

INSPECTION REPORT

EDGBARROW SCHOOL

CROWTHORNE

LEA area: Bracknell Forest

Unique reference number: 110049

Headteacher: Mr R Elsey

Reporting inspector: Mr I Thompson
12271

Dates of inspection: 20-24 March 2000

Inspection number: 186951

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

© Crown copyright 2000

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Sandhurst Road Crowthorne Berkshire
Postcode:	RG45 7HZ
Telephone number:	01344 772658
Fax number:	01344 776623
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs P Wilson
Date of previous inspection:	5 February 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
I Thompson	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?
			How high are standards?
			How well are pupils taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
			What should the school do to improve further?
J Harrison	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?
D Shepherd	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Equal opportunities	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
R Garrett	Team inspector	English; drama	
W Wimshurst	Team inspector	Mathematics	
O Denson	Team inspector	Science	
D Morris	Team inspector	Art	
L Kauffman	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
A Paver	Team inspector	Geography Business education	
P Mitchell	Team inspector	History	
R Fletcher	Team inspector	Music	
J Oxley	Team inspector	Physical education	
J Radford	Team inspector	Religious education Special educational needs	

The inspection contractor was:

Chapel House Inspection Unit Ltd

The ICAA Education Centre
Brighton
ALRESFORD
Hants
SO24 9RE

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Registrar
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

Paragraph

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

Information about the school
How good the school is
What the school does well
What could be improved
How the school has improved since its last inspection
Standards
Pupils' attitudes and values
Teaching and learning
Other aspects of the school
How well the school is led and managed
Parents' and carers' views of the school

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS? 1-20

The school's results and achievements
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT? 21-29

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS? 30-43

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS? 44-54

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS? 55-59

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED? 60-69

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER? 70-71

COMMUNITY LINKS 72

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES 73-199

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Edgbarrow School is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils in the 11-18 age range. There are 978 pupils on roll, more than at the time of the last inspection when there were 921 pupils. There are about 100 more boys than girls in the school, with particular imbalances in Years 7 and 10. The school is about the same size as most secondary schools. It serves a semi-urban catchment area centred on Crowthorne. Many pupils live outside the catchment area, principally in Wokingham.

The school has very few pupils of ethnic minority origin. Pupils come from the full range of social and economic backgrounds but overall are relatively advantaged. The intake is broadly comprehensive. An above average proportion of pupils has statements of special educational need. There are 58 pupils on the school's register of special educational needs, which is a below average proportion. However, there are 37 pupils at stages three to five of the special educational needs code of practice, of whom just less than one-third have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school accepts a substantial number of pupils who have had difficulties elsewhere and whose education has been disrupted. There are 21 pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, which is well below the national average.

Almost one quarter of the staff joined the school in the last two years, including the headteacher who was appointed in September 1999.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a successful school. Pupils achieve good standards. Strong leadership has led to an improvement in teaching standards with a positive effect on pupils' learning. The school is well organised and managed. It provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Most pupils achieve good standards of attainment.
- Good teaching, which motivates pupils and stimulates learning, is a key feature of the majority of lessons.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities in which many pupils participate.
- Provision for pupils' cultural development is very good.
- The headteacher provides very good leadership.
- Financial planning is very effective.

What could be improved

- Standards in music at Key Stage 3.
- Provision for personal, social and health education at Key Stage 3.
- Provision for information and communication technology across the school.
- The pattern of the school day and the length of lessons.
- Provision for design and technology at Key Stage 4.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection in February 1996. Improvements in teaching have ensured that standards have been maintained or have risen in many subjects. The school has responded positively to the key issues identified, although it still does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	B	B	B	D
A-levels/AS-levels	D	A	C	

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

In the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, results were well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. Both boys' and girls' results were similarly high in relation to their national averages. Results were above average in comparison with those achieved in schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. Comparisons with test results when pupils enter the school show that the majority do better than might be expected at Key Stage 3.

In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils awarded five or more grades A*-C was well above the national average, as was the proportion awarded five or more grades A*-G. Pupils' average points scores have increased over the last three years. Boys and girls achieve similarly high results and the gap in their performance is much smaller than is found nationally. Boys' performance exceeds their national average by a higher margin than that of girls. In 1999 the average points score was below average in comparison with similar schools, partly because more pupils are now entered for the examinations.

In the 1999 GCE A level examinations, results were close to the national average and were in line with students' prior attainment. Results show an overall improvement since 1996.

Pupils with special educational needs usually attain the standards that their teachers expect of them and many do better than expected. The results of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests and the high proportion of pupils gaining GCSE grades A*-G represent substantial achievement for many pupils with special educational needs.

In work seen during the inspection, standards achieved in geography and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 3 are well above expected standards. Attainment is above average in art, design and technology, modern foreign languages and science. It is in line with expected standards in all other subjects except information technology (IT) and music, in which it is below the expected levels.

Standards achieved by pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 are well above expected levels in mathematics. Standards are above the levels expected in art, design and technology, history, modern foreign languages, music and science. The expected levels are reached in all other subjects except information technology, where standards are below those expected.

At the end of the sixth form, students achieve well above average standards in physical education. Standards in design and technology, French, geography and mathematics are above average. Average standards are achieved in all other subjects.

Pupils achieve well. The school's inclusive policy for pupils with special educational needs enables them to achieve well throughout the school, some having success at A level. Pupils who are gifted and talented make very good progress and their achievements reflect their abilities.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory overall. A minority of pupils show insufficient interest and involvement in their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4. Good in the sixth form. The number of fixed period exclusions is above average.
Personal development and relationships	Both are good.
Attendance	Good. The rate of unauthorised absence is low.

Pupils have satisfactory attitudes towards learning overall although a minority are inattentive in lessons and some older pupils are disaffected. Attitudes are good in the sixth form. Behaviour is satisfactory. The number of fixed period exclusions is above average, reflecting the school's efforts to raise standards. Pupils' personal qualities are well developed. Relationships are good. Pupils relate very well to most of their teachers.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Satisfactory	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 overall quality of teaching is good. Teaching is satisfactory or better in 95 per cent of lessons. It is good in 45 per cent, very good in 19 per cent and excellent in a further 4 per cent. It is unsatisfactory in four per cent of lessons and poor in one per cent. Well planned teaching, which motivates pupils and stimulates learning, is a key feature of the majority of lessons. There has been a significant improvement in the proportion of good teaching since the previous inspection.

Teaching in English, mathematics and science is good throughout the school. In mathematics, it is very good in the sixth form. Teaching in design and technology is very good throughout the school. Teaching is unsatisfactory in music at Key Stage 3 and information technology at Key Stage 4.

The good teaching has a positive impact on learning. Teachers know their subjects well and their expertise supports their authority in the classroom. The work and pace of lessons are generally well matched to pupils' needs to promote effective learning. However, ineffective planning is the common feature of unsatisfactory teaching. The small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching seen was limited to an occasional lesson in mathematics, music, physical education and science. Relationships are good and this helps create a positive learning atmosphere. Pupils with special educational needs are generally well taught in mainstream classes. Teaching is good in the small withdrawal groups and in the sessions of individual support in literacy. Good relationships between teachers and pupils and effective classroom support have a positive effect on pupils' learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall but provision for personal and social education at Key Stage 3, design and technology at Key Stage 4 and information and communication technology across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school has an inclusive policy for these pupils and the curriculum is well organised to meet their needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Pupils' cultural development is very good. Their moral and social development are good. Spiritual development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good support and guidance are provided.

The school has good links with parents, which support learning. It provides good care for pupils and effectively supports and monitors pupils' personal development. The curriculum is broad and balanced, and meets statutory requirements except in the provision for teaching design and technology to all pupils at Key Stage 4 and information and communication technology at both key stages. The programme for teaching personal, social and health education varies in quality. Pupils are given good careers guidance.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very good leadership and is fully committed to raising standards in the school. He is well supported by other members of the senior management team.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	They have a good working knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and support the school well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Effective systems in place, through departmental reviews and monitoring the work of individual teachers.
The strategic use of resources	Very good use made of available resources.

The school has adequate staffing and resources for learning. Accommodation has many deficiencies, which affect learning. Overall, leadership in the school is very good but there are weaknesses in the management of music. There are very well defined systems for seeking best value throughout the school. The governors play an active role in monitoring the work of the school, but do not meet some of their statutory obligations. The school does not comply fully with the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The standards that the school achieves.• The school is approachable.• The positive values promoted by the school.• The extra-curricular provision.• The care provided for pupils with special educational needs.• The leadership provided by the headteacher.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The provision for personal, social and health education at Key Stage 3.• The unsatisfactory quality of the school's accommodation.• Information provided on progress.

The inspection team supports parents' positive views and agrees with their concerns about the school's accommodation and the provision for personal, social and health education. Inspectors found that the quality of information provided to parents is good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, results were well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' average points scores were similar in mathematics and science and higher than in English. Both boys' and girls' results were similarly high in relation to their national averages. Overall, results were above average in comparison with those achieved in schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. Results have been at much the same level for the last three years with an improvement in 1999. Comparisons with test results when pupils enter the school show that the majority do better than might be expected at Key Stage 3.

2. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils awarded five or more grades A*-C was well above the national average, as was the proportion awarded five or more grades A*-G. Pupils' average points scores have increased over the last three years. Boys and girls achieve similarly high results and the gap in their performance is much smaller than is found nationally. Boys' performance exceeds their national average by a higher margin than that of girls. However, based on the last six years, the average total points score per pupil rose at a slower rate than the national trend. In 1999 the average points score was below average in comparison with similar schools. This is the result of a number of factors which combine to lower the average points score. The comparisons are based on the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and do not take account of the higher than average number of pupils at Edgbarrow with statements of special educational need. The school has a policy of entering all eligible pupils for examinations. This has the effect of increasing both the number of entries and the number of relatively low scores, which depresses the overall average. Many of the lower scores represent significant achievement by pupils who have special educational needs and this is reflected in 98 per cent of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-G in 1999. The school has a deserved reputation for dealing effectively with difficult pupils and accepts a significant number who have had problems and disrupted education elsewhere. Analysis of 1999 results shows that a high proportion of these pupils, who joined the school late in Key Stage 3 or in Key Stage 4, did not achieve their potential because of, among other things, failure to complete coursework and unsatisfactory attendance.

3. In 1999 GCSE examinations, results at grades A*-C were well above average in design and technology, French, mathematics and science. With the exception of German, results in all other subjects were above average. At grades A*-G results in all subjects were above average. Pupils' best overall results, compared with their achievements in other subjects, were in design and technology, mathematics and science.

4. In the 1999 GCE A level examinations, results were close to national average standards and were in line with students' prior attainment. The best overall results were in French, geography and mathematics. Results show an overall improvement since 1996 with the best results being in 1998.

5. Pupils with special educational needs usually attain the standards that their teachers expect of them and many do better than expected. For example, pupils entering the school with very low levels of literacy gain pass grades at GCSE and some go on to achieve success at A level. In the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in 1999, the proportion of pupils who gained level five in English was well above average, representing

substantial achievement for pupils with special educational needs. Most pupils make good progress in mainstream lessons and in their special literacy programmes.

6. In work seen during the inspection, standards of attainment in English at the end of both key stages and the sixth form are in line with nationally expected levels. Pupils are able to read competently. Written work is generally well presented and accurate but lower attainers struggle with spelling, presentation and expression.

7. Standards of literacy across the curriculum are satisfactory overall. Departments vary considerably in their approach to improving standards of reading and writing. Reading skills are developed reasonably well, but opportunities for reading aloud are limited in most subjects. Standards are good in modern foreign languages, reinforced by the wide range of material that is used in the classroom. Writing skills are satisfactory. Good standards are achieved in art, where the correct use of terms is encouraged. History provides a wide range of writing opportunities at Key Stage 3.

8. Most pupils develop competent speaking skills, but they are not given sufficient opportunity to improve further in science, geography, music or physical education. Listening skills are developed well in art, geography, history and modern foreign languages. However, in music, where listening is an important part of the course, distracting chatter among Key Stage 3 pupils interferes with listening to the teacher, other pupils and the music itself.

9. In mathematics, standards at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 are well above average. At the end of the sixth form they are above average. Good progress is made with data handling skills and problem solving skills are developed effectively.

10. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory. In science, pupils use units of measurement well in calculations. Data handling skills are good. In geography, pupils make very effective use of data handling techniques in their coursework. In Year 11, higher attaining pupils can draw accurately the graphs of trigonometric functions. Higher attaining pupils can extend investigations appropriately. Understanding of shape and space is developed well. In Year 9, higher attaining pupils in mathematics have a good understanding of locus, although lower attaining pupils still have difficulty in measuring angles accurately. Year 9 pupils have a good understanding of the concepts of probability and in science all pupils use graphs well. In design and technology, pupils use formulae well in work on controlling devices.

11. In science, standards of attainment are above average at both key stages and in line with expected standards in the sixth form. Pupils complete written work accurately and use appropriate terminology. They can explain what they have done and discuss what they are planning to do. Practical skills are well developed. Pupils can identify limitations in a practical experiment and suggest alternative solutions. They work well in groups.

12. In other subjects, the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 are well above expected levels in geography and above in art, design and technology, and modern foreign languages. They match the levels expected in history, physical education and religious education. Standards are below those expected in information technology and music.

13. The standards achieved by pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 are above the levels expected in art, design and technology, history, modern foreign languages and music. The expected levels are reached in all other subjects except information technology, where

standards are below those expected.

14. At the end of the sixth form, students achieve well above average standards in physical education. Standards in French and design and technology are above average. Average standards are achieved in all other subjects.

15. Overall, pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. The majority of pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are broadly average. By the end of Key Stage 3 most have made good progress and the average level of attainment is above average. Pupils do particularly well in the core subjects of mathematics and science. The pattern of good achievement continues into Key Stage 4. Comparisons between Key Stage 3 results and GCSE results show that the majority of pupils do at least as well as might be expected. Boys do particularly well in comparison with standards nationally and the gap between boys' performance and that of girls is much less than found nationally. Standards at the end of the sixth form are in line with students' prior attainment. The school's inclusive policy for pupils with special educational needs enables them to achieve well throughout the school, some having success at A level. Pupils who are gifted and talented make very good progress and their achievements reflect their abilities.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. The attendance rate in 1998/9 was above the national average. The rate of unauthorised absence is low. In nearly all year groups attendance is above the benchmark of 90 per cent, but in the current Year 11 attendance is around 88 per cent. A minority of pupils have poor attendance patterns, particularly in Year 11, and this has an adverse effect on their levels of attainment. The main reasons for this are difficulties at home and frequent changes of school. Pupils are generally punctual to arrive at school in the mornings.

17. The school buildings are spread out on a large campus. Movement around the school is made difficult in some places by narrow passages and steps, which demands common-sense behaviour and orderliness. Pupils respond well. They are courteous and helpful around the school. Parents are satisfied with standards of behaviour and have noted some recent improvements, in response to staff setting higher standards. The number of permanent exclusions is broadly average. The number of fixed period exclusions is above average. All of these are well documented, with clear and appropriate reasons given, and reflect the school's efforts to set standards and to improve behaviour.

18. Pupils have satisfactory attitudes towards learning. Attitudes and behaviour in lessons are good in the sixth form and satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4. Although most pupils in Years 7 to 11 have good attitudes and behave well, there is a small core of pupils who are uninterested or, on occasion, disrespectful to teachers. Attitudes are unsatisfactory in almost one in ten lessons. That this is linked to the quality of teaching or behaviour management is illustrated by the fact that pupils seen behaving badly in English were seen working well in history, when unsatisfactory behaviour was promptly challenged and the lesson captured and retained their attention. In many lessons across the school concentration flags towards the end of the long double-period lessons.

19. Pupils' personal qualities are well developed. For example, they accept responsibility in sixth form school service. Groups of sixth formers and Year 11 pupils mentor Year 8 pupils; this is proving successful in raising motivation. Pupils in Year 11 have responsible attitudes towards their work experience. Pupils with special educational needs make considerable gains in self confidence and organising skills as they move through the

school. Selected pupils undertake extended work placements as part of the CARE (community service, awareness and responsibility) project in the community. A high number of pupils participate in foreign exchange visits. Pupils show respect for the feelings of others in moral debates, for example in social education lessons. They participate in school decision making through their form representatives. Pupils show enthusiasm in taking part in the popular school productions, musical presentations and sporting events.

20. Relationships are good. Pupils relate very well to most of their teachers. Parents and pupils feel that the school is safe. Bullying is rare, but is handled swiftly and sensitively when it does occur.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

21. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is good at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. At Key Stage 4 it is satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory or better in 95 per cent of lessons. It is good in 45 per cent, very good in 19 per cent and excellent in a further 4 per cent. It is unsatisfactory in four per cent of lessons and poor in one per cent. Well planned teaching, which motivates pupils and stimulates learning, is a key feature of the majority of lessons. There has been a significant improvement in the proportion of good teaching since the last inspection.

22. At Key Stage 3, the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory in music. Overall, it is satisfactory in information technology and good in all other subjects. It is very good in art and design and technology. At Key Stage 4, the overall quality of teaching is very good in design and technology, and good in all other subjects except music, where it is satisfactory, and information technology, where it is unsatisfactory. In the sixth form, the quality of teaching is very good in design and technology, mathematics and physical education. It is good in all other subjects except information technology and music, in which it is satisfactory.

23. The small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching seen was limited to an occasional lesson in music, physical education and science, at Key Stage 3, and in mathematics, music, physical education and science at Key Stage 4.

24. Teachers know their subjects well and their expertise supports their authority in the classroom. This was evident in an excellent Year 9 lesson in art: a highly effective demonstration by the teacher drew an excellent response from pupils and led to higher than average standards being attained. In an inspirational Year 12 French lesson, the teacher's linguistic competence and imaginative use of resources led to excellent learning and made a very good contribution to students' spiritual development because they were moved by the material they were studying.

25. There is considerable variation in the way that teachers tackle reading and writing in lessons. Opportunities for reading aloud are limited in most subjects. Literacy standards are developed well in modern foreign languages, reinforced by the wide range of material that teachers use in the classroom. Teachers pay satisfactory attention overall to the development of writing skills. Good standards are achieved in art, where the correct use of terms is encouraged by their definitions being displayed throughout the department, and teachers in history provide a wide range of writing opportunities at Key Stage 3. Appropriate opportunities to develop numeracy skills are used effectively by teachers in departments such as design and technology, geography and science, with the result that skills, particularly in measurement and managing data, are well developed throughout the school. Teaching of information and communication technology skills is less well

developed across the school, although there is some good practice. For example, in design and technology there is some very good work on control by computer. Few teachers make effective use of information and communication technology to support learning on a regular basis. This is partly because most of the school's equipment is old and there is not enough of it, so that access is limited, and partly because of the need for staff training in its use.

26. The work and pace of lessons are generally well matched to pupils' needs. For example, in a Year 9 geography lesson on the development of Brazil, the brisk pace of the lesson, and probing questions which made pupils think, maintained interest and promoted very good progress. In a Year 7 history lesson, on a day in the life of a monk, activities were well matched to individual needs. This led to high quality learning and enabled good management of some difficult pupils. Excellent planning and organisation to involve all pupils for the whole of a Year 11 physical education lesson promoted high quality learning at a brisk pace. The principal factor in pupils' good progress, in a Year 11 mathematics lesson, was the effective way in which the teacher provided tasks accurately matched to pupils' needs with additional challenges for higher attainers. The school has put considerable effort into training on this aspect of lesson planning, the success of which can be seen in the high proportion of good and very good teaching. Nevertheless, ineffective planning is the common feature of unsatisfactory teaching. For example, in a Year 7 science lesson, because teaching methods and materials were not suitable for the class, behaviour deteriorated and progress suffered. Similarly, in a Year 10 physical education lesson, slow pace and inadequate challenge led to poor behaviour and unsatisfactory learning. In music, learning in lessons at both key stages was badly affected by work not being matched to pupils' needs and abilities. Many otherwise satisfactory lessons, across the school, lose pace and impact towards the end of the long double lessons when pupils' interest and concentration flag, particularly late in the long morning session. The teachers who cope best with this are those who plan for a variety of activities and who are prepared to change the course of their lessons when they know pupils are slowing down. Summaries and reviews of the work covered during the lesson are often used as an effective means of maintaining interest and consolidating learning. This has the effect of keeping pupils working well to the end of lessons. It is a particular feature of lessons in design and technology, where pupils often leave classrooms discussing their work.

27. Pupils with special educational needs are generally well taught in mainstream classes. When teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their pupils' needs and tailor their teaching styles and learning materials to them, pupils learn with confidence and make good progress. Teaching is good in the small withdrawal groups and in the sessions of individual support in literacy. The good relationships between teachers and pupils and the effectiveness of classroom support have a positive effect on pupils' learning and development.

28. Teachers know their pupils well and relationships are generally good throughout the school. In many lessons this creates a positive learning environment. For example, the teacher in a Year 11 English lesson built on good relationships to motivate pupils to tackle a difficult poem so successfully that they were surprised by their own understanding. In design and technology, secure relationships enable high standards to be set and pupils to be trusted to work independently. In many departments teachers make a point of displaying pupils' work to set standards and celebrate achievement. This is a particularly strong feature of the art department. Pupils show respect for each other's work and can find inspiration from the displays. Attitudes are less positive when teachers do not set and insist upon high standards for behaviour. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson, because not enough was demanded of the class, some pupils ignored the teacher and

talked among themselves with a consequent adverse effect on the learning and progress of the whole class. In a Year 7 music class, when behaviour management was insecure, a confrontational atmosphere developed which affected learning.

29. Most teachers make effective use of questioning to reinforce pupils' knowledge and understanding and to involve them in learning. Questioning is also used informally to assess pupils' progress. Objectives are usually made clear at the start of lessons and, particularly in design and technology, targets are set which enable pupils to gain an idea of their own progress. Marking and more formal assessment, with the exception of music, are satisfactory overall, with some good practice. For example, clear and effective assessment makes a good contribution to raising attainment in design and technology. In most subjects, pupils are clear as to the standards they are achieving and what they need to do to improve. This is a strong feature of the progress department, where pupils with special educational needs are made well aware of the targets in their individual education plans and can explain clearly what they need to do to improve.

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

30. The curriculum is broad and balanced, and meets statutory requirements except in the provision for the teaching of design and technology to all pupils at Key Stage 4 and teaching information and communication technology across the curriculum. The curriculum includes all other subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education and personal and social education. The length of the teaching week at 25 hours and 10 minutes is in line with the model for comprehensive schools nationally at Key Stage 3 and for the DfEE recommended time at Key Stage 4. The time allocation to subjects is appropriate. At Key Stage 4 there is a core curriculum followed by all pupils with three further options. The range of subjects offered in the sixth form is adequate. However, the number in some sets is low because the school provides minority subjects in an effort to retain students and so maintain numbers in other subjects. The school has not yet conducted a survey of cost effectiveness in the sixth form but raw figures show that overall the sixth form costs are more than matched by income. The numbers taking GNVQ business studies are very high because the subject has attracted students who see its usefulness in future employment. The school will add another GNVQ, in information technology, to its curriculum next year and has laid careful plans to meet the requirements of Curriculum 2000.

31. The school has a literacy policy, which enables pupils to gain full access to a wide range of experiences in their subjects. There is no cross-curricular numeracy policy in place. However, good arrangements in many departments contribute effectively to pupils' standards of numeracy.

32. The school makes very good provision for pupils with special educational needs. The curriculum is accessible to all pupils on the special educational needs register. Individual education plans are effective in ensuring that pupils' particular needs are provided for. Pupils who find the full range of GCSE courses too demanding, benefit from being able to concentrate on a reduced number of subjects and at the same time develop their literacy skills through the CARE course. In the sixth form, carefully planned provision enables students with special educational needs to follow A level courses successfully.

33. The school makes available a very wide range of extra-curricular activities that enrich curricular provision. About 30 per cent of the school's population take an active part in extra-curricular sport, supervised by a total of five staff. Many departments offer clubs, activities and educational visits and these are very well supported by pupils. They include visits to the Houses of Parliament and the trenches in history, geography field trips, an art visit to Florence and Paris as well as work experience in France for sixth formers. The school has a good reputation for stage shows, and concerts include bands and orchestras in which staff also participate.

34. There is equality of access and opportunity for pupils except with regard to the teaching of information and communication technology and design and technology. Although all pupils are taught information and communication technology in Year 7, this is not continued into Years 8 and 9 for all pupils. At Key Stage 4 only those who opt to study a short course at GCSE have time allocated to the subject. Currently not all pupils study a design and technology subject at Key Stage 4, as is required by the National Curriculum. However, from September 2000, this will be a requirement and the school has plans to make appropriate provision. Opportunities for independent learning are restricted by the lack of computers.

35. A lifeskills programme is provided for all pupils and taught by form tutors. At Key Stage 4 personal and social education is taught and this includes drugs awareness and sex education. However, the overall quality of the programme is unacceptably variable and insufficient coverage is given to all aspects of the course at the appropriate time. The programme is well planned but its teaching is erratic and sometimes unsatisfactory. Inspectors agree with the concerns expressed by some parents about the quality of personal, social and health education.

36. The provision for careers education and guidance is good. The programme at Key Stage 4 includes the opportunity for all pupils to have work experience, which is monitored with careful preparation and follow up by members of the teaching staff.

37. The school is a community school with well-established links with local primary schools and industry. The community contributes well to pupils' learning. For example, work visits are well organised by the local business education partnership, which is also very effective in providing mentoring for pupils and good advice on interview and job related skills. The partnership organises teacher training days for business education teachers.

38. The school has good relationships with partner institutions. The induction programme for Year 7 pupils is successful. There are good pastoral links with primary schools and the transfer of information about pupils with special educational needs is good. There are also effective links with further and higher education. For example, the science department has established good links with Surrey and Reading universities.

39. Assemblies are good community experiences for pupils in their year groups. They are formal occasions. Pupils are well behaved and listen attentively to the headteacher and other senior members of staff. Local clergy are occasionally invited to take assemblies. The day-to-day assemblies have strong moral and social aspects. Time is sometimes set aside for reflection, but there is no worship. Statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not met. Pupil participation and the use of live music and display are not well developed.

40. Good provision for spiritual development is made in some departments, but there are missed opportunities. Since the last inspection, some departments have included awareness for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in their subject policies. All departments need to do this. Religious education staff sensitively promote pupils' appreciation of, and respect for, the beliefs of others. Pupils who went to Israel felt emotionally affected in Jerusalem. In history pupils understand that religion was a vital factor in the lives of people in past centuries. In geography pupils are constantly faced with matching their own developing values against a difficult world. The unusual, dramatic visual stimulus of the video of the volcanic eruptions of Mount St Helen moved sixth form students to a sense of deep wonder. Inspirational teaching in a Year 12 French lesson gave students a moving spiritual experience.

41. A great effort is made to teach all pupils the clear difference between right and wrong behaviour. Staff are good role models in their care for individuals and in their hard work. In design and technology pupils learn to be concerned about the environment and finite resources. A strong sense of fair play is developed in team games. Wide issues of right and wrong in human actions are discussed, particularly in English, history and, at Key Stage 4, in personal and social education. The attractive and prolific ceramic displays in corridors all round the school are respected by the pupils.

42. There are many opportunities for pupils' social development, ranging from the school committee and a careers convention to the sixth formers' mentoring of younger pupils and the school's enthusiastic collections for charities. Many subject departments, such as design and technology, science, physical education, music and modern foreign languages give good opportunities for collaborative work. The art trip to Paris had beneficial social effects as well as inspiring students to raise their standards. The school newsletter helps the school to operate as a coherent community and involves parents with the details of school life. Both the senior and junior spoken English teams won the annual Rotary competition this year.

43. Cultural provision for pupils is strong. Pupils are given very good opportunities to learn about and understand their own cultural heritage and that of other nations. A large number of extra-curricular activities and numerous expeditions in England and abroad contribute significantly to pupils' cultural experience. Multicultural studies are very well built into the curriculum in religious education, geography, history and modern foreign languages. Art makes a particularly strong contribution to the understanding of European and international culture. The variety of music encountered by pupils is good but the cultural impact of this exposure is underdeveloped. The orchestra and string band's expedition to Barcelona gave an exciting cultural experience to 40 young musicians. A two-day arts festival celebrated performance of the expressive arts including a dramatic production.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

44. The school provides good care for pupils. Parents find the school approachable and caring. Tutors and heads of year move up through the school with their year group. This provides strong continuity of pastoral care. Pupils feel confident in the support they are given. Relationships are good. Many staff are trained in counselling.

45. Arrangements to ensure pupils' welfare are satisfactory. Child protection procedures are good and follow recognised LEA guidelines. The school has appropriately detailed health and safety guidelines. A number of health and safety concerns were identified during the inspection, which were promptly rectified. Nevertheless, the school needs to

formalise the procedures for risk assessment and recording.

46. The recording of attendance conforms to statutory requirements. Attendance is well monitored and there are effective procedures aimed at improving it. The Educational Welfare Service gives very good support and makes home visits. A parent volunteer is helping the school to contact parents on the first day of any absence of Year 11 pupils. This is proving effective.

47. The school is orderly. Staff keep good records on pupils' behaviour. Clear channels of communication facilitate effective monitoring. The school makes excellent use of alternative support strategies. For example, the school is participating in the Bracknell Forest Borough Council Behaviour Support Project. As part of this project, records of behaviour and attendance are being computerised to help identify patterns of behaviour and inform case conferences. The Learning Through Action theatre group was successfully involved with the current Year 10 pupils in thoughtful work about issues related to self esteem, relationships and drugs.

48. A few pupils' lack of interest and low level disruption adversely affect learning in a minority of lessons at Key Stages 3 and 4. Some teachers do not have the behaviour management strategies to deal with these pupils. The systems to motivate and reward older pupils are not fully effective. The school recognises this and is currently refining the commendation system for Key Stage 4. There is some good practice in departments. For example, teachers in modern foreign languages send home letters of congratulation for good work.

49. Teachers deal with any cases of bullying firmly and effectively. Pupils express confidence in the system and report that there is relatively little bullying at the school.

50. The school effectively supports and monitors pupils' personal development. Pupils are able to play an active part in school life and decision making. The programme for teaching personal, social and health education varies in quality. Some parents were concerned that sex education was not taught early enough at the school. The inspectors agree with this. Sex education is taught in science lessons, but the emotional and moral implications are not fully covered until Year 10. Pupils are given good careers guidance to help them make decisions for their options choices in Year 9 and their destinations at 16 and 18.

51. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory. Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test results and reading tests are used to place pupils in groups on entry to the school and, this year, nationally standardised tests have been introduced in Year 7. These have been used to build up a clear picture of pupils' attainment when they arrive at the school. Good arrangements are in place in most subjects at both key stages, for example, mathematics, design and technology, science, religious education, and English. Arrangements are unsatisfactory in music and information and communication technology at Key Stage 3.

52. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' progress are satisfactory but the use of the data collected to monitor progress, identify underachievement and to set targets is not yet well developed across the school. A good programme for target setting has been recently introduced which involves all subjects in reviewing the attainment and progress of pupils. Information on attainment is shared with pupils in many subjects, for example science, English and history, though in others, such as music, the criteria for assessment, or how pupils are doing, are not clear.

53. The school monitors the performance and personal development of pupils with special educational needs effectively. The systems for identifying and supporting pupils in need of extra help, and the arrangements for monitoring and assessing the progress of pupils with statements of special educational need, are very good. The quality of support provided is very good and has a positive impact on pupils' learning and attitudes to work. The progress department, which supports pupils with special educational needs, works well with subject departments in developing learning materials which help pupils to organise their written work successfully. Support assistants make a very effective contribution to the well-being of pupils through the good relationships they have built up with them and through their daily records, which provide detailed information on progress and personal development. There is good liaison between the school and the external agencies that provide specialist support and guidance.

54. The use of assessment information to guide curricular planning is satisfactory. The information is used well to determine the grouping of pupils and identify pupils with special educational needs. In some subjects, for example physical education, modern foreign languages and geography, the information provided is not yet used as well as it might be. In music little use is made of the information to plan work for pupils. In others, for example science, religious education and mathematics, assessment data is used well.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

55. The school has good links with parents, which support learning. Parents' views at the pre- inspection meeting and in the questionnaire returns were predominantly positive. Parents are pleased with the standards of education provided. They find that the school is approachable and listens to their views.

56. Since the last inspection, the school has invited more partnership with parents. The recently introduced home school contract is working successfully. The views of parents and pupils were sought over school uniform and discipline. This year, raising achievement evenings have been held on GCSE study skills, GCSE revision and attainment testing scores. A successful practical example of the new initiatives to involve parents in partnership was the redecoration of five classrooms over a weekend by 60 parents.

57. The school provides good quality information for parents. The newsletters give a useful insight into school life. In the questionnaire returns, some parents were concerned about the sufficiency of information they receive on their children's progress. On the basis of the current written progress reports, the inspectors' findings do not support this. Reports generally present a suitably individual picture about the work pupils can do, ways to improve and the standards achieved. These reports are supplemented by an annual meeting with the subject teachers, which is usually well attended by parents, although attendance in some year groups can fall to a relatively modest 50 per cent.

58. The school has established a very good partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs. Communication between school and home are very good. Parents contribute to the reviews of their children's progress and help their children at home. They are generally pleased with the way in which their children are supported and integrated into the life of the school.

59. Parents support the work of the school very well. They have provided a high level of financial support, which has helped to reduce class sizes. The PTA is very active and has raised considerable funds as well as organising social events. Parents arrange contacts

and organise the annual careers convention, which pupils enjoy and find useful.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

60. The quality of leadership and management in the school is good. The headteacher provides very good leadership with good support from senior and middle managers. He has established a very clear direction for the work of the school. He has made a considerable positive impact, in the short time since his appointment, by clearly communicating his vision for the future of the school to staff, pupils and parents. There is a clear commitment to attaining the highest standards achievable from all pupils, in line with the school's mission statement. This is reflected in the formation of a raising achievement working party and in its initiatives, which have involved parents and pupils in study skills and revision techniques evenings. The school's aims and values are central to its work. They are evident in plans, policies and in the effort that teachers put into their work. The school's strengths and weaknesses have been assessed and are well understood. Effective action is in train to manage improvement. For example, regular, rigorous monitoring, by members of the senior management team and senior staff in departments, is a key factor in the improving quality of teaching. Day-to-day administration is efficient and the school runs smoothly.

61. With the exception of management in music, the quality of leadership at middle management level is good overall and has improved since the last inspection. Efficient coordination by heads of year makes a positive contribution to good quality pastoral care throughout the school. Most heads of department have established a clear direction for their subject and monitor the work of their departments effectively. The positive effects of excellent management in modern foreign languages can be seen in the way the department works as a team to provide effective cover for an absent colleague, in the high quality analysis of results to guide future work and particularly in boys' standards of achievement in French. The progress department is very well managed. The coordinator for special educational needs gives clear educational direction, promotes high standards and ensures that complex daily routines run smoothly. Management in music is unsatisfactory because schemes of work do not provide work that is sufficiently matched to pupils' individual needs and assessment is ineffective, with the result that staff and pupils cannot be sure of how much progress has been made, or of the standards achieved.

62. The governing body brings a wide range of expertise to its work in support of the school. The governors play an active role in monitoring the work of the school and their links with the community enable them to reflect opinions and concerns. They support the school well. There is an effective, planned programme of subject reviews. This ensures that governors are well informed and enables them to work with the senior management team in identifying areas for development and to set targets and evaluate progress towards them. There has been satisfactory progress in tackling the priorities identified in the previous inspection report. For example, assessment procedures are now more consistent and teaching has improved. However, the governing body does not meet some of its statutory obligations. The school does not comply fully with the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils; National Curriculum requirements in respect of design and technology at Key Stage 4 and information and communication technology across the curriculum at both key stages are not met fully.

63. Financial planning is very good and reflects governors' professional expertise. The school manages the funds available to it very efficiently and has established very good procedures to monitor and evaluate effectiveness. Detailed development planning and longer term strategic planning have clear links to finance. Contingency planning and best value analysis are particularly strong features of businesslike financial projections. The

school has no major single sponsor. However, the governors have considerable skill in raising and managing funds. For example, a major computer company has refurbished a classroom. Parents raise large amounts of money each year to contribute to the school and a parents' trust fund subsidised official school finances heavily during the period it took to reduce a substantial deficit budget, which arose from circumstances beyond the school's control. Given the progress pupils make at the school, the quality of teaching and the broadly average costs per pupil, the school gives good value for money.

64. There is a satisfactory match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum. Compared with the last inspection, it is now rare to find non-specialist teachers in the classroom. There are, however, difficulties in German caused by long-term absence and in information technology, where cross-curricular work is restricted by limited staff skills and access. Although support staff are matched to the subject curriculum to a satisfactory extent overall, there is not enough support available to meet the needs of all pupils with special educational needs in mathematics, design and technology, information technology and physical education.

65. Arrangements for the induction of staff new to the school are good. The school is an effective provider of initial teacher training. Students are well supported by their mentor and by departmental staff. Teachers participate in regular reviews of their work. Their teaching is monitored and supported by heads of department and members of the senior management team. Teachers confirm that they receive good support.

66. The quality of teaching and learning is impaired by the quality of accommodation particularly in mathematics, information technology, science and English. The humanities department has rooms that are small and overcrowded, modern foreign languages classrooms are poor acoustically and the décor in many rooms is in need of refurbishment. These examples contrast sharply with the very good accommodation in the design and technology department, where improved facilities have had a positive influence on pupils' learning. The physical education department has very good outdoor and indoor areas that promote games skills in particular. The library accommodation is satisfactory.

67. The old heating system is inadequate and takes up valuable potential classroom space. There is open brickwork that requires plastering and other matters that need attention. Poor decoration, inadequate furniture and lack of displays affect the learning environment. The reception area is congested and has no facilities for welcoming visitors. The constant interruptions create a difficult working environment for the tolerant administrative staff. The present access to the school and the numerous little alleyways are too narrow to be functional and the entrance and reception areas need reorganising. The flat roofs around the school are leaking and maintenance is a constant problem.

68. The school is aware of the problems and the recently appointed headteacher has made an impact on both short and long term planning for improvement. Seating in the outdoor areas and landscape planning have already begun; storage improvements, lockers for pupils and the painting of some rooms are evident. A capital funding programme has begun and parents are supporting the project. Long-term neglect is now being tackled with the help of parents.

69. The school has adequate resources to meet National Curriculum needs in most subjects. However, there are insufficient, modern computers to support learning across the school and, although they are of good quality, the number of books stocked by the library is below national recommendations.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

70. To raise further the standards of work and the quality of education provided, the governors and senior management should:

- (1) Improve standards in music at Key Stage 3 by ensuring that standards of attainment on entry are assessed, matching work closely to pupils' needs and improving the quality of assessment.
(See paragraphs 28, 29, 51, 54, 61, 167, 168, 172)
- (2) Improve curricular provision by :
 - allocating appropriate time and staff training to personal, social and health education at Key Stage 3;
 - making appropriate arrangements to meet statutory requirements for teaching information and communication technology across the curriculum by providing adequate resources and staff training;
 - reviewing the pattern of the school day and the length of lessons to ensure better use of teaching time;
 - meeting statutory requirements for design and technology at Key Stage 4. *

(See paragraphs 18, 25, 26, 34, 35, 41, 50, 62, 64, 69, 81, 91, 93, 116, 119, 122, 135, 137, 142, 150, 154, 157, 161, 162, 163, 165, 187)

**This is part of the school's development plan, for implementation in September 2000.*

71. The following less important weaknesses should be included in the action plan:

- A minority of teachers need further guidance on the management of pupils' behaviour and the use of a wider range of teaching methods.
- Many aspects of the school's accommodation are unsatisfactory and affect learning.

(See paragraphs 18, 66, 67, 80, 81, 82, 93, 94, 105, 137, 153, 157, 165, 169, 173)

COMMUNITY LINKS

72. The school has good links with its community on a number of different levels. It is a community school and members of the public come onto the premises every day and every evening, including at the weekends, to use the facilities of the sports centre. The sixth form centre is also a youth club in the evening and the Scouting Association has a base on the premises. Except for the scout hut, the school has joint use of these premises during the day. All are used well and the school has shown good entrepreneurial skills in having these facilities provided and refurbished at shared cost. Work experience placements are found in the community. For example, pupils with special educational needs work with the Forestry Commission. Departments contribute to the work of partner primary schools. For example, the science department organises a science day for primary school pupils at Legoland and members of the department lead occasional lessons in the schools.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	170
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	58

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	19	45	27	4	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	835	143
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	21	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	30	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	56	2

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	39
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	30

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	7.0
National comparative data	9.0

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	101	62	163

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	86	81	81
	Girls	59	51	48
	Total	145	132	129
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	89(81)	81(73)	79(70)
	National	63(65)	62(60)	55(56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	39	61	40
	National	28(35)	38(36)	23(27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	69	81	85
	Girls	51	54	51
	Total	120	135	136
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	74(68)	83(68)	83(73)
	National	64(62)	64(64)	60(62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	36(35)	53(44)	43(36)
	National	31(31)	37(37)	28(31)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	90	63	153

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	54	88	88
	Girls	39	62	62
	Total	93	150	150
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	61(55)	98(94)	98(94)
	National	46.3(43.3)	90.7(89.9)	95.7(95.2)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	42.1(39.5)
	National	37.8(36.8)

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	N/a
	National	N/a

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	16	22	38

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	16.1	17.4	16.8(20.8)	N/a	4	4
National	17.7	18.1	17.9	2.7	2.8	2.8

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	7
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	960
Any other minority ethnic group	9

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	3	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	50	3
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 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	55.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	20
Total aggregate hours worked per week	428

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.8
---	------

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26.1
Key Stage 4	21.8

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
----------------	---------

	£
Total income	2043888
Total expenditure	2099204
Expenditure per pupil	2341
Balance brought forward from previous year	-30214
Balance carried forward to next year	-85530

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	928
Number of questionnaires returned	403

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35	56	7	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	38	54	4	2	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	20	61	7	1	11
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	60	15	2	3
The teaching is good.	29	60	4	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	51	20	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	40	5	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	42	2	1	3
The school works closely with parents.	24	55	15	2	4
The school is well led and managed.	33	51	2	1	14
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	30	57	3	1	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	49	13	2	14

Other issues raised by parents

The poor standard of the school's accommodation.

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

ENGLISH

73. Standards of attainment are average at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4 standards are average, and in line with national results for GCSE English. Attainment in the sixth form matches national average standards. Standards throughout are broadly as high as they should be in relation to pupils' prior attainment.

74. In 1999, Key Stage 3 National Curriculum test results were well above the national average for all schools and broadly in line with results in similar schools. Over the last four years, the average points scores of pupils in English have been well above average, showing a slightly rising trend at a level above the national trend. Both boys and girls have been achieving above average standards for boys and girls during this period, but the average difference between boys' and girls' performance has been slightly greater than the national difference. Pupils' results were better in mathematics and science than in English.

75. In 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C in GCSE English was above the national average. Results in the previous two years were significantly above national averages. Over the past three years, the department has consistently achieved above average results for A*-G grades, reaching 100 per cent in 1999. GCSE English literature results for A*-C grades have improved over the same period, from slightly below the national average in 1997 to above the national average in 1999. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-G has been consistently slightly above national averages. Pupils' results were not as good as those in mathematics and science. The relative performance of boys in English and English literature was significantly worse than in mathematics and science. At A level, results in 1999 were below average for the award of grades A-B but above average for A-E grades. In 1998, results were above average overall.

76. In work seen during the inspection, standards of attainment at the ages of 14, 16 and 18 are average overall and in line with nationally expected standards. Pupils are able to read competently, with understanding, as a result of the emphasis and support given to reading skills and good reading habits throughout Key Stage 3. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils can read aloud with reasonable confidence, clarity and accuracy, but not very expressively. Written work is generally well presented and accurate in Year 7, with evidence of writing with involvement and enjoyment about current reading. Higher attainers in this year group show very good presentational skills and accurate use of punctuation and expression marks in imaginative stories. Pupils with special educational needs in Years 7 and 8 can produce a variety of work, including some good extended writing on "A Christmas Carol", and handle speech punctuation correctly. In Year 9, there is a wider range of written attainment. Lower attainers struggle over spelling, presentation and expression. They are better at explaining their intentions verbally than in writing. Higher attainers do not always achieve the quality expected because not enough is demanded of them. At Key Stage 4, standards are average overall. Most pupils are able to record evidence, use quotation and explain their conclusions in clear and accurate language. Lower attainers continue to display weakness in spelling and sentence punctuation, but the work of higher attainers is often sophisticated and fluent over a wide range of writing. However, their work would benefit from greater focus on key comments and quotation rather than on lengthy description or explanation. This applies also to the work of higher attaining students in the sixth form, which, though showing knowledge and understanding of texts, lacks analytical force. Lower attainers sometimes lose control of spelling and

sentence structure under the pressure of expressing their ideas about complex pieces of writing. Students in Year 12 are more confident and articulate in class discussion than in those in Year 13.

77. Standards of attainment at the last inspection were good. The department has continued to obtain good results since then, particularly for lower and average attaining pupils and students. However, present attainment standards are lower than past results would indicate. This is because teachers do not always expect enough of pupils. There are variations in the level of pupil involvement that teachers achieve. The pace of lessons is not consistently demanding and tasks are not always sufficiently challenging. The need for higher attainers to improve the quality, as opposed to quantity, of written response is not sufficiently emphasised by all teachers. These inconsistencies are producing average standards of attainment overall.

78. The contribution of other subjects to standards of literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory overall. There are variations between subjects in the range and quality of opportunities offered for practising skills. Reading skills are competent, but opportunities for reading aloud are limited in most subjects. However, in religious education good arrangements are made for all pupils to read aloud in Year 7. Writing skills are usually satisfactory and good standards of written work are achieved in art and by higher attainers in history at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Reasonable opportunities for writing are provided in science, but these are restricted to completing worksheets, labelling diagrams and writing up records. Pupils write lengthy reports in geography, but there is little opportunity for imaginative writing. History provides a wide range of writing opportunities at Key Stage 3.

79. Most pupils develop competent speaking skills, but they are not given sufficient opportunity to improve further in science, geography, music or physical education. In science and art they are encouraged to use appropriate terminology and pupils can discuss collaboratively in design and technology. Listening skills are well developed in geography, history, art and, among older pupils, in music. In science some Key Stage 3 pupils call out or fail to listen when others speak. This also happens in a minority of Key Stage 4 lessons. In music, distracting chatter among Key Stage 3 pupils interferes with listening to the teacher, other pupils and the music itself.

80. The attitudes to learning of pupils and students are good overall. Most are involved in their work, concentrate well, and apply themselves conscientiously to classroom activities and tasks. Behaviour is usually good, but there are exceptions when teachers do not sufficiently interest and involve pupils. For example, in a Year 10 class a few pupils were not involved in the lesson and showed it by sitting with their backs to the teacher. Attitudes and behaviour are better when pupils are challenged. For example, in another Year 11 class, when the pupils were strongly motivated by their teacher, they surprised themselves with their own understanding and achievement when tackling Andrew Marvell's poem "To His Coy Mistress".

81. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers know and understand their material well. These qualities are particularly evident in relation to examination preparation, media education, GCSE anthology work and A level set texts. Teachers make good use of a wide range of methods to involve pupils in their work, including review, question and answer sessions, group and pair work, worksheets and whole class discussion. A particularly good example occurred in a Year 13 class when the teacher used the students themselves to provide a visual illustration of Hamlet's isolation from the rest of the court at the beginning of the play. Teachers plan their work thoroughly and organise lessons well

with a variety of activities. Despite this, at times there is loss of pace and impact towards the end of long double lessons. Their management of pupils is good overall, arising from good relationships. Occasionally the lack of involvement of some pupils is not challenged sufficiently early in a lesson. Teachers provide good support for pupils with special educational needs in progress classes, withdrawal lessons and in English lessons. A noteworthy example was when a teacher gave a hearing impaired pupil the confidence to give a short talk to the class from notes. They provide good feedback to pupils in the classroom. Marking and reports have comments that are encouraging and helpful about what needs to be done to improve. Teachers use homework effectively to review and extend learning. However, in view of the difference between past and current standards, it is significant that only one lesson was observed where the quality of teaching was very good. It was characterised by high expectations, probing questioning and challenging material. The teacher obliged all the pupils to be involved throughout, and motivated them to succeed by her energy, enthusiasm and good humour.

82. The overall quality of learning is good. Although learning is always at least satisfactory, a number of factors affect standards in some lessons at both key stages. Pupils are not engaged in lessons because tasks are insufficiently demanding. Inadequate planning to provide enough variety in the long lessons leads to loss of pace and interest. Apart from these occasions, pupils and students make reasonable progress in acquiring knowledge and skills and developing strategies and styles to cope with increasingly complex texts and tasks. They work productively with interest and concentration, and understand their own strengths and weaknesses.

83. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from the arrangements made to support their learning, and their support teachers provide valuable assistance in the classroom. As a result they make progress at the same rate as other pupils. The success of the approach is evident in the fact that all pupils entered for GCSE English in 1999 gained grades A*-G.

84. At the last inspection, the quality of teaching was referred to as "ranging from sound to very good with a very few lessons which had some shortcomings". Much the same situation still exists, and the department should do more to raise the expectations of pupils, and particularly the standards of attainment of higher attainers, by monitoring and improving the consistency of teaching standards across the department.

MATHEMATICS

85. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests at Key Stage 3, the proportion of pupils achieving nationally expected levels was well above the national average. In relation to average points scored, attainment was also well above the national average. Attainment was above the national average for schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. The performance of girls was similar to that of boys. Results in mathematics were similar to those in science and better than in English. Between 1997 and 1998 pupils' average levels of attainment improved at a similar rate to national averages. Improvement from 1998 to 1999 was at a faster rate than that nationally.

86. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C was well above the national average. These results represent a significant improvement on 1997 and 1998 results and are as high as they should be, taking into account pupils' prior attainment. The proportion gaining A*-G was above the national average. Girls and boys achieved similar results. Pupils' performance in mathematics was better than in most other subjects. Results in mathematics were similar to those in science and better than those in

English.

87. In 1999 only five students took GCE A level examinations, which makes comparisons with national averages unreliable. All students were successful, two gaining the highest grade. In 1998, when 23 students were entered, the proportion gaining the highest grades was well above average, with over half achieving grade A.

88. On the basis of inspection evidence, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are well above those expected at the age of 14. Number and algebraic skills are satisfactory. In Year 8, higher attaining pupils can use formulae for the area of shapes and lower attaining pupils' understanding of percentages is developing well. In design and technology, pupils use formulae well in work on controlling devices. In science, pupils are able to use units of measurement and measuring equipment accurately. Understanding of shape and space is developed well; in Year 9 higher attaining pupils have a good understanding of locus, although lower attaining pupils still have difficulty in measuring angles accurately. Good progress is made with data handling skills. Year 9 pupils understand the concepts of probability well and in science all pupils use graphs well. Problem solving skills are developed effectively and, by the end of Year 9, pupils are able to identify patterns, establish rules and use formulae.

89. At the end of Key Stage 4 standards are well above those expected at the age of 16. Number skills are satisfactory. Year 10 higher attaining pupils show a good understanding of different kinds of numbers but, in Year 11, some average attaining pupils still have difficulty with the order of operations in calculations. In science, pupils use units of measurement well in calculations. Most pupils are able to use calculators accurately. Algebraic skills are satisfactory, with most pupils able to substitute numbers into formulae and calculate results. Data handling skills are good. In geography, pupils make very effective use of data handling techniques in their coursework. Pupils continue to develop a good understanding of shape and space. In Year 11, higher attaining pupils can draw accurately the graphs of trigonometric functions. Problem solving skills are well developed and most pupils are able to identify patterns, establish rules and formulae and predict and test results. Higher attaining pupils can extend investigations appropriately.

90. Standards in the work seen in the sixth form are above average. Year 12 students show a good understanding of sine and cosine rules and are able to apply confidently formulae for force and power to the motion of objects. Year 13 students are developing a good understanding of projectile motion.

91. The overall quality of teaching is good. In the sixth form it is very good. Effective teaching is ensuring good progress and improving all pupils' standards of work at Key Stage 3. It is raising levels of attainment at Key Stage 4 and promoting good standards at A level. All teachers have good subject knowledge. Teachers in the sixth form have very good subject knowledge. Lesson planning is good. Effective links are made between lessons and appropriate teaching methods are used. Good attention is given to mental arithmetic. Where learning support assistants are provided they are used well and contribute effectively to the good progress of pupils with special educational needs. Teachers usually manage pupils well and lessons are usually conducted at a good pace. The available time is used well, ensuring good quality learning for different groups of pupils. Questioning of pupils is generally well done but teachers do not always explore fully what pupils know and understand. Good use is made of different levels of tasks and resources to develop pupils' skills, knowledge, and understanding. Limited access to computers restricts opportunities to use them to support learning. Challenging activities are provided and homework is used well to build upon what pupils know. Good feedback is given to

pupils about their progress during lessons and in marking of books. Where teaching is weakest, the management and control of pupils are insecure and the pace of lessons is slow.

92. The quality of learning is good. Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 3. Broadly average levels of attainment on entry are improved significantly to well above national averages by the end of the key stage. Progress at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory: well above average levels of attainment are maintained, with pupils usually achieving expected results in line with their prior attainment. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. This is reflected in the 1999 GCSE results where few pupils failed to gain at least a grade G. However, withdrawal from lessons for one period each week for literacy support slows the progress of some of these pupils. Progress is very good in the sixth form where students are often given responsibility for their own learning. Throughout the school, higher, average and lower attaining pupils all make good progress. Pupils acquire skills, knowledge and understanding well. They work productively and at a good pace during lessons and usually show interest in what they are doing. There is no significant difference between the progress of boys and girls.

93. Attitudes to learning are generally good. Pupils usually behave well in class, although teachers have to work hard in some lessons to ensure the co-operation of a significant number of pupils. Pupils usually listen attentively when teachers are talking but there are instances when a substantial number of pupils do not apply themselves as they should and there are some who lack motivation. The presentation of work in books is good. Pupils take a pride in their work drawing tables, diagrams and charts neatly. Most pupils respond well to questioning and are keen to show what they know. Relationships between teachers and pupils are generally good. When concentration levels are not sustained, it is mainly in the long double lessons with lower sets, or when pupils are not managed well enough.

94. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department provides very clear direction for the subject and there is a very strong commitment by all staff to raising standards. Responsibility is delegated efficiently in the department and there is an evident sense of working together as a team. The department's budget is well managed to provide good supplies of textbooks, materials and equipment. The available accommodation is of poor quality. Teachers are doing their best to provide an effective learning environment although opportunities to display information and pupils' work are limited. The use of computers is planned for in good schemes of work but poor access to equipment means teachers are unable to use computers to support learning. Very good support is given to teachers through regular monitoring of teaching. The curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is good though the number of support staff in lessons is less than adequate. The available teaching staff are well deployed.

95. Statutory requirements are met but the opportunities to teach the requirements for information and communication technology are restricted. The curriculum provides a good range of learning opportunities for all pupils. All pupils have the opportunity to take GCSE examinations. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. Good analysis of data is carried out to track pupils' progress. Effective use is made of assessment to inform planning and teaching.

96. A number of improvements have been made since the last inspection. Teaching is now good at both key stages and very good in the sixth form. The quality of learning is now good at all levels. Appropriate tasks are provided for all pupils and the pace of most lessons is good. Marking now provides good information to help pupils improve.

SCIENCE

97. Attainment on entry to the school is high in science and, at the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is well above national averages. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, results were well above the national average and above average in comparison with schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. Results in science are similar to those in mathematics and higher than in English. Pupils' performance has been well above average for the last four years. There are no significant differences between girls' and boys' attainment.

98. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is well above national averages. In 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-G was well above average. Pupils did better in science than in most of their other subjects. Results were similar to those in mathematics and higher than in English. In comparison with similar schools, results are above average. Results have improved each year for the last three years. There are no significant differences between girls' and boys' attainment.

99. Attainment at A level is in line with national averages. Biology and chemistry had better results than physics in 1999.

100. In work seen during the inspection, standards of attainment are above average at both key stages with many pupils reaching well above average standards. Standards match those expected in the sixth form. Pupils in science can complete written work accurately, use appropriate terminology and units. They can explain what they have done and discuss what they are planning to do, with confidence. They use practical equipment correctly and competently so that they get accurate results. They are able to identify limitations in a practical experiment and suggest alternative solutions. For example, Key Stage 3 pupils using choice chambers to explore behaviour were able to suggest an improvement to the experiment when the creatures they were using were stuck in damp cotton wool. At Key Stage 4 a group of pupils investigating the behaviour of a spring, with a mass attached, were able to suggest ways in which they could improve the readings they were getting by modifications to the apparatus. They work supportively in groups and teams with a commitment to achieving results and they help one another. Some pupils are confident at making notes and most are confident using numbers to draw graphs, recording results and using appropriate formulae. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve good standards of work, with support, and develop competent practical skills. Students in the sixth form keep good records of their work. They are able to recall previously learned information and apply it in new situations. For example, they can predict the likely result of a series of reactions in organic chemistry. They have good practical skills and work well together in groups to solve problems. Year 12 students are able to manipulate delicate equipment and apply knowledge from other disciplines to separate DNA. Student in Year 13 can discuss their work confidently. Year 12 students are less confident and tend to lack a sense of urgency.

101. Attitudes are satisfactory overall. At Key Stage 3 pupils are excited and enthusiastic about science. They get to lessons on time and are well equipped. They behave responsibly in lessons and handle apparatus carefully. They are enquiring and ask perceptive questions. In a small number of lessons, pupils chatter and distract each other so that time is wasted and work is unfinished. At Key Stage 4 pupils are able to plan their work and show a greater degree of independence. They can consider alternative solutions and ask challenging questions. A significant minority of pupils in Year 10 lack interest and motivation and are uncooperative in lessons. They distract other pupils and do not have

the skills to complete their work independently. They cannot explain what they are doing or use appropriate terminology. For example, one group of pupils could not give another word for force without considerable prompting and did not understand the term 'pressure'. Attitudes in the sixth form are satisfactory although a few students in Year 12 lack confidence in practical work and find it difficult to talk about their work.

102. The overall quality of teaching is good. In a small number of lessons teaching is very good. Where this is the case the teacher sets a good pace and challenge, resources are ready and appropriate and good practice is established in practical work. Relationships are good and pupils respond enthusiastically. The atmosphere is creative and businesslike. When teaching is good, lessons are well planned, objectives are set and shared with the pupils, behaviour is well managed and teachers have high expectations of pupils. Good questions draw out pupils' previous knowledge and at the end of lessons objectives are reviewed to remind pupils of what they have done. There is consistent use of appropriate scientific terminology and expectation that pupils will use it. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in science. They receive some support but a number of pupils are able to work independently and achieve high standards. At Key Stage 4, particularly, there is some team teaching in which pupils with special educational needs work successfully with the most able pupils on investigations. They are able to provide detailed and accurate accounts of their investigations and are able to describe their findings confidently. In a small number of lessons, behaviour is not managed satisfactorily, time is wasted and pupils do not make enough progress.

103. Assessment is used to monitor pupils' progress. Pupils know how well they are doing and some are clear about their targets. Teacher assessment is accurate but is not yet used consistently across the department to support lesson planning.

104. Learning is satisfactory or good in the majority of lessons. When pupils are clear about what they have to do and they apply themselves to the task, they make good progress. Practical tasks are completed skilfully and competently and ideas are nurtured. Good use of resources to demonstrate concepts and good use of questions to challenge pupils ensure that knowledge is extended. High expectations of good behaviour lead to good relationships between teachers and pupils so that the pace of lessons is maintained. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are able to explain difficult concepts in ways that engage pupils' attention and extend their understanding. In lessons where learning is not satisfactory, demands by teachers are inconsistent, pupils lack motivation and time is wasted.

105. The head of department provides clear educational direction with an emphasis on high standards. Teaching is monitored and there is a supportive atmosphere in the department. There is a departmental development plan that includes targets to improve use of information and communication technology and better use of assessment for curriculum planning. Lessons are well planned, and are related to the schemes of work, with clear objectives that are shared with the pupils. Materials and resources are well matched to pupils' needs. Flexibility in the schemes of work allows teachers to use a good range of different teaching strategies. Opportunities to share good practice need to be extended in

order to improve the ability of some teachers to deal effectively with poor behaviour, which is having an impact on learning in a minority of lessons.

106. Since the last inspection, the department has developed a good range of teaching strategies, including team teaching, which are effective in promoting pupils' learning. Marking is generally good and pupils know how well they are performing. Policy development has included a new syllabus at Key Stage 3, still to be implemented in Year 9. Information and communication technology is being developed and is being used effectively at Key Stage 4. Strategies to support learning and support for pupils with special educational needs are particularly effective at Key Stage 4.

ART

107. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is above average. In the sixth form attainment is average.

108. In 1999, GCSE results for grades A*-C and A*-G were above national averages. Boys' results were well above the national average for boys, but below those of girls. Pupils perform as well in art as in most subjects. 1998 results show that girls did exceptionally well in that year making the overall results significantly higher than national averages.

109. At A level during the past three years numbers have been small with average results, falling mainly between grades B-D.

110. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average. Pupils' observational drawing, painting and modelling skills are of a good standard, and they have a good knowledge of a range of techniques, artists, styles and art vocabulary. Work in sketchbooks shows good attention to detail, understanding of perspective, proportion and geometrical features such as ellipses. Pupils are able to realise their intentions effectively over a wide range of imaginative subjects because their skills are well developed, for example in Year 9's 'time travel' pictures.

111. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is above average. Pupils show well learned skills and knowledge in the production of impressive quantities of drawings, paintings, pottery and research. The best of the work is sensitively done and often highly imaginative, for example an excellent three-dimensional 'Green Man' peering out from among realistic ivy leaves. The research for this included a trip to Oxford to look at gargoyles on the buildings there. Other examples of outstanding Year 11 work include a pottery totem pole, illustrating two generations of the pupils' family, some excellent studies of marine life, a powerful 'death and drugs' piece and a striking lino print, in several colours, of a phoenix.

112. In work seen during the inspection, attainment in the sixth form is average. The work provides evidence of well learned drawing, painting and modelling skills being further developed and consolidated in the examination projects. Research is thorough and well written though not always well spelt. A recent visit to Paris to a number of galleries has been inspirational and influential.

113. At all stages attitudes to art and behaviour in lessons are generally very good. There is a good take-up for GCSE and A level. Pupils show respect for each other's work. Substantial quantities of work, including a great many pots, are attractively displayed around

the school and are undamaged. Pupils are motivated and often work, in their own time, in the department and in the art club.

114. The quality of teaching is very good at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Lessons are interesting, well prepared and effectively presented, promoting very good attitudes and behaviour. Pupils understand the aims of lessons and are able to see art processes demonstrated by very able practitioners. For example, some outstanding Year 9 Cubist style paintings of a still life owed much of their success to the skill of the teacher in making abstract ideas understandable and achievable by all the pupils. A deft demonstration was observed with intense concentration and followed by keen application to their own pieces of work. The well structured schemes of work plan for a steady development of key skills in drawing, painting and modelling throughout the key stages, encouragement of pupils' imaginations and the acquisition of knowledge of artists, styles and appropriate art vocabulary.

115. The quality of learning is very good at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Well planned schemes of work and well taught lessons lead the pupils to understand the processes of art and to develop good observational drawing skills, good control of painting skills and good modelling skills especially in ceramics, which are a strong feature of the art curriculum. Management of the subject is very good. Performance in the subject is monitored effectively, with the result that high, average and low attaining pupils develop their skills, knowledge and understanding to a higher level than expected. Pupils with special educational needs learn and make progress as well as expected.

116. Standards of attainment were described as 'sound to good' at Key Stage 3 in the last report and 'good overall' at Key Stage 4. GCSE results were above local and national averages and A level results were 'sound.' Since then standards have improved to above average at Key Stage 3 and above average standards have been maintained at Key Stage 4 and in GCSE. A level continues to be average, with small numbers. However, in the current rather larger A level groups there are a number of very able students with the potential to achieve high grades. Criticism in the last report of resources for painting and drawing at Key Stage 4 has been remedied. However, the only other critical comment, which concerned insufficient opportunity to use information and communication technology, still applies. Access to computers is very limited.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

117. Standards are above average in design and technology across all key stages. A substantial proportion of pupils are attaining very high standards.

118. The results of teacher assessments in 1999 were well above national averages. Work observed during the inspection confirms this assessment because pupils' designing skills are as strong as their making skills. The design sheets and prompts, which guide planning, are good. The system of assessment that tracks pupils across all elements of design and technology has been well researched and is planned to build on prior attainment and help pupils identify their strengths and weaknesses. However, the department does not have a clear indication of actual design and technology skills, knowledge and understanding when pupils arrive in school at the start of Year 7, so initial planning fails to capitalise on pupils' potential.

119. In 1999, the combined GCSE results across all elements of design and technology were well above national averages and were the highest results in the school. Two subjects, resistant materials and child development, had disappointing results that held the

final subject average down. However, the average points scores indicate that both boys and girls attained better results in design and technology than in their other courses. The school does not meet National Curriculum requirements for design and technology at Key Stage 4 by providing courses for all pupils.

120. A level examination results are improving and numbers wishing to take the course are increasing. In 1999 one student attained a B grade and all students gained pass grades. These figures were an improvement on the previous year and very close to estimated grades.

121. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average. Pupils confidently develop a specification from a task brief and can research, test, produce and evaluate products that match their purpose. For example, Year 8 pupils designed a clock for a specific market and then evaluated their design against the original specification. Displays of Year 7 'Tamagotchi' point of sale packaging indicated how pupils were able to plan for customer appeal when designing packaging. In food technology, Year 9 pupils were challenged to experiment with recipe ideas for a themed restaurant that served food from other cultures. Excited discussion and careful thinking produced a range of alternative dishes that were tested. Pupils then used their analysis to inform their final choice. Pupils have good drawing skills and use technical vocabulary well.

122. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is above average. Pupils extend knowledge and understanding of their chosen element of design and technology. They work with increasing precision and also show a keen awareness of health and safety issues. Through modelling their ideas and analysing other designers' work, pupils clarify their designs and make decisions about modifications that may be needed. A minority of pupils have difficulty meeting deadlines. As a result of the analysis of examination results, the department has introduced strategies to support these pupils. Computers are used for skills tasks at Key Stage 3 and for presentation and analysis of Key Stage 4 projects. The quality of computers available to the department restricts the development of computer aided design and manufacture.

123. In work seen in the sixth form, standards of attainment are above average overall. A level work is steadily improving. The small group work and enhanced study skills allow students to develop as young designers and improve their independent decision making through their research. Students use their design and technology skills from Key Stage 4 to support their work in the sixth form, but many begin the A level design course with little graphics background and this is reflected in the lack of A grades in examinations.

124. Pupils with special educational needs work well in design and technology. The department has invested time in planning to meet the needs of all pupils. Staff know their pupils well and work closely with learning support assistants, when they are available.

125. The quality of teaching in the department is never less than satisfactory, with a substantial proportion being good and better. The design and technology team is a group of demanding enthusiasts with a passion for their subject. The majority can teach across a range of materials and have experience in industry as well as education. These features enrich pupils' acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding because the teachers' commitment is infectious and challenges pupils to excel at a personal level. Celebration of success is a strong feature of the department's work. Pupils' achievement across all key stages, displayed in the department, is of high quality and used during lessons as exemplar work to benchmark expected standards. To enhance planning and understanding, teachers use a wide range of techniques to emphasise technical vocabulary. The design sheets

provide a writing frame that allows pupils to practise annotation, explanation and extended writing. Similarly, mathematics is used to strengthen subject skills. At both key stages and in the sixth form, pupils work to scale, analyse data, weigh, measure and construct with accuracy. Other key skills such as computer use are included in the subject planning. The consistency of all this work contributes to raising standards. Expectations of standards, personal discipline and presentation are clear and pupils meet those expectations. For example, homework is given a high importance in the project on signs in Year 8. Pupils know that the homework, returned with detailed feedback at the start of the lesson, is the foundation for learning to continue. There is no question of homework being forgotten. The best lessons have rigorous reference to meeting time constraints, which helps pupils to set targets for completion. Assessment is very good. Teachers give detailed feedback and support to pupils, enabling them to modify their work and set targets for improvement.

126. High quality resources and artefacts enhance teaching and learning. Many of the items used to stimulate pupils' enthusiasm have been made within the department through close co-operation between the staff and the teacher/technician. These items fire ideas and prompt pupils' creativity, eventually inspiring very good results. For example, during a child development lesson when revision was becoming wearing and losing impact, pupils were given the practical challenge of producing a child's toy from items as basic as a sheet, wallpaper, two plastic cups and string. This challenge then formed the basis for a revision question on education and children's play. From being worn down by revision, pupils became inspired and animated, which boosted learning. The refurbishment of the department also enhances teaching because teachers are proud of the area. There are some inconsistencies in health and safety markings and policies for the use of personal protective equipment.

127. The last report identified low standards and unsatisfactory learning. These issues have been tackled effectively by the introduction of thorough assessment in the widest format, including self-assessment, giving pupils independence and responsibility for their own learning.

128. Management of the department has been a major contributory factor to the rise in standards. For example at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session the department manager supports teachers by systematically but discreetly monitoring the start of sessions. Team meetings make good use of data, and analysis is used very effectively within the team to moderate the standards achieved and identify matters that need to be improved.

GEOGRAPHY

129. By the end of Key Stage 3, teachers estimate the attainment of pupils to be well above the national average. The inspection of lessons and the scrutiny of exercise books confirm these findings.

130. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C in GCSE examinations has improved by 14 per cent over the last three years and was above the national average in 1999. The number of higher grades has doubled over the last three years, but the number of A* grades remain much the same. The few girls who choose to study geography attain higher standards than the boys. The average points score is lower than it should be because of underachievement by a number of immature boys of average and above average prior attainment who are lacking motivation; most of these gain low scores on the coursework paper. Some of these boys were admitted to the school after Year 7 and arrived with poor learning habits. Compared with results in other subjects, geography has improved from

being the poorest performing department to being close to average. Although numbers are small, attainment on the GCSE short course is well above the national average.

131. Overall standards in A level examinations are above average. The average grade attained has risen over the last three years from a grade E to a grade C. All candidates passed in 1999 and the number of higher grades was well above the national average.

132. Pupils arrive in Year 7 attaining at a level slightly above the national average; there is no difference between the attainment of boys and girls. In work seen during the inspection, by the end of Key Stage 3 standards are well above the national average. Girls do better than boys and some boys under-achieve. Pupils gain good habits in Year 7 related to using homework diaries, completing homework on time and laying out their work. They learn how to recognise the reasons for the choices of places to build settlements and begin to recognise them on Ordnance Survey maps. Others are justifiably proud of their assessed task on the Tees Valley, which is very well displayed. Year 8 pupils can talk at length about their farm study. By the end of the key stage, they are able to complete well researched, extended homework. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are broadly average. Pupils are able to identify the features of development zones and the structure of cities from analysis of photographs. For example, Year 10 pupils show that they understand the concepts of urban development and green belts. Standards at the end of the sixth form are above average. For example, a Year 13 class worked together well to show very good, incisive skills at comparing and contrasting two plans of the same town centre.

133. Teaching is good: it is occasionally very good and is never less than satisfactory. It is better at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form than at Key Stage 4. Minority time teachers at Key Stage 3 are good geographers, or well deployed to make best use of their skills. The full-time teachers are very good geographers whose strong subject knowledge is displayed in the way they manage classrooms and in the clarity of their explanations. Teachers know their pupils well and relationships are good. Behaviour is well controlled. Interest and the pace of lessons are maintained by the variety of methods and resources used. Teachers frequently use two textbooks, a map or atlas, work sheets and video in the same lesson. Pupils do not always arrive at lessons together, so that the beginning of the lesson lacks immediate impact. However, teachers establish and maintain a rapid pace based on strong planning of lessons. Texts and exemplar materials are skilfully used to illustrate points. Very good concept maps, built up on the board, provide excellent lesson summaries at all levels and particularly for examination revision. Teachers work much harder than pupils in class because they provide all that pupils are required to know, without letting them find out for themselves.

134. Writing skills are used well and interpretation of number in various forms is effectively woven into the fabric of most lessons. However, pupils' talk is underused. There is some good reading out loud and pupils are sometimes allowed to talk informally together in pairs to share their knowledge and understanding.

135. Teachers identify pupils with special educational needs, including very high attainers. They support pupils of all prior attainment levels well. Classroom assistants are employed productively, but there are insufficient to support in every classroom where they are needed. Teachers make no use in class of information and communication technology, except occasionally of the weather station. The course at Key Stage 3 contains insufficient practical work and fieldwork to provide a good foundation for Key Stage 4. A good variety of enquiry-based homework is well planned at Key Stage 3 to allow pupils to work at their own level and pace and to provide key assessments for establishing National Curriculum

levels. Marking is thorough, but there are insufficient comments that provide pupils with targets for improvement. Good records of the progress of each pupil are passed on through the department but this procedure is not yet used well enough to identify underachievement early or to inform teaching.

136. Learning is better at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form than at Key Stage 4. Pupils benefit well from the visual stimulus of the video. For example, Year 9 girls empathised with an Amazonian girl having her hair pulled out, as a rite of passage, and Year 12 students were shocked into awed silence watching a video of an earthquake which caused a landslide down the side of Mount St Helens. Learning is satisfactory at Key Stage 4. Year 10 are learning better than Year 11. Pupils learn to manage books and maps very well at all key stages. They are good at analysing sources, such as photographs, maps and diagrams.

137. The department is well led and is very well organised. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Teachers make a good team and the full-time teachers form an effective partnership committed to further improvement. Except for the absence of computers, resources are good. Rooms are small for large classes.

HISTORY

138. Standards of work are satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form and good at Key Stage 4. Pupils achieve well at all key stages in relation to their prior attainment. Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 were well above the national average. They were higher than the standard observed in Year 9, which is just above national expectations. The percentage of candidates achieving grades A*-C in GCSE examinations in 1999 was well above the national average and an improvement on the two previous years. Boys and girls achieved similar standards. All pupils entered on the full course achieved a grade. More than half the twelve entrants to the short course gained grades A*-C. Most pupils achieved at least satisfactory standards in relation to their attainment at the end of Key Stage 3. At A level all candidates have passed in the last three years. Whereas in 1998 two of the five candidates achieved A grades, in 1999 the grades were unjustifiably low in the opinion of the school. A serious dispute with the examination board over the results is still unsettled.

139. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at age 14 is satisfactory overall, with some pupils achieving high and a few very high standards. Pupils show an ability to acquire and consolidate historical information, successfully fitting new knowledge into an historical context. Some Year 8 pupils have confidence to argue over whether Oliver Cromwell's massacre in Drogheda could be justified. A Year 9 class had mature understanding of the change in naval attitudes demonstrated by submarine commanders during World War I.

140. In work seen during the inspection at age 16, many pupils reach good GCSE standards. The causes and the consequences of events are well worked out. Pupils understand the importance of different and varied factors which contributed to the advancement or hindrance of progress in medicine during past centuries. They make good use of bullet points in their notes. Pupils' recall of earlier work is often good but some pupils do not thoroughly and accurately learn historical facts. At both key stages, pupils' evaluation of written and pictorial sources is good. Students in the sixth form read copiously and

critically. They have increasing skill in the organisation of large quantities of material. Their perception in the analysis of evidence to support different historical interpretations is good.

141. Pupils respond well to the interesting work, the orderly classrooms and firm discipline of the department. At Key Stage 3 a high proportion of pupils have positive attitudes. They are generally quick to tackle the different tasks set and many are engaged by the topics studied. There are healthy signs of enquiry by individuals. Teachers take time to listen. A small minority of pupils are rather passive though well behaved. There is good collaboration in paired work. Group work is not practicable, as the rooms are too small. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, students are nearly all serious and hard working. Their files are generally well organised. Some coursework at both stages shows evidence of sustained effort.

142. The quality of teaching is good throughout the department. All lessons observed were at least satisfactory. A large majority were good and nearly half very good. The four history teachers are good communicators. They believe in the value of their subject and their enthusiasm is infectious. They present work to their classes in a variety of ways, which have a positive impact on both motivation and standards. They use high quality source materials and work sheets but take care to train pupils to research from books as well. Very occasionally in a lesson the teacher is working harder than a number of those being taught. At Key Stage 3, good opportunities are given for the experience of empathy, as when pupils write a diary of a day in the life of a plague doctor. There has been good refinement of the level of challenge made to pupils of different attainment since the last inspection. At Key Stage 4, very good training is given in examination techniques. Causes and consequences of events and attitudes are well explored and understood, for example in the study of the American government's policy to destroy the culture and lifestyle of the American Indians. Some, though not enough, links are made between events in the past and present day national and international events. More consistent attention needs to be given to spelling of both historical and general words. All teachers strive to extend their pupils' vocabulary. In some lessons there is excellent attention to learning new words, for example on medieval monasteries in Year 7 and on the rise of Oliver Cromwell in Year 8, but too little effort is made to encourage pupils to use the new words in their own work. Teachers make appropriate and rigorous demands on sixth form students, expecting a high level of concentration and achievement. Students are given increasing responsibility for their own learning. Class work in history using information and communication technology is planned but not carried out because of a lack of accessible equipment.

143. The quality of learning at Key Stages 3 and 4 is usually good or very good. The good variety of oral and written work reinforces knowledge and understanding. Some pupils, especially high attainers, take on extra work at home. Pupils' attention is held by the generally brisk pace of lessons, and by touches of humour and drama. Pupils with special educational needs are given much appropriate help by teachers and by support staff, especially in individual and paired work. Their progress in relation to their prior attainment is satisfactory and sometimes good.

144. Consideration of right and wrong in human action in times past helps pupils' moral development. Studies of societies so different from their own, such as the Roman Empire or the indigenous peoples of North America, make a good contribution to pupils' social and cultural development. The local history part of the GCSE syllabus brings awareness of the pupils' own cultural heritage.

145. The management of history is very efficient. There is very clear educational direction and much sharing and extension of good practice. Marking has improved since the last inspection and there is now a good standard of constructive comments on work at all key stages. Interesting, relevant expeditions are a feature of the department. At the end of inspection week, 40 pupils from Year 9 set out for the battlefields of Belgium. Follow-up work from expeditions has been well developed since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

146. Standards in information technology are good in Year 7 where there is a carefully planned programme of skills and application. As pupils move through the school, skills diminish because of lack of access to equipment and coherent practice.

147. Teacher assessments of standards at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 were well above national expectation. These assessments do not match the work seen during the inspection. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is in line with national averages; results are not analysed by gender. The school does not have a baseline assessment for IT and relies on information from assessments and tests that are administered for core subjects. This approach causes the school to miss the opportunity to identify and record skills pupils bring from home and their primary school.

148. At Key Stage 4, the school offers a short GCSE course in IT. This course will be examined for the first time in 2000.

149. About 30 per cent of the sixth form, who take general national vocational qualifications, have IT lessons. Their attainment is in line with expectation. They learn to use IT to aid problem solving and can apply basic skills, such as word processing and the use of spreadsheets and databases, throughout GNVQ units of work. A level students do not have formal teaching in the use of IT. However, many acquire good experience in subjects such as design and technology where, among other basic skills, the digital camera is used.

150. The Year 7 IT course gives pupils a sound grounding in the use of IT. They can use a variety of fonts, in word processing. They are able to manipulate text, for example, in the personal profiles, written in French, stored in their computer file. In subjects such as design and technology, pupils complete their packaging for a 'Tamagotchi' by using a computer drawing package to present a professional bubble pack that would be suitable for manufacturing by mass production. Subjects such as science and English are also represented on the course, but the influence of this good work diminishes across Key Stage 3 as opportunities to use computers become erratic and are too dependent on chance. Teacher assessment gives a generous estimate to the work of Key Stage 3. Assessments are in the context of the formal teaching of IT in Year 7, but do not reflect the fragmentation and lack of practice in Years 8 and 9. The estimated levels at the end of Year 9 are as a result of assessment feedback from a minority of subjects. However, there are no records to show the actual opportunities to develop pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding across the curriculum. A range of well-planned contracts has been negotiated between the IT co-ordinator and heads of department, but limited access to equipment and insufficient teacher training result in the whole school commitment to IT lacking structure and fulfilment.

151. Work seen at Key Stage 4 during the inspection was below national expectations. Years 10 and 11 have completed mock examinations, which have identified a shortfall in knowledge and understanding. This is because there is no coherent approach to IT in

Years 8 and 9, so that pupils join the IT option with limited background knowledge. Pupils at Key Stage 4 are dependent on teacher support and do not wish to co-operate or work independently. In Year 11 the opportunity to revise for their GCSE is carefully planned, but pupils do not use it effectively. At this key stage, reporting to parents does not include a statement about pupils' competence in IT. In the sixth form, IT attainment is dependent on the courses that students follow. There is a consistent approach to IT within the GNVQ key skills course, but other A level courses have no planned provision.

152. Pupils with special educational needs, at both key stages, benefit from the use of information and communication technology. They see their work on screen looking well presented and accurate, which boosts their self-esteem. For example, researching on the Internet after school has helped some pupils to make a good response to a homework question in geography. Some have trouble with the icons, such as the spell check, but they know what the icons should do and are prepared to experiment with their use, which generally increases confidence.

153. Attitudes and behaviour are generally good. However, the immature behaviour of a minority of pupils in Year 11, which wastes time, affects their progress and interferes with the learning of others in their class. Many pupils at Key Stage 3 and a few pupils at Key Stage 4 seize the opportunity to attend school clubs to develop their skills and understanding.

154. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. The small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is the result of failure to control immature, rude behaviour in Year 11. The teachers who form the IT team come from a number of subjects. They have personal interest or industrial experience in IT, which has a positive impact on learning. The Year 7 team leader has developed a strong and comprehensive programme of IT skills and application, which forms the basis of planning for the teaching team. This planning approach ensures consistency across the team. At Key Stage 4 planning is prompted by the syllabus from the examination board. Discrete teaching at all stages of learning gives full attention to technical vocabulary to enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding. Aspects of numeracy are taught through use of spreadsheets. Expectations of attitude, presentation and independence are shared with the pupils. The teaching of IT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory because the school is not meeting its statutory requirement to teach appropriate information and communication technology through all subjects.

155. Marking and assessment vary in quality and do not always contain enough analysis in the form of written comments to explain a grade or to enable pupils to set their own targets for improvement. Teachers make good use of the learning support assistants on the rare occasions when support is available. Teachers set homework, when appropriate, usually in the form of research.

156. Effective steps have been taken to meet some of the issues identified in the last report. Pupils' skills remain variable but are improving with the increase in equipment. Much of the equipment around the school is out of date. Changes in the computers in the main IT room have made many of the CD-ROMs incompatible with the system, which has a negative impact on cross-curricular IT. The school continues to be below the national average in ratio of computers to pupils which limits access. Reporting, previously criticised, is now in place at Key Stage 3.

157. A number of additional factors affects the quality of IT provision in the school. The co-ordinator has two other major roles that leave little time to manage IT effectively. This is compounded by the lack of time for the IT team to meet and discuss curriculum issues. The

design of the IT room is unsuitable for its purpose. The lack of a briefing area and a large monitor for whole-class teaching presents difficulties for teaching and learning. For example, Year 7 classes have to sit on the floor if the lesson is to start with a whole-class review or consolidation of previous work. The layout of computers in the main IT room blocks the line of vision between teachers and pupils, which on occasions makes behaviour management difficult. The fans required to maintain the room temperature and to keep the computers cool cause problems when pupils are using work sheets as there are no document holders to secure the paper; this makes working difficult. The school recognises its difficulties and has a clear plan for development.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

158. All pupils take French in Year 7 and both French and German in Years 8 and 9. At both key stages, standards in French are above average and above the expected standard, given the attainment of pupils on entry to the school. Standards in German are average. In the sixth form, standards are above average, and in line with the ability of the students.

159. In 1999, pupils were assessed by their teachers as working above the national level by the end of Key Stage 3. This has consistently been the case in recent years and is confirmed by the work seen during the inspection.

160. Examination results at GCSE in French are above the national figure for those gaining grades A*-C and grades A*-G. In 1999, boys did particularly well, achieving results which were 20 per cent above the national figure for A*-C grades. In German, results in recent years have been above the national figure but last year results were less good, with pupils achieving half a grade lower in German than in their other subjects. This was due to particular circumstances and indications are that standards are back to their usual level this year. At A level, students achieve in line with their prior attainment and results have been consistently above average in French. There have not been any entries in German since 1997.

161. From work seen during the inspection at age 14, pupils show a very good understanding of spoken language. This is because teachers always use French and German as their main means of communication in class. In the best lessons, pupils are able to use the language effectively to communicate with the teacher. Speaking is well developed and particularly good in French, where pupils are encouraged to extend their answers and to talk to each other in the language. Pupils enjoy speaking and do so with good accents. In most lessons, pupils of all levels of attainment are supported by material that is appropriate to their needs and this enables them to make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set for them, particularly when they are taught with pupils of similar ability. In work seen at the age of 16, pupils are able to express themselves very well in speaking and writing, with higher attaining pupils demonstrating the ability to write in accurate and interesting language with obvious pleasure. Pupils who study French have better opportunities to extend their work because they have had more lessons at Key Stage 3 to give them a firm foundation for progress. Standards in literacy are good, and reinforced by the wide range of material that is used in the classroom. Some work is covered using information and communication technology, but at present access to the facilities makes it difficult for this to be a regular feature of lessons. In work seen during the inspection at the age of 18, attainment is above the level expected nationally. Students are able to talk competently in French on a wide range of issues and substantiate their opinions well. They show a very good understanding of grammar and use this to produce good written work. Their listening skills are enhanced by the use of excellent taped material and videos in addition to input by the teachers.

162. The quality of teaching is good overall and sometimes very good or inspirational in French. Lessons are well planned to take into account the needs of individual pupils, including those on the special educational needs register. Teachers have excellent knowledge of their subjects and know their pupils well. The best lessons have a range of activities that cover the four targets of listening, speaking, reading and writing. An excellent Year 12 lesson enabled students to make excellent progress in their learning because it was carefully planned, with a good variety of activities in the four skills. It was conducted at a good pace and gave students a chance to consolidate work they had done before, as well as to cover new work. Music was used to inspire the students and to elicit an emotional response on the subject of bullfighting. Homework was effectively set to follow up the work done in class. Students took their work seriously, responding well to the teacher and enjoying the lesson because they were fully involved. In a Year 9 lesson, progress was only satisfactory because the teaching was less lively and was not geared closely enough to the needs of individuals. In both languages teachers use assessment at the end of each unit of work to judge the progress their pupils and students are making. This is linked to National Curriculum levels at Key Stages 3 and 4. Marking is completed regularly and gives some information about what the pupils know and can do and what they need to do to improve their work. There is good but limited use of information and communication technology, and teachers have the necessary skills to include it in their teaching. They make good use of the Internet as a teaching resource. Opportunities are limited by the lack of access to computers.

163. The quality of the pupils' learning is good overall, and very good in French. In German at Key Stage 3, pupils learn at a slower rate because they do not have many lessons and sometimes their German lesson is immediately after French, which can cause confusion. In Year 8, the wide ability range in German classes means that pupils are not always sufficiently challenged or supported in their learning, although some material is closely matched to pupils' abilities. In both languages, the very good use of the language by teachers means that pupils are able to develop their listening skills and then consolidate their learning through writing and reading.

164. Pupils show interest in their work and have a positive attitude to it. Behaviour in lessons is almost always good and sometimes very good. Work is usually well presented and carefully completed. Boys respond particularly well to the male teachers.

165. Management of the department is excellent. Monitoring of teaching and learning takes place regularly. The head of department has clear plans, which are very well thought out, and teachers work very well together with his guidance. This is leading to good standards of teaching and learning. The current textbook used for French is being reviewed, as is the languages curriculum. Lessons are too long and it is hard to maintain pupils' concentration, even with skilful teaching. Rooms are without blinds or carpets and this makes it difficult to teach at times. The activities room is well used and is an invaluable resource given that the small size of the classrooms makes it difficult to pursue carousel activities.

166. Since the last inspection the department has consolidated its work, improved the schemes of work for German and the documentation for assessment. Standards remain high because of the dedicated staff and the high profile of languages within the school. Good outcomes are further enhanced by the variety of visits and exchanges to both France and Germany, including a work experience visit by sixth formers. A large number of pupils participate in exchanges and this is an important factor in their motivation.

MUSIC

167. Standards vary widely across Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards are below national expectations. No assessments are made of standards of attainment on entry to the school. In work seen in Year 7, it is clear that a few pupils are exceptionally talented but, among the majority, standards are very low, commonly lower than the expectations for Key Stage 2 and, in the case of some pupils, even Key Stage 1. Teacher assessments were not made, as expected, in Year 9 in 1999. Observations confirm that, although attainment generally improves across the key stage, it remains, for most pupils, below average in relation to national expectations. This is especially so in respect of the depth, breadth and range of skills, knowledge and understanding expected at the end of Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, small numbers of committed pupils follow a GCSE course. In 1999, 11 pupils were entered, all gaining grades A*-G, with an above average proportion gaining grades A*-C. These results were only a little below the standards attained in 1998. Results in A level examinations of small entries in recent years have been variable. They were very good in 1997; there were no entries in 1998 and results were well below average in 1999.

168. From work seen during the inspection, it is clear that many pupils benefit from the specialist facilities available, particularly keyboard organs and music technology. However, a significant minority of pupils in Year 9 still confuse the most basic concepts, for example, movement of notes upwards or downwards. Many are insecure in their knowledge of simple musical notation. Such shortcomings point to the need for work that is much more closely matched to pupils' individual needs. Singing, although not well developed, is heard in classes at Key Stage 3 where warm-up exercises show that there is considerable potential. Pupils find it difficult to maintain an independent part, tending to shout to sustain their part against others, with consequently raucous tone. Extra-curricular activities do not regularly include a choir; this, like the recorder group, is convened for special occasions, last at Christmas. The school has a deserved reputation for its orchestra and swing band, which achieve good standards built upon the regular training given in their junior groups. The swing band regularly tours abroad. At all stages, especially at Key Stage 3, pupils appear uncertain of their own achievements, lacking confidence in their present attainments and tentative in their efforts to improve them.

169. Attitudes to music vary widely. In the sixth form and at Key Stage 4, most students are keen to succeed and settle well to work with increasing independence and with no behavioural disturbance. This has a significant impact upon improving standards across Key Stage 4. In contrast, at Key Stage 3, there is in many classes a small but significant number of pupils who seek or attract attention by discourteous and occasionally very poor behaviour. Teachers try to manage such situations sensitively and positively. However, occasional confrontations or mutterings of dissent distract the whole class and impede both teaching and learning with an evident impact upon standards.

170. Teachers show a caring commitment to their pupils, which is particularly evident in the more individual work at Key Stage 4, in the sixth form and in instrumental lessons. However, the quality of teaching overall is unsatisfactory. Although half the lessons are well or very well taught, there is a substantial amount of unsatisfactory and poor teaching. When this occurs, it is characterised by lack of appropriate pace, presentation and challenge. Learning objectives are not shared with pupils. Classroom management is poor. There is also little evaluation and feedback to help pupils to understand how well they doing. Good teaching is characterised by energy, commitment and dynamism. Then, teachers make clear to pupils the learning objectives and check that they are met by constantly monitoring work in progress. Such good teaching inspires comparable

responses from pupils, although they are sometimes hard won. For example, in a Year 9 class some pupils were disaffected but good behaviour management by the teacher ensured that progress was made. The motivation which good teaching inspires is evident in pupils' concentration upon work and their progress. However, although the caring attitudes of teachers are often very evident at Key Stage 3, they are frequently challenged by the poor attitudes and insensitivity of a significant minority of pupils who have a disruptive influence that depresses standards. Teachers are often working harder than their pupils.

171. Seven visiting instrumental teachers support the well-qualified and experienced school music staff. However, no additional support was seen in any music class for pupils with special educational needs. This places extra pressures upon both the pupils and class teachers. In one music class seen, there were two pupils with statements and five others on the special educational needs register, out a class of 24. The most talented and able pupils at Key Stage 3 are commonly involved in the work of the whole class and are only rarely given separate tasks or extending challenges. Lesson planning follows the school's revised curriculum, which has been substantially modified and improved since the last inspection. However, there remains much to be done, especially in relation to providing work which is closely matched to individual needs.

172. Learning is affected by the lack of appropriate assessment. Pupils are not made aware of the standards of their work through assessment. Pupils often lack confidence and understanding of their achievements. Assessment procedures, including self-assessment, are inadequate and ineffective since they do not regularly inform lesson planning and curriculum development. The lack of recording and reporting of attainment, especially at the beginning and end of Key Stage 3, means that it is very difficult to establish known baselines for further study and to enable the measurement of progress. Neither of these last two aspects of assessment is in place. Reliable measures of progress are therefore impossible.

173. Accommodation is adequate for whole-class teaching, but the acoustics of one room and the smaller size of the other restrict group and individual work, especially when visiting music teachers are using any of the four practice rooms. Resources are generally good, but the number of workstations for music information and communication technology is limited and all are in one room, restricting pupils' access. A wider range of software is needed to promote independent learning using information and communication technology and more classroom percussion to enhance the range of practical work possible in classes and groups.

174. Since the last inspection, time allocated to music has been increased. The schemes of work and lesson plans have been modified and improved but there remain too many shortcomings, so that improvement is very limited.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

175. Teacher assessments in 1999, at Key Stage 3, recorded pupils' standards in physical education as being above national expectations. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportions of pupils gaining grades A*-C and grades A*-G were above the national

averages. The results compare favourably with other results in the school. The 1999 group of 25 pupils was the first cohort to be entered for GCSE physical education.

176. In work seen during the inspection, attainment, at the age of 14, matches national expectations overall. It is above national expectations in soccer, badminton and basketball. In soccer, pupils are beginning to understand defensive strategies and to put them into game situations. Skills and strategies are known and understood in badminton and the level of some pupils' performance is well above national expectations. Girls' basketball is competitive, energetic and skilful in passing and positional play. A Year 7 class was seen performing below national expectations in rugby and gymnastics because of a lack of accuracy, control and quality in their movements. A Year 8 hockey and a Year 7 short tennis class achieved higher quality of skill because of the concentration they showed in the practices. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the age of 16 is in line with national expectations. In hockey, the majority of pupils can control a ball and pass effectively during a game, but they have difficulty in expanding their game to the right wing. Badminton skills vary across the range, from talented stroke makers to beginners, but overall the standard is in line with national expectations. The Year 11 GCSE group has satisfactory practical and oral abilities. However, written work is below expected standards because pupils do not express themselves clearly enough or make sufficiently detailed explanations. An immature outlook in the Year 10 GCSE group is a factor in underachievement and is preventing high attainment. In the work seen during the inspection, at the age of 18, there is a high attaining group following a sports leadership course. Their organisation, co-operation, enthusiasm and practical ability are very good. Other post-16 options which are offered do not attract support from students. There is commitment, at all key stages, to the extensive extra-curricular opportunities, where many teams and individuals reach high standards. Many pupils with low academic attainment succeed in the practical activities. The high attainers have further opportunities to improve through representation in county and national teams.

177. Pupils have a generally positive attitude towards the subject although absences and non-participating pupils in some Key Stage 4 lessons reflected some disenchantment. Relationships are good and most pupils co-operate effectively in paired and group work. Most activities are performed with enthusiasm and energy, particularly in games. Where practices are too complex, for example in a Year 7 rugby session, concentration wanes and learning is adversely affected. Where the level of skills expected is not challenging or appropriate, Year 10 pupils' enthusiasm for sport shifts to disruption. There is a very positive attitude towards the sports leadership course in the sixth form. The overall attitude to the subject is satisfactory.

178. The overall quality of teaching is good and, although the range is from excellent to unsatisfactory in the lessons observed, all the specialist staff taught at least one good lesson during the inspection. The teaching objectives are made clear to pupils and feedback is given in all lessons. Pupils are encouraged to organise their own warm-up and to evaluate their performance. Excellent teaching maintains pupils' concentration in the Year 11 GCSE theory class, together with clear instructions, high expectations, praising of good behaviour, detailed planning and very skilful class management. In a minority of lessons, instructions are lengthy and curtail activity; a large class of 36 posed organisational difficulties and, in one other lesson, practices failed to challenge the pupils. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is very good in games. In movement studies their knowledge is not as secure but the objectives of co-operation between the sexes in group work are being achieved. The teaching staff work very hard to maintain standards in pupils' progress through the key stages.

179. The overall progress by pupils through the key stages is satisfactory. A good balance of activities is offered together with the opportunity to extend performance levels through the extra-curricular programme. The bias is towards games, but sessions in gymnastics and movement studies promote creative experiences. In two instances, when progress was not satisfactory, pupil attitudes were negative and adequate support for an inexperienced teacher was not provided. The time allocation for physical education is generous, apart from in Year 9 where a re-allocation of time from Key Stage 4 would be beneficial to pupils' progress. The sixth form option programme is not effective in attracting students to take part in sport. The certificate course in sports leadership is providing very good learning opportunities. Mixed physical education is encouraged where appropriate and there is progress in social and co-operative skills.

180. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and movement studies, gymnastics and athletics provide breadth and balance. The GCSE option is well supported and contains 60 per cent practical work, which is ideal for talented games players. The extra-curricular programme is very good and there are good links with the sports clubs at the leisure centre and other local clubs. Approximately a third of the school population take part in the after-school games programme and all the specialist staff conduct the sessions. Assessment procedures are in place and recording is kept up to date. The department is preparing for the new arrangements for physical education in September 2000 by modifying schemes of work and updating their development planning. The leadership provides direction for the department but needs to focus more on support for the newly qualified teacher, a system for monitoring teaching and a timetable review. The experienced staff are well qualified and contribute effectively to pupils' learning because of their good teaching skills. They need to consider in-service training, including GCSE training, before next September. There are strong links with the leisure centre staff and this provides a flexible working arrangement in the fitness suite. The indoor accommodation is very good and the outside areas are well maintained. These facilities promote pupils' learning and respect for the environment. The gymnasium contains some old equipment that is still effective in providing challenges but requires more regular safety checks.

181. Since the last inspection a GCSE examination has been introduced and the first cohort achieved above average grades. The breadth and balance within the subject have improved. Extra-curricular provision maintains high standards. Gymnastics has remained the same and some pupils have weak basic skills in Year 7. Pupils plan and evaluate their performance more consistently. Non-participating pupils are given appropriate tasks, such as umpiring and written observations, during practical lessons.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

182. Standards have risen, since the last inspection, in examinations and in classwork. In 1996, the results at GCSE were below the national average but in 1998 and 1999 the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C at GCSE was well above average and all candidates obtained grades A*-G. Boys and girls achieved equally well. No examinations are taken in religious studies at A level, although the school now makes satisfactory provision for religious education in the sixth form through a module in the general studies course.

183. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment at the age of 14 matches the expectations set out in the Local Agreed Syllabus and exceeds them in some areas. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when standards varied between unsatisfactory and good. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject, which they pass on effectively to their pupils. By the end of Year 9, most pupils

have a good grasp of the main beliefs and practices of Christianity and of other world religions such as Judaism and Buddhism and they learn from religious belief as well as learning about it. For example, pupils can give detailed examples of how beliefs govern attitudes and behaviour in daily life, as in the following of dietary laws, and they understand how different faiths, such as Hinduism and animism, encompass a similar sense of responsibility towards the natural world.

184. Pupils are attentive listeners and most read aloud fluently, although girls do not project their voices as well as boys. Pupils respond promptly and accurately in question and answer sessions, but there is some weakness in oral work as many have difficulty in putting across their ideas with clarity and at reasonable length when engaging in sustained discussion. This is because they do not get enough practice in group discussion work. Pupils generally use religious terminology accurately and have a good knowledge of key words in Hebrew. Information is carefully recorded in exercise books, with good use of spider graphs, maps and illustrations and pupils' original writing is often above the expected standards. The work of pupils with special educational needs is improved by the use of well structured learning materials, such as prompts of key words and writing frames. However, this is not a consistent practice and the quality of work in a minority of books is below expectations. This is because assignments have been presented untidily and superficially and are sometimes incomplete.

185. By the age of 16, pupils following the Local Agreed Syllabus in the non-examination classes attain standards that generally match requirements. Work seen during the inspection shows that pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of Christian attitudes towards crime and punishment and the sanctity of life. Attainment in discussion and in appreciation of moral values often exceeds expectations. For example, pupils in a Year 11 class showed through their responses that they understood the way in which the offering of forgiveness, after a crime, can bring about healing and renewal. Pupils are articulate and well informed; they bring in knowledge from their experience and from resource materials to illustrate points and higher attainers speak eloquently. Attainment is often above average in the examination classes because of good teaching. For example, pupils have acquired a good understanding of the spiritual significance in Judaism of Shabbat and of certain historic places in Jerusalem. The overall quality of coursework is good. Pupils are well informed and write with clarity. They make good use of information and communication technology in presenting their work attractively. Higher attainers research their subjects in depth, using the Internet to locate relevant information and are skilled in expressing this information effectively in their own words.

186. Pupils' attitudes to their learning are generally good. Most pupils concentrate well and work in a responsible way. They are usually ready to listen to the views of others and they respond positively to the good opportunities that the subject provides for personal development. Behaviour is good in the majority of lessons, but a few boys in Year 11 find it difficult to wait their turn to speak and their interruptions have a detrimental effect on learning.

187. The quality of teaching at both key stages is good. This has a positive impact on pupils' learning and pupils of all levels of attainment make good progress. In three-quarters of the lessons seen the teaching was good and sometimes very good. There were no examples of unsatisfactory teaching. Strengths of the teaching include very good knowledge and understanding of the subject, careful lesson preparation and effective use of resources. For example, in a Year 10 lesson the teacher helped pupils to appreciate the rituals and symbolism of the Shabbat meal by getting them to enact the ceremony using appropriate religious artefacts, food and music. As a result of the good teaching, pupils

attained standards that were above average in detailed knowledge and in depth of understanding. The good relationships in the classroom encouraged pupils to enjoy the lesson and they built effectively upon the learning of previous lessons. There are a few shortcomings in the teaching. Time is not always used to best advantage in the double lesson and in some lessons there is a lack of variety in activity, which results in pupils losing interest because they have to listen for too long. At Key Stage 3, pupils do not have enough opportunities for structured group discussion work in which they can contribute ideas and improve their speaking skills. However, these weaknesses are outweighed by the overall strengths of the teaching. There are good systems in place for monitoring and assessing pupils' work. Homework is set regularly and well used to consolidate learning. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their spiritual and cultural awareness through the excellent programme of visits to places of worship and pilgrimage, in different parts of this country and in Israel.

188. The school has responded positively to the majority of the concerns raised in the previous report. Teaching staff are well qualified and experienced and form a strong team. The subject is now very well managed and led. A new head of department was appointed in September 1998 and has taken very effective action to improve overall performance. The quality of teaching and learning is now good. Attainment in relation to the Local Agreed Syllabus is now broadly average at both key stages, and there are examples of above average standards in several areas. Attainment at GCSE is above average. The school fully meets the requirements of the Local Agreed Syllabus and provision is made for religious education in the sixth form. Very good progress has been made. However, there is still work to be done in developing teaching methods which will give pupils more opportunities to take an active part in the lesson and improve the quality of oral work at Key Stage 3.

BUSINESS EDUCATION

189. The department offers courses in GCSE and A level business studies and GNVQ intermediate and advanced levels in business education.

190. At GCSE, standards in class are satisfactory. Over the last three years, attainment in GCSE examinations has varied from significantly below the national average to significantly above average. In 1999, attainment was broadly in line with the national average and pupils performed as well in business studies as they did in their other subjects. Results at A level in 1999 were well above average. Teaching and learning are good in class at A level.

191. At the intermediate level of the GNVQ, students in 1999 performed better than the national average but at advanced GNVQ students have performed less well than the national average. Students achieve standards at least in line with their prior attainment. It is a matter of considerable pride in the school that students pass on to university from this course. Some pupils, who underachieved at GCSE last year, say with confidence that they have benefited from the GNVQ course because it has allowed them to mature.

192. The external assessor's report for 1999 praises the team leader, particularly for the quality of the advice offered to the students and the good work that resulted from it. The minor issues raised by the assessor have been dealt with, except that there is still no time made available so that the team can meet in school time to make final assessments.

193. There is insufficient information and communication technology equipment in the department for students to have access to computers when they are needed.

194. The GNVQ co-ordinator is strongly committed to his work and his students. He is also heavily over-loaded with too many jobs. He is currently co-ordinator of information technology as well as head of business studies and co-ordinator of GNVQ. He also has a heavy burden of A level teaching.

DRAMA

195. All pupils study drama at Key Stage 3 for one period a week; it is a GCSE option at Key Stage 4, and A level theatre studies is available for students in the sixth form. Results in GCSE drama were significantly above the national average in 1997, above average in 1998 and close to average in 1999. All students have achieved at least pass grades in theatre studies in the last two years, but there were no A-B grades in 1999. Since the last inspection standards in the subject were maintained until 1998, but staffing changes in the department in the last two years have clearly had an impact on continuity of learning and 1999 results.

196. From limited observation during this inspection, standards of attainment are average overall at Key Stages 3 and 4 and above average in the sixth form. At Key Stage 3, pupils are developing the skills needed for collaborative working and performance, but are not yet sufficiently involved in evaluating their own work. At Key Stage 4, most pupils are able to work together with a substantial degree of concentration and create an authentic atmosphere in performance. Some pupils in Year 11 are reluctant participants and remain rather wooden and stilted when improvising. In sixth form theatre studies, students show above average skill in their use of voice, space and movement and are able to sustain a role convincingly in front of an audience. They support each other well. An external moderator assessed them favourably in practical examinations held during the inspection week. Pupils and students make appropriate progress through the key stages in line with their prior attainment. Pupils with special educational needs are well catered for by the drama curriculum and make as good progress as other pupils.

197. Teaching is at least satisfactory and usually good. Teachers use warm-up sessions effectively, to encourage self-control and concentration, and provide good feedback which pupils use to extend and develop their performance work. Teachers use interesting stimulus material that encourages the pupils to give an imaginative response and show empathy in their role-play. High expectations and challenging work are strong features of the teaching in Years 10 and 13. Occasionally teachers may over-extend a group activity, resulting in loss of focus and concentration. Sometimes they miss an opportunity for pupils to evaluate their own work, and do not make clear the purpose of preparatory improvisation work.

198. The drama studio is a very good facility, but the hall, although a good working space, is also a corridor between different parts of the school. Distraction is frequent and this is unhelpful to teaching and learning. Continuity of learning is difficult at Key Stage 3 because of the limited time given to drama. Staff training and mutual observation would overcome some lack of consistency in teaching style and approach.

199. Drama continues to make a significant contribution to the life of the school. Development plans and the prospects for raising standards are good under the invigorating leadership of the head of department.