition, lunchtime clubs and sporting activities all help to develop skills of co-operation and understanding of 'fair play'.
49. Provision for students' cultural development is satisfactory. The use of theatre visits, drama productions and visits to France, and Koblenz and various activity weeks contribute well to pupils' cultural awareness. In English, poems from the Gambia and from other cultures help pupils to appreciate life issues in other societies. In history, the study of events in other countries provides information about the cultural lives of others. This is reinforced through visits to museums, thus providing insights into past ways of life. The school does very well in local and national poetry competitions. The school's curriculum, however, still does not provide enough planned opportunities for students to develop an awareness of the rich variety of different cultures and traditions that exist in this country. Nevertheless, aspects of religious education make a significant contribution and PSHE provides some opportunities through topics such as racism, stereotyping and discrimination.
50. Since the last inspection, the provision for pupils' moral and social development has continued to improve. However, spiritual development remains an area requiring further thought and opportunities for pupils to understand and appreciate the cultures of the multi-ethnic society in which they live are not yet sufficient across all subjects. In addition, the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils is still not met.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

51. The school provides a very caring and inclusive environment in which all pupils are equally valued. Parents speak highly of the care and commitment of staff. They feel the smallness of the school enables teachers to know the pupils well. They speak of a 'listening school... where each individual is valued... and they are taught to respect each other'. The support offered to their children helps to develop their confidence and self-esteem. The provision for pupils' health, welfare and guidance makes a very

effective contribution to their personal and academic development. There is a very effective pastoral system in place. Form tutors, subject specialists and the heads of school know their pupils well and act quickly when they see a need to.

52. Procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and appropriate behaviour are good. The comprehensive behaviour policy offers clear guidelines and procedures for promoting good behaviour and dealing with any unsatisfactory or disruptive behaviour. However, not all members of staff consistently implement these procedures when they have disruptive pupils in lessons. Daily report sheets and the personal support programmes have been very successful in helping to manage some of the behaviour problems in the school. The school has a well-balanced reward programme of merits and certificates, which is particularly valued by the younger pupils. They feel it encourages them to do more or work harder. The weekly whole school assembly is well used to recognise and celebrate pupils' achievements and successes; pupils are very supportive of each other.
53. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. The school takes the issue of potential bullying seriously and addresses it through the personal, social and health education lessons, during assemblies and tutor times. Parents reported no incidents of bullying and pupils also felt this was not a problem in the school.
54. Procedures for monitoring and encouraging good attendance are very thorough and have been improved since the last inspection. Parents are kept well informed regarding their responsibilities for ensuring pupils attend school regularly and arrive promptly and about the need to inform the school if their child is unwell and unable to attend. Form tutors and heads of school liaise regularly to monitor attendance and punctuality and keep in close contact with the head of middle school, who has responsibility for this area. Very good links have been established with the education welfare officer, who visits the school every other week to follow up cases of persistent absence and takes cases to court where all else fails.
55. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good and have been significantly improved since the last inspection. This is one of the many strengths of the school. The arrangements for supporting pupils within tutor groups are very effective. Form tutors and heads of school get to know the pupils very well and as a result can give good personal support and guidance to pupils in their care. By sharing information with pupils and their parents, teachers reinforce the partnership with the school and pupils' progress is recognised and praised.
56. Procedures for monitoring and assessing pupils' academic progress and attainment have improved since the last inspection. There is a comprehensive school policy for assessment in place. This contains good, clear guidelines for the use of marking to both inform future teaching and pupils about their achievement. The grading system for both achievement and effort is on display in most classrooms and pupils understand it. However, the policy is inconsistently applied across subject areas and there is no overall monitoring of the system. Pupils in Years 7-9 in most subjects are not sufficiently aware of how they are doing in relation to national expectations; i.e. the National Curriculum level they are working at.
57. The school has a large amount of data available and this is well used to set whole-school targets and to monitor pupils' progress overall. However, not all subject teachers use the data to set targets for individual pupils and to plan work to meet their needs. Heads of department do monitor assessment within their departments, but some heads of department, as in mathematics, are relatively new to the school and assessment and

the use of data are areas that need further development. Some departments, such as art, English, history and modern foreign languages, have the principles and practices well embedded into their curriculum. In summer 2001, teacher assessments of pupils' attainment for the national requirements at the age of 14 were not accurate enough in a significant number of subjects. Many teachers do not understand the new requirements for each level, have no exemplar material to help them and in small departments few opportunities to share practice.

58. The school has a good system of academic tutoring in place. This works well in Years 10 and 11. Some underachieving or insecure pupils receive good additional support through a mentor, who encourages them to work hard and to set ambitious goals for their future. Whilst satisfactory, academic tutoring is not yet as effective in Years 7 and 8, where pupils are less sure about its value and their targets
59. Pupils with special educational needs are very well cared for. The special needs co-ordinator ensures that individual needs are assessed extremely carefully and provides training and advice to everyone who may be able to provide support. Regular feedback on progress is obtained from subject teachers. The site and buildings have been adapted to enable pupils with a range of needs to enjoy their time in school. The addition of a lift and the welcoming learning suite are clear examples. The special educational needs co-ordinator maintains continuous contact with parents and other agencies that can offer support so that each change in circumstances can be adapted to and pupils can learn effectively and mature safely.
60. The school's procedures for child protection are good and have been reviewed and updated since the last inspection. The school follows the local authority's policy and guidelines for child protection, with the head of Year 7 as the designated contact point. Regular updating training helps to keep staff well informed of any changes to the legislation.
61. Systems for ensuring pupils' health, and welfare are very good. Well-established systems are in place to take care of pupils who may fall ill during the day. Five members of staff have received first aid training and there are effective procedures to meet the medical needs of pupils. There are good links with the relevant outside agencies, whose representatives attend regularly. The school nurse visits twice a week and offers a counselling role alongside her normal health reviews. There are also good links with the 'Info Shop' and another counsellor, who offers good support and a backup service for pupils who have concerns or need advice.
62. There is an appropriate health and safety policy and procedures in place to address the issues of safety and security of pupils in the school and when out on visits. Regular health and safety checks and risk assessments are undertaken by members of staff and the governors, who take an active role in fulfilling their responsibilities for health and safety. When issues are identified the Bursar takes immediate steps to deal with them.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

63. The partnership with parents is very good and one of the strengths of the school. The school has worked hard to foster strong links with parents and to establish effective liaison between home and school. Parents are very supportive and express many positive comments about the school. They think the leadership and management are very good; value the high expectations of staff and appreciate the good teaching that results in their children making good progress. Parents feel the school has improved enormously in the last few years. They say this is reflected by the increasing number of

parents that send their children to Thomas Keble, including some who prefer it to the grammar schools. The school is now over-subscribed. During the parents' meeting there were only two areas of concern raised, namely the amount of work their children are set to do at home and the lack of healthy food available at lunchtime.

64. The range and quality of information provided for parents are good. The attractive school prospectus and governors' annual report to parents provide comprehensive information about the school and its activities. Formal consultation evenings are well attended and provide an opportunity to review pupils' progress and achievements. Parents are invited to bring their son or daughter with them to these consultation events. This helps to ensure the whole family is involved in the education process. The special educational needs co-ordinator maintains very good contact with parents. This is sensitively adapted to meet individual circumstances and can involve detailed face to face discussions or light touch telephone contacts as appropriate.
65. Parents generally feel happy about the annual student reports and half-termly progress reports and find them very helpful. However, the annual reports are very general and do not provide sufficient details relating to the levels pupils have reached or do not always identify targets for improvement. Parents feel the school is very approachable and that they can easily contact the school if they have questions or concerns. A large number of open meetings, consultations about the national tests and option choices, careers evenings and occasional workshops are held to keep parents updated and suitably informed about new initiatives. The school has consulted parents regarding issues such as the home/school agreement and kept them informed about the progress of the recent bid for technology status.
66. The school offers frequent and appropriate opportunities for parents to become involved in their children's learning. Pupils have a regular homework timetable and parents are provided with a book explaining how they can help their child at home. Parents are encouraged to support the homework schedule and the pupils' diaries become a regular day-to-day link with the school. Parents are required to sign them each week. The school keeps in regular contact with parents, writing to share with them either concerns or the successes of their child. Parents are very supportive of their children's activities and school plays and events are very well attended. The very active Thomas Keble School Association (TKSA) is jointly run and supported by staff and parents. It provides a very valuable service for the school with a large number of social and fund raising events successfully held each year. These raise significant amounts of money to help support school activities or purchase additional resources for the school. They also provide a community focus with many local people attending firework parties or summer fairs. The work of parents through TKSA has a significant impact on pupils' learning. The purchase of a new mini bus facilitates school trips, the provision of new curtains in the hall helps with the school play and recent fund raising initiatives have supported the successful technology bid.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

67. Thomas Keble is a good and effective school. This is because the headteacher and the governors ensure through clear leadership, the school has a shared sense of purpose and commitment. There is a high focus on pupils achieving well. The support and care shown to each individual is a strength and parents very much appreciate this aspect of the school's work. All pupils are well integrated into the life of the school, including the small number of disabled pupils and the few pupils from other ethnic groups. Parents of pupils with particular learning needs, disabilities, or emotional and behavioural difficulties express great appreciation of how well the school meets their children's

needs and the good progress they make. This group of pupils also includes the more able who could have attended the local grammar schools, but preferred Thomas Keble's approach to learning.

68. At the time of its last inspection, Thomas Keble was described as an improving school. Since that time under its new headteacher it has continued to improve and at a faster rate. Overall performance is now in line with that of schools nationally, even though the proportion of pupils in the upper ability range is small because of local grammar schools. Governors, parents and staff of the school consider that the school's small size is a strength as it leads to teachers knowing each individual pupil well. Parents state the school is very well led and managed and that their children are happy.
69. The leadership of the school is very good. The headteacher is well supported by his deputy and other senior staff. Commitment and hard work are a feature not only of the work of these staff, but also that of all other teaching and non-teaching staff in the school. Management of the work of the school is good. The heads of school, mainly responsible for the personal development of pupils, although increasingly and appropriately for their academic development, know pupils very well and are a strength of the school. The work of heads of department is more variable, although good overall. It is very good in art, design and technology, history and special educational needs. However, not all heads of department are sufficiently secure in their role as leaders of their subjects and accountable for results. Although both English and music have some significant strengths, some aspects of these departments' work are not yet sufficiently effective to move pupils' learning forward quickly enough. Because the school is small, subject areas such as music and drama have only one or two teachers in the department. Without the opportunity to discuss and share ideas and check standards with another professional, this can hinder developments, such as assessment procedures.
70. Leadership and management of the literacy strategy are satisfactory and for the numeracy strategy good. Discussion and support from senior management encouraged and supported appropriate training for the implementation of the strategies with realistic audits made of the original provision. Teachers are committed to the strategies. In literacy, co-ordination of approaches needs to be better to ensure consistent practice. In numeracy, teachers have a shared understanding of the requirements of the strategy by developing the programme of work for each of their classes. This has led to improved teaching. Working groups co-ordinating developments across curriculum subjects have made good efforts to help departments provide a range of opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Good evidence was found in science, information and communication technology, and design and technology.
71. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very well managed. Statutory duties are carried out properly and the resources and support staff are deployed flexibly and effectively to meet pupils' needs. The co-ordinator leads a large team, with different skills and qualifications, but has worked with them to create a unified, dedicated and well-trained resource for pupils. Individual support staff give their own time freely to undertake training and administrative tasks and this significantly benefits the support provided. The co-ordinator has created a team base that holds a range of specialist information to assist them in their work. However, as the range of special needs within the school has grown, there is insufficient expertise in behaviour management and the collaboration between support staff and subject teachers should still be developed further.
72. An area of weakness, currently, is the whole-school management of information and communication technology. The information and communication technology co-

ordinator, whilst managing well the teaching of specific information and communication lessons, does not have the time to monitor and evaluate the use of computers and other technologies across the curriculum and the pupils' achievements. This has an adverse impact on the skills pupils, who do not take a specific information and communication technology course in Years 10 and 11, acquire. Therefore, their overall attainment, although satisfactory, is not as good as it could be and does not build well on the good skills achieved in earlier years. The appointment of a new assistant headteacher intends to address this issue.

73. The governors of the school support the headteacher well and take an active and knowledgeable interest in the work of the school. They bring a good range of skills from their own work, they know the school's strengths and weaknesses and, like the headteacher, have a clear focus on raising pupils' achievements. Their involvement and support for the school's technology bid made a significant contribution to its success. There is a clear, shared direction for the school's future. The special educational needs governor is very supportive, although still relatively new to the role and learning what it involves, such as the requirements under the new Code of Practice. Governors are beginning to understand the principles of checking how the school gives value for money, for example, taking note of parental views, but this could be more focused. For example, they do not have a clear strategy to review the impact of their considerable spending on new computers on pupils' attainment. The governing body is currently not fulfilling its statutory requirements for the provision of religious education and for a daily act of collective worship.
74. The school sets clear and very appropriate priorities through its school improvement plan. These are currently focused on raising pupils' achievement, the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, the further development of the school's accommodation and resources, links with the community and now the implementation of the school's successful bid for technology status. School working groups ensure whole staff involvement in developments and the monitoring of outcomes. However, the school improvement plan does not yet always specify outcomes clearly enough in terms of pupils' achievements. Outcomes are sometimes just the action taken, such as a policy being in place, and not what pupils should now know and can do. The school recognises this and is to implement across all subjects the strategies used in the technology bid to evaluate the effectiveness of developments. These are clearly focused on improvements in the standards pupils' achieve. Although governors allocate funds to implement new policies, the school development plan itself is not costed.
75. The school's monitoring and evaluation of its performance are good overall. A strong feature of this is how it consults parents and pupils using questionnaires and through the annual parents' meeting and the pupils' school council. Over the last three years, the school has developed appropriate procedures to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its teaching and how well pupils are doing. These are well integrated into its performance management procedures and provide an effective whole school approach to the improvement of teachers' classroom practice. The effectiveness of the school's strategies is reflected well in the much higher proportion of good teaching seen than at the time of the last inspection. The school now has good data on pupil performance and is using this satisfactorily to monitor pupils' progress and identify underachievement. In Years 10 and 11 this has led to the mentoring of pupils to encourage them to work hard and to obtain the best possible results at GCSE. However, the school is not yet using its data on pupil performance as effectively as it could to identify what it needs to do to improve standards further. In particular, some heads of department produce beautiful word-processed charts of results, but there is no clear evaluation of where weaknesses exist and what action needs to be taken.

Similarly with observations of teaching, which, although helpful for improving individual teacher's practice, do not yet inform subject practice sufficiently.

76. The school's staffing, equipment, materials and accommodation make a sound contribution overall to pupils' learning. Staff are appropriately qualified and well supported, especially those new to the school. Administrative staff and other support staff are effective and have access to training to meet individual and school needs. In-service training opportunities for teachers are good, although access to appropriate courses to develop further the role of heads of department has not been as good as it could be. The school provides a very good place for trainee teachers to develop their skills and those in school at the time of the inspection had good opportunities to learn their craft. The number of computers is good, but not all subject areas use computers sufficiently for teaching and learning, for example mathematics and music. Nevertheless, other technologies, such as interactive whiteboards in design and technology, lap tops for special educational needs pupils, graphic calculators in mathematics and digital cameras in physical education, make good contributions to the development of pupils' information and communication technology skills. The library is very well used by pupils during break and lunchtimes and provides very good access for pupils to computers. However, although there is a reasonable range of modern fiction books, reference books are out dated. The range of books in history, geography and art are not good enough to support individual research and learning. Computers are well used for monitoring financial information and increasingly so for analysing data on pupil performance.
77. Since the last inspection much of the accommodation has been upgraded and improved to meet increasing numbers. The new learning support area provides appropriately sized and welcoming teaching spaces for pupils, and importantly a supportive environment for less confident pupils to use at break and lunchtimes. It makes a significant contribution to the progress special educational needs pupils make, both personally and academically. In contrast, some areas of the school do not present such good working environments and need further improvement, for example the music and art areas. Although accommodation for physical education has significantly improved, the new indoor spaces are still somewhat small for large classes.
78. The school runs efficiently and effectively. It makes good use of its staffing and other resources to provide a good quality of education for its pupils. The overall management of finances is very good, with clear thought given to their allocation and good tracking of expenditure. The school is very successful in getting additional funds to support its work, such as from the European Social Fund. The school compares its performance with that of other schools, seeks the views of parents and pupils and ensures it obtains best value for money when purchasing equipment and resources. Given the good progress pupils make, both personally and academically, and the improving results in national tests and examinations, the school gives good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

79. In order to build further on the good progress pupils currently make and to raise standards further the school should now:-

- (1) Raise standards in writing by
 - more consistently implementing the National Literacy Strategy
 - providing clear models of appropriate formal and informal sentence styles and vocabulary
 - giving opportunities for pupils to incorporate these models into their own work
 - monitoring carefully the performance of boys
(paragraphs 4, 8, 9, 11, 31, 38, 68, 79-83, 85-91, 173)

- (2) Ensure work is set at an appropriate level for all pupils with appropriate targets for improvement, through more accurate and consistent assessment of pupils' attainment by
 - developing further teachers' understanding of the new National Curriculum levels
 - providing greater opportunities for teachers to moderate their assessments with other teachers
 - sharing good practice among subject departments
 - identifying clearly the needs of higher attaining pupils
 - making sure pupils know what they need to do to improve
(paragraphs 3-4, 15, 32, 56-,57,58, 74, 89, 94, 97, 108, 113, 129, 131, 137, 142, 144, 150, 152, 166, 185)

- (3) Continue its work on raising the attainment of boys by
 - monitoring carefully the progress they make in relation to their previous achievements
 - identifying any particular characteristics of those boys who underperform
 - reviewing the grouping arrangements and the effect of a large number of boys in a particular group
(paragraphs 2, 14, 28-29, 80, 92-93, 101, 105, 122, 131-132, 138, 157, 164, 190)

Other issues that the school needs to address are:

The delivery and assessment of pupils' information and communication technology skills in all subjects of the curriculum
(paragraphs 12, 71, 75, 98, 109, 121, 128, 137, 144-154, 162, 168)

The statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship, which is not fully met
(paragraphs 44, 50, 72)

Sufficient time for the delivery of the Locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education in Years 10 and 11 so that the statutory requirement is fully met
(paragraphs 36, 180, 183, 186)

More opportunities for pupils to understand and appreciate the different cultures of the multi-ethnic society in which they will live.
(paragraphs 49, 50, 169)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS**Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection**

Number of lessons observed	126
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	41

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	5	30	63	24	3	0	0
Percentage	4	24	50	20	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	552
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	39

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	36
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	178

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	19

Attendance**Authorised absence**

	%
School data	8.3
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year. (2000-2001)

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	37	53	90

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	15	21	25
	Girls	34	39	39
	Total	49	60	64
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	54 (54)	67 (55)	71 (48)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	13 (19)	42 (25)	41 (13)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	22	25	20
	Girls	41	42	35
	Total	63	67	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	72 (67)	77 (65)	63 (55)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
at NC level 6 or above	School	25 (28)	38 (32)	37 (15)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	46	37	83

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	16	39	44
	Girls	16	35	36
	Total	32	74	80
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	39 (32)	89 (91)	96 (98)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	36.7 (32.1)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	8
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	538
Any other minority ethnic group	4

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	28	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	34.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.2

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	183

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23
Key Stage 4	20

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-01
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	£
Total income	1413834
Total expenditure	1404270
Expenditure per pupil	2908
Balance brought forward from previous year	-8711
Balance carried forward to next year	842

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	8.3

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	552
Number of questionnaires returned	269

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	36	55	7	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	51	44	4	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	36	52	4	1	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	51	14	3	1
The teaching is good.	42	53	2	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	52	40	6	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	33	2	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	28	1	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	48	44	6	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	62	33	2	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	50	42	5	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	49	45	3	0	3

Other issues raised by parents

Very few parents raised any concerns. Of those who had concerns about homework some felt there was too much and others too little. A very small number of parents expressed concern about the lunchtime food, especially the lack of healthy alternatives.

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

ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is good.

Strengths

- Carefully planned teaching that engages pupils and helps them to make good progress from below average standards on entry to the school in Year 7;
- A rich and varied curriculum that encourages pupils to write creatively;
- Pupils do well in GCSE English Literature examinations.

Areas for improvement

- More structured teaching of English Language skills, especially writing, through every year group;
- More use of information from assessments to set challenging targets for higher attaining pupils;
- Building closer links with partner primary schools to minimise the disruption when pupils transfer between schools.

80. Pupils' literacy skills on entry to the school are below average overall. For some pupils they are very weak. However, pupils make good progress throughout their time in the school, although writing skills for older pupils are still lower than expected nationally overall. The school's results are equivalent to those of schools in other areas where the most able go to grammar schools.
81. In national tests for 14 year olds at the end of Year 9, overall performance has been just below that nationally over the last three years. This is because too few pupils attain the higher levels. In 2001 there was a small improvement in standards from previous years, although overall performance was below the national average. However, evidence from teacher assessments and a sample re-mark suggests that the proportion of pupils reaching at least the expected level was closer to the national average. Whilst standards attained by girls were in line with the national average, boys' attainment fell well behind. Standards in English in 2001 were below those attained in mathematics and science - particularly the percentage of pupils attaining the higher levels, but they have not been consistently worse than the other core subjects in recent years.
82. Work seen during the inspection week was close to the national average because more Year 9 pupils are reaching the higher grades. Speaking and listening skills are well developed. Higher attainers can discuss the relative guilt of Macbeth and his wife effectively, marshalling their own responses when they have heard other peoples' views. Other pupils use discussion to identify the persuasive techniques in an advertisement. In each of these situations, the pupils' willingness to listen and absorb the other person's view was most influential in moving their understanding forwards.
83. Reading skills are sound. Pupils in Year 8 can identify the basic elements of good informative writing, such as a natural history magazine article. In Year 9, middle attainers can understand Shakespeare's portrayal of Macbeth's inner torment, whilst higher attainers squeeze each detailed layer of meaning out of the text. Writing is less competent. Whilst pupils can write descriptively or can tell a story, their control of sentences is very basic and they choose quite ordinary words that do not convey their

ideas sharply. Even the higher attainers bring little skill in writing formally or crafting their writing to appeal to the reader.

84. At GCSE in summer 2001, the pass rate was in line with that nationally, although the percentage of pupils gaining the higher A* to C grades was significantly below the national average. However, this percentage was in line with that achieved by similar schools. This was an improvement on results in summer 2000, but not as good as results in previous years. Standards in English were close to those attained in mathematics in 2001, but below those in science. These results reflect the overall very low literacy skills of these pupils on entry to the school and represent good progress over time.
85. In summer 2001, results in English Literature, which is taken by more than half of the pupils aged 15, were well above those attained by the same pupils in English. They compared well with the results in schools where pupils arrived with similar ability levels, and with particularly good achievement of the highest grades.
86. Standards for pupils currently in Year 11 are below average overall. This is because their writing skills are below the level expected for their age. Reading, and speaking and listening skills are considerably better. Higher attaining students in Years 10 and 11 express themselves confidently in discussions. They use humour and appropriate technical vocabulary when they discuss poetry and they listen to each other and value the range of different ideas. Even those who have most difficulty in English lessons can take part in a formal discussion about children's writers' intentions, or recall anecdotes to illustrate their work experience placements. Here, again they have the confidence to talk well because their peers are prepared to listen well.
87. Pupils of all abilities show good reading skills when they are dealing with literature. They can interpret character and identify motives and moral dilemmas in plays from the 17th and the 20th centuries. Higher attainers, in particular, can see how writers use punctuation or sentence structure to guide a reader to a particular point of view. They respond very strongly to some of the ideas that they encounter – for instance in poems attacking patronising male attitudes.
88. In Years 10 and 11, writing is a particular weakness. Though pupils have been well taught to construct detailed analyses of their literature texts, they have still not developed the fluency and variety in writing that lets them influence a reader's thinking. Consequently, their writing conveys their ideas simply, but without sophistication. This lowers the attainment in GCSE English.
89. Teaching is good overall. Although they arrive in the school with literacy skills that are below average, pupils, including those with special educational needs, gradually progress and achieve well by the end of Year 9. Teachers demonstrate clearly how to read and interpret literary texts. They also model how to present their understanding to maximum effect. This has contributed to the good standards attained in English literature. There is less clear modelling for pupils to consult when they are writing about things other than the books they have read, so the initial low standards restrict attainment in external tests.
90. Where teaching is best, good planning ensures that lessons include a range of activities to appeal to different learning styles. These are appropriately adapted when there are pupils with special educational needs. Good management of behaviour is based on very good relationships, so that pupils are well motivated and work hard throughout the lessons. Some of the best lessons are built on techniques that have been introduced within the new National Literacy Strategy. In particular, brisk starter activities set the

tone and build up the pace of learning and frequent changes of activity approach important concepts in different ways. Teachers use questioning well to draw out understanding and to ensure that every pupil is learning. Other strengths include the personal contributions of individual teachers, who go out of their way to excite, engage or inspire pupils to take on the challenges. In less successful lessons, teachers strive for pace without ensuring that pupils understand the work. Speaking and listening tasks do not offer sufficient scope for pupils to develop independence and initiative. Although more able pupils are identified, there is no consistent approach to providing them with more challenging activities.

91. The introduction of a new planning approach and radically different teaching methods as part of the National Literacy Strategy is one of the improvements since the last inspection. This initially affected Years 7 to 9, but the greater pace and variety of activities and distinct modelling of skills can now be seen in lessons with older pupils. The need to improve the attainment of boys has been another impetus for change and the variety of approaches in lessons now suits their different approach to learning. Units of work have been planned to make use of information and communication technology as a creative tool and publicity flyers for the school environment demonstrate how effectively this can be done. Plans have also been developed to prepare pupils for the new demands in public examinations.
92. To this extent, the management of English teaching has been satisfactory. Pupils are still offered the varied and stimulating experiences that encourage large numbers to write creatively for publication and for which the school wins awards. A more direct style of management is needed however, to move other aspects of the work of the department forward. The improvements required by the National Literacy Strategy have only been partly achieved. Links with primary schools are not close enough to establish exactly where the teaching should start for each pupil who arrives at the school. Very good practice has not been clearly identified and replicated throughout every lesson. The work of individual teachers and classes has not been sufficiently well monitored and evaluated and statistical data has not been used effectively to set clear targets for each individual pupil.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is good.

Strengths

- Lessons are planned and taught well;
- Teachers establish good relationships with pupils;
- Pupils work hard in a supportive, encouraging environment.

Areas for improvement

- The better use of assessment data to inform teaching;
- The greater involvement of pupils in lessons.

93. The standards of pupils on entry to the school are below those expected nationally. The 2001 results in the national tests for pupils at the age of 14, were close to the average for all schools. When compared to similar schools in areas where there are grammar schools, the results were above average. These results are a considerable improvement on the previous year and the increase is far greater than the national increase. From work seen during the inspection, the standards of pupils currently in Year 9 maintain this improvement and are average overall. Standards for higher

attaining pupils are above those expected nationally, those of average attaining pupils are in line and those of lower attaining pupils below. For example, higher attaining pupils in Year 9 confidently investigated number sequences that involved generating sequences on graphical calculators and developing the idea of limiting values; high level work. Other work seen from these pupils is also from the higher Level 7 of the National Curriculum. The proportion of pupils at these levels is lower than that nationally, as one would expect from the attainment on entry. Girls' results in the National Curriculum tests for pupils at the age of 14 are higher than boys with the difference being greater than the national difference. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress. There are small groups withdrawn in Year 7 to follow the national programme designed to bring these pupils to the minimum standard required and this is appropriately meeting their needs. Other pupils are well supported within the classroom.

94. The results in the GCSE examinations in 2001, again when compared to all schools, were below the national average. When compared to the types of school mentioned above, the results were above average, with the proportion of higher A*-C grades in line. GCSE results, when compared to previous attainment at the age of 14, are better than could be expected and hence, progress is good. These results are broadly similar to the standards seen in lessons. For the very low attaining pupils there is a certificate of achievement award, but departmental policy is to enter as many pupils as possible for the GCSE examination. The proportion of higher attaining pupils in the current Year 11 is less than might be reasonably expected. There is good use made of a trainee teacher to support these higher attaining pupils. Higher attaining pupils use powers and indices with confidence and solve questions involving the use of standard index form; required skills for the highest grades. Girls achieve better results than boys and the difference is greater than the national difference. There was no conclusive evidence in teaching to suggest that there is any difference in approach or material to encourage this. A small number of pupils with special educational needs and low ability in mathematics is taught in a small group. They make good progress.
95. The good progress of pupils and the standards they achieve are an indication of the good teaching in mathematics. Most of the lessons seen were good or better. Some lessons were judged very good and a few satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this to prepare their lessons well. Lessons start well; many have a starter of a brief review of previous work or a mental exercise and are delivered at a good pace. They contain material that is relevant to the experience of pupils, is challenging, but not beyond them. Worked examples are to be completed in a certain time and this encourages pupils to sustain a good pace of work and concentrate throughout the lesson. Discipline and pupil management is good. Pupils are constantly encouraged to achieve the very best they can and lower attaining pupils are praised to encourage them to persevere. Very good lessons sustain a high level of involvement of all pupils throughout and as a result, good progress is made. Marking is inconsistent. It is encouraging, but there is a lack of constructive feedback to pupils and little indication as to how pupils can improve. The opportunities for pupils to contribute to the learning process and to be more involved in lessons are often missed. Teachers do not always encourage pupils to ask questions or to offer their own suggestions as to solutions to problems.
96. Pupils' attitudes also reflect the good teaching they receive and as a result all pupils display positive attitudes to mathematics. They arrive at lessons promptly, settle quickly and are very willing to answer questions or work on the board in front of the class. They answer questions politely, but some pupils are so enthusiastic that they would dominate the lesson if allowed. They distribute and collect books or equipment without fuss and if it is necessary to move around the room during a lesson do so with the minimum of

disturbance. Pupils are very responsible, for instance, when moving to the computer room during a lesson they did so with minimum disturbance to other classes that were taking place around the school. This class arrived in the computer room and with no prompting from their teacher started working on the task in hand. Their computer skills were good and only a few pupils had to share, but they did so in a positive manner. Pupils are mutually supportive and are prepared to discuss their work and listen well when other members of their class are giving answers or working out solutions on the board. Pupils' work well together; in one lesson, pupils were considering different linear equations in order to match the corresponding graphs, equations and tables of values. Considerable discussion took place between pupils and resulted in good learning. By working together, they arrived at well thought out conclusions.

97. Departmental management is good. An experienced teacher leads a supportive team of enthusiastic and suitably qualified teachers, who work well together. The qualifications of one member of staff were gained abroad, but this does not affect curriculum delivery or lesson presentation. Although the National Curriculum and the National Numeracy Strategy are followed and planning ensures pupils get a co-ordinated programme of work, there is no over arching scheme of work, which would be helpful. Because teachers construct their own plan within these national guidelines, they have developed a comprehensive understanding of the National Numeracy Strategy. There are plans in place to develop this practice into a full scheme of work that includes help and guidance for teachers. Opportunities for the use of computers is contained in the current scheme, but access to the school facilities are not always available for a short part of a lesson.
98. The system of grouping pupils in bands by ability does not allow easy movement between all groups. In the rare instances that this occurs, teachers plan individual work for pupils to ensure that missed work is fully understood. The use of assessment to inform future planning, curriculum delivery and learning is underdeveloped at present. Useful analysis of GCSE mock examination results is undertaken in Year 11. Pupils review their examination papers for areas of weakness and these results are used to plan the final revision programme of each group. There is little use of data to set targets, although many higher attaining pupils have a good idea of their individual level and target grade. Some classes are reminded of their target levels during lessons, but not at the beginning of the lesson when the aims and objectives are shared.
99. The resources available for use in teaching mathematics are sufficient and there is a list in the department handbook. There are enough graphical calculators for a whole class to use, but there are no computer facilities available in the classrooms. The teachers make good use of the overhead projector to enhance their teaching, but there are no screens mounted in the classrooms. The department is housed in two adjacent buildings apart from the main school building. The classrooms are attractive, with displays of pupils' work and some commercially produced posters.
100. This is a department with much potential. Teaching is good and there is the capacity for it to improve further. Results are rising and the indications are that this rise will continue. With the development of assessment procedures, and the use of these to inform teaching and to set targets for pupils, the rise in results should continue. Improvement since the last inspection has been good overall.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is good.

Strengths

- Improving exam results, particularly in national tests for 14 year olds;
- Good improvement in the issues identified at the last inspection;
- Good opportunities to develop pupils' literacy skills;
- Good relationships between staff and pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Sharing with pupils the levels attained in the National Curriculum;
- Greater intellectual challenge for more able pupils in some lessons.

101. Standards in national tests and examinations are rising and reflect the work done by the department since the last inspection. Pupils achieve well given their below average ability on entry to the school. From the work seen in lessons and in books, many pupils make good progress and all are making at least satisfactory progress. This is reflected in the improving exam results and relates to the work done by the department to raise the attainment of all pupils.

102. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected levels in the national tests at the end of Year 9 has improved each year with a significant rise in 2001. Results are now above those attained nationally and are in the top 40 per cent for all schools. This year, for the first time, girls attained more of the higher levels than the boys, who were in line with national results. In comparison with schools in those areas where there are grammar schools, the science results are well above average for the higher levels and in the top 25 per cent for all these schools.

103. At GCSE, results have improved, but not to the same extent. Up until 2001, pupils could choose either single or double award science and so the identification of trends over time is difficult. All now do double award science. In double award science there has been a gradual improvement in the average point score attained by pupils and by 2001 the proportion of pupils attaining A* -C was in line with all schools nationally. For the last two years, all pupils entered for the examination have attained a pass grade and this is above the national average. In 2001, GCSE results for science were better than English or mathematics results in the school and girls attained more of the higher grades than boys.

104. Standards seen in class and in the books reflect the improved results obtained in the examinations and national tests. However, overall they are in line with those expected nationally, both up to the end of Year 9 and at GCSE. Within the sets there are differences. Pupils in the top sets in Years 7, 8 and 9 attain above the level expected nationally. For example, Year 9 pupils discuss with a high level of understanding issues raised in cloning human embryos. Year 7 describe clearly how an inverted image is formed in a pinhole camera. At GCSE, more able pupils use complex scientific language with ease to describe chemical processes in plants and animals and can evaluate the results from experiments. Pupils in the lower sets, while being able to use less complex language, often have difficulty in using it to explain processes such as how the formation of rocks follows a cycle. Many pupils in these sets attain below national expectations.

105. The department now has much data on pupils' attainment. Up to the end of Year 9, teachers use the end of unit test marks to track individuals' progress through National

Curriculum levels. However, at present these levels are not shared with pupils. At GCSE, the introduction of double award modular science for all means pupils get regular test marks so they can follow their progress.

106. During the inspection, girls and boys were observed to achieve equally well. This occurs particularly in lessons where teachers use methods to involve all pupils, such as targeting questions at individuals rather than generally. However, there is little evidence of boys and girls working together in mixed groups. Occasionally in sets where there are many more of one gender than the other, the majority group can dominate the lesson and this can lead to some underachievement by the other group. In the lower sets in Years 7 to 10, there are many more boys than girls and occasionally the enthusiasm and self-confidence of the boys overshadows the few girls present.
107. Pupils with special educational needs, both boys and girls, make good progress when supported by learning assistants. This support helps to keep pupils on task and to develop their understanding. Teachers use methods that keep pupils interested or resources matched to their specific needs, such as easily read sheets. Pupils with physical disabilities achieve well because their support assistant helps them to take an active part in the lesson, such as one in which they were identifying rock samples.
108. Teaching is good. In over half the lessons seen, teaching was good or better, with one excellent lesson. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Lessons are well planned, often with practical activities. The aims of the lesson are shared with pupils and teachers explain where these fit into the programme of study. The support of the technician is very effective in the smooth running of practical sessions and those using information and communication technology. All teachers have good subject knowledge and use this effectively to question pupils' understanding at different levels.
109. In the best lessons, teachers set and maintain a brisk pace and present pupils with plenty of opportunities to make them think or apply scientific knowledge to solve a problem. When pupils are given this responsibility, they respond well and achieve beyond that expected. In the less successful lessons, teachers often talk for long periods or activities take up too much time. As a result, some pupils lose concentration, but rarely misbehave. Relationships between teachers and pupils are always good and any minor incidents are dealt with firmly and without confrontation. However, sometimes there is insufficient intellectual challenge presented to pupils, particularly those identified as more able.
110. The use of digital microscopes, projected software and electronic equipment for recording measurements helps develop all pupils' understanding. However, this use of information and communication technology is developing and at the moment is used more by teachers for demonstration than by the pupils.
111. When teachers do not make pupils think for themselves or keep them occupied all the time, achievement is below that expected. Activities, such as colouring in diagrams and cutting and pasting, particularly if they take up much of the lesson's time, do not allow pupils to achieve as well as they might.
112. Improvement has been good since the last inspection. The head of department shows clear leadership and there has been a full overhaul of the curriculum and schemes of work. The range of homework tasks has greatly improved and has resulted in some high quality responses from pupils. The design of a sound-deadening box or a survey of weathering activity around the home are two very good examples of this improved range.

113. Opportunities for developing literacy skills are good. Pupils are presented with plenty of occasions in lessons to read both silently and aloud. Within the range of homework tasks there are occasions where pupils can write at length or creatively, such as producing newspaper articles and pamphlets about the oil industry or global warming. In lessons, pupils frequently make their own notes or summarise information for revision purposes. The skills of speaking and listening are developed well by presentations made to the class following group discussions or the analysis of results.
114. Teachers' marking is detailed and contains guidance explaining how pupils can improve. Targets for improvement are set at the end of each unit and there are sheets for pupils to use themselves to assess their progress. Marking follows the school grading system, but the use of National Curriculum levels is under-developed up to the end of Year 9. Better use would help pupils to know how well they are doing.

ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is good.

Strengths

- Good teaching and the good learning opportunities provided;
- The good attitudes of the pupils' towards the subject;
- The very good use of sketchbooks for preparation work and to extend choice;
- Good provision for extra-curricular opportunities through clubs, visits and artists in residence;
- The very good leadership and management of the department.

Areas for improvement

- More information and communication technology resources to improve the range of learning approaches;
- More up-to-date books in the library to promote improved independent learning and research.

115. Standards of work seen during the inspection are in line with national expectations by Year 9 and above average by Year 11. These standards are achieved because the teaching is good throughout the school. The quality of teaching and learning are never less than satisfactory. They were good in two-thirds of lessons in Years 7 to 9 and good or better in all lessons seen in Years 10 and 11. By Year 9, pupils' achievements in relation to standards on entry to the school at the start of Year 7 are good. This level of good achievement is sustained through Years 10 and 11. Pupils' good attitudes to the subject, and their positive approach to art, also contribute the quality of their learning being good. Consequently, they make good progress as they move through the school. No significant differences were noted in the attainment and progress of boys and girls.
116. Teacher assessments of pupils in Year 9 in 2001 suggest overall above average levels of attainment. However, the lack of opportunities locally to help teachers set and moderate standards to the new national levels for the subject has led to an element of over-assessment. The department is aware of this and is taking the necessary action to improve its assessments in Years 7 to 9. Overall, the quality of marking procedures and the use of assessment to set standards and targets for individual pupils are now good. When asked, pupils know how well they are doing and, most importantly, what they must do to improve further.
117. At the time of the previous inspection, overall results for GCSE grades A* to C were below average. Since then there has been a steady upward trend of improvement.

This is confirmed by the above average standards seen in lessons during the inspection. There has been a similar improvement for the proportion of pupils obtaining higher grade A passes, although the department has not had an A* pass for the past three years. The school has had consistent success in that, over the last five years, all pupils taking art have achieved an A* to G. By 2000, results were close to the national average. However, in 2001 they were not as good. There are good reasons for this, confirmed by school analysis and supported by the inspection findings. The main reason was the absence through illness, for an extended period, of the key art teacher at a crucial time leading up to the examination. Although temporary cover was obtained, this had a negative impact on the teaching and learning opportunities for the pupils concerned. In spite of this, the overall performance of pupils taking GCSE art in 2001 was close to the school average. This indicates that the pupils concerned were achieving at the level expected, based on their attainment in Year 9. However, a smaller proportion of pupils reached the higher A*-C grades than in previous years.

118. Pupils' basic drawing and sketching skills are below average in Year 7. There are limitations in their ability to observe and reproduce imagery or to explore fully form and shape. Their use of line is inadequate to reproduce successfully three-dimensional objects. However, there is good, steady progress in the development of key artwork skills and techniques, resulting from teachers' positive criticism, support and analysis. Pupils review their work regularly and are encouraged by their teacher to re-draft and re-submit their work if they wish to be considered for higher grades. This approach offers good encouragement for the pupils to improve and develop their work. Learning is often being very well supported with sketchbooks for preparation and investigation work. Teachers encourage pupils to see sketchbooks not only as working tools, but also as works of art in their own right. This was well illustrated by some Year 7 pupils' background research studies on Indian art. Here, much of the text and annotations are decorated well and show a developing sense of pattern and colour. Creative approaches are encouraged and this is paying significant dividends for those eventually choosing to study art at GCSE level. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils used their artistic imagination well when creating clay heads in a 'surrealist' style. The work of a local artist and sculptor, who incorporates surrealist elements in his work, was effectively used as a starting point for the pupils' individual interpretations.
119. Pupils in Year 11 show high levels of commitment and individual involvement in completing coursework units prior to preparation for their examination. Teaching strategies involve a professional, individual 'tutorial' approach. This is very effective and encourages pupils to analyse and self-evaluate their work. Standards of work seen show an increasing proportion of pupils capable of achieving higher grade passes at GCSE. One pupil showed some high quality research sheets on Dali, Van Gogh and Monet when preparing for a 'mask' project. Another produced some above expected standard work in interpretations of a 'landscape' theme showing the influence of Escher and Picasso. Such work is confident and backed up by some excellent analysis and use, for example, of pupils' own photographic resources. Pupils are not afraid to experiment with and use a range of two and three-dimensional media in their work. Even with lower attaining pupils, it is usually a matter of less technical skill, rather than a lack of creative ideas.
120. Some pupils with particular special educational needs in Year 10 are now given the option of an entry level course in art. However, the door is left open for transfer to a full GCSE course in the future. Arrangements with a local special school enable their pupils to study GCSE art at Thomas Keble. This is indicative of the head of department's planning to ensure that as wide a range of pupils as possible is able to take part in the creative and artistic life of the department.

121. Teachers, learning support teachers and support assistants alike are supportive of pupils with special educational needs. There is often a real partnership for learning in the way staff and pupils work alongside each other. The technician, who is also a ceramist, works with pupils outside lessons to give specialist support as an 'artist in residence'. Pupils are also involved with a local author in creating illustrations for his new book. This partnership has proved successful with previous publications. Other pupils are working with another artist on 'texture' experiments using natural materials, as part of work influenced by Aboriginal art. In the recent past, the pupils have been involved, with the head of department, in work on a Millennium sculpture for the village green. This was part of a twin work with an exchange school in France. This is indicative of the varied local and international links being forged by the department. Opportunities are provided for regular gallery trips and visits. The cultural and multicultural opportunities provided by such experiences are a strength of the department. They play a significant part in the personal development of the pupils.
122. The department is managed well and the head of department shows high qualities of leadership. Courses are well structured. A flexible approach ensures the needs of all pupils can be met. Overall planning within the department is good. There is a very good commitment to improve and a capacity to succeed; for example, a strong interest in professional development. This is not only for Internet research, but also for the production of artwork. As a tool, information and communication technology is starting to be used positively in support of work in art. Teachers are undergoing training and pupils are beginning to use computers well in their work, for both research using the Internet and to produce art work. However, the department has insufficient information and communication technology resources to meet an increasingly growing demand. Although more traditional reference resources are available in the department, the art section in the school library requires improvement to properly support independent learning and research. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Teacher expectations are high, art rooms and lessons are productive places to be where pupils are encouraged to become independent artists in their own right. The department is poised for further success.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision for design and technology is good.

Strengths

- Examination results are above average compared to schools in similar circumstances;
- Teaching is good, leading to pupils achieving well;
- Information and communication technology is well used;
- Good use is made of industrial visits to support teaching;
- The department is well led.

Areas for development

- Some work offers insufficient opportunities for product design;
- Older pupils have a poor knowledge of the function of electronic components used in systems and control.

123. GCSE examination results have shown a rising trend since the previous inspection, when they were below the national average. Results for 2001 are in line with those nationally for all schools and above the national average for schools in areas where a

significant number of pupils attends grammar schools. This represents good achievement. Food technology results are well above the national average. Girls' results are better than those of boys, but are in line with these pupils' previous attainment.

124. Current 14 year old pupils are working at the level expected nationally for their age. Teacher assessments show a rising trend in attainment since 1999. Pupils can research existing ideas and use these well as a basis for their own design proposals. They take account of the views of people likely to use the items they produce. Pupils can test, evaluate and modify their ideas. Some units of work in resistant materials and electronics are too prescriptive and limit opportunities for product design development. This inhibits the progress of higher attaining pupils. Pupils have the skills to produce good quality practical work.
125. Current work shows 16 year old pupils' attainment to be in line with national expectations at this age. Good teaching leads to pupils having a good understanding of the subject matter in food technology. This is not so in systems and control, where pupils have poor knowledge of the materials they are using and the function of electronic components. This was an issue raised during the previous inspection. Pupils know about industrial methods of production, for example, how batches of items are made. This area of work is often well supported by industrial visits. Pupils have satisfactory skills to use modelling to clarify their design thinking, particularly in graphic products. They work with confidence and independence using hand tools and machinery, leading to practical work of a satisfactory standard.
126. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well, particularly when there is specific support from learning assistants. Class teachers are also skilled at giving such support. Some facilities in resistant materials have not been adapted to the needs of pupils with physical disabilities.
127. Teaching and learning are good overall. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Very good planning, linked to high expectations of what pupils can achieve, for example, in food technology, motivates pupils very well and leads to good progress and achievement. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good and make a significant contribution to the progress they make. They maintain interest throughout lessons, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. Where teachers have good subject knowledge this has a positive impact on what pupils attain. However, where teachers are working outside their specialist area, pupils' attainment is restricted, for example, in the range of graphic skills they develop. Some teachers are skilled at using questions to extend pupils' knowledge. This is not the case when teachers give pupils information without involving them in discussion. Homework is well used to support pupils' work. Some course materials are written in language that is at too high a level for lower attaining pupils.
128. The department is very well led. Delegation of responsibilities is effective and leads to a good sense of shared purpose. This is evident, for example, in the way that assessment and target setting for pupils is incorporated in planning by all teachers. Development planning is very good and made a significant contribution to the school's recent successful bid for Technology College status.
129. The curriculum for pupils up to the age of 14 is satisfactory and covers work using a range of appropriate materials. However, pupils have no opportunities for working with pneumatic systems, an issue raised during the previous inspection. There is considerable emphasis on the development of pupils' literacy skills and this leads to pupils having a good understanding of specialist technical language. There are good

elements of cultural development, for example, where 14 year olds consider foods from a range of ethnic cultures. Pupils also exchange ideas with schools in Poland, France and Spain. There is a satisfactory range of GCSE courses available and some elements of design and technology are included in the work-related curriculum courses. The newly introduced GCSE catering course is a strength of the department's work. Information and communication technology is well used, for example, when planning electronic circuits and producing formal drawings of what is to be made and for some elements of computer control. However, insufficient use is made of some computer-controlled equipment.

130. There are good assessment systems in place. These are well used on a day-to-day basis to help planning and they indicate to pupils how they can improve their work. However, teacher assessments of pupils up to the age of 14 are not sufficiently accurate, tending to over-estimate pupils' achievements. This leads to some pupils not working at appropriately high levels. Annual reports to parents are unsatisfactory as they give too little detail of what pupils can do and what they should be aiming to do in the future.

131. Staffing is satisfactory. Very good technical help has a direct impact on pupils' good progress. Accommodation is satisfactory, with good displays of pupils' work. Some work surfaces in the food technology room are damaged and unhygienic. The resistant materials rooms are small, with one being too overcrowded to use machinery safely. Resources are good overall, though the limited specialist resources for graphics and pneumatics restrict pupils' progress.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is good.

Strengths

- A well planned and structured curriculum that supports the understanding of human and natural features;
- Teaching that involves all pupils in their learning and supports literacy development;
- A good range of resources that support the learning activities;
- The good use made of wall displays of pupils' work.

Areas for improvement

- The progress and attainment of more able pupils in individual lessons;
- An increase in the use of information and communication technology to support and enrich learning;
- Opportunities for pupils to provide additional information from their own research.

132. The standards pupils attain in geography are just below the level expected nationally for 14 year olds and in line with that expected for 16 year-olds. Nevertheless, for 14 year olds they represent good achievement given their below average attainment on entry to the school. In summer 2001, teacher assessments overestimated the standards 14 year olds achieved because of insufficient rigour in the assessment process. Girls achieve more of the higher levels. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because they receive good support in all learning activities.

133. The 2001 GCSE results indicate a significant improvement over the low standard achieved in 2000. Attainment was still well below that of all schools nationally, but is now closer to the standards achieved in schools situated in areas where selection takes

place. Girls achieved the larger proportion of the higher grades, but a number of boys were also awarded the highest grades. All pupils achieved a GCSE grade and this represents a better performance than standards achieved nationally. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good. Several pupils achieved above predicted grades. The results indicate that pupils make good progress in the subject from the end of Year 9 to the examination at the end of Year 11.

134. All pupils develop a good knowledge and understanding of contrasting environments because teachers concentrate upon the factors that influence each of the environments studied. By the end of Year 9, most pupils recognise and describe accurately the contrasting environments' natural and human characteristics. This supported pupils understanding of the situation presented by two visitors, who talked about their work in Sierra Leone. Pupils interacted well with the visitors and their answers showed that they were aware of the location and climate of the area. Teachers encourage pupils to use maps accurately and provide many activities that incorporate the use of maps into the lesson activities. This approach enabled Year 9 pupils to make good use of their map skills in order to produce accurate posters containing a range of rainforest information. By the end of Year 11, pupils are able to use a wide range of skills and knowledge to support investigative work, for example, about the present day environment and development in the area of Gloucester Docks.
135. Presentation standards are very good in displays of pupils' work in classrooms, but in their books, standards are variable with few pupils producing diagrams that match the subjects' very well identified methods of presentation. In Years 10 and 11, insufficient use is made of the map skills pupils have acquired because teachers provide too few activities that require pupils to select their own methods for displaying information on a map or diagram. The use of fieldwork to support understanding has improved since the last inspection with, for example, a visit to the 'Living Rainforest' giving pupils a first hand experience of the rainforest environment. Some use is made of the area around the school to support understanding of individual topics, but practical activities and fieldwork do not yet have a sufficiently high profile in all the planned learning activities.
136. Teaching is good with some very good features in individual lessons. Where teaching is very good, teachers clearly explain the activities that will occur, set well defined time targets and expect pupils to include evidence and ideas in their work. In a number of lessons, time targets are not used effectively enough with the result that the pace of learning is not sufficient for all the tasks to be completed. Good subject knowledge enables teachers to respond accurately to pupils' questions and there is good, planned use of question and answer activities to support pupils' understanding and involvement in their learning. However, few activities enable pupils to bring information to the discussion from their own homework research with the result that there is an over-emphasis on the recall of information from a previous lesson.
137. The good standards that many pupils achieve in lessons reflect the positive attitude they have towards the subject. This is supported by the provision of lesson activities that interest pupils and involve them in a range of activities. For example, pupils in a Year 8 lesson about a National Park studied evidence about activities that affected its environment before writing a letter to present their own opinions. Teachers encourage pupils to work in groups and pairs to collect information and to provide reasons to support their ideas. The positive impact that this has on their learning is evident in the way that Year 11 pupils work together to identify the impact of different situations on migration patterns. In all lessons, pupils are expected to use key geographical terms accurately and, by Year 9, they use a range of terms accurately in both written work and discussion. This effectively supports their literacy standards and provides a sound basis for pupils studying the subject in Years 10 and 11. Teachers further support

pupils' literacy development by the encouragement they give for pupils to present their ideas in different forms. For example, pupils produce poems to express their feelings for people whose lives have been disrupted by a recent earthquake. Pupils with special educational needs are fully included in all activities because teachers are aware of their needs. This ensures that they make good progress in discussion work and, with the use of some modified worksheets, in the written tasks.

138. The organisation of the subject by the head of department is good. This has resulted in the complete revision of the subject's schemes of work so that they now provide a more effective basis for the planning and delivery of individual topics. Lesson planning concentrates on providing learning activities matched to the main ability level in the set and this enables many pupils to make good progress. This is an improvement since the last inspection when there was little variation in the tasks undertaken by pupils of differing abilities. However, there are insufficient tasks to support improvements in the attainment of the most able pupils. Teachers of the subject now need to work together to ensure individual lesson plans provide the most appropriate learning activities for all pupils in the class. The quality of marking has improved with positive features identified and some indication given about the level at which the pupils are working. However, marking rarely indicates ways of bringing about an improvement and there is no co-ordinated approach to showing pupils what they have to include in assessed work to reach higher standards. The use of information and communication technology is starting to be introduced as a planned part of the learning activities, but its use as a resource for pupils to collect, process and present information and data as part of a whole class activity is not yet sufficiently high profile.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is good.

Strengths

- Good teaching supported by very good subject knowledge;
- Well-planned lessons that have a clear historical focus;
- Involvement of pupils of all abilities in discussion activities;
- The provision of resources that enable pupils to be involved in historical enquiry.

Areas for improvement

- The development of additional tasks to raise the attainment of the most able pupils;
- Comments on pupils' work to contain more detail on what they need to do to improve;
- More systematic use of information and communication technology to enrich learning.

139. Standards of attainment in history are close to those expected nationally. This represents good achievement from below average attainment of pupils on entry to the school. In National Curriculum assessments for 14 year olds in summer 2001, results were close to those expected nationally. Girls achieved more of the higher levels than boys. The work seen during the inspection for 14 year olds in Year 9 broadly matches the teachers' assessments. The quality of teachers' assessment has improved and now more accurately measures attainment at the end of Year 9. The GCSE examination results in 2001 were below the levels achieved by all schools, both nationally and in areas where selection takes place. However, the results indicate a significant improvement over the 2000 results with an increased number of pupils gaining higher grades. Boys achieved more of the higher grades. All pupils achieved a GCSE grade, which is better than standards achieved nationally. The progress of pupils with special

educational needs is good and several achieved above predicted grades. These results indicate good achievement from Year 9.

140. Pupils make good progress in history. A wide range of learning activities supports pupils' interest and positive involvement in lesson activities. Both boys and girls of all abilities enjoy the subject and want to do well. Well-planned and structured lessons include a variety of learning activities that encourage pupils to think about the causes and effects of different actions and their impact on historical events. This carefully planned approach enabled pupils in a Year 9 lesson to identify and provide simple explanations of the causes of the First World War. Pupils show developing knowledge and understanding of each of the topics studied and a growing ability to place individual events into the correct sequence. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, pupils developed the ability to sort out evidence about the early American settlement and placed it into the appropriate time sequence.
141. Teachers make good use of a variety of historical documents and pictures and this successfully develops pupils' awareness and understanding of historical events. For instance, this approach was very effective in a lesson about King John where pupils developed the ability to consider several sources of information in order to assess the character and actions of the king. The good development and use of basic historical skills are making a positive contribution to the improvement in the standards pupils achieve by the end of Year 9.
142. The quality of teaching is good and, together with the very good subject knowledge shown by all teachers, helps pupils understand complex historical events. This was clearly shown in a well-structured discussion activity, supported by video evidence, that encouraged Year 11 pupils to form their own judgement about one individual event in the development of the American West. Pupils showed empathy with the situation surrounding the deaths of many Indians, with the teacher encouraging the pupils to express their feelings after listening to accounts recorded by people at the time. There is a need to develop further this approach so that it is used in a more obvious way from the start of Year 7. Good use of targeted questioning by all teachers ensures that pupils of different abilities contribute to discussions. This approach ensures that pupils with special educational needs are fully included in all lesson activities and this helped one boy, aided by a learning support assistant, to identify a piece of evidence that could be considered by the whole class.
143. Starting in Year 7, pupils are shown how to look at a range of evidence and to work out how reliable it is or if it is subject to a biased view. This contributes effectively to the good ability many pupils gain by Year 10 in being able to assess historical evidence. Limited use is made of pupils' own information obtained from their own research as part of a homework task. The result is an over-dependence on the recall of information provided by the teacher or from whole class resources, which negatively affects what pupils achieve, especially the most able. Few additional tasks are provided to enable individual pupils to achieve their full potential and most lessons contain the same range of tasks for all pupils with the expectation that all will be able to work at the same pace.
144. The subject provides good support for all pupils' literacy standards through the way in which teachers encourage the accurate use of key historical words and concepts. Pupils are encouraged to use a structured approach to their writing, but there is little encouragement for pupils to illustrate work using their own pictures and diagrams. In depth written work used to record the result of an investigation is a positive feature of the work of Year 10 and 11 pupils. However, whilst there are appropriate opportunities to write in depth for younger pupils, teachers need to use this approach more widely from Year 7. Many pupils work well with a partner and this supports them in assessing

the evidence before the whole class considers it. Subject planning currently provides too few occasions for pupils to be involved in group work or role play with the result that whole class discussions are not supported by the considered opinions and additional information generated by groups of pupils.

145. The head of department provides very good leadership and management of the subject. He has introduced a more structured approach to lesson planning. Pupils are now made clearly aware of each lesson's aims and the learning activities that will occur and this supports the improvements in many pupils' progress and attainment. Monitoring of teaching is well developed, but the findings from this activity are not used fully to modify the structure of an individual lesson or to promote independent learning. Limited use is made of information and communication technology to support investigations as a part of lesson tasks. The use of visits and practical activities satisfactorily supports pupils' learning, but the range and variety of the activities need further development. The process of assessment has improved since it was identified as an area of weakness at the time of the last inspection. Pupils' work is regularly marked, with positive features recognised and rewarded, but pupils are given little advice about how to reach higher standards. Assessment is now based on a carefully planned and monitored process and this gives pupils an accurate indication of the standard of their work.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is good.

Strengths

- Teaching of timetabled ICT lessons is very good;
- Above average attainment in skills and the use of software;
- The good support given by teachers to pupils and by pupils to other pupils.

Areas for development

- Monitoring and evaluation of cross-curricular ICT;
- National Curriculum levels linked to programmes of study with discrete lessons;
- Management of whole-school ICT.

146. Standards achieved by pupils in information and communication technology are overall in line with those expected. In summer 2001, the standards attained by 14 year olds (Year 9) were broadly in line with national averages. In relation to prior attainment, achievement in Years 7 and 8 is very good, particularly in skills, with overall good achievement by the end of Year 9. Pupils enter the school with below average knowledge and are introduced to a range of ICT skills starting with word-processing, editing and combining text, graphics and desktop publishing. They also gain a sound understanding of measurement and control and data logging. Years 10 and 11 pupils taking the GCSE course consolidate and develop skills further and continue to achieve well. Progress for other pupils in Years 10 and 11 is more variable and depends on the opportunities they have in their subjects, as there are no specific ICT lessons. These range from good to somewhat limited and as a result not all pupils achieve as well as they could. This makes standards average overall rather than good.

147. For current 11-14 year olds, computer skills and the interrogation and use of a variety of software are good, particularly in Years 7 and 8. By Year 9, pupils are confident, competent users of computers within their ICT lessons. Pupils achieve very good skills in presenting accurate information in a variety of ways and appropriate for different

audiences. In Year 7, pupils become proficient in word-processing and are able to produce an accurate business letter. Research on the Internet in Year 8 helps to develop pupils' ability to read information, interpret data and use it appropriately to develop their knowledge and understanding of the use of ICT. By Year 9, pupils have reached good standards in word-processing, desktop publishing and the use of a range of ICT software. They also develop sound skills in using spreadsheets and databases. The National Curriculum assessment levels are not linked to the tasks pupils undertake in class and this hinders progress. It results in pupils not reaching the required depth of understanding of the use and application of ICT that would enable pupils to attain higher standards in this subject by the end of Year 9.

148. For these pupils the use of ICT in subjects is still variable, but this has improved since the previous inspection. The application of skills, knowledge and understanding across subjects is developing with some good examples in design and technology where pupils use computer aided design and a program to develop their understanding of electronic circuits. In English, where ICT is planned, pupils use it to improve and develop their writing, for example, by preparing and developing a leaflet for the school. They also have opportunities to use desktop publishing skills to extend and develop their work.
149. The GCSE results of pupils in 2001 were significantly above national averages. They show good improvement in the last three years. More boys tend to take the subject, but the results for boys and girls are not significantly different. The work seen in current GCSE classes in Years 10 and 11 reflects these results. Pupils organise and present their work well and use a variety of sources to collect information and illustrate it in a different way. They show good understanding of the effective use of ICT and how it can be used in the outside world; for example, using spreadsheets and databases to analyse financial performance. Pupils work well independently and attempt to investigate and find solutions to problems that arise for themselves before seeking support from the teacher.
150. In addition to the discrete ICT examination course, there are GNVQ and work-related courses, plus GCSE business studies. These support the development of pupils' ICT skills through the extensive use of computers within these areas. However, opportunities for other pupils to develop their computer skills further are more variable. There are good opportunities in design and technology where pupils use computer-aided design and computers to develop work on sensors and circuits. The English department has ICT well planned into its work and has linked it to the appropriate assessment criteria. In GCSE physical education, pupils make good use of Power Point to improve their presentations. However, the use of computers to support pupils' learning in mathematics, art, geography and history is less well developed. Subject teachers' confidence in using ICT as an aid for teaching is improving. This is having a positive effect on the increasing use of computers across all subjects of the curriculum.
151. In all years, pupils with special educational needs make good progress and in some cases very good progress. The open-ended nature of the tasks and the very good support given by teachers enables them to achieve expected levels. Computers are well used to support pupils with learning and physical disabilities. Higher attaining pupils also make good progress, but are not sufficiently challenged in order to enable them to achieve the highest standards.
152. The quality of teaching in timetabled ICT lessons is very good. The very good relationships with pupils and between pupils themselves encourage co-operation in lessons. Pupils support each other with their learning and offer help and constructive criticism, which develops confidence and promotes self-assessment. Pupils have positive attitudes to work due to appropriate tasks given by teachers that interest and

motivate them. Teachers actively encourage pupils to work together to reinforce and extend their learning. Teachers also create effective opportunities for pupils to develop independence as early as Year 7 and this makes them competent, mature learners by Years 10 and 11. Teachers give very good individual support that ensures all pupils make good progress, particularly pupils with special educational needs.

153. Marking of pupils' work is regular and has constructive comments for improvement that support pupils' progress and attainment. Assessment requirements in Years 7, 8 and 9 are not specified in plans and are not related sufficiently to the National Curriculum levels. This limits the extent to which end of year assessments can be used to promote improvement in pupils' learning.
154. Whilst the management of discrete ICT is good, there are weaknesses in the co-ordination and management of whole school use of ICT and the contribution it makes to pupils' skills. This results in restricted progress and attainment. The school is aware of the need to develop an appropriate management structure for the subject that recognises the status of ICT within the school and ensures fully its use in all subjects. Provision and access to computers and software have improved considerably since the previous inspection and are having a positive effect on pupils' use of ICT in lessons and in subjects across the curriculum. Statutory regulations are met, but the coverage of the programmes of study for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is just adequate, although improving.
155. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection, which has had a positive effect on provision and quality of learning and achievement. However, there is room for further improvement.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern foreign languages is good.

Strengths

- Good teaching enables pupils of all abilities to do their best;
- All pupils can gain a qualification in French;
- Pupils, who are strong in languages, can study French, German and Spanish;
- Teachers plan their lessons to ensure the best possible progress for every pupil.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils should have more access to computers, particularly the Internet;
- There should be more books and magazines, particularly in the library, so that pupils can read other material besides their textbooks.

156. In the National Curriculum assessments at the end of their third year in the school, pupils' results in French were above national averages in 2001, an improvement on previous years. Pupils, who are better suited to a work related course, finish French at this stage and gain a Certificate of Achievement that recognises their three years of study. Pupils with some aptitude for languages begin German in Year 8; their results are also good, although national averages do not apply.
157. Similar standards were observed for pupils currently in Year 9. Pupils in their first three years at Thomas Keble make good progress in their languages, often achieving more than might be expected given their overall below average ability on entry to the school. They do well because they are grouped by ability and because their teachers understand how to draw out the best efforts from their pupils, whatever their talents.

Able pupils in their second term of German much enjoyed talking about the Simpson family while learning how to use new vocabulary and grammar. Pupils, who are struggling with French, join in number and vocabulary games with enthusiasm, learning as they participate. Pupils of all abilities take pride in their written work, which is well presented and of a good standard.

158. In summer 2001, Year 11 pupils achieved better results in GCSE French and German than in previous years. Although below the national average, more of the higher grades were obtained than in schools where pupils' ability on entry is similar. However, those pupils taking French did not do as well in this subject as they did in other subjects. Girls attained better grades than boys overall. In both French and German, a few pupils attained grade A* (the top grade) for the first time for several years. Pupils in school at the time of the inspection were also studying Spanish for GCSE; the Year 11 group had done well in their 'mock' examinations and will take their GCSE in 2002. Overall standards for Year 11 pupils in all three languages are average, although above average in Spanish.
159. In their lessons, pupils in Years 10 and 11 make good progress because they practise exactly the sort of topics they need to know for their examinations. They concentrate well, listen hard to taped passages and read with care. They pronounce their languages well, imitating the good accents of their teachers, and can speak in full sentences to explain what is happening or to express an opinion. These pupils work hard and take trouble over their homework and their work done in class. They want to succeed and are prepared to take pains to do so.
160. The teaching of languages is good overall. It is never less than satisfactory; it is mostly good, very good or outstanding. Teachers are fluent and confident in the languages they teach and are skilled in adapting lessons to meet the needs of the most able, the average pupil or the pupil with special educational needs. Pupils are greatly helped by assistant teachers or helpers, who speak the languages being taught and can offer support to individuals. Work is carefully and thoroughly marked so that teachers and pupils know where improvement is needed.
161. Pupils behave well in lessons, responding to their teachers' energy and enthusiasm by trying their hardest. Lessons move fast, with several changes of task so that pupils learn in different ways. For example, in a very good Year 7 French lesson, lower attaining pupils made very good progress in increasing their vocabulary on personal details by discussing what pets they have. After a quick question and answer session in French at the start of the lesson, pupils moved onto a taped listening exercise. This was followed by appropriate written work and a quick revision at the end of the lesson. Pupils were constantly praised for their work and as a result redoubled their efforts and achieved well for their abilities. In several lessons, pupils were disappointed when a task or a lesson ended. Outside lessons, pupils take part in visits or exchanges with other countries to extend and use the languages they are learning.
162. There has been considerable improvement since the last inspection. A team of teachers now works well together and they aim to do the best for the whole range of pupils. Under the new head of department assessment procedures have significantly improved. There is a clear knowledge of National Curriculum and GCSE requirements, the involvement of pupils in target setting and regular monitoring of teaching by the head of department. There is also a growing supply of up-to-date textbooks with enough to go round whole classes. Results have improved strongly.
163. Whilst there is good use made of computers in some lessons, with suitable software to support the pupils' work, there is room for development in this area: ideally through the

creation of Internet links with schools in other countries. For keen linguists, or for those whose interest needs encouraging, a greater supply of modern books and magazines in the library would be helpful.

164. The department provides an unusually wide programme of languages without forgetting the needs of those who find languages difficult. It makes a good contribution to the education of all the school's pupils.

MUSIC

The quality of provision for music is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Teaching at GCSE has improved significantly since the last inspection and the results have reflected this;
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they make effective use of their musical skills in class to support pupils' learning;
- In most music lessons, pupils behave very well and this helps to create an appropriate learning environment.

Areas for development

- Lesson plans need to be tailored more effectively to meet the needs of different groups of pupils and individuals and higher ability pupils need to be challenged more;
- Assessment procedures are inadequate;
- The provision of resources in a non-specialist room is inadequate;
- Greater use of information and communication technology.

165. Pupils aged 11-14 are working broadly in line with national expectations in music. Progress is satisfactory. In summer 2001, a slightly larger than expected number of boys received the lowest grades given in the National Curriculum assessments (Levels 3 and 4) in that year and far fewer boys than girls reached Level 7, the highest level awarded. Some boys worked less well than girls during the inspection itself, but this trend was less marked than the statistics suggest. Achievements in GCSE music examinations are now good and results have improved over the last three years. In 2001, four out of the five GCSE candidates gained A*-C grade passes and this was well above the national average in this examination. Despite this trend, over the last four years results have fluctuated from well below to well above the national average, in line with the abilities of the individual candidates. However, statistics based on such small groups of pupils cannot be considered reliable. Progress is satisfactory for 11-14 year olds and good for the small number of pupils continuing with music to GCSE level in Years 10 and 11.

166. In lessons for 11-14 year olds, the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with some good features. In one lesson, teaching was unsatisfactory and this resulted in poor pupil behaviour. This lesson was taught in a classroom away from the main music area. The acoustics were poor and the room did not lend itself well to music teaching. However, in most music lessons, discipline is very good. Teaching at GCSE level has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now generally good.

167. In some lessons in Year 9, pupils work effectively on imaginative composition tasks, for example, devising their own music to go with cartoon strips. Paired work is generally effective in these lessons and pupils show initiative and take responsibility for their own learning. Despite the quality of the composition tasks being good, the musical learning

is not always made explicit to the pupils and this is a clear weakness in lesson planning. In contrast, in a Year 7 project on 'rhythm', teaching seen was purposeful, had a clear sense of direction and led pupils to concentrate well as they created different combinations of rhythms. Tasks were varied and were developed logically over the course of the lesson. Nevertheless, there were too few opportunities for pupils to work in groups, make up their own more difficult patterns and to break beyond the restrictions of repeating rhythms. In lessons, the technical musical vocabulary used is sometimes too simple and so does not always help to stretch the pupils, particularly those of higher ability. Lesson plans are not sufficiently geared to the needs of individuals and groups and formal assessment procedures are still not helpful in generating meaningful measurements of pupils' musical achievements. Despite this, teachers' informal assessments in lessons are sometimes very helpful and some pupils, including those with special educational needs, are supported well in this way. Homework for 11-14 year old pupils rarely helps them to develop their musical abilities.

168. In the best GCSE lessons, pupils follow focused sequences of listening tasks. They use the high-level understanding that they gain from these to help them to compose their own music. In one lesson, Year 10 pupils produced some effective, but short, melodies, using the structures of the music they had just listened to. They went on to play their music to the teacher and therefore, refined their work. Pupils of a wide range of different abilities currently study music at GCSE and so the quality of work observed during the inspection was variable. It was average overall. Pupils set targets for their own musical development throughout the GCSE course, but these targets are not always focused well enough to help them to maximise their learning. Some of these targets are useful, however, and the teacher monitors them regularly.
169. Teachers' musical knowledge is generally good, and very good in some GCSE lessons, and both teachers demonstrate their own musicianship well in the classroom. However, they do not always know enough about music from other countries and their understanding of music technology is limited mainly to keyboards. Although keyboard work is generally good, automatic functions are sometimes over-used. A small number of pupils have access to the department's computer in an extra-curricular club and here the support technician demonstrates a good understanding of the equipment. In this club, a GCSE student has composed a solo song and recorded it onto the computer. The pupil shows a deep personal engagement with this music and it has a lot of potential, but, at the moment, inexperience in using music technology is currently restricting further progress. Developing wide-ranging skills in this area and building it into the culture of the department is clearly a desirable target.
170. The department has improved significantly in many respects since the last inspection and most of the key issues highlighted at that point have been addressed. For example, new and appropriate projects for pupils have been devised and are being taught. The teaching of GCSE music is now much better and more pupils choose to study it. However, there is still a lot of scope for improving the quality of lesson planning, the department's assessment practices (including 11-14 year old pupils setting appropriate targets for themselves) and the procedures for monitoring the teaching of new staff. Spending priorities have focused mainly on developing a stock of good-quality keyboards, but it will now be important to make sure that a good range of instruments is available in both teaching rooms. Too few instruments reflect a range of different cultural traditions. Despite the inclusion of a small number of appropriate projects, pupils do not yet have an appropriate awareness of the musical contributions of different cultures in society. Management of the department does not yet have a clear vision of how to address these deficits. Nevertheless, there is a good range of extra-curricular activities for pupils and the number of visiting instrumental teachers has increased significantly. A very healthy number of pupils currently have instrumental or

vocal lessons in school, in addition to their music classes, and the department is active in the local community. For example, pupils perform at local old people's homes and musical productions are staged. A fifth of pupils are currently participating in such activities, including at the time of the inspection the school's production of 'The Boyfriend'.

171. Visiting instrumental teachers plan their lessons very well and expect high standards of work. They take care to set appropriate targets with pupils and monitor these effectively. The head of department manages them very well. However, the overall management of the department is not yet effective enough to develop pupils' musical skills to the best possible levels.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is good.

Strengths

- Good teaching, leading to good learning by most pupils;
- Good leadership and management, particularly in developing areas, such as extra-curricular provision and assessment;
- The positive attitudes of pupils towards the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Raising attainment in GCSE physical education;
- Increasing curriculum time for all pupils doing core physical education in order to bring provision closer in line with similar schools and to help to raise standards further.

172. Overall standards in physical education are satisfactory. Standards of pupils by the age of 14 in knowledge, understanding and performance skills are in line with national expectations and are in line with the teacher assessments for 2001. There is no significant difference in attainment of boys and girls. Since most pupils join the school with standards below expectations, especially in gymnastics and dance, this represents good achievement for all pupils, including higher attainers and those with special educational needs.

173. During the inspection, activities for pupils between the ages of 11 and 14 were observed in gymnastics, dance and games. The best standards are achieved in dance. Pupils, often with little experience of dance before joining the school, make rapid progress in their ability to devise individual and group dances combining effective motifs, good dynamics and interpretative skill. This was evident in lessons in which pupils devised fight scenes to illustrate *West Side Story* and, most impressively, when Year 7 pupils devised a "river sequence" combining imaginative individual and whole class routines. Pupils also make impressive gains in confidence when learning dance. In gymnastics, pupils develop the ability to devise and perform individual and paired balances with appropriate poise and control. Year 9 pupils improve their attacking and defensive skills in basketball, in particular learning how to feint and dodge effectively. Pupils make less progress in developing good ball handling and passing skills in volleyball, a game in which they also show limited tactical awareness.

174. On the core course for pupils between the ages of 14 and 16, standards are in line with expectations. This represents satisfactory achievement from the age of 14, the rate of progress being sometimes adversely affected by the relatively limited amount of teaching time available in Years 10 and 11. Standards of pupils on the GCSE optional course are below expectations for the age group. This confirms the evidence of the

2001 examination, in which the proportion of pupils achieving an A*-C grade was below the national average, although it was in line with the percentage for schools with pupils of a similar ability on intake nationally. GCSE results during the previous two years were variable, representing differences in the entry pattern. The majority of pupils on the current Year 11 course are boys and standards are weakest on the theoretical part of the course. Standards of pupils in Year 10 are higher than those in the current Year 11.

175. Pupils in core lessons make satisfactory progress in consolidating their volleying and digging skills in volleyball. In dance they make much more rapid progress in developing complex routines without much intervention from the teacher. In GCSE theory lessons, more able pupils develop an appropriate knowledge and understanding of technical terms. They make good progress in developing knowledge and understanding of the relationship between health and fitness. They also learn the function of key elements, such as the circulatory and respiratory systems, and have a good understanding of how various muscle groups work. They make good progress in learning how to apply this knowledge to devising effective training routines. Pupils also develop a sound understanding of the social context of sport, researching issues such as women and the media in sport and the role of sporting organisations. They learn to research and present information effectively, sometimes using technology such as PowerPoint presentations. Less able pupils make less sustained progress, partly because of weaker literacy skills.
176. As with younger pupils, those between the ages of 14 and 16 with special educational needs make at least satisfactory, and often good, progress in developing their practical skills.
177. The quality of teaching in physical education is good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Both the good and very good teaching have several characteristics and these are seen in lessons across all year groups. The strongest feature is the combination of high expectations, very good subject knowledge and effective teaching methods to which pupils of all abilities respond with positive efforts. Consequently, they learn well. This was particularly evident in dance lessons. Confident and imaginative teaching, using basic music resources effectively, succeeded in getting all pupils in a short space of time to exercise their imagination and collaborative skills to produce sophisticated group presentations. Teachers use questioning effectively to reinforce and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. This was a feature of warm-up routines in several games lessons. Teachers provide good feedback to pupils, both individually and collectively, enabling them to see clearly how they can improve. This was evident, for example, in a Year 9 gymnastics lesson in which the teacher gave good feedback and also got pupils to evaluate each other's paired routines. Good refinements in technique, particularly in body tension, were the result. Classroom management and relationships are always good. These result in motivated pupils, who generally give of their best and enjoy lessons. This is a strong feature of dance lessons. On the very few occasions where teaching is less effective, there is insufficient attention given to consolidating basic skills, particularly when teaching the difficult handling skills of volleyball. This weakness is partly due to the relatively limited amount of time available for teaching.
178. Leadership and management in physical education are good and contribute significantly to the good progress being made. The relatively new head of department has developed good policies, a scheme of work and good assessment procedures. More effective use is now being made of assessment information. The department makes more use of information and communication technology, for example, using filming as a technique to evaluate and improve performance and getting pupils to make PowerPoint

presentations. Extra-curricular provision has also improved and is a strength of the school. There are now clubs and teams in several sports, with a good take-up by pupils. The school competes against other schools and has had good success in some areas, such as cross-country. The monitoring of teaching and standards is now more extensive and good practice is being shared. Developmental planning is detailed and sound.

179. Although accommodation has improved significantly in the last year, particularly the indoor facilities, they are barely spacious enough for large classes. More significantly, the time allocation for physical education for all pupils except those doing GCSE courses is relatively low by local and national standards. This results in barely adequate coverage of some areas of the statutory curriculum and for example, allows for relatively little time to consolidate skills. To some extent, the good quality of the teaching and the contribution of extra-curricular activities compensate for this deficiency, but the overall result is that the quality of learning is often restricted.

180. In 1997, standards were in line with expectations for pupils at the ages of both 14 and 16, although GCSE results were above the national average, which is no longer the case. However, progress in learning is now better for younger pupils. There have been significant improvements in the quality of accommodation, teaching, planning, assessment and monitoring, and these to some extent have compensated for the loss of curriculum time. Therefore, overall, there has been good progress in physical education since the previous inspection.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is satisfactory.

Strengths

- The good teaching;
- The good contribution made to pupils' spiritual and moral development;
- Good curriculum provision in Years 7 to 9;
- Very good pupil management.

Areas for improvement

- The setting of detailed targets against which pupil progress can be identified and the sharing of these with pupils;
- Statutory requirements are not met in Years 10 and 11.

181. Attainment in Years 7 to 9 is in line with expectations in relation to the Gloucestershire LEA Agreed Syllabus and occasionally exceeds it. In Years 10 and 11, attainment is

below national expectations owing to insufficient time to cover the requirements of the LEA Agreed Syllabus. This makes provision satisfactory rather than good.

182. In lessons and work seen during the inspection in Years 7 to 9, learning was good. There are some good examples of pupils developing their knowledge and understanding of religious language and principles well. Teachers enable pupils to make links between their everyday experiences and religious values through careful planning and thought-provoking questions. This enables pupils to develop important attitudes towards religious ideas, such as enlightenment, Karma and meditation.
183. Pupils generally make sense of what they study and can relate it to their experiences of life. In Year 7, their work shows that they are beginning to understand that they can learn from religion as well as gain information about it. Through studying the rich variety of religions in Britain, pupils gain an appreciation of, and respect for, the views of others, who are of different religions and traditions to themselves. In one lesson, through the very good use of video and well-targeted worksheets by the teacher, pupils made significant gains in knowledge of the events leading to the resurrection of Jesus. They were able to look at the evidence and form judgements about its authenticity. In Year 8, through a study of Muslim prayer, pupils understood the importance of a life of prayer in religious groups. As a result of the teacher's knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, the topic, coupled with high expectations, pupils formed opinions about how to use prayer in their everyday lives. In Year 9, pupils expressed their views well about the importance of meditation. Through the excellent use of guided meditation, pupils were able to see the world through the eyes of others. This helps them to explore their feelings and emotions and their respect for the opinions of others enables them to share their views openly and honestly. They collaborate well with each other and this contributes significantly to their progress. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well and make good progress. The teachers' use of key words, religious language and good discussion work are useful aids in improving written and speaking skills.
184. In lessons and work seen in Years 10 and 11, the limited amount of time available for the course means that the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus cannot be fully met. Hence, standards are not as high as they could be. Because of the constraints on time, pupils are provided with too much content in lessons. Whilst this enables them to gain in knowledge of a topic, little time is left for them to reflect on the information and to form their own views about it. In one lesson, pupils did explore aspects of life and death and, through the good use of video material by the teacher, they understood why different people draw opposing conclusions about death and resurrection. They work well together, respecting the views and attitudes of others. This enables them to make progress as they learn that religion can have a significant impact in their lives. There are no significant differences in the standards achieved by boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted or talented make significant progress.
185. Teaching is good. During the inspection, all teaching seen was good or better, including one excellent lesson. Lesson aims are generally shared with pupils. Teachers make good use of questioning to consolidate current learning and to review previous work. They use a suitable range of approaches that enable pupils to express their views and assist them to *learn from* as well as *learn about* religion. This helps pupils to maintain their interest and develop understanding of religious principles and concepts. In most lessons, teachers manage pupil behaviour very well and this contributes to a good climate for learning.

186. Assessment of pupils' work is generally satisfactory. The procedures provide a sound basis for assessing what pupils know and understand. Assessment is well used to inform the planning of new work. The department does not set detailed targets against which it can assess pupils' progress. Consequently, pupils are unclear about the standards they are reaching and what they need to do to improve. This is recognised as an area for development.
187. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is broad, balanced and meets the needs of the pupils and the requirements of the Gloucestershire LEA Agreed Syllabus. The schemes of work are appropriate and are linked to the fundamental aims of the syllabus designed to assist pupils both to *learn about* and *learn from* religion. Lesson plans fit very well with the schemes of work and provide many opportunities for pupils to acquire sufficient knowledge and understanding, thus enabling them to make significant progress. The introduction of the GCSE short course for most pupils in Years 10 and 11, together with an appropriate time allocation, would help to ensure statutory requirements are fulfilled for these pupils.
188. Religious education makes a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, thereby providing opportunities for pupils to explore world issues of justice, relationships and personal beliefs. In lessons, the teaching encourages pupils to explore their personal views about religious and moral issues. Work on the major world religions necessitates discussion about the cultures that support them, thereby preparing pupils for life in a multi-faith and multi-cultural society.
189. The subject is well managed. The headteacher is currently the acting head of department. There are plans for a new appointment from September 2002. There is one part-time specialist and five non-specialist teachers. The specialist teacher has shown considerable leadership in supporting the team with the provision of material and lesson plans. Support and in-service training for all departmental staff will further enhance pupil achievement. Documentation is very good. There are regular formal meetings of the department. These provide opportunities to discuss issues relating to pupils' achievement. Accommodation is satisfactory. Excellent displays celebrate pupil achievement. Curriculum resources are generally satisfactory, but some updating is needed.
190. Since the last inspection, standards in Years 7 to 9 have been maintained, but have fallen short of expectations in Years 10 and 11. Nevertheless, there have been improvements in the quality of teaching, classroom management and planning. These continue to be strong features in the subject. The lack of time to fulfil the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus, however, has not been resolved. Therefore, improvement since the last inspection is just satisfactory.

OTHER COURSES OFFERED BY THE SCHOOL

DRAMA

Overall, provision in drama is good.

191. Drama is being developed as part of the curriculum for Years 7 to 9 and as an examination option for older pupils. Pupils are making good progress in adapting to the demands of an examination syllabus, though standards are currently below those attained nationally. Younger pupils can work effectively within the limited available space and focus their attention effectively on interpreting a script. They show good understanding of character and motivation and girls in particular can use expression

and tone to bring out mood or attitude. Movement is less confident. In examination groups for older pupils, collaborative work to develop improvised scenes is good. Pupils listen to each other to build their portrayals and evaluate their work effectively.

192. Teaching is generally good. Well planned lessons emphasise the skills and attitudes that are needed to succeed in public examinations. When pupils are working, the teacher intervenes effectively to prompt and challenge. However, strategies and routines, which promote good behaviour in sets that include a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, are not well developed.
193. The subject is now making a good contribution to the wider curriculum by offering opportunities for pupils of all ages and abilities to contribute to a school production. Levels of enthusiasm and commitment are high in this exciting collaboration between the expressive arts.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

Overall, the quality of provision in vocational courses is very good.

194. Vocational studies contribute strongly to the achievements and ethos of the school. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 for whom an academic curriculum is not appropriate may follow the ASDAN course or GNVQ courses for part of their timetable. They achieve well on these courses. The ASDAN course provides opportunities for pupils to gain knowledge of the world of work and acquire an appropriate range of practical skills and insights into future work possibilities through work experience. Pupils gain bronze, silver or gold awards and complete a detailed record of their achievements to show prospective employers. In summer 2001, the school had its first results, which were good. Pupils currently on the course in Year 11 are doing even better.
195. The care and support ASDAN pupils receive from support staff and teachers is outstanding. A teacher visits all potential work placements and gives employers a clear and precise picture of each young person's skills and the tasks he or she can perform. This leads to successful experiences in the work place. Pupils are then encouraged to share these with their classmates on their return. Without exception, pupils following the course at the time of the inspection had received excellent reports from their workplaces.
196. The school also runs a GNVQ course in leisure and tourism. This provides well for the needs of pupils for whom a less academic curriculum is more appropriate. Pupils make good progress and the first results will be available in summer 2002. A few pupils undertake courses at the local further education college and the school is seeking to improve further these links.
197. Teaching seen on the above courses was very good.
198. The management of the vocational courses is very good. The courses provide very good benefits to the pupils participating. The pupils are helped to enjoy their time in school, to meet adults in the workplace, to go out with their teachers to learn about work in the community and to gain confidence in themselves and their abilities.

BUSINESS STUDIES

Overall, the quality of provision in business studies is good.

199. GCSE results in business studies have varied over the last three years. In summer 2001 and in summer 1999, results were above national averages. In summer 2001,

pupils did better in business studies than in other subjects. All 24 pupils entered achieved one of the highest A*-C grades – a very good achievement. In summer 2000, results were not as good, but careful analysis of the results and improvements to the curriculum addressed weaknesses in provision.

200. Teaching seen during the inspection was good. The subject is well managed and is popular.