

INSPECTION REPORT

UFFCULME SCHOOL

Uffculme, Cullompton

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113560

Headteacher: Mr B Gordon

Reporting inspector: Mr K Davitte
15029

Dates of inspection: 13th – 17th May 2002

Inspection number: 244840

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: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11 – 16 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Chapel Hill
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Cullompton
Devon

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr F Rosamond

Date of previous inspection: 25th September 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
15029	Mr K Davitte	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
12775	Ms J Goodchild	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?
30941	Mr K Brammer	Team inspector	English	
13619	Mr B Meech	Team inspector	Mathematics	
12890	Mr T Jardine	Team inspector	Science	
8503	Mr A Allfree	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology	
13734	Mr H Davies	Team inspector	Geography Religious education	
31329	Ms K Barratt	Team inspector	History	
28106	Ms M Majid	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
20287	Mr D Harris	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
29510	Mr N Mayfield	Team inspector	Music	
23030	Ms C Runyard	Team inspector	Physical education	
12191	Mr C Moxley	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Uffculme School is an 11-16 comprehensive school in the village of Uffculme in the local education authority of Devon. There are 836 pupils on roll with 422 boys and 414 girls. The majority of pupils are white (92%). Only five pupils speak English as an additional language and no pupil is at an early stage of learning English. The social and economic circumstances of pupils are generally favourable and the percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (8%) is below average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs (15%) is also below average and the percentage with a statement of special educational needs (3%) is average. The overall attainment of pupils on entry to the school, as shown by test results in primary school and testing in Year 7, has been broadly average, but the intake in the last two years shows slightly higher standards.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Uffculme School is a very good school which enables the majority of pupils, who enter the school with mainly average standards, to reach well above average standards in most subjects in GCSE examinations. This stems from good teaching, good leadership and management and a team effort involving all staff, both teaching and non-teaching. Strong parental support and extremely well-motivated pupils help enormously. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- National test results at the end of Year 9 were well above average in both mathematics and science in 2001.
- GCSE results have been well above average overall compared with all schools nationally in each of the last four years.
- The very wide range of extra-curricular activities with high participation rates.
- Mainly good teaching, and a substantial proportion of very good teaching, which make high but realistic demands of pupils.
- The excellent all-round personal development of pupils and high quality relationships which reflect the aims of the school.
- It is an inclusive school where the progress and wellbeing of every pupil matters.

What could be improved

- The more effective integration of whole-school and departmental planning and rigorous checking to ensure that any problems are picked up and action taken promptly.
- Meeting statutory requirements in information and communication technology (ICT) so that all pupils in Years 10 and 11 receive their entitlement, and not just those taking the GCSE course. All subjects across the curriculum making a greater contribution to developing pupils' ICT skills.
- Meeting statutory requirements in design and technology by teaching control technology and mechanisms in Years 7-9.
- Accommodation, particularly indoor facilities for the teaching of physical education.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in October 1995. Since that time GCSE results have improved from mainly above average to well above average. Teaching now ensures that the needs of pupils of differing abilities are better met. Facilities for ICT have improved but are still not sufficient to meet all demands and to spread its use more uniformly throughout departments. Provision for special educational needs,

which was judged to be weak at the last inspection, is now very good. Assessment systems criticised in the last report are now much stronger and have helped to raise standards. Whilst development planning has improved, the links between whole-school and departmental plans are not strong enough. Some improvements have been made in accommodation but there are still some major weaknesses. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations. The average point score per pupil is calculated using A* A B C D E.

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

At the end of Year 9 in 2001, pupils who had entered the school in Year 7 with mainly average results attained well above average results in national tests in mathematics and science and above average results in English compared with all schools. This represents very good progress and achievement in science and mathematics and good achievement in English. Compared with similar schools results in 2001 were well above average in mathematics and science and average in English.

At the end of Year 11 in 2001, GCSE results were well above average compared with all schools as they have been in each of the last three years. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, made very good progress and achieved very well. The trend in improvement since the last inspection has been above the national trend. In 2001, results were above average in English and well above in most subjects including in mathematics and science. Results were below average in the short GCSE course in physical education (although well above in the full GCSE course) and in GCSE outdoor pursuits because of the below average performance in the theory paper. Boys' results in French improved in 2001 from the well below average results of 2000. Differences between boys and girls are not marked and are confined to particular subjects, rather than being a whole-school issue. At the highest grades, results were above average at A* in about half of subjects and above average at A in most subjects. The school exceeded its challenging GCSE targets in 2001. Compared with similar schools, results in 2001 were high and in the top five per cent nationally.

Standards seen at the inspection were above average overall at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. They are well above in several GCSE subjects including in mathematics, science, art, geography and religious education. Standards are below average in ICT as Year 9 pupils have benefited from only one year of specialist classes introduced since last September, and there is little provision for pupils in Year 11. The situation in Year 10 is much better with a GCSE ICT option now available. Throughout the school literacy skills are above average and numeracy skills well above. Although current Year 11 pupils are not quite as able as last year's GCSE candidates they are achieving well and the school has again set challenging targets for this summer's examinations.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good: pupils enjoy school and are positive and enthusiastic learners.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good: in an orderly and purposeful school nearly all pupils respond very well to the high standards expected and to the trust placed in them.

Personal development and relationships	Excellent: pupils want to, and are not afraid to, succeed and are generous in applauding the success of others. The impressive way pupils relate to one other and to adults is one of the striking features of the school.
Attendance	Very good: attendance in 2000/1 was very high in relation to the national average and the rate of unauthorised absence was below average.

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.

The quality of teaching and learning are good overall and, in a substantial proportion of lessons, very good. Teaching is very good overall in mathematics, science, history and in the teaching of pupils with special educational needs. Examples of excellence were also seen in several subjects at the inspection. In English the quality of teaching is good, ranging from excellent to just satisfactory. Most teachers have very good subject knowledge, high expectations and meet the needs of all pupils extremely well. Most, but not all, classes benefit from specialist teachers in ICT. Right from the time pupils join the school most are well motivated and teachers build on that further. In nearly all lessons, pupils concentrate well and this is maintained through a variety of teaching methods, which challenge and involve, and where pupils receive good ongoing feedback. Pupils are generally expected to think and develop their enquiry skills. Lessons are very well managed but in a minority of classes teaching lacks clarity and firmness. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well through subjects but the literacy initiative is not as well co-ordinated across the school. The school is making great strides in teaching ICT in specialist classes but there is insufficient use in other subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory: a fairly traditional range of subjects apart from some very good vocational courses for lower attainers in Years 10 and 11. There are some weaknesses in ICT and physical education linked to accommodation difficulties and in design and technology arising from staffing deficiencies in Years 7-9. Very good extra-curricular activities offer opportunities to all.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good: pupils are very well integrated. Provision is very well led and managed. When taught individually or in small groups, pupils benefit considerably and make spectacular gains in reading ages. There is now wheelchair access to most of the school. There are good links with parents but they could be more involved in setting targets for pupils.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good: it is unnecessary to make different arrangements for the very small numbers involved, but there is a keen awareness of any needs and very good support, as for all other pupils in the school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good, and excellent for social development. Values such as fairness, integrity and respect are strongly reinforced in assemblies and through the strong community feeling in the school. Very good opportunities to explore a wide variety of cultures and much emphasis on pupils developing respect for others and their beliefs.
How well the school cares	Very good: very effective transition from primary school and into post-16

for its pupils	education. Monitoring of personal and academic progress, behaviour and attendance is very good. Any signs of bullying are 'nipped in the bud' and pupils greatly value this. Assessment is well used and is an improving feature of the school, but National Curriculum levels are not used enough. Partnerships with parents are strong and successful.
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HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good: in a distinctive atmosphere pupils enjoy school and succeed. The published aims of the school are not a mere paper exercise but work in practice. There are some weaknesses in departmental management which have been identified but not tackled effectively. The linking of whole-school and departmental planning is not strong enough.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good support is given to the school but with more information, particularly on strengths and weaknesses of departments, governors have the potential to make a much greater contribution in holding the school to account. Some statutory provision is not met in the curriculum, mainly through accommodation difficulties.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good: there is an accurate evaluation of most strengths and weaknesses. The use of test and examination data to set targets has moved on rapidly.
The strategic use of resources	Good: the school works diligently in managing a tight budget but recent changes in funding have forced the school into setting a deficit budget, which it plans to bring back into balance at the end of the next financial year. Measures are being taken to reduce the above average staffing costs which restrict the money available for equipment and resources. Principles of best value are being applied well in this process.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and are making good progress • Teaching is good and the school expects children to work hard and achieve their best • Behaviour is good • The school is well led and managed • They feel comfortable about approaching the school with a question or problem • They are kept well informed about how their children are getting on • The school is helping pupils become mature and responsible and provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents (about 16 per cent of replies) are unhappy with the amount of homework their children have to do at home.

Inspectors agree with parents/carers on what pleases them most and why they value having their children educated at Uffculme. Even when parents express concern about a particular aspect of the school it is outweighed by their praise for the school as a whole. Parents are well informed but reports vary from high quality to those which are far too general in their comments. Where parents are

concerned about homework such concerns range from too much or too little work being set. Some parents feel that pupils in the lower sets do not receive as much homework as others. Inspectors judge that the setting and use of homework is good overall but that pupils are not reminded often enough how much time they should spend on work, including an upper limit. This could prevent enthusiastic pupils from over-stretching themselves, particularly in their earlier years in the school. Inspectors did not find any overwhelming evidence that pupils in lower sets are set less homework but that is something which the school should follow up through its regular monitoring.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. In national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001, results were above average overall compared with all schools. In individual subjects the best results were in mathematics and science which were well above average. Both mathematics and science were well above average not only at the levels expected of 14-year-olds (Level 5+) but also at the higher levels (Level 6+). Results in English were not as good but were still above average. In relation to pupils' broadly average results on entry to the school pupils' achievement was very good in mathematics and science and good in English. In the past three years, results in English, mathematics and science have been mostly above average but science results were also well above average in 2000.
2. There are no significant differences between the results of girls and boys. Although girls' results in English in national tests in 2000 and 2001 were higher than those of boys, there is little difference when the results of boys and girls are compared with boys and girls nationally.
3. The overall trend in results over the past five years shows a better picture in mathematics and science than in English. Whilst results in mathematics and science have been above the national trend, results in English have been below the national trend.
4. Compared with similar schools, results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were well above average overall mainly because of the well above average results in mathematics and science. They were above average compared with similar schools in English.
5. GCSE results in 2001 and the three previous years were well above average compared with all schools. The results of boys and girls were also well above average compared with boys and girls nationally. The picture was similar in 2000. Overall GCSE results have also been well above average in each of the last three years. Based on pupils' earlier attainment the GCSE results of 2001 represent very good achievement. The trend in the average GCSE point score per pupil has been above the national trend.
6. GCSE results compared with similar schools were very high in 2001 and in the top five per cent of schools nationally.
7. In individual subjects in 2001, GCSE results were well above average overall in most subjects and at least average in all subjects. Results were below average in the GCSE short course in physical education (although well above in the full course) and in GCSE outdoor pursuits. In 2000, French results were below average. The reason for that was the well below average performance of boys although girls were above average

compared with girls nationally. Boys' results in French improved in 2001 with a smaller entry.

8. At the highest grades, results in 2001 were above average at A* in about half of all subjects and above average at A grades in most subjects. The overall results at grades A*-C, A*-G and those at A*/A indicate that lower, average and higher attainers achieve well and that was confirmed in work seen at the inspection. The school exceeded its challenging GCSE targets comfortably in 2001.
9. Differences between the GCSE results of boys and girls are confined to particular subjects, for example geography and religious education, rather than being any kind of whole-school issue. In English the performance of the most able boys is not high enough.
10. In 2001 pupils achieved significantly better in design and technology and mathematics than the same pupils achieved in their other subjects, and in 2000 they did significantly better in art, science, design and technology, mathematics, physical education and religious education. In 2001, pupils achieved significantly lower results in English and English literature than the same pupils achieved in their other subjects and that was also the case in 2000 for English (mainly because of the results of boys), English literature, geography, history and for boys in French.
11. The school has received a School Achievement Award from the Secretary of State for Education and Skills for the past three years. In the pre-inspection meeting parents were pleased with the improvement over time in GCSE results and nearly all those who replied to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that their children are making good progress in the school.
12. Standards seen at the inspection were above average overall at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. They are well above in several GCSE subjects including mathematics, science, art, geography and religious education. Standards are below average in ICT as Year 9 pupils have benefited from only one year of specialist classes introduced for all Years 7 to 9 pupils since last September. Year 7 pupils are attaining average standards in ICT for their age. Standards in ICT are also below average at the end of Year 11 as the major improvements in ICT provision are fairly recent and have not yet had their full impact. Although current Year 11 pupils are not quite as able as last year's GCSE candidates they are achieving well and the school has again set challenging targets in all subjects for this summer's examinations.
13. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make very good progress. By the end of Year 9 their literacy levels have improved considerably and by the end of Year 11 they all achieve one or more passes at GCSE. The small number of pupils with English as an additional language achieve well.
14. Standards of literacy across the school are above average. Speaking and listening skills are particularly well developed and most pupils are articulate and confident speakers. The quality of pupils' reading and writing is above average.
15. Standards of numeracy and mental arithmetic are well above average. The mathematics department is developing its schemes of work well to incorporate the National Numeracy Strategy and there is a good emphasis on promoting number skills.
16. In addition to academic success there are some very good achievements in a wide range of activities, including sporting and musical, where many pupils including those

who are talented and gifted, are able to enjoy themselves and be challenged and extended.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. The attitudes of pupils towards school are very good. They demonstrate a high work ethic and determination to succeed. Many take a great pride in presenting their work well and lower attainers, in geography for example, respond positively to the high standards expected by teachers. A high number of pupils respond positively to the opportunities to take part in a wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities, where their involvement is excellent. Many volunteer to take part and contribute to musical productions. Pupils integrate well, including those with SEN, pupils from ethnic minorities and those who transfer from other schools at various times from Year 7 to Year 11.
18. Relationships between pupils and with staff are excellent in nearly all cases. One of the most striking characteristics of the school is the mutual respect shown between most staff and pupils. Pupils respond positively to being valued as individuals and, in collaborative or group work, willingly share and support each other in their learning. This is particularly evident during outdoor pursuits activities where pupils actively 'look out' for one another and sensitively share their expertise in the use of equipment and skills. In debate they listen with sensitivity to the views and opinions of others including where they differ from their own. In English, pupils listen to each other carefully and with respect but are equally prepared to challenge opinions and arguments in a constructive way.
19. The development of pupils' initiative and personal responsibility is very good. Pupils studying geography for GCSE are all undertaking individual pieces of project work, selected by them and based on the area where they live. Most enjoy opportunities for individual research, including in homework tasks. During lunch and break times pupils organise themselves without the need for adult supervision. Pupils show initiative in organising events such as house competitions and the recent talent show which raised funds for charity. Upper school pupils coach teams during lunchtimes. Many pupils volunteer in Year 10 to act as prefects and support the daily life of the school in a variety of ways. By the time they reach the end of Year 11 they are confident and articulate young people. The standard of behaviour within the school is very good. Behaviour in lessons was never less than satisfactory overall at the inspection, and on occasions excellent. However, a small number of pupils, who have emotional and behavioural problems, present some challenging behaviour. Pupils interviewed at the inspection complained that in some lower sets pupils are prevented from learning by the poor behaviour of a minority, with some French lessons being cited as an example. No pupils have been permanently excluded from the school during the last three years.
20. Attendance is very good and well above the national average. For the year 2000/01 the overall attendance level was 95 per cent. Unauthorised absence was below the national average. There has been a steady improvement in the level of attendance since the previous inspection. These high attendance levels help in promoting the standards pupils achieve. The school has successfully addressed the key issue related to attendance from the previous inspection. All attendance is now properly recorded and procedures meet statutory requirements.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

21. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and in a substantial proportion of lessons very good. Teaching is very good overall in mathematics, science, history and in the teaching of pupils with special educational needs. In English, teaching is good. Examples of excellent lessons were seen at the inspection in English, mathematics,

science, geography, history and physical education and lessons in several other subjects came very near to that.

22. Most teachers have very good subject knowledge, have high expectations and meet the needs of all pupils extremely well. Most teachers of ICT use their specialist knowledge effectively but there are weaknesses in a small number of ICT lessons where high attainers in particular are not challenged enough. The best teaching in science is characterised by teachers' expert knowledge and enthusiasm and imaginative methods. In geography, local knowledge is well used to add interest to lessons. The fact that in modern foreign languages all teachers are competent speakers of the language they teach, gives lessons that extra edge. Despite this, some teachers do not use the language enough, or insist enough that pupils attempt to do so. Expert knowledge is well used in outdoor pursuits to bring the best out of pupils. The value of teaching sex education as an integral part of science was well illustrated in a lesson observed with a Year 7 class.
23. In most individual subjects basic skills are well taught but there are some missed opportunities, for example in physical education. Pupils' writing skills are well extended in history, and oral skills well developed in the many opportunities in religious education. Although the co-ordination of literacy skills is not effective enough across the school, that should not disguise the substantial amount of good practice which exists as an integral part of good or very good teaching. Teachers of mathematics are adept in promoting pupils' number skills and there are good examples of this being reinforced in subjects, although not consistently enough as yet.
24. A very good range of teaching methods helps in creating and maintaining interest, with most lessons well planned and carefully structured. In English, teachers profitably share the objectives of the lesson with pupils and that is also a good feature of ICT lessons. Activities are well chosen in drama. There is a good underlying methodology in art lessons. In mathematics, as in most other subjects, lessons are well organised to match the abilities of pupils, including those with special educational needs. Teachers in the majority of lessons in modern foreign languages use a wide and engaging repertoire of methods which capture attention and involve pupils and in only a minority of lessons is this not so. In both geography and history a wide range of carefully thought out and interesting strategies are used to involve pupils and teaching materials are often inventive. There is a stark contrast in English between imaginative lessons where teachers and pupils exhibit their enjoyment and enthusiasm and lessons which are rather pedestrian and lack sparkle. Although the school is making great strides in the teaching of ICT in specialist classes, ICT as a teaching tool in other subjects is generally underused, with one of the main problems being access to facilities.
25. Pupils are generally expected to think and develop their enquiry skills, as for example in religious education. This is also a feature of the best lessons in English, although in that subject teachers occasionally reveal the answers to questions too readily. In ICT there are usually sufficient opportunities for pupils to work out solutions themselves before being helped. Pupils in practical activities in outdoor pursuits are encouraged to use their observations to improve their own work as well as that of others.
26. Right from the time pupils join the school most are well motivated and teachers see this as a great asset and build on that further. Most pupils readily volunteer to answer questions and participate in discussion. In drama pupils are creative and at times imaginative and original in their interpretations of themes and texts, and honest and constructive in their evaluations. Their motivation helps in a myriad of ways. In a Year 10 science lesson, seen at the inspection, considerable research done by pupils

helped them to present their arguments in debate. Pupils in art are prepared to work in their own time to meet demanding requirements. Perseverance and concentration in history enable pupils to complete tasks set. In music, pupils are able to comment knowledgeably on each other's work, which helps in raising standards. Only a small minority of pupils in the school are unco-operative.

27. Lessons are very well managed, including most lessons in modern foreign languages but some teaching in that subject lacks clarity and firmness. Science teachers manage potentially disruptive behaviour well and that is mainly the case in music too.
28. The fact that most classes are grouped by ability helps in catering for the needs of individual pupils. In providing for pupils with special educational needs there is good teamwork between subject teachers and teaching assistants, so that pupils are supported but their independence is preserved. Those pupils with a wide range of learning difficulties are included well in mainstream classes. Teachers are aware of their needs and make considerable efforts to meet them. Whilst there is no need to make vastly different arrangements for the small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language, as no pupils are at an early stage of learning English, teachers show a keen awareness of any possible difficulties which might arise.
29. Very good use is made of display in geography and history as an integral part of lessons. The range and variety of resources developed in history is exceptional. Most lessons proceed at a brisk pace and utilise the one-hour sessions well but in a small number of lessons insufficient time is allowed to wind up the lesson constructively. The rich range of extra-curricular activities adds much to pupils' learning.
30. Ongoing assessment is good. Good and encouraging marking is a feature of English teaching in all years but there is greater variation in the quality of marking in science. Marking is regular in modern foreign languages but does not always make it sufficiently clear to pupils what they need to do to improve, as is also the case with some marking in ICT. There is plenty of ongoing and helpful feedback to pupils in art lessons and in physical education.
31. The use of homework is good and there was little evidence to support the concerns of some parents that lower attainers are set less work, or less demanding work, than other pupils.

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

32. The school offers a satisfactory and mainly broad and balanced curriculum.
33. A good feature of provision is the above average proportion of pupils taking two modern foreign languages in Years 8 and 9. With recently improved facilities in ICT and specialist classes introduced for all pupils in Years 7 to 9, the quality of the curriculum has improved markedly. There are weaknesses in design and technology, with statutory requirements not being met in control technology and mechanisms. A fairly traditional range of GCSE subjects is offered in Years 10 and 11, but the high entry rates for most subjects, including design and technology and religious education, help to ensure that most pupils have a good breadth of experience in their studies. Some pupils who would like to study two modern foreign languages at GCSE are prevented from doing so by budgetary constraints or by insufficient numbers wishing to choose such an option. Most pupils follow a course in ICT in Year 10 but about 20 per cent in Year 10 and most in Year 11 do not receive their ICT curriculum entitlement.

Throughout the school the poor facilities in physical education, particularly indoor accommodation, restrict the range of activities offered and affect standards attained in some skills. The school wants to meet national recommendations by timetabling physical education for two hours a week for all pupils in Years 10 and 11, but currently poor facilities prevent that from happening.

34. There is some very good provision for vocational education in Years 10 and 11 but it is confined to lower attaining pupils. For that group it works well, gives confidence and improves attendance and attitudes. In implementing that programme there are good links with a further education college. Such links are important as the school has enough to do in meeting a range of other curriculum needs before being able to embark on vocational ventures on its own. In extending vocational provision to a wider range of pupils in the future, joint provision with further education should be invaluable.
35. Personal social and health education (PSHE) relies much on the contribution of individual subjects rather than teaching aspects in specially designated classes. This is more difficult to monitor but there are many strengths in that system. For example sex and health education is taught well through a specialist programme in the science department. The main weakness in the PSHE programme is the failure to cover matters relating to how individuals spend or save their money and how to manage personal finance. A good audit has been carried out of where aspects of citizenship are currently taught in subjects across the curriculum and where there is potential for building on this in the immediate future.
36. Arrangements for teaching literacy in line with the National Literacy Strategy are satisfactory as most teachers have been briefed in training days and have received very good subject related materials published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). Although there is much good practice in teaching literacy as an integral part of good teaching throughout the school, it is not co-ordinated sufficiently to give it a stronger whole-school focus. There is insufficient involvement of the library despite much willingness from that quarter. The National Numeracy Strategy is proceeding well with a good lead from the mathematics department.
37. Pupils are mainly taught in ability sets. This works well. Setting and other group arrangements do not disadvantage pupils and there is no derogatory labelling. Pupils interviewed were happy with the arrangements, felt comfortable working with other pupils of the same ability and appreciated the extra support received in smaller classes in lower sets.
38. Provision for SEN was weak at the time of the last inspection but is now very good and most parents agree with this judgement. Adaptations to the buildings have enabled much better access to the curriculum for pupils with disabilities. Pupils with SEN are very well integrated and when taught individually or in small groups there are many benefits. Almost all these pupils have improved their reading by more than one year in their first nine months in the school and two-thirds have improved by more than two years. Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is also very good.
39. One of the school's declared objectives is to encourage all to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including competitive sport, and it fulfils that aim with many pupils and broadens their experience. Parents are strongly supportive and appreciative of the extra-curricular programme and the time given up by staff to make this possible. There is an unshakeable belief in the school that such activities not only contribute to pupils' personal development but also improved examination results as a consequence of the extra confidence given to participants. This may well be true. At the

time of the inspection an impressive number of pupils, 161 in all, were receiving instrumental tuition. Extra-curricular activities also provide an opportunity in the school for the gifted and talented to stretch themselves. There is a very good record of success in competitive extra-curricular activities and the school is well known for the success of its rugby teams.

40. Provision for careers education is very good and, in addition to a well-equipped careers area, the school works closely with external services. A valuable Year 9 industry day attracts representatives from a number of companies. All pupils in Year 10 benefit from a minimum of one week's work experience. The school has tried a Young Enterprise project in the past but did not judge that to be a success. There is no business enterprise venture in the school at the moment. In reviewing that situation the school could tap into the expertise of support staff, including the bursar. There is also current business expertise on the governing body which could be used to inspire pupils, either through talking with specific groups or even by addressing assemblies.
41. There are some very good links with primary schools, particularly in the meticulous transition arrangements, but subject curriculum links are not strong enough. The number of small primary schools which the school draws from makes for some difficulties, but more could be done. There are much better links with primary schools on special educational needs. Links with post-16 educational institutes are very good and help in easing the transition at the age of 16.
42. Parents have had some influence on the shape of the curriculum. The school has responded to requests for GCSE music to be taught during the day rather than in after-school hours. This is proving a success.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

43. The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. It is very good for spiritual, moral and cultural aspects and excellent for social development. The school ethos and its aims clearly embrace and enhance this aspect of pupils' personal development.
44. The provision for spiritual development is very good with religious education lessons making a very significant contribution. The daily life and activities of the school also enable pupils to consider and understand human emotions and feelings. Pupils are encouraged to develop their own self-awareness and understand and accommodate the differences they perceive in other people. It is a very inclusive provision and pupils are assisted to develop respect for others and their beliefs. While some assemblies do not meet requirements for a daily act of collective worship, a number observed during the inspection made a positive contribution to raising pupils' self-esteem and self-awareness. The use of the registration period varies a great deal, and little input into this element of personal development was seen. The contribution of the history department is excellent. Pupils have the opportunity to reflect on a wide range of issues such as the Cold War, the First World War and the Holocaust. In religious education all pupils have the opportunity to learn about a range of beliefs and values. Good examples were seen in pupils' books when they were considering ultimate questions and when studying the significance of the Cross to Christians. In English, the beauty of imagery in poetry and the symbolic use of language help to raise spiritual awareness. A number of subjects have not yet identified the sections in their schemes of work where they can contribute to raising pupils' spiritual awareness. Despite the very good provision overall, opportunities in some subjects are not exploited fully.

45. The provision for moral development is very good. The school provides a very clear code of conduct as a basis for behaviour. It is positively reinforced by most teachers who act as very good role models. The headteacher sets an excellent example in this respect and expects equally high standards from his staff. He is prepared to take quick action where he feels this is not the case. The school promotes fairness, integrity and respect for others. Assemblies are well used to reinforce these values. A sense of fair play is strongly promoted in physical education. Science, religious education, history and mathematics play an important part in this provision. In religious education, pupils in Year 8 study a unit on making moral decisions. Pupils also examine religious teaching on contemporary issues such as euthanasia and abortion. In history, considerable input is built into the scheme of work. Examples include the study of the ethics of political violence, slavery and the values of the Romans. There is a high expectation in departments and the school that pupils will respect others as well as property. This is helped by the high standards of maintenance and cleaning in the school which sets a good example. Pupils are encouraged to be active in considering the needs of the less fortunate through charitable work. A very good example is the regular Fair Trade sale organised by Year 9 pupils.
46. The provision for social development is excellent and is a considerable strength of the school. It fosters an excellent sense of community and encourages pupils to recognise and respect social differences. Pupils are given a range of opportunities to show initiative and accept responsibility. Good examples include the prefect system, the school council and a range of responsibilities in extra-curricular activities. As many pupils as possible are encouraged to become prefects through an unusual system of applying for posts of responsibility in departments. In subjects they are encouraged to accept a high degree of responsibility for their own learning. Many subjects encourage pupils to work together in groups and pairs, developing team-working skills, so important for life after school. In music, many activities foster social interaction. In mathematics, religious education, history and geography, teachers encourage thoughtfulness, honesty and respect. The wide range of trips and visits in this country and abroad adds to the growth of social skills. The school provides positive links with the community and the world of work.
47. The provision for cultural development is very good. There are very good opportunities for pupils to explore their own culture as well as gaining knowledge of and appreciation of other cultures. Music, art and English make very good contributions, complemented by other subjects. A wide range of world music is covered, and in English, in addition to British literature and drama, a very good selection of world poetry is taught. The impressive range of visits in history, and links with faith communities in religious education, also strongly contribute to raising pupils' cultural awareness. The school is aware that most of its pupils grow up in an environment where there are very few representatives of minority ethnic groups. As a result it makes a positive effort to introduce pupils to features of other cultures. All Year 7 pupils visit a Hindu temple and Year 8 visit a mosque. Exchange visits to France and Germany organised by the modern foreign language department also make a significant contribution. In addition, there are many other visits to places of cultural interest. There are areas of the curriculum where there is insufficient emphasis on multicultural aspects, including dance and physical education.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

48. This is a caring school where the individual needs of its pupils are important.
49. The educational and personal support and guidance which pupils receive is very good. The transition from primary school to secondary school is very effective. Pupils in Year 7 settle quickly and feel well supported in their early days in school. Health and sex education are effectively taught through the science curriculum. Preparation for life beyond school is good. Though careers education is not taught discretely the provision the school makes is very good. A valuable open evening is held for parents and pupils and all post-16 providers are invited to attend. Work experience for Year 10 pupils contributes towards pupils' awareness of the world of work. The school has a good partnership with Connexions who support the careers education programme.
50. The monitoring of pupils' academic performance and personal development is very good. Pupils who are underachieving are identified through the termly academic reviews. Their progress is monitored by heads of year who also act as mentors and set targets to raise their achievement. These procedures are well established in Years 10 and 11. This year monitoring of academic performance through the termly reviews has been extended to other year groups.
51. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good. At the last inspection a concern was identified about the recording of attendance. This has been effectively addressed. Pupils whose attendance is becoming a cause for concern are swiftly identified and support systems put in place. The education welfare service supports the school well.
52. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. Pupils know and understand what constitutes acceptable behaviour. The majority of pupils meet these standards. Heads of year monitor incidents of unacceptable behaviour through the 'red slip' system. If a pattern of poor behaviour is emerging a range of strategies is put in place to support the pupil.
53. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. The ethos of the school promotes respect amongst pupils for each other. Further awareness is developed through many subjects, particularly drama. If incidents do occur they are firmly and effectively dealt with and 'nipped in the bud'. Pupils interviewed valued this and singled out the deputy headteacher in particular for the way he handles such issues. Racist comments are rare and are dealt with swiftly. Parents/carers at the pre-inspection meeting and pupils interviewed were very confident that this was so.
54. There are a small number of pupils with challenging behaviour. The school's behaviour management procedures outline strategies for managing these pupils to prevent them disrupting the learning of others. Individual behaviour plans to support these pupils are drawn up in conjunction with the special educational needs department. External agencies are involved in providing specialist input where necessary. However, pupils report that not all teaching staff follow these procedures and lesson disruption continues.
55. Pupils with a range of learning and emotional difficulties are very well cared for and the vocational programme in Years 10 and 11, coupled with much support, enables all to proceed to employment, apprenticeships or further education.

56. Procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are very good. All the appropriate procedures are in place. There is regular liaison with those responsible for the care of children being looked after by the local authority. During the inspection a carer from a local home visited the school especially to make sure that the inspection team was aware of the wonderful support given by the school to young people in care. The provision made for pupils at risk of exclusion is very good. The socially inclusive nature of the school, and the opportunities it provides for these pupils, ensure that they remain in the education system.
57. In the pre-inspection meeting, parents were at pains to acknowledge the contribution of the 'school secretary' in supporting pupils, and this too was mentioned by some pupils interviewed at the inspection.
58. Appropriate health and safety procedures are in place. Good attention has been paid to improving the quality of drinking water in the school.

Assessment

59. Procedures for assessing pupil's attainment and progress are good. The results of external examinations are systematically analysed and acted upon and this makes a significant contribution to the high standards pupils achieve. The achievement of boys and girls is also monitored and some departments are making use of this information to address any weaknesses.
60. National test results from primary schools and data from the school's own assessment procedures are used to build up a profile of each pupil's attainment when they enter the school. This forms a baseline for tracking pupils' progress over their time in school. This information is well used and sent to all members of the teaching staff. Predicted grades for both the end of Year 9 national tests and GCSE examinations enable teaching staff to set targets for pupils. Pupils are aware of their predicted GCSE grades and the level they are working at in Years 10 and 11, but not in the other years.
61. Use of assessment information is good. There is good practice in mathematics where assessment data is well used to set targets and monitor progress. The mathematics department has improved GCSE results by targeting boys' performance as a specific area where standards could be raised. In addressing the weaker performance of boys in modern foreign languages, teachers have worked on methods to encourage their greater involvement in lessons, including through improved questioning techniques.
62. The school is attempting to use National Curriculum attainment levels as the basis for monitoring progress. These are centrally collated each term to form an academic overview of pupils and used by heads of year to identify underachievement by pupils and differences between subjects. Despite this intent there is as yet no whole-school consensus on how National Curriculum levels should be used. There was evidence at the inspection of some staff using National Curriculum levels when assessing pupils' work, for example in some history and geography lessons, but that was the exception rather than the rule. In art, although assessment of younger pupils is thorough and is a source of good information on National Curriculum levels, this is not shared with pupils. There is no problem about teachers' understanding of National Curriculum levels. At the inspection, teachers' lesson plans included an assessment of the National Curriculum levels pupils were attaining in Years 7 to 9 and these were mostly very accurate. It is understandable why teachers are reluctant to make changes to assessment systems which work, and which fit their subject, but the greater use of National Curriculum levels could strengthen existing practices, without dismantling them.

63. Records of pupils with SEN are kept up-to-date and are well used in assessing both short and long-term progress. Although ICT is used to monitor the progress of individual pupils with SEN, it is not used enough to track progress of particular groups of pupils and to determine the success of particular teaching styles.
64. The school's system of commendation for pupils is valued and is a regular item in the weekly newsletter. However some pupils interviewed at the inspection were somewhat disillusioned. They claimed that their tutor had not passed on the necessary information which counted towards commendations.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

65. The parents' views of the quality and effectiveness of what the school provides and achieves are very good. Parents strongly value the school's educational philosophies.
66. Parents appreciate the fact that their children like school, that teaching and behaviour are good, and pupils are expected to work hard. They agree that the school is well led and managed and would feel comfortable about approaching the school with a question or problem. They feel they are kept well informed about how their children are getting on and that the school is helping pupils to become mature and responsible. Parents appreciate the wide range of activities which would not be possible without the great commitment of staff. Some 16 per cent of respondents to the questionnaire have concerns about homework.
67. Inspectors agree with parents/carers on what pleases them most and why they value having their children educated at Uffculme. Even when parents express concern about a particular aspect of the school that is outweighed by their praise for the school as a whole. Parents are well informed but reports vary from high quality to those which are far too general in their comments. Parents' concerns about homework range from too much or too little work being set. Some parents feel that pupils in the lower sets do not receive as much homework as others. Inspectors judge that the setting and use of homework is good overall but that pupils are not reminded often enough how much time they should spend on work, including an upper limit. This could prevent enthusiastic pupils from over-stretching themselves, particularly in their earlier years in the school. Inspectors did not find any overwhelming evidence that pupils in lower sets are set less homework but that is something which the school should follow up through its regular monitoring.
68. The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is very good. Pastoral staff ensure that ongoing contact is established with parents of pupils who are causing concern. A weekly newsletter, also available on the school's website, keeps parents well informed of the daily life of the school. The school monitors the use of the website and is encouraged by about 100 extra users of the site on the regular day of publication. Parents' views are sought about such aspects as changes to the school day and developments in education through the forum of the parent teacher association. Volunteers are requested to sit on various committees such as catering and developing the sex and relationship education scheme of work. There is, however, no Internet home/school agreement.
69. There are constructive links with parents and carers of pupils with SEN who are suitably involved in most decisions about their children's progress and SEN provision. They are fully involved in the review of statements and parents are informed about

individual education plans but they are not involved enough in the actual setting of targets. Communications with a local home for young people in public care are very good.

70. The quality of information provided for parents, particularly about the progress of their children, is good. Parents receive both a termly interim report and an annual report. The information gives parents a clear view of the standards being achieved and pupils' attitudes to their studies. In the lower school, information on potential levels of achievement in the end of Year 9 national tests is not given to parents. The quality of annual reports varies between departments. Mathematics reports, for example, are of a high quality but in science there is much variation. Most departments ensure that parents are clear about what their children have studied, how they are achieving and what they need to do to improve, but some departments' comments are too general in nature. Parents are able to discuss the reports at a consultation evening held after the publication of these reports. Other important information evenings, such as options choices in Year 9 and a settling-in meeting for parents of Year 7 pupils, are held during the year.
71. The contribution of parents to their children's learning is very good. Most willingly collaborate with the school to resolve difficulties when they occur. There is a thriving parent teacher association that organises both social and fund-raising events. A group of parents recently accompanied an expedition and camped overnight with pupils taking part in the Ten Tors competition. They regularly supervise checkpoints on Exmoor for other outdoor activities. Last year the Year 9 industry day was organised by a parent. The very good results attained by pupils in external examinations are due in part to the high quality support from parents and carers.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

72. Leadership and management of the school are good. Parents agree that the school is well led and managed with nearly seven out of ten responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire strongly agreeing with this. Teachers and support staff appreciate the many informal contacts they have with senior management. Supply and relief teachers are quickly made to feel an integral part of the school and are also greatly encouraged by the response of pupils. The published aims of the school are not a mere paper exercise and are seen to work in practice. For many reasons Uffculme succeeds in being an inclusive school serving the needs of lower, average and above average attainers equally well. There is a continuous drive aimed at all pupils achieving as much as they can both academically and in their personal development. Equality of opportunity figures strongly. Leadership and management at all levels, despite having to wrestle with some difficult accommodation problems, never lose heart and never waver from putting the interests of pupils first. This attitude permeates the whole school and is supported by a very committed teaching and support staff.
73. Individual members of the senior management team make a very good contribution to key issues such as: the successful transfer of pupils into and out of the school; high standards of behaviour; developing much improved assessment systems; and managing a tight budget. Better use of assessment data has led to much more critical self-evaluation by departments in analysing examination results. Most middle managers provide good leadership and in mathematics, art, history and special educational needs leadership is very good. There is a lack of clarity in formal line relationships between middle and senior managers and some misunderstanding about respective functions. For example there is a head of ICT as well as a school co-ordinator at senior management level for ICT but no job description for that co-ordinating function. Job

descriptions are often too generic and therefore do not give a clear enough direction to staff in positions of responsibility.

74. Although priorities for development are well chosen, whole-school planning and departmental planning are not sufficiently well integrated. There are too many separate documents and one document embracing all plans written to a common format could ensure more constructive joint approaches, set clearer timescales for implementation and make the regular monitoring of such plans easier. There have been major shortcomings in English with the head of department being unable to meet the requests of the senior management team to produce an acceptable development plan. It has only been as a result of more direct intervention and much support by the deputy headteacher of late that the situation has begun to be rectified. Development planning in SEN is very good.
75. Senior managers have a good understanding of the strengths and weakness of teaching in the school. This is mainly as a result of informal contacts but there is not enough formal monitoring of lessons by senior or middle managers to help to draw on approaches which work best with particular pupils, and to offer support to teachers where needed. Evidence from the inspection shows that staff dedicated to their teaching welcome the opportunity to engage in discussion about their lessons and what matters to them most.
76. Governors offer good support to the school. The school has made great strides in becoming far more critically self-evaluative, particularly at departmental level, but information from that is not shared enough with governors. Governors are understandably wary of being seen as 'interfering' with matters which they see as the prerogative of senior managers, but with their diverse experiences and talents they have the potential to make a greater contribution in holding the school to account. The school does not have any difficulty in recruiting governors and benefits from having some long established members. The challenge is to continue to use such experience and to bring new members on board more quickly so that parent representatives feel that they have an equal voice. The chair of governors with his wealth of experience in education has all the credentials to make this happen. That has already begun to happen of late with greater involvement of parents in the appointment of staff.
77. Governors do not meet their statutory duty in providing a daily act of collective worship. Where statutory requirements are not being met in ICT and design and technology that is mainly because of accommodation difficulties. There is the opportunity of rectifying most deficiencies in ICT and design and technology in the coming academic year with the planned improvement in accommodation and an additional staffing appointment in design and technology.
78. There are shortages in resources and equipment in several departments which have not suddenly arisen, but are the result of under-investment for some time. The necessary expenditure on such items has been prevented by a tight budget and the above average proportion of the budget spent on staffing costs. Added to that, plans have been thrown into disarray by unexpected cuts in funding. The school has been forced to look for economies in staffing but the full effects of this will not be felt immediately. It has therefore been necessary to set a deficit budget for the current financial year with plans to bring it back into balance by the end of the next financial year. The school should look more critically at long-term projections for staffing in order to determine the best structure for teaching and management teams, including at senior management level.

79. In managing the budget, principles of best value are well applied. New boilers and stringent computerised control of heating costs by the bursar have led to greater cost effectiveness. Membership of the Devon Bursars' Association provides a good forum for comparing costs. Caretakers have been trained to undertake school maintenance tasks and therefore save much money in that respect as well as carrying out repairs more speedily. ICT technicians, through setting up rooms and systems and attending to problems, have smoothed the path in the expansion of ICT and avoided expensive contracting costs. The ideas of the bursar to bring about further savings deserve careful consideration by the governors.
80. There are no significant problems in appointing suitable staff. Best use is made of most staff but not all departments tap into the knowledge and willingness of the well-qualified librarian to take some load off their shoulders. ICT is well used by senior staff in managing the school but there are procedures in the reception office which could be carried out more efficiently using computerised processes than entering information by hand.
81. The school does its very best in pressing for improved accommodation and in juggling with what it has. Some accommodation has improved but problems remain which affect the curriculum and standards, particularly in physical education. A very good feature of improvements made is the much better access for disabled pupils allowing such pupils from the locality to be better integrated. This fits in with the inclusive nature of the school. The school has just missed out in its bids for a sports hall which could transform facilities in the school. A future bid could be strengthened with more emphasis on community use.
82. Being a very good school and aspiring for excellence, there may be avenues where Uffculme could be involved on a bigger stage nationally through recognition of what it does particularly well, or participating in pilot projects. This could be a further boost to staff and bring the school more into the mainstream of pioneering developments.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

83. In order to improve standards further the governors and senior managers should:

- Bring about the more effective integration of whole-school and departmental planning, and rigorous checking to ensure that any problems are picked up early and decisive action taken by:
 - ensuring that all responsible for producing plans, including heads of department, are involved in devising the process from the outset, feel an ownership for the tasks they are being asked to complete, and have a greater influence on decisions made;
 - publishing one document which embraces the whole-school plan and all other plans, showing clear timescales for implementation of whole-school and specific departmental priorities;
 - ensuring that heads of departments and others responsible for plans receive the necessary training and support where needed;
 - line management being strengthened and the monitoring roles of senior managers being more clearly defined and implemented in relationship to departments;
 - governors being informed of the plans and their progress and where that progress is insufficient.

(Paragraphs: 74, 93, 117, 129, 136, 181, 187)

- Meet statutory requirements in ICT so that all pupils in Years 10 and 11 receive their entitlement, and not just those taking the GCSE course, and all subjects make a greater contribution to the development of pupils' ICT skills by:
 - implementing existing school plans to expand facilities and therefore making them more accessible to subject teachers;
 - subjects planning more precisely for the greater use of ICT, including this in development plans and providing additional training for those staff who require it;
 - introducing an alternative and suitable programme for those not following the GCSE course in Years 10 and 11.

(Paragraphs: 24, 33, 77, 92, 107, 116, 122, 143, 145, 146, 147, 151, 152, 163, 172, 176, 187)

- Meet statutory requirements by teaching control technology and mechanisms in design and technology in Years 7 to 9 by:
 - making best use of existing staff and of the skills of a new appointment;
 - improving resources to make that possible;
 - building control technology more effectively into revised schemes of work.

(Paragraphs: 33, 77, 128)

- Improve accommodation, particularly indoor facilities for physical education by:
 - continuing to lobby for funding both locally and nationally;
 - revising bids for a sports hall including a stronger case for community use.

(Paragraphs: 33, 81, 180)

In addition to the above the following less important issue should be considered for inclusion in the governors' action plan: a stronger whole-school focus on literacy to pull together the good work already being achieved by most individual departments.

(Paragraphs: 23, 36, 101)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	148
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	45

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	10	51	61	26	0	0	0
Percentage	6.8	34.4	41.2	17.6	0	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	836
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	65

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	27
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	122

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2

National comparative data	8.1
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National comparative data	1.1
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	87	85	172

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	60	71	70
	Girls	72	66	68
	Total	132	137	138
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	77 (80)	80 (72)	80 (78)
	National	64 (963)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	37 (31)	59 (45)	49 (43)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	60	71	76
	Girls	73	72	74
	Total	133	143	150
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	77 (77)	83 (74)	87 (89)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	41 (30)	58 (47)	56 (33)
	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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2001	80	82	162

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	53	76	79
	Girls	54	75	79
	Total	107	151	158
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	66 (65)	93 (99)	98 (99)
	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	48.1
	National	39.0

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	765
Any other minority ethnic group	5

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	8	0
Other minority ethnic groups	1	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	49.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.8

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	332

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23.5
Key Stage 4	21.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	2,242,007
Total expenditure	2,280,414
Expenditure per pupil	2,746
Balance brought forward from previous year	27452
Balance carried forward to next year	-10955

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4.2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	6.6

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

836

Number of questionnaires returned

306

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	47	46	6	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	52	44	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	46	47	2	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	56	12	4	4
The teaching is good.	48	48	1	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	47	8	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	35	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	65	33	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	38	50	8	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	68	28	1	1	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	51	43	1	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	70	26	1	0	2

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

- Most pupils, of all abilities, make good progress.
- Standards of speaking and listening are well above average.
- Teaching is good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes, work well together and enjoy the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Departmental planning and stronger leadership and management.
- More effective co-ordination of schemes of work.
- The performance of the most able boys in GCSE English.

84. Standards on entry to the school are average. Standards in national tests by pupils aged 14 in 1999 were well above average, while those of 2000 and 2001 were above average. They were also above average compared with similar schools in 2001. Boys and girls perform equally well and teacher assessments are in line with pupils' test results. Results in English in 2001 were not as good as those in mathematics and science.
85. Standards attained by pupils aged 16 in their GCSE examinations in English and English literature are above the national average. Although results represent good progress and achievement, both boys and girls perform less well in English than they do in most of their other subjects. Girls do better than boys, as they do nationally. In 2001 there was a much greater difference between the performance of boys and girls than in 2000. Although boys gained a high percentage of B grades in English they were awarded only one A* and no A grades, compared with the girls' total of 13 A*/A grades. However, boys came closer to the department's expectations in English literature.
86. Current standards are above average at the end of Years 9 and 11. Pupils make good progress and achieve well in all years. Standards of work seen during the inspection were well above average in speaking and listening. Pupils of all ages and abilities are confident and articulate speakers and are able to use talk to develop and refine their ideas, to negotiate and solve problems, and to evaluate their own and others' performances. Successful group work is a key feature of many lessons. This was well illustrated by Year 9 pupils who were able to reinforce their learning about the structuring of short stories by analysing a Philippa Pearce story and reporting their findings to the rest of the class before starting to write their own, using their agreed model. Most pupils readily volunteer to answer questions and read in class and to participate in discussions. They listen to each other carefully, and sometimes very patiently, and often support and guide fellow pupils as well as challenge their opinions and arguments in constructive and helpful ways.
87. Reading standards are above average, though many pupils do not record their reading or make as much use of the library, with its good range of contemporary fiction, as they could. Their deductive and inferential skills are good and pupils cope well with a wide range of stimulating fiction, non-fiction and media reading tasks. A lower ability Year 9 set studying Robert Westall's 'Urn Burial' showed an impressive understanding of how

the author uses dialect to bring characters to life. They were able to read this challenging novel with appropriate expression and good understanding and to make predictions based on their study of the book so far. Pupils' thoughtful and, at times, creative responses to literature were well illustrated by a Year 10 class studying a unit on 'Poetry from other Cultures' who produced perceptive and original, group choral presentations of their chosen poems. The activity showed their deep understanding of the poets' themes and how form, rhythm and language contribute to our interpretation of poetry.

88. Writing standards are also above national expectations. Most pupils produce interesting and energetic personal and imaginative writing. They use a wide range of vocabulary which matures appropriately as they move up the school, and often successfully experiment with imagery. Writing for a variety of audiences and purposes is carefully structured, well presented and, except from pupils of below average ability, technically accurate. Persuasive and argumentative writing on a variety of topical and social issues, such as celebrity role models and homelessness, is insightful and lively. There is also much good writing in response to the study of literature. Year 7 pupils, writing about Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner', demonstrated both their understanding of the poem and their ability to use technical terminology correctly when discussing how the poet conveys a sense of the supernatural to the reader. By Year 11, the most able pupils write sensitively and show a good understanding of the writer's craft. This was well illustrated by their writing on the characters of George and Lennie in Steinbeck's 'Of Mice and Men' and about Priestley's use of symbolism to reinforce his themes in 'An Inspector Calls'. However, pupils of middle and low ability, and some of the more able boys, often write about plot and character as if they are real events and people, rather than literary constructs. Lower ability pupils sometimes use an inappropriate narrative style and fail to look closely at the quotations which they select to support what they say, or to consider how language and imagery influence readers or audiences. If they do comment upon textual evidence, they tend to explain or paraphrase, instead of analysing it and, therefore, they restrict their chances of attaining higher grades.
89. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress as a result of very good teaching by specialist staff and the high quality individual support which they receive from their other English teachers and learning support assistants. Nearly all make sufficient progress to be entered for GCSE examinations in both English and English literature and to gain a pass grade. Although last year some of the more able Year 11 boys achieved disappointing results in English, most gifted and talented pupils make good progress. Their teachers choose suitably challenging tasks and resources and, where the teaching is very good, provide them with frequent opportunities to develop as independent learners.
90. Pupils' learning is good. A significant reason for this is that pupils have very positive and enthusiastic attitudes to their work and very good relationships with each other and their teachers. Most find English to be rewarding and enjoyable and they therefore work hard and achieve well. Teaching too is good overall in all years. Most of the very good teaching observed at the inspection was in Years 7 to 9. An excellent lesson was characterised by the teacher's high expectations, a variety of challenging tasks and eager participation by the pupils. Learning was purposeful, rewarding and very enjoyable. Most lessons are well planned and carefully structured and teachers share the learning objectives with their pupils. There is also a constructive range of teaching styles and activities which engage all pupils. As a consequence, pupils find much of their English work interesting and worthwhile and gain confidence in using language fluently, both in discussions and in their writing. In the best lessons, teachers make very good use of pupils' own knowledge, ideas and experiences and encourage pupils

to use high level questioning and reasoning skills. Where teaching is less effective, teachers tend to reveal the answers to questions too readily, rather than eliciting them from the class, spoonfeed pupils with information, instead of asking them to research it for themselves, or limit tasks to those set out on a worksheet, without offering opportunities for pupils to make choices. Such actions tend to restrict pupils' responses, particularly of the most able, and make them too dependent upon their teachers.

91. Marking is good in all years. It is often detailed and gives helpful advice on how pupils can improve as well as informing them about their progress and their levels of attainment. It is also positive and encouraging. Teachers' assessment of their pupils' performance is accurate. Homework consolidates and extends their learning in lessons and is regularly set. However, the department does not make enough use of the wealth of pupil performance data now available in the school to help with its planning and to set improvement targets for teachers, classes and individual pupils.
92. There is a good range of extra-curricular opportunities, such as school plays, theatre trips, visits by theatre groups and writers, and poetry and short story competitions. However, there are inadequate links with the library and there are insufficient opportunities for all pupils to develop their skills in ICT. Currently, there is no organised scheme of work for pupils to ensure that they all develop a range of appropriate ICT skills and experiences in their English lessons.
93. Following intervention by senior management the leadership and management of the department are now satisfactory. Weaknesses in departmental planning, already identified by the school, are being addressed through close co-operation between the head of department and the deputy headteacher of the school. This action if sustained should enable the department to move forward more rapidly, but the main onus for that now lies with the head of department. There is much enthusiasm, commitment and industry amongst the staff and all have worked hard to produce good quality units of planned work for pupils, but their use is not effectively co-ordinated in an overall scheme. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory, though the head of department is quite rightly looking to augment the book stock with more recently published fiction and to provide additional resources to support the National Literacy Strategy, as it is developed in other years, following its successful introduction in Year 7.
94. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards and the quality of teaching have improved and ongoing assessment has become more consistent across the department. However, best practice in teaching is still not effectively shared amongst all staff, though some teachers work very well together on occasions. Management of the department is now only satisfactory, whereas it was judged to be good at the last inspection.

DRAMA

95. Standards in drama are above average. In 2001, all pupils entered for the GCSE examination gained A*-C grades, as they did in the previous year, and the subject exceeded its targets. Far more girls than boys took drama last year but the number of boys opting to take it has now increased significantly.
96. Because pupils work well together and have very good speaking and listening skills, they make good progress, particularly those with special educational needs. They work collaboratively to develop and share ideas and they trust and support each other. They

are also enthusiastic and creative and, at times, imaginative and original in their interpretations of themes and texts. All pupils use space well and are aware of how to use dramatic conventions, such as tableau, thought tracking and freeze frames effectively. Some are not developing their voices appropriately, perhaps because little projection is required in the studio or small hall, and others do not always consider the audience when devising their group presentations.

97. Teaching is good. Tasks are well chosen and often augment the work done in English classrooms. This is because the drama teachers all teach in the English department and are aware of the value of drama in helping pupils to explore their Shakespeare texts or poetry, for example. Pupils also consider a wide range of social and moral themes, such as social class or bullying. It was possible to see only a small sample of lessons during the inspection. The very good relationship between teachers and pupils in these lessons enables honest and constructive evaluations of performances and pupils are highly motivated and eager to improve.
98. Management of the department is good and facilities satisfactory, but pupils are not able to take full opportunity of the staging and directing options in their course because of the lack of portable lighting and the ineffective blackout materials in the drama studio.

Literacy across the curriculum

99. Standards of literacy across the school are above average. Speaking and listening skills are particularly well developed and most pupils are articulate and confident speakers. The quality of pupils' reading and writing is above average.
100. Opportunities for the development of pupils' literacy skills vary considerably. In some departments they are good. In science, for example, there are regular debates and discussions. During the inspection a Year 10 class was observed debating very effectively the moral and economic implications of limestone quarrying. There was also good quality discussion by Year 11 geography pupils on farming systems in Britain and, in religious education, a class discussion on the presentation of religion by the media. In some subjects, history for example, pupils receive help in the structuring of their extended writing through the provision of prompts and phrases which enable them to link ideas and argument. Some teachers make a point of teaching literacy skills, and provide a range of speaking and listening, reading and writing opportunities, others do not, either because they think that standards are already high and it is therefore unnecessary, or because they are unsure how to do it.
101. All staff have had training in developing pupils' skills in literacy. However, although there is much good practice in some departments, there is no consistent whole-school impetus given to the National Literacy Strategy, save that provided by the English department. Few departments have amended their planning or marking policies to take account of literacy. Few heads of department regularly monitor what is happening in literacy in their area of the curriculum or identify further training needs. The school has also yet to explore the contributions which the library, and its very willing and experienced librarian, and information and communication technology can make to literacy. The main strength in the teaching of literacy arises from it being an integral part of the much good and very good teaching in the school, but that could be even better with improved whole-school co-ordination.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Strengths

- Well above average achievement and standards at the end of Years 9 and 11.
- Very good, confident, effective teaching.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning and the very high standards of their work.
- Good use of assessment data to monitor progress and set targets.
- Very good leadership and management, with a clear focus on sustaining high achievement.

Areas for improvement

- Extending and developing the use of ICT, particularly as an aid to teaching in the classroom.

102. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 have been mostly above average since the last inspection and in 2001 they were well above average compared with all schools and similar schools. Pupils who started with average standards in Year 7 made very good progress in achieving the well above average results of 2001. Thirteen per cent of pupils increased their National Curriculum test performance by three levels between the ages of 11 and 14, which is unusually high. Results have improved faster than the national trend over the last five years.
103. GCSE results have improved consistently since the last inspection and have been well above average for the past three years. The percentage of pupils achieving A*-C grades was some 20 per cent above the national average in both 2000 and 2001. Only a handful of pupils performed below expectations in each of the past three years, with no significant long-term difference in the achievement of boys or girls. In the past three years only one pupil has failed to achieve an A*-G grade, again reflecting very good progress through the two years of their GCSE course.
104. Current standards at the end of Year 9 as seen in lessons and pupils' books are well above average, confirming very good progress and achievement. There is good continuity from primary school in Year 7 in the development of pupils' skills, in line with the National Numeracy Strategy. Pupils' mental arithmetic skills are systematically extended and reinforced and pupils of all abilities are required to work with and without a calculator. Year 7 pupils investigating magic triangles showed good number skills as they moved from triangles with six digits to ones with nine. In the books of a class of more able pupils there was demanding work with vectors and their application to translation. There is an appropriate continuing emphasis on numeracy in Year 8 and pupils of all abilities can handle equivalent fractions and decimal equivalence. There is growing confidence in algebra as demonstrated by a Year 8 class investigating the ratio of circumference to diameter of a circle when pupils rearranged formulae with confidence. By Year 9 most pupils of all abilities can cope with the development of algebraic expressions and the more able are confident in their work with straight line graphs and the solution of equations. There is good development of pupils' skills in investigative work. In a Year 9 class, where pupils were working on an investigative assignment looking for number relationships within a number grid, the more able pupils were able to explain the relationships in words and in terms of algebraic expressions. In Years 7 to 9, support for pupils with special educational needs is good, with appropriate well managed in-class support and work in small groups. As a result these pupils also make very good progress, with virtually all pupils improving by at least one National Curriculum level from Years 7 to 9.

105. Standards in work seen in Years 10 and 11 are also well above average and continue the very good progress from Year 9. In statistics, pupils can collect and tabulate data choosing appropriate charts to display or interpret the information. They have a good understanding of mean and standard deviation with pupils happy to use sigma and sequence notations for their definitions. There is demanding work in the solution of equations both algebraically and graphically and some challenging work was seen in a Year 10 class of middle to lower ability pupils finding the n th term of a sequence. Year 11 pupils show good recall of previous work across the curriculum and are confident in the use of algebra. Some very good work in geometry was seen with pupils of lower ability working well with revision of angles, triangles and parallel lines.
106. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and in the lessons observed was consistently good or better. The department uses assessment data well to monitor progress and to set targets. As a result, teachers have a detailed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of pupils, including those with special educational needs. Lessons are well planned and well organised to match pupils' needs. Teachers use a range of strategies and activities to maintain pupils' interest and concentration for the full hour of the lesson. In a Year 7 investigative coursework lesson with lower attaining pupils, the teacher used the first part of the lesson very well to generate ideas and develop strategies for looking at the problem. As a result pupils were enthusiastic as they started their investigations and all worked hard and made good progress. Relationships in the classroom are very good and pupils are keen to participate in answering questions or explaining their ideas. In the best lessons the aims of the lesson are shared with pupils at the beginning and their enthusiasm is well used to ensure that effective learning takes place. In a Year 8 lesson work on rearranging formulae and solving equations was profitably linked to work that pupils were doing in science. The excellent relationships in this class enabled the teacher to sustain some good discussion on the applications of the methods, promoting some very effective understanding. No work exploiting the use of ICT was seen during the inspection, but past work of pupils of all abilities shows them to have considerable skills in using ICT. Pupils are grouped by ability in mathematics, and this enables teachers to provide very effective one-to-one support when pupils are working on examples. Even in these groups, however, there can be a wide range of ability and this support can be very demanding of the teacher.
107. Leadership and management of the department are very good. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. There is a clear focus on sustaining and improving the very high levels of achievement through continued development of the curriculum and teaching strategies. The National Numeracy Strategy has been built into the schemes of work for Year 7 and is in the process of being developed for Years 8 and 9. The department has developed a good whole-school policy for numeracy which has been well co-ordinated by the head of department. Within the department there is a very good team spirit; ideas and responsibilities are shared and staff work well as a team. Schemes of work make reference to ICT for specific topics but access to computer rooms is sometimes difficult. The department lacks a clear policy for developing the role of ICT in mathematics and there are no appropriate ICT resources in the department at present to support teaching in the classroom.

Numeracy

108. Standards of numeracy and mental arithmetic are well above average. The mathematics department is developing its schemes of work to incorporate the National Numeracy Strategy and there is a good emphasis on promoting number skills

whenever possible. Pupils are often required to make calculations without using their calculators and to make estimates of a calculation before using a calculator. As a result most can work without a calculator to a considerable extent with both integers and fractions. The department has recently developed a whole-school policy for numeracy and mapped the mathematical requirements of other subjects from Years 7 to 11. As a result there is growing evidence of pupils applying their mathematical skills in a number of subject areas but opportunities to reinforce work with mathematics are still often missed.

109. There is good liaison with mathematics in science where the department has identified areas of difficulty for many pupils in each year and the support for numeracy is very good. There is a good emphasis on graph work from Year 7 onward to represent and interpret data. Pupils are routinely required to make calculations of formulae, reactions, weights and volumes. They can express relationships through simple formulae for variables such as distance and time. There are also good links between geography and mathematics that ensure common strategies and methods for problem solving. In map work pupils work with grid references, scale, direction and height. There is effective and regular use of graphical methods with pupils able to interpret line, bar and scatter diagrams. In GCSE coursework there is frequent collection and interpretation of statistical data. Opportunities to use numeracy in history are used well. When pupils visit an Elizabethan Hall they measure the main hall, and for many topics, such as women's work in 1930, they collect and interpret statistical data with confidence. In ICT, pupils demonstrate good skills in gathering and interpreting data and representing it graphically. Much of the project work involving ICT also reinforces numeracy. There is good promotion of numerical skills in design and technology where pupils are required to weigh and measure with accuracy, create cutting lists and estimate costs. In one lesson pupils needed to calculate the diameter of a ball bearing and the teacher generated some excellent discussion of the various possible methods and the likely errors, with pupils showing good understanding of the relationships of circumference to diameter. There is limited reinforcement of numeracy in physical education. Pupils count, score and time activities, but in GCSE coursework, opportunities to present results in tables and graphs are missed.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of the provision in science is **very good**.

Strengths

- External examination results have been well above the national average.
- Pupils make very good progress.
- The quality of teaching is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Deficiencies in the quantity and quality of the teaching accommodation and learning resources affect the quality of education provided and the standards achieved.
- Insufficient use of ICT to teach and learn science.
- The absence of a scheme of work for Years 10 and 11.

110. The results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were well above average for all schools and similar schools in 2001. This represents very good achievement for pupils who entered the school with broadly average standards. The improvement in the results since 1997 has been at a rate faster than the national average. In most years boys outperformed girls by a greater margin than nationally.

111. GCSE results for double award science in 2001 were well above the national average for all schools. Results in the previous two years were similar. There is no significant long-term difference in the results of boys and girls. The high proportion of A* and A grades and the fact that all entrants were graded shows that gifted and talented pupils and pupils with special educational needs did well. Results for the double award were comparable with those of the other GCSE subjects taken by pupils. The small number of pupils who took the single award in science achieved average results in 2001, an improvement on previous years. The most recent GCSE results are similar to those at the time of the previous inspection.
112. By the end of Year 9 most pupils' attainment is well above average, representing very good achievement. In a top set Year 9 pupils could define terms such as potential difference, earthing, discharge and insulator. One very able pupil could explain how static charge originated and most showed they had grasped the concept well. In a Year 9 lower set most pupils knew that work is done when an object is moved by a force and knew that friction and gravity are forces opposing work; however less able pupils were unsure of the correct units to use. Pupils' progress is helped by the good standards of literacy and numeracy that most display. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve very well.
113. By the end of Year 11, standards are still well above average with pupils continuing their very good achievement during their final two years at the school. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 were able to explain the optimum conditions for the industrial production of ammonia using graphs and tables showing that they understood the chemical laws and concepts involved. A middle ability set in Year 11 knew the names of the particles of the atom, could work out the formulae of some common substances and could explain the effect of surface area on the rate of melting. The least able pupils in Year 11 knew some of the names of the parts of plants and some could define terms such as tissue but they were unsure about concepts such as homeostasis. Pupils' investigations for the coursework component of GCSE are of a high standard. The most able produce workable plans with predictions based on a good understanding of the underlying scientific theory. Their observations are accurate and explained by the extensive use of calculations. Evaluation is thorough and detailed and the problems that arise are thoroughly aired.
114. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is very good, an improvement since the previous inspection. It was never observed to be less than satisfactory. The best teaching is characterised by teachers' expert knowledge and their enthusiasm, imaginative methods that motivate and involve pupils, clear explanations and attention to literacy and numeracy. Pupils' response to this very good teaching was overwhelmingly positive. Most pupils behave very well in class and focus on their work. Potentially disruptive behaviour is dealt with well. An example of excellent teaching was seen in a Year 9 lesson on static electrical charge. The teacher established pupils' knowledge and understanding of the topic by means of well-chosen questions addressed to a wide range of pupils. The teacher insisted that pupils used technical language correctly in their answers. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the topic was developed by a memorable demonstration of the effects of static charge involving pupil volunteers that literally made their hair stand on end. The teacher posed searching questions to make pupils think about what they had seen and experienced. Imaginative methods were used in a Year 10 lesson on the effects of industrial processes on the environment. Pupils were set to debate the topic by role-playing the different members of a community at a public enquiry. The pupils' contributions to the debate were sensible and revealed that many had undertaken considerable research to help support

their case. The format of the lesson contributed to pupils' personal development as well as their understanding of the difficulty in striking a balance between industry and the environment. Most lessons proceeded at a brisk pace helped by the use of deadlines for the completion of tasks. Pupils responded well to the demands made of them to apply their prior knowledge and understanding, for example to predict outcomes of reactions and properties of substances. Pupils with special educational needs learn well because the methods used by teachers suit their preferred learning styles.

115. The widespread involvement of science teachers in extra-curricular activities promotes very good relationships with pupils and learning in class. There are some weaknesses in the teaching seen: occasionally teachers did not ensure that all pupils join in practical activities; the quality of the marking of exercise books is uneven; and targets for improvement are insufficiently used in reports to parents. The department does not fully meet the requirement of the National Curriculum to contribute to the teaching of ICT.
116. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The greatest strength of the department is well-qualified, experienced and committed teachers who work well together and who are deployed in Years 9 to 11 to teach their specialist subject. The department makes a strong contribution to personal, social and health education and to the programme of extra-curricular activities. The monitoring and evaluation of pupils' progress is carefully carried out and effective action taken when pupils are found to be underachieving. There are shortcomings in planning: there is no scheme of work for Years 10 to 11 and the development plan does not describe how the department will improve. Shortages of teaching accommodation and learning resources affect the quality of pupils' experience and the standards they achieve. For example, one laboratory cannot be used in wet weather and about ten per cent of lessons are held in classrooms dispersed across the school site where practical work cannot take place. The department's budget is insufficient to renew out-of-date class texts and major items of equipment and to provide class sets of some basic equipment. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards have risen since the previous inspection due to the improved teaching. All the concerns identified in the previous inspection have been addressed with the exception that the shortcomings in the accommodation remain because funding has not been forthcoming.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Well above average GCSE results which are a result of good teaching and learning.
- Ceramics work which adds breadth to the curriculum.
- The very good sketchbook work, particularly that of older pupils, which contributes significantly to overall high attainment.

Areas for improvement

- Ensure that all pupils in Years 7 to 9 have the opportunity to make art, using computers.

117. Following the established trend of recent years, GCSE results are well above average. The number of pupils, both boys and girls, who obtain the highest grades is also well above average. When, compared with the other subjects they take, pupils tend to do better in art.

118. When pupils enter the school in Year 7 standards are broadly average. By the time they reach the end of Year 9 all pupils have made very good progress and achieve very well to reach well above average standards. This is seen in the work of pupils currently approaching the end of Year 9, particularly in their sketchbook work and in ceramics. In the Year 7 'faces into landscape' project, good sketchbook work is used as a starting point for the ceramic relief work, and in Year 9 an architectural theme is used to encourage observation drawing. This, coupled with a study of thoughtfully chosen examples of famous architecture, leads to high standards of attainment.
119. Standards by the end of Year 11 are also well above average, representing very good achievement. The sketchbook work of older pupils in Years 10 and 11 is rich in both ideas and media experiments, and it is this aspect of their work in particular which lifts pupils' attainment to well above average. The standard of two-dimensional work of Year 11 pupils who have just finished their GCSE course is not as high as that seen in sketchbooks and in their ceramics work, with observation drawing and painting in particular being average. Pupils in Year 10 show higher standards in all aspects of their work. For example, their observation drawing experiments using pen and ink show a confident approach and the ceramics work on a teapot theme reveals a very good understanding of hand-building ceramics techniques, coupled with imaginative designs and high standards of finish.
120. Overall, teaching and learning are good and in some lessons very good. Teaching is based on a very good underlying methodology, which stresses the importance of the development of ideas and of visual research. It is this aspect of teaching in particular which lifts the attainment of all pupils. Teachers have consistently high expectations of their pupils to which they respond positively, working in their own time to meet the demanding requirements of the course. For example in the 'faces into landscape' lesson in Year 7 all pupils had completed their homework ensuring good progress in the lesson. Older pupils doing GCSE are equally committed, and their hard work is evident in all aspects of what they do. Because ceramics skills in particular are very well taught, pupils in Year 10 build imaginative ceramic forms based on an architecture theme, combining different hand-building and decoration techniques with confidence and skill. During lessons, pupils are given plenty of information about how well they are doing and individual needs are effectively met, which means that pupils of all abilities meet and often exceed their potential. The formal assessment of the work of older pupils is very good and all receive good written feedback, which is linked to GCSE assessment criteria. The assessment of the work of younger pupils is thorough and provides good information to teachers about National Curriculum levels, but this information is not shared with pupils or used to set targets for improvement.
121. The management of the department is very good, rooms are well organised and resources and books are well cared for. The effect of this is to create a purposeful and stimulating place to work. The head of department, who understands where weaknesses exist and how they should be addressed, provides clear direction for the subject. Since the last inspection standards have improved, and the criticisms of the last report relating to the use of homework and the lack of opportunity for pupils to discuss their work in class have been fully addressed. Currently the main weakness is the lack of opportunity for pupils to make art, using computers, particularly within the curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9.
122. This is a very good department, which promotes high standards and where all pupils make very good progress. The department makes a significant contribution to the cultural and personal development of pupils both in its routine work and the

opportunities provided to take part in visits to such places as London, Paris and Barcelona.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The good understanding of teachers of the GCSE requirements, which lead to above average GCSE results.
- Hard-working pupils who reach their potential.

Areas for improvement

- The curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 to ensure that all pupils learn about control technology and mechanisms.
- Ensure that all pupils develop skill in the use of computer-aided design and manufacture.
- Ensure that the department handbook and schemes of work are brought up to date.

123. When pupils enter the school in Year 7 their experience of and attainment in design and technology is below average. By the time they reach the end of Year 9 they attain above average standards, indicating good progress and achievement. This is maintained in Years 10 and 11, and in 2001, GCSE results were above average and well above average at the higher grades, A and A*. Girls do better than boys and this is a marked feature in food and textiles technology where girls predominate.
124. In a Year 7 lesson, pupils made simple pop-up card constructions as part of a graphics exercise and showed a good understanding of how to apply information they had previously learned in order to solve a problem. Similar skills were evident in a Year 8 lesson where pupils speculated about how to measure a ball bearing when doing their planning for a maze game in resistant materials. Skills in using tools and materials are above average in all areas of design and technology. For example in Year 8 food lesson, pupils showed good skills in using ingredients, processes and tools when making scones, with all pupils making good quality products. Overall the standards of making in Years 7 to 9 are good, but the standards of designing and the presentation of folder work are less good.
125. The standard of work currently in Year 11 is similar to the above average standards achieved by GCSE pupils in previous years. In food technology in particular, folder work and making skills are of an equally good standard. In other design and technology areas, skills in making tend to be better developed than folder work. For example, in resistant materials, work on storage systems shows a good understanding of materials and the correct use of construction techniques, with a very good understanding of how to produce quality products to a high finished standard. Again achievement is good.
126. Overall, teaching and learning are good and in some lessons very good. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their individual specialisms. Because of this, skills are mostly well taught and are a significant factor in raising standards. For example, in a resistant materials lesson where Year 10 pupils were making flat-pack tables, pupils were given clear instructions about construction techniques which helped in promoting high standards. Individual lessons are well planned and these generally proceed at a good pace. In a Year 10 food lesson the quality of the planning coupled with clear expectation set the pace of the lesson. This resulted in all pupils completing the making of their products, for possible inclusion on a school meals menu, on time

and to a high standard. By matching their work well to the needs of pupils, teachers ensure pupils of all abilities make good progress. When designing 'post it' holders, lower attaining pupils used models which ensured that they visualised more easily what they intended to make and this helped in raising standards. Pupils enjoy work in design and technology and in the majority of lessons attitudes are very good. A significant factor in the high standards of attainment seen at GCSE is the extra hard work by pupils outside lesson time to ensure that coursework is completed. Older pupils feel well informed about how well they are doing because of teachers' good understanding of the requirements of the GCSE examinations. This is seen in the quality of marking of GCSE coursework. Younger pupils also value the ongoing feedback and also feel well informed, but they do not know how well they are doing in relation to National Curriculum levels as these are not used to set targets for improvement. The routine marking of the work of pupils in Years 7 to 9, although thorough in some design and technology subjects, is uneven in quality and reflects the lack of clear guidance that a marking scheme could provide.

127. The curriculum for younger pupils is currently unsatisfactory. The National Curriculum requires that all pupils learn about systems and control technology, about mechanism and structures, and all should have an opportunity to use computers to aid design and manufacture. These aspects of the curriculum are inadequately taught to some pupils and not at all to others. This means that currently all pupils do not have equal access to the design and technology curriculum. There is little use of computers in the routine work of pupils doing design and technology, with some pupils in Years 7 to 9 reporting that computers have never been used by them in their design and technology lessons.
128. Management of the department is satisfactory. The day-to-day management of equipment and resources is good and the management of the curriculum for older pupils is a strength and ensures targets are met across all areas. The department works well as a team and this is effective in promoting higher standards. The way in which the department relates and reports to the senior management of the school lacks clarity, which is highlighted by the lack of a line manager. The schemes of work for younger pupils need to be brought up to date, as does the departmental handbook, to provide clear guidance to teachers about such things as marking, risk assessment in project planning, and how teaching within the department should contribute to whole-school initiatives, such as literacy and numeracy and the spiritual, social, moral and cultural development of pupils. Also the current development plan does not provide a clear picture of where further developments are needed and what needs to be done to achieve them.
129. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards have clearly improved and the quality of teaching and learning has been maintained. Decisions have been taken to improve provision, most notably with the appointment of a deputy head of department.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision for geography is **very good**.

Strengths

- The overall good teaching: teachers have very good subject knowledge and lessons are well planned.
- The good leadership and management of the subject.
- The use of computers to assist learning and the range of practical and field study activities available to pupils.
- Commitment to continue to raise standards and the capacity to succeed.

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning strategies and sharing good practice.
- Strategies to raise standards of boys in line with those of the girls.
- Sharpening procedures and effectiveness of development planning.

130. GCSE results in 2001 were well above the national average for A*-C grades, and all pupils entered gained a pass grade. Girls attained at a higher level than the boys, but boys' results were still well above the national average. Pupils did not do as well in geography as in their other subjects. There has been an overall upward trend in results over recent years.
131. By the end of Year 9, attainment overall is above average and achievement is good in relation to pupils' attainment on entry in Year 7. From observations in lessons and scrutiny of books, pupils develop a good range of knowledge, understanding and geographical skills. A significant number have a good grasp of physical and human concepts and they use specialist language well. Some very good examples were seen in lessons exploring the consequences of human activities on ecosystems and the impact of globalisation of world trade on both producers and consumers. Pupils also showed an ability to think about concepts as was seen when they were examining village functions across time.
132. From observation of lessons and looking at pupils' books, standards in the current Year 11 are well above the national average. This represents good achievement in relation to standards at the beginning of the course. While boys attain well, girls are achieving at a higher level. Pupils continue to show good speaking and listening skills and they take considerable pride in presentation in their books. They are effective independent learners and use computers well to gather information, analyse coursework data and present findings. Skills used in preparation for the individual coursework element of the examination are particularly well developed. Good examples were seen on topics including geomorphological processes and a variety of problems associated with economic activities in the local area.
133. Teaching overall is good with a substantial amount of very good and some excellent practice. Teachers plan lessons well to meet pupils' individual needs. They are very secure in their subject knowledge and use a wide range of interesting strategies to motivate pupils. Teachers use their local knowledge well to provide interest and enhance learning. Pupils are expected to think about what they are doing, and appropriate emphasis is placed upon the development of enquiry and independent learning skills. Relationships are extremely good and lessons are conducted in an orderly and brisk manner. There are high expectations and teachers are very clear

about the standards of work and behaviour expected. Computers are used effectively to assist learning and appropriate field study activities are provided across all years.

134. Learning is good. This results from both the quality of teaching and the positive and hard working attitudes of the vast majority of pupils. In all lessons observed pupils' attitudes to work were good and frequently very good. For example, particularly good progress resulted from enthusiastic teaching and active involvement by pupils in lessons on the consequences of the globalisation of world production and changing rural settlement patterns over time. Pupils with special educational needs make equal progress to that of their peers.
135. Leadership and management, by a very enthusiastic and hard working acting head of department, continue to be good in the absence of the head of department. The efforts of both staff have had a positive effect on the standards. Good improvements have been made since the last inspection in the schemes of work, as well as in the development of assessment procedures and the use of data to enhance learning. There is some constraint on the range of teaching and learning strategies, as a consequence of a slightly below average time allocation for the subject in Years 7 to 9. The department meets the statutory requirement for the use of ICT. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, with the resultant sharing of good practice, is limited and subject development planning lacks sharpness.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **very good**.

Strengths

- Very good teaching.
- Very good leadership and management.
- A very good curriculum, including a wide range of educational visits.
- The very good contribution to the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Area for improvement

- The use of ICT in teaching the subject.

136. In 2001, GCSE results were just above average. There was a contrast between the results in the modern world examination which were high in relation to the national average and the results in the social and economic examination which were below average. This has been the pattern over the last three years. In 2001, boys' results were higher than girls but both achieved satisfactory results in relation to their other subjects. All nine pupils taking the entry level examination (below GCSE level) achieved the highest grade of distinction, which for those pupils was a very good achievement.
137. Currently, standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are a little above average and achievement is good. Using written and film evidence, lower attaining pupils are able to analyse many reasons for enlistment in 1914. Higher attaining pupils have a very good understanding of the reasons for military stalemate on the Western Front and for the conditions of warfare. By the age of 16, pupils can talk confidently about the nature and purpose of a wide range of evidence seen in their modern world study and particular issues of interpretation of events are tackled well in coursework. Pupils are able to analyse the impact of economic recession upon political movements, such as the Chartist, and to understand their aims in the context of broader trends in the 1830s.

138. Teaching is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and they plan their lessons well to ensure a good pace which includes both reinforcing and extending pupils' knowledge, for example in a Year 8 lesson on the Plains Wars in America. All teachers use resources effectively and plan tasks which develop the teaching points of film evidence particularly well, for example in Year 9 lessons on World War One. Pupils are also helped to learn by teachers' skilful use of questions, seen particularly in a Year 11 revision lesson with higher attainers and a Year 7 lesson on the Black Death with lower attainers. The quality of learning is assisted by tasks which actively involve pupils in taking responsibility for their learning and that of others through small group research and formal debate. This was seen for example in the study by Year 10 of the reasons for Hitler's rise to power in 1933.
139. Pupils learn well across the age and attainment range, with good progress made by pupils with special educational needs. Literacy strategies help all pupils to develop their vocabulary and plan their extended writing very well, this was particularly noticeable in work on Feudalism by lower attaining pupils in Year 7 and on the development of the iron industry by higher attaining pupils in Year 9. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good, especially their concentration, commitment to finishing tasks and confidence in oral work.
140. Leadership and management are very good. The careful selection of resources and very good display work offer a rich learning environment. The curriculum is regularly and creatively reviewed, successfully developing its remit to deliver aspects of citizenship, increasing the use of large scale enquiry questions, for example 'Were the Romans civilised?' and clearly addressing key aspects of causation and chronology in the schemes of work. The subject makes an excellent contribution to the spiritual and cultural development of pupils through its work on the Holocaust, world wars, the study of Saxon society, medieval Islam and the clash of cultures on the American Plains; the well planned curriculum provides well for pupils' social and moral development through the study of diverse political systems and explicit discussion of values held, for example with regard to slavery in the British Empire and the reasons why imperial troops fought for Britain in 1914. The lively and inclusive ethos of the department is also developed through an unusually extensive range of visits for all year groups: local, regional, and European (including the battlefields, Berlin and Auschwitz, and forthcoming expeditions to Normandy and Russia); and three separate visits are provided in Year 8 to match the pupils' interests and attainment.
141. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. There has been good development of assessment and recording and selected work is marked to National Curriculum levels and recorded centrally for good monitoring of pupils' progress. The scheme of work is a helpful working document and contributes to the support offered to non-specialist teachers.
142. The area for improvement is in the use by pupils of ICT. Currently it is not used to promote pupils' knowledge, understanding or skills.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Overall, the quality of provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Mainly good teaching and learning.
- Very good attitudes and behaviour of pupils.
- Use of the Internet, which gives students access to rich source materials.
- The offer of extra-curricular ICT (OCR text and word processing).
- Excellent technician support and attention to the best value principles.

Areas for improvement.

- Curriculum entitlement in Years 10 and 11.
- ICT across the curriculum.
- Clarity of responsibility in the line management of the subject.
- Provision of extended work for the more able pupils and suitable accreditation for the less able pupils.
- The need for a formal assessment scheme which recognises pupils' progress across all aspects of ICT.
- Accommodation, which is holding back further improvement.

143. Much of the improvement in provision has been made in the current academic year because of the improvement in resources and teaching accommodation.
144. Since September 2001 all pupils in Years 7 to 9 have benefited from being taught ICT in specialist discrete classes. Eventually all Years 7 to 9 pupils will benefit from three years of specialist tuition but at the moment all have received only one year's tuition. This has a direct bearing on standards. Standards are average in Year 7. In a very good Year 7 lesson pupils were given the challenge of designing a pamphlet for a tourist attraction. They were well aware of the design needs and were able to use the publishing program 'wizard' and choose appropriate colour themes. They know how to insert a picture from the Internet. Overall attainment by the end of Year 9 is currently below average but standards are improving with pupils making good progress and achieving well. Pupils can use wordprocessing, spreadsheet and presentation software. They have very good opportunities to use the Internet and show particular skill in searching. However, they have a limited ability to use databases, as the software is inadequate and pupils often choose to use a spreadsheet as an alternative. They use ICT to present information in different forms and are beginning to be aware of the intended audience and the need for quality in their presentations. They have not had the opportunity to use ICT systems to control events or find how ICT devices with sensors can be used to monitor and measure external events.
145. In Year 10 some 60 per cent of pupils take the GCSE course in ICT started this year. In addition, a Year 10 class following a work-related course is taking a course in Key Skills, which includes wordprocessing, desktop publishing, spreadsheets, databases and the use of office technology. Nevertheless some 35 per cent of pupils in Year 10 do not have any formal ICT provision and in Year 11 it is very limited. The GCSE course was not available when Year 11 started their GCSE courses. A very effective text processing and wordprocessing qualification is offered to pupils in Year 11 after school but only on a voluntary basis.
146. Overall standards are below average at the end of Year 11 as opportunities for them to develop ICT skills have been limited. In Year 10 pupils are making good progress and

achievement is good in relation to pupils' previous attainment. There are above average standards in wordprocessing and desktop publishing. The new programme has been well thought out and pupils are enthusiastic, well motivated and eager to learn. The work of these pupils in lessons and in their coursework folders indicates that standards are rising. The pupils work with others to explore a variety of information sources and ICT tools and reflect critically on their own work. Presentation of most project work is good. Those following a successful course in Key Skills are learning to input data into a spreadsheet and can create graphs from the information. It was not possible to see the after-school text and wordprocessing group as they were taking an examination, but afterwards pupils said how valuable they found the course.

147. In all years, pupils with special educational needs make very good progress as a result of well-targeted support but there is insufficient challenge in lessons to enable higher attaining pupils to develop the higher level skills of selection and to address specific audiences.
148. The quality of teaching and learning in discrete lessons is mainly good and sometimes very good. Pupils make good progress in lessons as a result of good teaching and their own often excellent attitudes, motivation and enthusiasm. Most teachers have specialist knowledge that they use effectively in their teaching to ensure that key concepts and knowledge are developed correctly but there are examples where teaching lacks in-depth knowledge and this affects learning. Teachers have clear objectives and explain what is to be done in a structured informative and lively way. They provide opportunities for pupils to work out solutions themselves before helping. For example, a pupil was given time to work out why inserting the word 'gram' in a numeric cell in a spreadsheet led to an incorrect display before the teacher intervened. When the teaching is very good, there is a very good pace to the lesson and very good use of questioning to ensure pupils understand the task and are able to assess their knowledge and what they can do. However, teaching sometimes does not take sufficient account of pupils' different levels of attainment and there is not enough extension work for higher attainers on the GCSE course. A newly appointed teacher has prepared exciting worksheets for GCSE pupils which engage pupils' interest. Teachers do not stress the specialist vocabulary of the subject enough to reinforce the good wall display of key words. The management of pupils is very good, together with very good use of praise, encouragement and humour, all of which helps pupils to make good progress. In a good Year 9 lesson where the pupils were working on a film project, they were successfully encouraged to share ideas as they worked with spreadsheets, desktop publishing and the Internet. Ongoing assessment is not used well enough to enable students to know how well they are doing and how they can do better, and marking does not always include enough advice to help pupils improve. There is no formal method of ensuring that all pupils know their National Curriculum levels.
149. The technician and his assistant offer excellent support. The technician deals with the budget for hardware and looks carefully for best value including that the National Grid for Learning funding is used effectively.
150. At present, the use of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. National Curriculum requirements are not being met in most subjects. In design and technology, for example, there is little evidence of the use of ICT. There is some good use in religious education and pupils in Year 9 successfully use their skills in searching the Internet and creating leaflets from the pictures and information gained. There are also examples of some good use in geography to gather information and some good use in music. In English a class was observed improving their skills in using presentation software and were able to create slides, using media clips and transition effects. Some departments

are very keen to use ICT, but are unable to gain access to the computer suites. For example, in science they are unable to use the data loggers. However, this department has a very good page on the school website, which is attractive to pupils and useful for parents. Sometimes when ICT is used in other subjects, it is only for presentation and does not develop pupils' ability to use the technology imaginatively.

151. The head of department has made a good start in raising standards and improving the profile of the subject. He has initiated new schemes of work for all years. There have been several initiatives to raise standards including revising schemes of work and introducing GCSE and Key Skills in Year 10. Standards could be further improved by timetabling discrete ICT for all pupils in Years 10 and 11, auditing and supporting ICT across the curriculum and providing for the use of computers for control technology. Leadership and management are satisfactory, but there is some confusion as to the roles of the school co-ordinator and the head of department, which should be clarified.
152. There is no policy for the use of the Internet, or an Internet home/school agreement, although the school has taken reasonable steps to ensure that the pupils are protected from offensive materials. Pupils do not have their own email addresses.
153. In comparison with the very limited provision at the time of the last inspection improvement has been satisfactory.
154. Provision is improving and the proposed expansion of facilities, would help further, but the school has some way to go to reach its objective of ICT being at the 'heart of the school'.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in French and German is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards reached at GCSE in both languages are above the national average.
- Teaching overall is good. Teachers are proficient linguists and pupils learn well as a result.
- Higher attaining pupils and those of lower attainment and with special educational needs achieve well through teaching that challenges them.
- The well-established programme of exchanges to France and Germany enriches the experience of the many who take part.

Areas for improvement

- The department lacks a common vision for the future and the opportunity to share ideas and good practice.
- The quality of teaching is not adequately checked and supported to ensure that good practice is more evenly spread within the department.

155. Over the past three years the number of pupils gaining grades A* to C in the GCSE French and German examinations has been above the national average. The majority of pupils have been entered for at least one foreign language and a good number have taken both. Particularly strong were the results of the highest and lowest attaining pupils. In 2001, for example, over 20 per cent of pupils entered gained grades A* and A, which is significantly above the national average in both languages. Equally noteworthy,

all pupils entered for a language over the past three years have gained a pass grade. This represents good achievement for many pupils. Boys' results have been below those of girls, especially in French and in 2000, boys' results were well below average.

156. Work seen during the inspection, both in class and from looking at pupils' books, shows that standards in French and German are above the national average by the end of Years 9 and 11. The highest attaining pupils in both years are pushed hard by strong teaching and achieve results that are well above those expected at their stage of learning. For example, these pupils are able to manipulate verbs in French to write about events in the past and to say what they intend to do in the future. In German, which they have studied for less time, they understand and apply difficult rules of grammar for changing the endings of words. Most pupils speak confidently about themselves and their home situation in French or German. Pupils of lower attainment and those with special educational needs, boys and girls alike, are also achieving well, especially in the skills of speaking and listening. They understand and react promptly to their teachers' instructions in the language.
157. Many pupils, especially boys, have difficulty with the pronunciation of French and German. In cases where the teacher insists on pupils pronouncing the language accurately and gives them the chance to practise, they surprise themselves at how authentic they sound. Writing in the foreign language also presents problems for many pupils. This is particularly true of boys, who are more slapdash and have less eye for grammatical accuracy.
158. The teaching of French and German is good overall and in a substantial proportion of lessons it is very good. In spite of the additional pressure teachers were under during the inspection week due to GCSE oral examinations, teaching was never less than satisfactory. All teachers are competent speakers of the languages they teach, even in the case of their second foreign language. Lessons start in a brisk orderly way with a clear statement of what pupils will be learning. This sets the scene well and creates anticipation. In many lessons, too, teachers set a fast challenging pace which involves everyone and leaves no room for inattention.
159. Teachers have a wide and engaging repertoire of methods and materials for capturing pupils' attention and enabling them to take part actively. Pair work, for example, is used skilfully to encourage pupils to rehearse what they have learnt and experiment with adapting language. In several lessons pupils made strong headway in speaking French and German while working in pairs or groups. They were entirely used to collaborating independently in this way. Much of the teaching appeals to boys as well as to girls, with clear achievable tasks, firm but humorous management, lots of praise and encouragement, but only where it is due. This leads naturally to a strong working ethos in which pupils make swift progress and relish their learning.
160. Some of the best teaching is with the highest and lowest attaining pupils. In a Year 11 French lesson, for example, the last lesson before GCSE study leave, the teacher made very good use of the time by separating the class into two groups. It was a tribute to the high expectations of the teacher and the pupils' sustained motivation that the lower attainers worked independently in the school library without supervision and gained good last-minute practice in listening comprehension. In a Year 8 class of high attaining pupils, also, the teacher's very good command of German and insistence on good pronunciation encouraged pupils to push themselves and express opinions in well-accented German on which school subjects they liked.

161. In a few respects the quality of teaching could be even better. In some lessons teachers do not use French or German enough in the classroom, or insist that pupils themselves use it to ask for things routinely or apologise for being late. In such cases pupils make less progress because they hear and use too little of the language. A small amount of teaching centres too heavily on the teacher and the textbook. When this happens the teacher spends too much time talking and gives the pupils too little opportunity to drill and repeat the language themselves. Such lessons fail to engage pupils' interest and as a result they lose concentration and learn less. Some teaching lacks clarity and firmness. As a result learning is patchy and intermittent with the most attentive pupils making headway and others quickly losing the thread. The marking of pupils' work is regular and encouraging, but is not sufficiently linked to National Curriculum levels and does not make pupils aware enough of what they need to do to improve.
162. Where ICT is used to supplement work in the classroom it is very motivating and helps pupils to reinforce key points of language. However, ICT is not yet used with the majority of pupils in the teaching of French or German and there is much scope for development to allow all pupils to take advantage. Pupils in Year 10 who hoped to continue both French and German to GCSE have been prevented from taking both languages through constraints of the timetable.
163. The modern foreign languages department has six well-qualified experienced specialists. Pupils benefit greatly from the stability and continuity this offers. Many in Years 10 and 11 are also benefiting from being able to do coursework instead of the final GCSE writing paper. The thriving programme of exchanges to Lillebonne in France and Immenstadt in Germany enriches the experience of the many pupils who participate. The department makes a very good contribution to pupils' social and cultural development.
164. Leadership and management are satisfactory and although strengths outweigh weaknesses there are shortcomings. The department currently lacks a common vision for the future. There are too few opportunities for all of the staff to share ideas and discuss a common approach to important initiatives, such as the use of ICT or the performance of boys. Management offers support when it is called for, but there is little routine monitoring of the quality of teaching to ensure that teachers who struggle have regular opportunities to develop and improve. Roles within the department are also ill defined with little delegation and sharing of tasks with others.
165. The previous inspection report mentioned only the quality of accommodation and resources as being in need of improvement. Since then these two aspects have improved significantly. The construction of a purpose-built suite of new classrooms and office space has greatly improved the quality of accommodation. Resources have been updated. Standards of attainment and the quality of teaching have remained above average. Provided the department finds a common purpose and unites in driving up standards it is well placed to make further improvements.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **good**.

Strengths

- Very good cultural social and cultural education in extra curricular activities.
- Very good attitudes of pupils.
- Above average results at GCSE.
- Good quality of leadership.

Areas for improvement

- Improve the standard of singing.
- Insufficient provision for ICT, particularly for GCSE pupils.

166. GCSE results in 2001 were above average. Over time, results have been steadily improving from previously average results. The department has done well to achieve these results in classes held in after-school hours. That situation has improved with current GCSE courses timetabled during normal school hours.
167. Pupils come to the school with a wide range of attainment and by the age of 14 attain above average standards. Evidence from work completed and lessons seen show that, by the age of 14, pupils have particularly good skills in reading music notation. They play challenging tunes on keyboards with correct fingering but singing is less strong. Their composition skills are satisfactory. By the age of 16, pupils show particular strengths in performing on a range of instruments and in composing using ICT and are above average overall. The difference between the attainment of boys and girls is similar to that seen nationally. The achievement of pupils by the ages of 14 and 16 is consistently good.
168. The standard of teaching is good for pupils of all ages. Lessons are well prepared and teachers have good knowledge of the subject. Good use is made of resources and work is regularly assessed. Pupils have good opportunities for practice. In a Year 7 lesson on Haiku music, teaching was well informed and well prepared. Pupils were well managed and regularly praised and as a result made sustained efforts to discuss and write down word rhythms. In a Year 8 lesson on Samba, standards of learning were good and pupils maintained a high standard of creative effort in rehearsing tunes. This resulted from aims being made very clear, a wide range of resources being made available for pupils of different abilities and able tutoring. Pupils in a Year 9 lesson on music of the Beatles were given a good introduction to '60's' culture and teaching was well paced. However the pace of teaching was only satisfactory in a singing session in which pupils were not adequately prepared. In keyboard work, pupils made good progress as a result of being given tasks that matched their abilities and they were effectively encouraged to demonstrate their progress to the class. They therefore made good progress in keyboard playing. A Year 10 lesson on popular songs was set in a good historical context for pupils to improve their understanding and appreciation. Good use was made of questioning to help pupils to refine their answers, as well as being given predicted grades on their work. Pupils achieved good standards, maintained their interest and valued the support they received. Very good teaching of a Year 11 class on listening was characterised by very good pace, coverage of a wide range of topics and very good use of probing questions. Pupils worked very hard to give increasingly sophisticated answers and the growth in their confidence was marked. The teaching of basic skills and use of homework are satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs and those with particular talents in music make good progress.

169. The quality of learning is also good. Pupils of all ages are very aware of the results and standards they achieve and how they can be improved. They work at an energetic pace. Pupils up to the age of 14 show very good attitudes to the subject and this continues into Years 10 and 11 where they are enthusiastic for the subject and where there is a stimulating atmosphere in the classroom. Behaviour is very good and pupils value the challenges offered to them. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good.
170. High standards of performance are achieved by groups such as the school wind band, jazz band and folk group and they make a very good contribution to the life of the school and pupils' cultural and social development. A high proportion of pupils attend rehearsals and learn a wide range of musical instruments. Concerts are very well attended. The department also makes a good contribution to the moral and spiritual education of pupils through the high standards of behaviour set in class and by encouraging pupils to reflect on their progress.
171. The quality of leadership and management are good. The department is led by an enthusiastic teacher who provides a good role model as a musician. Very effective action is taken to meet the school's aims for the subject. Staff are well co-ordinated and the monitoring of teaching is satisfactory. Development planning is pragmatic and meets school requirements. The accommodation and resources for the subject are only satisfactory but an improvement since the last inspection. However, there is only one computer and access to ICT is limited for the growing numbers of GCSE pupils. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, including standards of teaching and learning, standards at GCSE, the timetabling of music during the normal school day and the growing popularity of the GCSE course.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Well above average results in GCSE physical education with many pupils attaining better grades than in their other subjects.
- Well above average standards in (non-GCSE) outdoor pursuit activities.
- The quality and range of extra-curricular activities.
- Teachers make a positive contribution to the pupils' personal and social development.
- The pupils respond well to the quality of provision and form very good relationships.

Areas for improvement

- Improve GCSE theory results in outdoor pursuits.
- Improve the use of assessment at Key Stage 3 to ensure consistency in judgements of standards of boys and girls.
- Ensure a prompt start to lessons to increase teaching time, especially at Key Stage 4 where curriculum time is less than the national recommendation.

172. In 2001, GCSE physical education results were well above the national average with many pupils achieving better grades than in their other subjects. This trend has been maintained over the last three years. Results in the short GCSE course in physical education were below average but pupils achieved satisfactorily in relation to their

earlier results. Results in the GCSE outdoor pursuits course were below average and higher attaining pupils gained lower grades than in their other subjects. The weakness was in the theory, as practical work was well above average.

173. Standards by the end of Year 9 are average with pupils' achievement good in relation to their standards on joining the school. Overall strengths are the pupils' evaluative and communication skills which have a positive impact on their learning. Pupils are able to comment knowledgeably on each other's work which helps in raising standards. The boys' ability to play cricket is above average. They can use a variety of spin accurately when bowling and apply tactics and strategies effectively in a game. Girls have a good grasp of the triple jump technique but their tennis skills are below average. They are slow to anticipate the flight of a ball and do not move quickly about the court. All pupils know how to warm up effectively before exercise.
174. By end of Year 11, standards are average and achievement good. Pupils' skills have improved and they apply tactics and strategies more consistently. Particular strengths are pupils' skills in (non-GCSE) outdoor pursuit activities such as climbing. They develop a range of teamwork skills that is outstanding. They know how to use equipment safely and their ability to communicate to each other has a significant influence on creating a safe and supportive environment. The area of weakness is again tennis, and for girls in particular. They are able to maintain a rally but are still slow to anticipate. Their tactical awareness is below average. The small amount of time dedicated to tennis in the already limited curriculum time for physical education in Years 10 and 11 leads to this slower rate of learning. There are also lower expectations of what the girls can achieve in tennis compared to the boys. Pupils have a satisfactory grasp of rules and strategies in rounders.
175. Current pupils in Year 11 following the GCSE physical education course are above average in theory and in their practical activities. They have a good recall of facts and are confident in their use of technical vocabulary when writing and speaking. Their notes are well written and are a good resource for revision. Homework assignments are used effectively to link practical aspects to theory and are marked constructively. There is some scope for independent research though this could be developed further with greater thought and attention given to the use of ICT skills. There are not enough opportunities to develop the use of number. In practical activities pupils apply advanced skills and tactics in games such as rounders and many reach county and occasionally national standards in rugby and swimming. Pupils following the outdoor pursuits GCSE course are below average in their grasp of theory. They have a limited recall of facts and their notes are often incomplete and not in sufficient depth. Their practical work is well above average.
176. High standards are reached in extra-curricular activities. Pupils achieve consistently well in local area and county competitions and individuals have represented national teams and attended national trials in sports such as rugby and girls' cricket. Pupils' enthusiasm is particularly noticeable in outdoor pursuit activities such as participating in the Ten Tors event, the Duke of Edinburgh Award and in inter-house competitions where they are responsible for the organisation of activities.
177. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils' very good attitudes and teachers' high expectations of behaviour have a strong influence on the rate of learning. A particular strength is the organisation and teaching of GCSE physical education. The teachers know the syllabus and exam requirements well and prepare the pupils effectively. There is excellent teaching in practical outdoor pursuit activities, where the quality of learning and development of a wide range of skills are outstanding. Outdoor

pursuits are particularly effective as an inclusive activity to motivate and challenge pupils who would otherwise be disenchanted with school life. In the best lessons pupils are challenged physically and intellectually with high expectations to tackle difficult tasks. There is a strong emphasis on developing teamwork skills and using observations to improve their own work and that of others. Teachers' effective ongoing assessment in lessons also contributes to pupils' learning. Pupils with special learning and behavioural difficulties achieve as well as their peers because tasks are adjusted to meet their needs. Praise and encouragement are used effectively to highlight their achievement and encourage further efforts.

178. There is strong personal development of spiritual, moral and social skills, but missed opportunities to introduce cultural and multicultural aspects, especially in dance. The area for improvement is the teaching of theory for outdoor pursuits at GCSE. Expectations are too low and notes are not covered in sufficient depth for higher attaining pupils to achieve their expected grades. Homework is not used to reinforce learning or to encourage independent research. In a minority of tennis lessons for girls, expectations of work rate and quality of work are not sufficiently high and they are often slow to change for lessons. The current schemes of work require updating to include reference to numeracy, literacy, ICT and the new levels for assessment.
179. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved with a greater range of strategies used resulting in the improvement of pupils' evaluative and planning skills. The quality and range of extra-curricular activities, particularly for outdoor pursuits, remain very good. Accommodation has not improved and this is having considerable impact on the range of activities that can be offered, especially in Years 10 and 11. The gymnasium is small and the ceiling is too low for badminton, volleyball and trampolining. The playing fields are in poor condition and the hard court areas are small. The changing rooms are also too small for large groups of older pupils. Assessment procedures remain good but are not used effectively in Year 9 to inform teachers of areas of strengths and weakness. Judgements of standards are not consistent between teachers.
180. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. There have been several changes over the last two years and the current two acting heads of department have worked hard through close teamwork and frequent discussion to maintain a good quality of education for the pupils. The current department plan however, does not have a sharp enough focus on how to reach the desired raising of standards through specific teaching techniques. The main challenge facing the new head of department, who will be in post from September 2002, is to give the department a clear educational direction.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **very good**.

Strengths

- Standards of attainment at GCSE.
- The good quality of teaching.
- The very good input into pupils' personal development.

Areas for improvement

- Strategies to raise the attainment of boys in line with that of the girls.
- Sharpening subject development planning.
- Updating resources in the department.

181. GCSE results in 2001 were well above the national average with a high proportion of pupils entered for the full examination. Girls attained at a higher level than the boys, but the boys' results were above the national average. Results were above average in the short GCSE course. Over the last four years, standards attained have been consistently high and above national averages.
182. By the end of Year 9, attainment is above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. This represents good achievement in relation to pupils' standards on entry to the school in Year 7. From observations in lessons and scrutiny of books, a significant majority can carry out enquiry tasks effectively and they are aware of the significance of symbolism in religion. They possess good knowledge of the beliefs, values and traditions of worship of the major world faiths. Pupils display empathy and understanding of the reasons for religious practices, and many are able to differentiate within and between religious faiths. This was observed in lessons on the various schools of Buddhism. Pupils work effectively in pairs and groups. In a lesson on Christianity, pupils evaluated well what it means to be a Christian, using case studies provided on a video. A significant number of pupils take pride in the presentation of their work.
183. Lesson observations and pupils' books showed that attainment by the end of Year 11 is well above the national average. Current pupils are achieving well in relation to their predicted grades. They can carry out research tasks and write in a variety of formats. They have very good speaking and listening skills. This was seen in a GCSE lesson, when pupils were examining the influence and nature of religious programmes on television. In revision lessons, Year 11 pupils showed that they have a good grasp of religious language. Books show a good knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and concepts, for example religious values and beliefs associated with the sanctity of life.
184. Teaching overall is good with some very good practice. Lessons are well planned and teachers have a very secure knowledge and understanding of their subject. Expectations are high and teachers use an appropriate range of teaching and learning strategies to assist learning. Clear learning objectives are set and attention is given to meeting individual needs. Pupils are expected to think and develop enquiry skills. Speaking and listening are encouraged and a good range of extended writing tasks is provided. In a very small proportion of lessons poor timing did not allow a final consolidation and testing of learning to take place. In the best lessons pupils were challenged and opportunities given for group discussion work. In a lesson on religion and the media pupils were challenged to develop and communicate their own opinions.

185. Learning overall is good. This results from good teaching and well-behaved and motivated pupils. Pupils are attentive and sustain their concentration in lessons. Relationships are good and pupils respect the views of their peers and teachers. Particularly good progress was observed in revision lessons in Year 11 on religious language and examination techniques. In Years 7 and 8 good learning was seen in lessons on Guru Nanak and in understanding various people's reasons for their Christian beliefs. Pupils with special educational needs make equal progress to that of other pupils.
186. The leadership and management of the department are good. The new head of department has a clear vision for the future development of the subject. Subject development planning however lacks sharpness. Computers are being used to assist learning but opportunities for training to develop this further and also to use them in departmental administration are limited. The budget for the subject restricts the purchase of many books and other resources for the new courses undertaken, and the textbook stock is rapidly becoming out of date. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Religious education makes a very significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There has been good improvement since the last inspection both in standards and pupils' achievement and in the range of visits to faith communities.