

# INSPECTION REPORT

**The Malling School**  
East Malling

LEA area : Kent

Unique Reference Number : 118897

Headteacher : Mrs V J Dagger

Reporting inspector : Mrs S D Morgan  
1355

Dates of inspection : 27<sup>th</sup> September – 1<sup>st</sup> October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708164

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school : Modern (non-selective)

Type of control : Foundation School

Age range of pupils : 11-18

Gender of pupils : Mixed

School address : Beech Road  
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West Malling  
Kent  
ME19-6DH

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Appropriate authority : Governing body

Name of chair of governors : Mr R de Gray

Date of previous inspection : November 1994

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Mrs E Dickson Lay Inspector	-	Attendance Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Partnership with parents and the community Accommodation
Mr J Lovegreen	English	Assessment Equality of opportunity
Ms F Bradley	Mathematics	Support, guidance and pupils' welfare
Mrs M Bailey	Science	Staffing and learning resources
Mr J Lockett	Information technology Design and technology	-
Mr R Coulthard	Religious education Music	Leadership and management
Ms R Fox	Modern Foreign Languages	-
Mr M Milton	History Geography	Curriculum
Ms R Allison-Smith	Art	-
Mr P Canham	Physical Education	-
Mrs C Childs	-	Special educational needs Work of the special educational needs unit
Mr D Gutmann	-	Sixth form

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## MAIN FINDINGS

### What the school does well

- Average GCSE results are improving year by year. A high proportion of pupils gain at least one GCSE at grade G or better, this means that almost all pupils with special educational needs achieve some examination success.
- GCSE A\*- G results are close to the national average which means that pupils are making sound progress.
- Excellent provision and curriculum management in the Language and Dyslexia Unit enables pupils to make very good progress.
- Pupils at Key Stage 3 make good progress in art, history and religious education, and at Key Stage 4 they make good progress in English, drama, modern foreign languages, design and technology (resistant materials) and business studies.
- In the sixth form students make good progress in GNVQ business and performing arts, in information technology and NVQ French and Spanish.
- The school provides good support, guidance and welfare for its pupils.
- There is good behaviour around the school and positive relationships between pupils and teachers.
- Very good financial administration and control of the budget.

### Where the school has weaknesses

- The quality of teaching varies too much and almost one-fifth of the lessons were unsatisfactory.
- At Key Stages 3 and 4 progress in mathematics, information technology, geography and music is unsatisfactory or poor.
- Some aspects of the key issues raised in the last inspection report have not been effectively addressed.
- Available assessment information is not effectively used to improve the curriculum and plan pupils' learning.
- Parents are not sufficiently involved in the life of the school and with their children's work.
- The use of homework is unsatisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4.

The school has many more strengths than weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection will be addressed. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.

### How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has improved since the last inspection in 1994 and has the capacity to continue to improve. Nearly all of the key issues from the previous report have been addressed satisfactorily. Levels of achievement, including examination results, have been improved. Governors are now more widely involved in curriculum matters. The cost and viability of the sixth form have been carefully evaluated. The quality of learning for girls has been improved and a maintenance and refurbishment programme for accommodation has been put in place. The time allocation for religious education at Key Stage 4 has been improved. The school has taken action to address matters related to health and safety. There are a few areas where progress has been unsatisfactory. Whilst the school has improved the equipment for information technology it is still not being taught effectively across the curriculum, except in science.

Weaknesses in the management of special educational needs across the school remain. School development planning continues to need improvement. Two of these areas have been recognised by the school as requiring further development and they have been identified in the school development plan.

### Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds in national tests and GCSE examinations in 1998:

<b>Performance in:</b>	<b>Compared with all schools</b>	<b>Compared with similar schools</b>	
Key Stage 3 test English	E	E	
GCSE examinations	D	C	
A/AS - levels	n/a	n/a	

<i>Well above average</i>	<i>A</i>
<i>Above average</i>	<i>B</i>
<i>Average</i>	<i>C</i>
<i>Below average</i>	<i>D</i>
<i>Well below average</i>	<i>E</i>
<i>Very low</i>	<i>E*</i>

Results in Key Stage 3 tests in English, mathematics and science were well below the national average and well below average when compared with non-selective schools with an average proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. Results are higher in science than in English and mathematics. The results for 1999 show some improvement in all three subjects, although few pupils gained the higher level 6.

GCSE results have shown a rising trend over the last four years, at a faster rate than the national average. Pupils' results in 1998 was strongest in English literature, design and technology (resistant materials), and religious education. Their results were lower in mathematics, science, French, geography and business studies. In 1999 results at the higher grades have shown considerable improvement in most subjects, particularly in science, French and business studies. Results were very low in information technology.

The number of students in the sixth form is small, but increasing. They all follow GNVQ courses. Results achieved in 1999 vary considerably between courses, from well above to well below national expectations. They were best in advanced business.

### Quality of teaching

	<b>Overall quality</b>	<b>Most effective in:</b>	<b>Least effective in:</b>
Years 7-9	satisfactory	The Language and Dyslexia Unit, religious education, history	Mathematics, geography, music
Years 10-11	satisfactory	The Language and Dyslexia Unit, English, history, modern foreign languages, religious education, business studies	Mathematics, geography, music
Sixth form	satisfactory	GNVQ and information technology in classes which contain students studying the course at the same level, French NVQ	GNVQ leisure and tourism Intermediate
English	satisfactory		

Mathematics	unsatisfactory		
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The quality of teaching is sound overall. 83 percent of observed lessons were judged to be sound or of a better standard, 45 percent were good or better and 17 percent were very good or excellent. Some teaching of the highest quality was observed in the Language and Dyslexia Unit, where pupils made very good progress. Some unsatisfactory teaching was observed in all key stages. Often weaker teaching was observed in classes where supply teachers were covering for staff who were on long-term sick leave or where teachers were new to the school. Overall the quality of teaching has shown some decline to that reported in the last inspection.

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

## Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Behaviour in lessons satisfactory, good around the school. A small minority of pupils disrupt the learning of other pupils in a few classes.
Attendance	Slightly below the national average, mainly due to pupils with long term attendance problems; little truancy.
Ethos*	Stimulating and effective learning environment. Commitment to high achievement evident in increased academic success. Satisfactory pupil attitudes to learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are good.
Leadership and management	Satisfactory, although some weaknesses identified by the previous inspection remain, for example, the management of special educational needs across the school and school development planning. Leadership and management of most subjects satisfactory or good.
Curriculum	Satisfactory overall. Although all pupils have taught information technology lessons the full National Curriculum requirements are not met. Unsatisfactory arrangements for GCSE music. Assessment information not effectively used to improve pupils' learning.
Pupils with special educational needs	Pupils in the Unit make very good progress. Pupils in the main school make sound progress overall, although only a small proportion have individual education plans. The special needs register is not effectively maintained and the Code of practice not fully implemented.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Good opportunities for moral and social development. Sound provision for spiritual and cultural development.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Satisfactory. Sufficient qualified teachers. Lack of training in information technology. Insufficient learning support assistants for special educational needs pupils in the main school. Satisfactory accommodation, although weaknesses in facilities for physical education and science. Unsatisfactory resources for learning in a small number of subjects.
Value for money	Satisfactory value for money.

\* *Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

### The parents' views of the school

<b>What most parents like about the school</b>	<b>What some parents are not happy about</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The school is very approachable.</li><li>• The school provides a good level of support and pupils generally make good progress.</li><li>• Children with special educational needs receive very good support.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The amount and quality of the homework set.</li><li>• The quality of teaching in some mathematics classes is unsatisfactory.</li><li>• Communication with the school is sometimes a problem.</li><li>• The behaviour of a few pupils disrupts lessons.</li></ul>

The inspection evidence supports parents' positive views about the school. Progress is sound overall. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress in the main school and very good progress in the Unit. Good levels of support and guidance are provided. The weaknesses were also confirmed. The quality of teaching in mathematics was found to be unsatisfactory. The use of homework is unsatisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4. The behaviour of a small minority of pupils in some classes has an adverse effect the learning of the rest of the class. The use of pupils contact books is too variable and parents are not always informed when their children change sets.

## **Key issues for action**

The governors, headteacher and staff should address the following issues.

### **\* Improve the quality of teaching by:**

giving sufficient attention to the teaching of literacy and numeracy in all subjects;  
ensuring that there are appropriate expectations in all subjects for higher attaining pupils;  
ensuring that teachers provide enough opportunities for discussion, problem solving and investigative work in lessons;  
providing sufficient in-class support assistants for non-statemented main stream pupils with special educational needs;  
ensuring there is consistently good marking in all departments in Key Stages 3 and 4;  
using homework effectively and setting appropriate assignments in Key Stages 3 and 4;  
improving staff knowledge about information technology.

*Weaknesses identified in paragraphs: 20, 24-26, 28, 53-54, 56, 58-59, 63 -64, 102, 106, 119, 128, 132, 136 –137, 140 –141, 145, 148, 155, 157, 161, 164, 170, 173, 180, 187, 189, 204*

### **\* Improve aspects of the management of the school by:**

more effective management of special educational needs across the school with:

- an effectively maintained special needs register;
- individual education plans for all the necessary pupils;
- effective management of the statutory reviews of statements of special educational need;

ensuring that absolute priorities are clear and objectives precise in the school development plan;  
having a clear management structure and definition of responsibilities in the sixth form;  
monitoring teaching effectively so that it helps to improve the quality of teaching significantly.

*Weaknesses identified in paragraphs: 22, 49, 66 –67, 71, 80, 96 –98, 101, 103 –104, 119, 129, 149, 182, 237*

### **\* Improve standards of attainment and progress in subjects such as mathematics, information technology (to meet National Curriculum requirements), GNVQ leisure and tourism intermediate, geography and music.**

*Weaknesses identified in paragraphs: 27, 31, 33, 35, 38, 53 –54, 62- 63, 133 –138, 167 –170, 183 –185, 188, 199 –202, 235*

### **\* Make more effective use of available assessment information in order to further improve the curriculum and plan pupils' next steps in learning.**

*Weaknesses identified in paragraphs: 70, 72-73, 126, 149, 155, 174, 189, 197*

### **\* Increase parents involvement in the life of the school and with their children's work.**

*Weaknesses identified in paragraphs: 90, 93*

In addition to these key issues, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan. These are indicated in the listed paragraphs:

Arrangements for the professional development of staff , particularly in information technology and special educational needs	98, 107-108, 189
Adequacy of resources in some subjects	112, 115, 116, 140, 149, 157, 197
Deficiencies in the school buildings	109 –110, 149, 217
Timetabling arrangements for some classes	64-65, 149, 152, 197
Continued improvement in the provision for collective worship	75, 104
Development of multi-cultural education	78
Further development of a whole school approach to behaviour management	57, 85
Punctual start to lessons	47, 65, 154
Further extension of religious education in the sixth form	223

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Characteristics of the school**

1. The Malling School is a small 11-18 school with 786 pupils, 57 of whom are in the sixth form. Over the past four years, the roll has been steadily rising. There are more boys than girls in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form, and similar numbers of boys and girls in Key Stage 4. The school draws its pupils from a wide area. A significant proportion of pupils come from areas which are socially and economically disadvantaged. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals has been falling and is now average. Few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school competes with local selective schools and so receives few pupils with high levels of attainment on entry and overall levels of attainment on entry are well below average.

2. Over 30 percent of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, of these over eight percent have statements of special educational need; these figures are well above the national average. The school has a Language and Dyslexia Unit which 42 pupils attend full-time.

3. During the last year, a number of staff have been absent through long-term sickness. The school has undergone significant staff changes during the last two years, 20 teachers have left and 22 have been appointed. At the time of the inspection, there were five supply teachers in the school covering for staff who were on long-term sick leave or for vacancies that could not be filled.

4. The school's mission statement and aims clearly state the principles which underpin its work. The emphasis is on putting children first, encouraging them to work for the highest goals and encouraging every child to have a vision of achievement. Effective partnership with parents and interaction with the community are also stressed.

5. The school's priorities as set out in the school development plan, are to improve:

Pupils' literacy and numeracy and raise achievement

Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning

The ICT policy in relation to staff training and teaching quality

Implementation of individual education plan targets for pupils with special educational needs in the different subjects

The assertive discipline policy.

6. Proposed targets for GCSE results have been set for the next four years. These were agreed with the local education authority. The figures for each year have been based on the results of end of key stage national tests and tests administered at the start of Year 7 and Year 9.

## Key Indicators

### 7. Attainment at Key Stage 3<sup>1</sup>

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3  
for latest reporting year: 1998

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	71	65	136

<b>National Curriculum Test Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	20	28	34
	Girls	41	25	26
	Total	61	53	60
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	45(45)	39(47)	44(48)
	National	65(56)	60(60)	56(60)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	13(22)	14(13)	9(17)
	National	35(23)	36(37)	27(29)

<b>Teacher Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	23	27	28
	Girls	42	31	30
	Total	65	58	58
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	48(68)	43(41)	43(42)
	National	62(59)	64(63)	62(61)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	19(36)	13(21)	2(3)
	National	31(28)	37(37)	31(29)

## 8. Attainment at Key Stage 4<sup>2</sup>

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	67	49	116

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	7	58	65
	Girls	8	47	49
	Total	15	105	114
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	13(28)	91(88)	98(97)
	National	44.6(45.1)	89.8(86.4)	95.2(92.3)

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or

units and percentage of *such pupils* who achieved

all those they studied:

	Number	percent Success rate
School	0	n/a
National	➤	n/a

### 9. Attainment in the Sixth Form<sup>3</sup>

Number of students in final year of approved vocational qualifications and percentage of *such students* who achieved these qualifications:

	Number	percent Success Rate
School	23	78%
National	>	72.5%

### 10. Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year :

		percent
Authorised Absence	School	9.9
	National comparative data	7.9
Unauthorised Absence	School	0.4
	National comparative data	1.1

### 11. Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year :

	Number
Fixed period	92
Permanent	5

### 12. Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :

	percent
Very good or better	17
Satisfactory or better	83
Less than satisfactory	17

## **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

#### **Attainment and progress**

13. The school's results at **GCSE** have shown improvement since the time of the last inspection. Although there was a decline in the number of pupils gaining five or more A\* - C grades in 1998 to 12.9 percent, results for 1999 have shown improvement to 28 percent of those entered. The results remain well below the average for all schools nationally (44 percent in 1998) and the most recent results are just below the average for pupils in modern schools in 1998 which was 30 percent. The performance of girls and boys has been similar. Results in the range A\* - G have shown improvement over the last three years with 84 percent of pupils gaining five or more A\* - G grades in 1996 and 90.5 percent in 1998. Results for 1999 are similar to the 1998 figure. The 1998 result was slightly above the national figure of 89.8 percent for all schools. The number of pupils gaining at least one GCSE grade G or better has been increasing, from 93 percent in 1996 to 98 percent in 1998. This figure is above the national average and well above average for similar schools. This means that almost all pupils with special educational needs achieved some examination success.

14. The results show that standards are rising, and the school has been successful in improving what low-attainers and pupils with special educational needs have achieved at GCSE. Pupils with special educational needs have a wide range of difficulties and abilities. Several pupils with statements of special educational need are in the highest sets, attain very good academic and creative standards and have achieved some very good results in GCSE examinations. Analysis of GCSE results shows that on average pupils attached to the Language and Dyslexia Unit gain higher grades of passes than mainstream pupils.

15. Another method of measuring GCSE results, known as the "average points score", is calculated by allocating points for each grade and averaging them, to give a figure which shows how well pupils have done overall. It shows that the overall results between 1994 and 1998 improved at a faster rate than the national average, though the average points score remained below the national figure.

16. The number of pupils taking **General National Vocational Courses (GNVQ) and A/S** level courses in the sixth form has been small but is increasing. In 1999, students on the advanced business course achieved a completion rate of 90 percent, well above the national average and representing a rise from average levels of around 75 percent in 1998. Students on the advanced level leisure and tourism course attained only 25 percent completion, well below average expectations. In all subjects, intermediate students attained at an average rate of 60 percent, slightly below national expectations but reflecting ability on entry.

17. Nationally, girls do better than boys. This is also the case at the Malling School, but the difference between their results is less wide than has been the case nationally over the last few years.

18. Comparing pupils' GCSE results in various subjects they took in 1998 shows that they did relatively well in English literature, design and technology (resistant materials) and religious education. Their results were lower in mathematics, science, French, geography and business studies. In 1999 results, at the higher grades, have shown considerable improvement in most subjects, particularly science, French and business studies. Results were very low in information technology.

19. Overall, when pupils enter the school their levels of attainment are well below average and they have weak literacy skills. In the end of **Key Stage 3** national tests in English, mathematics and science, results fluctuated between 1996 and 1998, but overall have shown some decline and are well below the national average. In comparison with the national picture, results in English and mathematics were well below the national average and in science they were below. When compared with results of similar schools, English and mathematics were well below average and science was average. There has been some decline in the number of pupils gaining the higher level 6. The results for 1999 show some improvement in all three subjects, although few pupils gained the higher level 6.

20. In the lessons observed **progress** was sound overall, reflecting the quality of teaching. Progress was lowest in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Scrutiny of work completed by pupils during 1998-99 confirmed that pupils make sound progress. In several subjects, average and lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make better progress than higher attainers.

21. Pupils in the main school with **special educational needs** make good progress in individual withdrawal lessons and in lessons taught to groups in the Skills Centre. Progress is good for pupils who follow the "Successmaker" and "Talking Computer" literacy programmes and are taught by the specialist literacy staff in the Skills Centre. Their immediate gain in reading ages from receiving this input is good and is shown to remain effective for promoting individual progress after the end of the programme. Similar support for pupils in mathematics is not in place so insufficient progress is made in this subject by mainstream pupils with special educational needs. Overall, in other lessons pupils with special educational needs make sound progress.

22. In a small number of lessons taught to sets of pupils with special educational needs progress was unsatisfactory. Despite appropriate individual support from learning support assistants, it occurred because the quality of teaching was unsatisfactory. Only a small proportion of mainstream pupils with special educational needs have individual education plans. These have been very recently given to subject staff and targets are not incorporated into their planning. This situation is similar to that identified at the time of the last inspection and is a cause of concern.

23. Pupils attached to **the Language and Dyslexia Unit** make very good progress in attaining well selected personal targets in their individual education plans. In observed lessons they made good progress overall. The progress over time for pupils attached to the Unit is very good.

24. In subjects other than English, standards of **literacy** are poor. Much work has been done to improve reading levels, and this has been supported by rehousing and beginning to develop the library. Many subjects encourage its use, or refer pupils to the local library. The use of pupils' listening, speaking and writing skills by other subjects is haphazard, with the exception of the support offered to pupils with special needs. There is no literacy policy and no subject apart from English makes any reference to literacy skills in its planning. Whilst many teachers want to help improve them, there is little understanding of the responsibility for all teachers to be involved in a planned and systematic focus to raise literacy levels. Spelling errors are usually ignored. There are good question and answer sessions in most subjects, but few apart from art, religious education and physical education make effective use of group discussion. Pupils generally are expected to listen quietly rather than being taught to listen closely to what is being said. Pupils are too rarely expected to write at length, particularly in Key Stage 3. Yet in art and modern foreign languages younger pupils show themselves to be capable of extended writing. Significantly, it is in these subjects that the standard of presentation is highest. In some other subjects, it is unsatisfactory.

25. Overall standards of **numeracy** across the curriculum are unsatisfactory. There is no whole school policy for numeracy, and few subjects make any contribution to the development of this key skill. In a small number of subjects the use of number is well integrated in the curriculum. Pupils' ability to use measurement accurately supports their work in food technology at Key Stage 3, while at Key Stage 4 they demonstrate sound skills in using spreadsheets in information technology. In art, they learn an appropriate mathematical vocabulary to describe their work, and use scaling techniques well when making three-dimensional models. Calculators are not used appropriately to support work in numeracy.

26. Standards in **English** are well below the national average at the end of both key stages. They have shown some decline in Key Stage 3 between 1996-1998. The 1999 results show some improvement in the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level 5, but a low proportion achieved the higher level 6. The percentage of pupils entered for GCSE examinations is increasing and most pupils take both language and literature. A very high proportion of pupils gain an A\* - G pass. Pupils make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 3 and good progress at Key Stage 4. A clear focus on reading and literature has improved pupils' understanding of text and their use and understanding of vocabulary. Some higher attaining pupils make insufficient progress in Key Stage 3, as they are not effectively taught how to develop their language skills. The written work of pupils in Key Stage 3 is brief and shows limited understanding of elements such as paragraphing, and spelling is weak. Pupils' good progress at Key Stage 4 results form a more mature approach to their work and a clear understanding by pupils and staff of GCSE requirements.

27. In **mathematics** standards are well below the national average. At Key Stages 3 and 4, standards are well below those for similar schools, for the majority of pupils. Taking the period 1996-98 attainment at Key Stage 3 was lower than in English and science. Progress is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3 and poor at Key Stage 4. Teaching programmes at both key stages restrict the progress that pupils, particularly those with higher attainment, can make.

28. Overall attainment in **science** is below national expectations at the end of both key stages. Pupils' experimental and investigative skills are sound. Their ability to plan and carry out an investigation is better than their ability to evaluate results. Progress is satisfactory in both key stages. Pupils' exercise books indicate sustained progress over time. Higher attaining pupils make least progress, because in many lessons they were not sufficiently challenged.

29. Attainment in **art** is in line with expectations at Key Stage 3 and below at Key Stage 4, for those pupils who take art as an option. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4. Pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of the work of artists, craftspeople and designers. They gain confidence in their use of literacy skills and are able to express ideas about their own and others' work.

30. Current evidence in **design and technology** indicates that standards at the end of Key stage 3 will be in line with those nationally. Design skills, however, are less well developed than making skills. At Key Stage 4, the best results were obtained in resistant materials, with the proportion of pupils gaining higher grades being above the national average for all schools. In other subjects, the number of higher grades varies with a satisfactory number in textiles and a lower number in food technology and child development. Pupils make satisfactory progress in both key stages.

31. The level of attainment in **geography** at the end of Key Stage 3 is well below national expectations. The work of higher attaining pupils often matches national expectations. Results at GCSE are well below both national averages and averages for similar schools. There has been insufficient progress in raising standards at GCSE since the previous inspection. Pupils' progress was unsatisfactory overall at both key stages.

32. Attainment in **history** at the end of Key Stage 3 is well below national expectations. The results of GCSE examinations were well below national averages and averages for similar schools in 1999, and these results were lower than the results in 1998. Pupils' oral work is of a higher standard than their written work. During the lessons seen, pupils made good progress.

33. **Information technology** standards at the end of both key stages are below those expected nationally. At Key Stage 3 pupils have limited opportunities to use and apply knowledge, gained in information technology lessons, across the curriculum. In information technology lessons progress is sound, however, overall progress is unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 4 results in the GCSE short course are poor.

34. Attainment in **modern foreign languages** is below national standards at both key stages. Over the past three years end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments and GCSE results have fluctuated. GCSE results in French for 1999 show an improvement. Most pupils sit a GCSE language examination, and the proportion of Year 11 pupils taking GCSE compares very favourably with national figures. Pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 and good progress at Key Stage 4.

35. At the time of the inspection, there were no permanent teachers of **music** in the school. The school has been unable to employ specialist music supply teachers. On the limited evidence available, attainment at Key Stage 3 is well below average. Very few pupils take music in Key Stage 4, and pupils in Year 10 receive very little direct teaching. Attainment in performance is in line with their abilities, composing is below expectation and no judgement could be made about musical knowledge or skills in analysing music. Small numbers of pupils take GCSE, and in the previous three years all pupils have achieved above a grade E. Progress at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory in lessons but poor over time. At Key Stage 4, it is poor.

36. Attainment in **physical education** by the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with that expected nationally. At Key Stage 4 it is below in the core curriculum. Pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 and unsatisfactory progress at Key Stage 4. Standards for those pupils studying the GCSE course are well below average in their

written work and just below in their practical work. Extra curricular provision provides opportunities for pupils to develop their skills and take part in local sports fixtures and competitions.

37. In **religious education**, attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is below the expectations of the Kent Local Agreed Syllabus. By Year 11, pupils' understanding of religious issues is more developed. In the GCSE short course taken by all pupils, results were very good for the school, although no figures to make a national comparison are available. Standards of presentation of written work are good in Key Stage 4 and most pupils are careful to spell words accurately. Pupils make good progress through Key Stage 3 and satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4.

38. **Other courses** at GCSE and GNVQ level are taught at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Attainment in GCSE business studies is above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. Pupils make good progress in business studies. Attainment in drama is above average and pupils make good progress. In GNVQ courses in the sixth form, a high proportion of students taking advanced business completed the course. Only 25 percent completed the advanced level leisure and tourism, which is well below national averages. Intermediate students in all subjects attained a completion rate slightly below national averages, but reflecting their ability on entry. Students make good progress in business and performing arts. In leisure and tourism progress is at least satisfactory for advanced students, but currently unsatisfactory for intermediate students as they lack the necessary study skills. In the GCSE and AS information technology courses, in the sixth form, attainment is satisfactory and pupils make good progress. The attainment of students studying for the NVQ qualification in the sixth form is below national averages, students make good progress in both of the languages studied.

### **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

39. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development were generally described as good at the time of the last inspection. The current situation is similar, although the attitudes and behaviour of a small minority of pupils do have a negative impact on the progress made in some lessons. Most pupils respond positively to their teachers hard work to enable them to achieve academic success. Pupils commented that the headteacher and their heads of year are very approachable and listen to their views and concerns. Pupils feel that any incidents of bullying are effectively dealt with and they are confident to ask staff for help and advice. Procedures for dealing with bullying are understood by pupils and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Overall, the school is an orderly and pleasant community in which pupils understand and follow the rules.

40. Pupils entering to the Language and Dyslexia Unit quickly and confidently settle into the clear routines and respond very well to the high expectations set by the staff. Pupils react positively to the help they receive and form effective relationships with the staff and each other. Pupils attached to the Unit are well integrated into the mainstream school, forming friendships and taking responsibilities in the main school. Pupils behave thoughtfully and politely and are outgoing and friendly. These pupils gradually take more responsibility for themselves and develop good attitudes and skills as increasingly independent students.

41. Throughout the school pupils with special educational needs are well accepted by their peers and take part fully in the life of the school. Pupils with behaviour and emotional difficulties vary in their responses in lessons, but when the teaching is good, well paced, creative and actively involves the pupils, their response is generally good. Pupils with special educational needs respond well where there is additional support given in lessons, and they relate well to the support staff, teachers and fellow pupils. Pupils feel very positive about the Unit and about the Skills Centre.

42. Overall pupils behaviour in lessons is satisfactory. In more than eight in every ten lessons observed, pupils responded well to the teaching. In over a half of the lessons observed, pupils' responses were good or better. Key Stage 3 pupils' responses were slightly better than those in Key Stage 4. Boys and girls work well together both in pairs and in groups. Few instances were observed where boys dominated discussions and this was less evident than at the time of the last inspection. Most pupils concentrate and listen carefully, although they tend to become inattentive when teaching does not meet their needs. Some instances of misbehaviour in class were observed, in almost all cases pupils did as they were told when their teachers insisted that they respond to the requests made. A small minority of pupils lack motivation and do not concentrate on their work and, in some lessons, their behaviour affects the learning

of the rest of the class. This was most evident when classes were being taken by teachers covering for staff absence. During the inspection, these attitudes towards learning were observed in some lessons in both key stages. Some pupils commented that the noise and poor behaviour of a few pupils restricted their learning in some lessons. This was confirmed during the inspection. Most sixth form students respond well to the increased autonomy they are given. A sizeable minority, however, find it difficult to organise their work and do not make efficient use of their time. Overall, pupils' attitudes to learning are satisfactory.

43. Behaviour outside of the classroom is good. Pupils are polite and courteous. Many of the corridors are narrow, however, but movement between lessons is calm and civilised. Behaviour in the canteen and at break and lunchtime was good and no serious incidents of misbehaviour outside of the classroom were observed during the inspection week. There are few permanent exclusions and the rate has fallen over the last three years.

44. Parents, both in written comments and at the parents meeting held before the inspection, expressed the view that the school played a significant role in developing positive attitudes and values in their children. They commented that the school promoted positive attitudes by, for example, awarding credits to younger pupils and letters of congratulation to older pupils, and these were valued by pupils. Inspection evidence supports this view and this is an improvement since the last inspection.

45. Pupils are courteous and considerate to one another and to adults, and relationships are good. They are given a range of responsibilities such as prefect duty, form representatives and charity representatives, which they take seriously. Parents felt that the school helped pupils to develop self-confidence by providing opportunities such as exchange visits. In some lessons, pupils are given opportunities for reflection. They develop an awareness of the feelings and values of others. For example, in religious education they discuss moral and social issues thoughtfully. During lessons, pupils work well together, share resources and manage equipment sensibly and carefully. Pupils' personal development is good.

Point for action:

improve the behaviour of the small minority of pupils who have a negative impact on the progress made in some lessons.

## **Attendance**

46. The rate of attendance for the school for the last academic year was 90 percent, slightly below the national average. Unauthorised absence is low. The levels of attendance are affected by several pupils with long term attendance problems, and a significant number who take holidays during term time. There is little truancy. Most pupils arrive at school on time although there is some lateness due to transport problems.

47. Registration takes place at the start of morning and afternoon sessions. A class register is also taken at the start of every lesson. Many lessons do not start on time when pupils move between buildings.

Points for action:

make further improvements to the rate of attendance;

- ensure that pupils arrive punctually for the start of lessons.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

### **Teaching**

48. The quality of teaching is sound overall with more than eight in every ten observed lessons judged to be sound or of a better standard. Over four out of ten were good or better and almost two in every ten were very good or excellent. The quality was best in Key Stage 3, although differences between key stages were not significant. Overall the quality of teaching has shown some decline to that reported in the last inspection. Some teaching of the highest

quality was observed in the Language and Dyslexia Unit where pupils made very good progress. Some unsatisfactory teaching was observed in all key stages. Weaker teaching was observed in mathematics, geography, and music. There is a lack of information technology teaching across the curriculum. Often weaker teaching was observed in classes where supply teachers were covering for staff who were on long-term sick leave or where teachers were new to the school. Overall, teaching in the sixth form is at least satisfactory and often good. Teaching in GNVQ and information technology lessons was good when teachers in all subject areas worked with one level of GNVQ attainment in the class, either intermediate or advanced. Teaching was weaker however, when staff worked with students of more than one level of attainment in the class. In NVQ sixth form lessons teaching was good.

49. In the main school the quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall, although there are weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics. Most mainstream subject teachers show considerable commitment to supporting pupils with special educational needs. The lack of individual education plans, however, means teaching cannot be as well planned as needed to meet pupils specific needs. There are instances of good liaison between subject teachers and learning support staff to ensure information about learning, types of support and pupils' needs are effectively shared.

50. The teaching of language and literacy to mainstream pupils with special educational needs in the Skills Centre is good. It is well planned and structured. Pupil testing and ongoing assessment informs the programmes, and the type and the amount of help the pupils receive. Teacher expertise is good and careful use is made of information technology to support pupils' learning, to enable consolidation and support progress.

51. The overall quality of teaching for pupils attached to the Language and Dyslexia Unit is very good, with some instances of excellent teaching. Teaching is carefully planned to ensure appropriate curriculum coverage and presentation. Pupils' work is regularly and appropriately marked and discussed with them, enabling good progress. Homework is appropriate and carefully set. In the Language and Dyslexia Unit, individual tutorial lessons are extremely well planned and taught. Targets are effectively used in detailed lesson planning, are reviewed regularly and, are an integral part of the individual education plans. The mix of individual, small group and mainstream teaching activities acknowledged in the previous report continues to be effective. Overall, the Unit teachers' organisation and practice is very good indeed.

52. The teaching of religious education, modern foreign languages and GCSE business studies was good overall. The teaching of English at Key Stage 4 and in GNVQ lessons where teachers worked with one level of GNVQ student was also good. In a number of subjects, the quality of teaching ranged from very good or excellent, to poor. Literacy and numeracy across most subjects has insufficient emphasis and is not consistently planned for.

53. Overall, staff have a secure knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach and the requirements of the National Curriculum and examination syllabuses. The strength in business education, where staff have experience of working in a business environment, leads to interest for the pupils and above average achievement. Teachers' knowledge of examination requirements in English and design and technology (resistant materials) leads to good progress for pupils. In music, the lack of specialist knowledge of some supply teachers has led to pupils making poor progress over time. Many teachers lack sufficient knowledge to use information technology to support work in their subject areas.

54. Most teachers have appropriate expectations of what pupils can achieve. In a number of subjects, however, they are not high enough, particularly for higher attaining pupils. These pupils are not sufficiently challenged in subjects such as English, mathematics and science. In English, teachers do not always demand enough of pupils and praise is sometimes given too readily. Expectations are low for the majority of pupils in mathematics and not enough is expected both in class and homework. In science, the level of expectation varies between teachers. In many lessons, the work is not sufficiently demanding for the higher attaining pupils and untidy or incomplete work is not challenged sufficiently.

55. Overall, teachers make satisfactory use of the time available. In the most effective lessons, teachers discuss the work to be completed at the start of the lesson and pupils know what they have to do in the time available. Question and answer sessions are used effectively to confirm and extend pupils' understanding and good use is made of a

range of interesting resources, for example in religious education. In some lessons, however, the pace of work is slow and too much time wasted on organisational and administrative tasks.

56. The methods used by most teachers were effective but others were ineffective. In English, teachers create a happy and positive atmosphere. Class discussion is effectively used but group work is under-used. In mathematics most lessons consist of written exercises and teachers do not give pupils sufficient opportunities for discussion, problem solving and investigative work. Science teachers organise lessons well but use a narrow range of teaching styles. Design and technology teachers demonstrate new techniques effectively, however, in physical education, insufficient use is made of demonstrations. In most lessons teachers plan their work effectively, for example, in French teachers plans were detailed and related closely to the demands of the GCSE course.

57. Most teachers maintain discipline well and pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. There were good examples of staff dealing effectively with inattentiveness. A number of teachers, however, under reacted to unsatisfactory behaviour by ignoring rather dealing with inappropriate amounts of noise and this limited the progress made. A few teachers who were new to the school found the management of some pupils, often boys, difficult.

58. The quality of marking is unsatisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4 and satisfactory in the sixth form. In English, for example, evidence of excellent as well as poor marking was seen in Key Stage 3. The high quality marking indicated levels of achievement and how pupils could improve their work. Other teachers within the department accepted short and untidy pieces of work and too many errors of spelling and punctuation were ignored. In science, marking is not analytical or detailed enough to motivate pupils to make further progress. Good feedback to pupils is provided in subjects such as modern foreign languages, design and technology and religious education where the approach enables pupils to understand how they can improve their work. Overall, there is a lack of consistency in the school and within departments. Pupils commented that their work is not always marked and often there are no comments. The last inspection report mentioned unevenness within and between departments and there has been no improvement in this respect. Whilst there is some checking of books by heads of department and senior managers, it is sporadic and superficial. As a direct result the amount of written work produced by many pupils and the quality of its presentation are unsatisfactory.

59. The use of homework is unsatisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4 and satisfactory in the sixth form. Homework was set regularly during the inspection. The assignments, however, are not always appropriate, for example in English where they do not encourage pupils to show initiative. In design and technology, homework is set regularly, but was a set task for all pupils with a lack of open-ended tasks to stimulate higher attaining pupils. Parents expressed their dissatisfaction with the quantity and quality of the homework set both in their written responses and at the parents meeting. Inspection findings confirmed their views. The last inspection report mentioned that where teaching had weaknesses, expectations were low and tasks insufficiently challenging, this is still the case in some lessons, particularly for higher attaining pupils.

Points for action:

improve the overall quality of teaching by identifying weaknesses and providing support, particularly for teachers who are new to the school and supply staff;

improve teachers' expertise, in information technology, and increase the use of computers in most subjects;

ensure that individual education plans are in place for pupils with special educational needs in the main school, to enable teachers to plan work to meet pupils' needs;

improve the quality and consistency of marking in Key Stages 3 and 4, to ensure that pupils are given a clear message about what they have achieved and specific advice as to how they can try to improve their work;

improve the use and quality of homework set in Key Stages 3 and 4.

### **The curriculum and assessment**

60. Since the previous inspection, the governing body's involvement in the curriculum has improved. The governors now have an active curriculum committee. Governors visit the school once or twice per term. These visits have a specific focus and are followed by a report back to the governing body. Also, heads of subjects give presentations to

the curriculum committee. Governors are involved in the preparation of the school development plan which includes the curriculum.

61. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is broad and balanced, and includes a good programme of careers education and personal and social education. The curriculum meets statutory requirements except for the use of information technology by other subjects, which was a weakness at the time of the previous inspection.

62. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is also broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements, except that most other subjects do not use information technology. A subject that makes sound use of information technology is science. There is a large core of subjects studied by all pupils, including full GCSE courses in French or Spanish and short GCSE courses in religious education and information technology. All Key Stage 4 pupils now study religious education and there is an appropriate time allocation for this course. All pupils take courses in physical education and personal and social education which includes sex, drugs and health education. Pupils are able to choose three options one of which has to be a design and technology subject. All pupils have a fortnight of work experience at the end of Year 10. The school has not exploited the flexibility that is now available at Key Stage 4 to provide a wider range of vocational options designed to facilitate progression to vocational courses post-16. The arrangements for GCSE music are unsatisfactory at present because of the long-term absence of the permanent staff.

63. The sixth form curriculum has been improved since the previous inspection. All students study appropriate GNVQs at foundation, intermediate or advanced levels in business, leisure and tourism and performing arts. The students for intermediate and advanced leisure and tourism are taught in the same classes and work is not well matched to the varying needs of the students working at different levels. Provision for improving literacy levels and communication skills is undeveloped and inconsistent across GNVQ subjects. In addition to GNVQ, students may take AS (short course) or GCSE courses in information technology, and an NVQ course in French or Spanish. These courses usefully broaden the curriculum for sixth form students. The resources the school receives for the sixth form students match the school's expenditure on the sixth form provision.

64. The planning for continuity and progression in pupils' learning is satisfactory overall and for most subjects. However, there are some weaknesses. Mathematics work in Year 7 does not build on what has been learnt in primary schools. In the taught information technology course, work covered during the Key Stage 3 course is repeated at the start of the Key Stage 4 course, as pupils have not practised and applied the skills in other subjects. Art and design and technology are taught in modules for five or six weeks with six lessons per week. So, a pupil has an intense experience of art for six weeks but then there is a long time before the next art module which results in a loss of continuity and progression in learning. Schemes of work are mostly satisfactory although few make clear how the work in different subjects promotes pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Provision for personal and social education is satisfactory and for careers education and guidance it is good.

65. There is a mixture of grouping pupils by mixed ability, setting and banding, and these groupings generally help to match work to pupils' needs. However, there are some weaknesses. At GCSE, the same setting is used for English, religious education and science, and pupils' allocation to science sets is not based on their science attainment and so does not enhance their progress. There are no longer a significant number of classes being shared by two teachers, as at the time of the previous inspection. For Key Stage 3 science, however, there are some classes which are split between two teachers and, several Year 9 classes have a double and single lesson on same day but they are taught by different teachers. Many lessons start five or ten minutes late because travelling time between lessons is a problem because of the distance between buildings and a lack of urgency by many pupils to get quickly to their next class.

66. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory in the main school. Arrangements for the modification of the National Curriculum for individual pupils are now satisfactory, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. Currently no pupils are disapplied from the National Curriculum. For modern languages, the eight lowest attaining pupils are taught French in a special class and this arrangement helps the pupils make good progress. In science, pupils are taught in single gender classes for GCSE to encourage the progress of girls. This has been reviewed by staff and pupils, who judged that it improved the progress of girls without reducing the progress of boys. The withdrawal arrangements for pupils with special educational needs requiring support teaching in the Skills Centre continues to be well planned to minimise disruption to the curriculum. As noted in the previous report

however, there is still insufficient extension of this work through supported work in mainstream lessons.

67. Most subject departments address differentiation in the curriculum both in their policies and in lessons, but an overall whole school response is not yet fully co-ordinated. Special educational needs link groups are still only established in some subjects. The cross-curricular meetings which include some aspects of special educational needs in their agenda are useful for disseminating ideas and expertise. Liaison between staff based in the Language and Dyslexia Unit and some departmental teaching staff has resulted in some useful curriculum developments, such as identifying key language needs and the production of specialised teaching aids for specific aspects of schemes of work. This initiative is particularly well co-ordinated in science and has begun informally in mathematics.

68. The curriculum for pupils in the Language and Dyslexia Unit is very well planned. Good liaison exists with most subject departments. These ensure effective and appropriate provision of schemes of work for pupils to access the National Curriculum and be able to be integrated into mainstream classes. The extensive and enriching programme of extra-curricular visits, workshops and residential trips is an excellent feature of the Language and Dyslexia Units provision.

69. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities. Music is strong and includes a band, choir and orchestra. One-fifth of pupils have individual instrumental lessons with visiting teachers. Drama productions involve many pupils. Other clubs include art, Youth Action and computer club. After-school sports include football, rugby, netball, cricket, rounders, dance and athletics. The school is successful in competitions with other schools.

70. The school handbook has clear and helpful policies on both assessment and marking. These make it clear that assessment is integral to teaching and, that if assessment is thorough, accurate and well communicated, it is invaluable to both teacher and pupil. Since the last inspection the school has increased and improved the amount of assessment information which it has. Some good use is made of this. In most subjects, teachers are aware of what pupils know, understand and can do when they join Year 7, and pupils are appropriately placed in ability groups. The results of assessment information, however, are not used sufficiently to decide changes in curriculum or teaching schemes.

71. Sound use is made of mainstream pupils' reading and cognitive ability tests, information from feeder schools and Key Stage 2 national assessments results to identify and support those with special learning needs through the Skills Centre. Regular assessments linked to the literacy teaching programmes are used well to highlight specific pupils and define additional teaching requirements. Arrangements for forming individual education plans and target setting for mainstream pupils with special educational needs, both across the curriculum and in specific subjects, have not been established. Consequently assessment of pupils in relation to the success of their individual education plans is not being carried out. This was a weakness identified in the last inspection. Assessment of pupils attached to the Language and Dyslexia Unit is rigorous, regular, well focused on pupils' needs and linked specifically to their individual education plans and targets. The ongoing assessment incorporates submissions from visiting specialists as well as from Unit and mainstream staff. Very good use is made of assessment information from feeder primary schools and units. Work is regularly marked and discussed with pupils.

72. The school has copious amounts of assessment information. The aim of gathering this is to allow teachers and pupils to track and predict progress and achievement. Pupils can then be set targets, which also relate to targets set for subjects and the whole school. The system depends on heads of department getting and understanding a considerable amount of statistical information, and communicating and discussing it with departmental colleagues. Too much information, some of it apparently conflicting, has resulted in some teachers not being confident about the system and its relevance to their teaching.

73. Increasingly, older pupils are encouraged to consider their work and negotiate targets for improvement with teachers. In some subjects, they are aware of the criteria on which their work is being marked. Too many pupils, particularly at Key Stage 3, remain unsure about how they are performing and unclear about specific steps they can take for improvement. This happens because mark schemes and grades are inconsistent across and sometimes within departments, and targets set for pupils are too general and there is little advice as to how to achieve them. This is the case in geography although pupils do understand their grades. Assessment is not rigorous enough in art, science and

English at Key Stage 3, in contrast to what happens in the same subjects at Key Stage 4. There are good systems in religious education, design and technology and modern languages courses. Assessment procedures in the sixth form are sound and most GNVQ staff have gained the appropriate national assessor qualifications. Students receive prompt and effective feedback on their completed assignments, and are aware of ways they can improve.

Points for action:

- improvement of information technology across the curriculum to meet statutory requirements;
  - improvements to timetabling arrangements for some science classes in Key Stage 3;
- improve planning for continuity and progression in art and design and technology in Key Stage 3;
- improve the provision in some GNVQ groups where students taking intermediate and advanced courses are taught in the same classes;
- ensure that systems are put in place to form individual education plans and target setting for pupils in the main school
    - with special educational needs;
  - use assessment information to reflect on what works best for pupils and how problems in learning can be more effectively addressed;
  - simplify the amount of assessment information issued to departments and encourage more consistent use of it.

### **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

74. The school provides good opportunities for pupils' personal development through its strong pastoral provision, good relationships within the school and the taught curriculum. The provision for pupils moral and social development is good; provision for spiritual and cultural development is sound.

75. There is not a whole-school approach to promoting spiritual development, and opportunities to promote this aspect of pupils' development are not consistently provided across the curriculum. Certain curriculum areas do, however, contribute much of worth to the spiritual development of pupils. For example, religious education lessons seek to raise questions of meaning and purpose by encouraging pupils to reflect on and explore issues such as forgiveness, reconciliation and animal welfare. In art, pupils are invited to reflect on and value their work, and to express personal comments and opinions on their own work and the work of others. On the other hand, there is a lack of opportunity for reflection in English, where teachers do not actively encourage pupils to explore their thoughts or consider their responses to particular issues or texts. Although arrangements for collective worship have improved since the last inspection, statutory requirements are not consistently met. Not all form tutors make suitable provision on the days when their pupils do not attend an assembly. While some form and year assemblies do include a short prayer or reflection on a theme, others do little to promote an ethos of spirituality or reflection. Assemblies cover a range of themes but involve limited pupil participation. At some assemblies, the school band plays and this adds considerably to the quality of the occasion. The school has developed links with local churches and representatives from these regularly visit.

76. Provision for moral education is good. Pupils are taught right from wrong and most teachers are quite clear in their expectations of pupils' behaviour and respect for others. Many curriculum areas encourage explorations of moral issues as part of lessons. Notable among these are the personal and social education programme, history and religious education lessons, providing significant opportunities for pupils to consider topics such as human rights and responsibilities, freedom and friendship. Representatives from organisations such as the police support the school in its efforts to develop pupils' sense of citizenship, through tackling issues such as crime prevention, alcohol and drugs misuse. Issues of morality are frequently central to the message in school assemblies and form assemblies. During the inspection pupils in the sixth form were urged to think of ways in which they could help sufferers of the Turkish earthquake, and pupils in Year 10 were asked to consider whether they would stand up against anything they knew was morally wrong.

77. Pupils in the school relate positively to other pupils and to adults. These good relationships are central to the school's promotion of pupils' social development. The pupils recognise that most teachers are approachable and that they value their opinions. Pupils are trusted to act responsibly; rooms are open to them during break and lunch times

and they respect equipment and materials made accessible to them. The curriculum makes some contribution to an awareness of important social issues in the wider world and also to the development of citizenship. Paired and group work, particularly in science, religious education and drama, contribute effectively in developing pupils' respect for other points of view. There are some good opportunities for pupils to be involved in the life of the school community through appointments as form representatives, charity representatives and sports captains. Year 11 pupils have opportunities to take on further responsibility as prefects. The school also enables pupils to exercise personal responsibility through various initiatives helping the elderly and children with learning difficulties. Social development is strongly promoted through the wide-ranging charitable work of the school, which has recently included fundraising for a special school in Norfolk and an enterprise run by the GNVQ business studies students, selling light bulbs in aid of Barnardos.

78. Provision for pupils' cultural development is sound. An annual school musical production is presented to parents and local primary schools. Most departments arrange visits to enrich some aspect of the curriculum. Regular visits to the theatre are organised by the English and drama departments, and visits to major art galleries support pupils learning in Key Stage 4 art lessons. The modern languages department runs exchange visits to France and Spain, and there is an annual school trip to Switzerland open to pupils from Year 8 upwards. In English lessons, although pupils are made aware of language and literature traditions, and there are a wide range of theatre workshops and performance opportunities, there is limited focus on multi-cultural issues. The school's provision for preparing pupils for life in a multi-cultural society and developing cultural diversity is generally weak, in spite of good practice in some subject areas. Support for this aspect is given through the teaching of individual subjects, for example the exploration of cultural differences through art, modern languages and religious education.

Points for action:

develop a whole school approach to promoting spiritual development;  
continue to improve provision for collective worship;  
improve provision for preparing pupils for life in a multi-cultural society.

### **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

79. Overall, the school makes good provision for pupils' support, guidance and welfare. Most teachers help and advise pupils effectively in lessons, and promote learning through establishing an orderly environment. Relationships between staff and pupils are generally good, and pupils approach teachers confidently when asking for help with their work. Mainstream pupils with specific learning difficulties are systematically identified through screening tests in Year 7, and given effective withdrawal teaching at Key Stage 3.

80. The annual audit forms for pupils with special educational needs are completed by the school for the local education authority. There has been no recent external moderation of the school's responses. No documentation is available to show the frequency, duration, content and amount of support any one mainstream pupil may have received over time. Pupils' entry dates, needs and any subsequent movement on the register of special educational needs are not recorded. Individual education plans are still not established and not in effective use for mainstream pupils. These issues were raised in the previous inspection report and have not been effectively addressed.

81. Pupils attached to the Language and Dyslexia Unit are very well supported on entry. Great care is taken over integrating pupils into mainstream subject lessons, ensuring support matches individual needs, and enabling continuity in learning, pupil confidence and academic success. In the Unit, pupils' progress is carefully monitored. Pupils are effectively involved in personal target setting and in reviewing their own progress. Pupils are extremely well supported in the Unit, when integrating into the life of the school and in extra-curricular activities. Liaison between Unit and mainstream subject staff is developing well and now should be extended to include all departments, including staff supporting mainstream pupils with special educational needs.

82. Since the last inspection, the school has set up a satisfactory system for monitoring pupils' academic progress at Key Stage 4 and for setting targets for improvement. The school collates pupils' previous attainment into a profile and teachers use this profile to set realistic targets for pupils to achieve at the end of Key Stage 4. The school also

uses these profiles to identify pupils who need additional help to raise their attainment to expected levels. This system is not used at Key Stage 3.

The school has good procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance. Heads of year and the education welfare officer monitor attendance each week and work closely together to help pupils with attendance problems to come to school.

83. As at the last inspection, the school's pastoral system makes a significant contribution to pupils' support, guidance and welfare. The school has good communication with primary feeder schools, and its well thought out induction programme enables the youngest pupils to settle quickly in the school. Heads of year maintain extensive pupil records, have very good relationships with pupils and play a key role in supporting them well. They work closely with form tutors, and monitor the pupils' standards of work and behaviour. The quality of pupils' personal and social education is overly dependent on the effectiveness of the form tutor and there is considerable variation. In most personal and social education lessons, tutors give pupils satisfactory guidance and they gain in knowledge and understanding. In some lessons very good guidance is given, however, in a few progress is unsatisfactory.

84. The school recognises pupils' successes through a satisfactory system of merit awards and commendations. It publishes a "student of the month" award, for academic, community or sporting achievement, and celebrates pupils academic achievements at prize days and presentation evenings.

85. The school has good procedures for monitoring discipline and behaviour, and for promoting high standards. Training and guidance help staff establish and maintain good order in lessons and around the school. The school displays a clear code of conduct in classrooms. Teachers refer to this and to an assertive discipline policy which was introduced two years ago. The school's evaluation of this initiative shows that behaviour has improved. Staff, however, are inconsistent in applying this policy and a review is planned by the school.

86. The school has good systems in place for recording and reporting bullying and harassment. Heads of year use pupils records to identify the frequency and pattern of bullying. They investigate all incidents and counsel all pupils involved. The school sends to all parents pamphlets which tell them about bullying, what to look for, and what action to take.

87. The school makes very good use of outside specialists to support pupils. Currently there is very limited time available from the educational psychologist and this means that only a few pupils are discussed at in-school review meetings.

The police, fire and health services work closely with staff and the school's Youth Action Group, to help pupils recognise and reject potentially dangerous behaviours such as drug taking. As part of the personal and social education programme, pupils from Year 9 onwards receive a wide ranging programme of careers information, experience and guidance. This programme gives good support to pupils preparing for post-16 education and work. The school makes excellent use of specialist support for pupils with specific behavioural problems.

88. The school has good and effective procedures for child protection. A designated teacher, appropriately trained, makes sure that all teachers are aware of child protection issues; these issues are part of the induction programme for all new staff joining the school.

89. The school makes good provision for pupils' wellbeing, health and safety. It has a carefully planned system to make sure that all staff recognise health and safety issues, and report and deal with them promptly. This aspect of the school's work has improved since the last inspection. Electrical and fire-fighting equipment are tested regularly, and maintenance staff check the school grounds and premises regularly and frequently and keep appropriate safety records. The inspection team reported some health and safety issues to the school during the inspection. Some of these were already being dealt with; the others were remedied promptly. The school has very good arrangements for first aid and provides appropriate accommodation for sick pupils.

Points for action:

- improve the effectiveness of some form tutors in delivering the personal and social education curriculum;

- improve the effectiveness of the implementation of the assertive discipline policy (as planned).

### **Partnership with parents and the community**

90. The school has good links with the community, but a closer partnership with parents is needed to produce a shared involvement in pupils' learning. The information provided for parents is satisfactory overall. There is a comprehensive and well presented prospectus, which effectively describes the school and its activities. At the previous inspection some parents expressed concern that they were not informed when their child changed sets; the school has not yet addressed this issue and parents are still not notified until after this has happened. Informative monthly newsletters keep parents up to date with departmental activities and school successes. The termly newsletter produced and written by pupils in the Language and Dyslexia Unit is a high quality publication, which is an effective means of sharing information with parents and friends of the school.

91. Reports to parents are informative, setting out helpful targets for improvement and including comments from pupils on their attainment and progress. Pupils and parents are appreciative of the high quality and usefulness of them. The use of pupils' contact books is too variable, and the inconsistent and unstructured setting of homework does little to contribute to the schools partnership with parents.

92. Written information about the school and pupils' progress is supported by an introductory meeting for parents when pupils enter the school and annual parents' evenings for each year. At other times, if staff are concerned about individual pupils, heads of year make early contact with the parents involved to prevent the development of any major problems.

93. Overall, parents are not sufficiently involved in their children's learning. Most of their support is centred around attending school concerts and supporting sporting activities, with a high proportion showing little interest in the academic work their children are doing. While consultation evenings are generally well attended, fewer parents have supported other meetings. A parents' association, for example, ceased to function through lack of interest some time ago. Parental consultation and support is very good for pupils attached to the Unit. Contact between home and school is open and flexible, giving particularly good support to pupils with communication difficulties. Parents are involved in targets in individual education plans and in supporting pupils' learning.

94. The school has continued to develop its links with the community which are good, and these make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. Industry and commerce support the school, in particular the GNVQ courses, through a range of activities including visits by outside speakers and visits made by pupils to businesses and organisations, for example the Automobile Association, Churchill Theatre and the Body Shop. In association with the Midland Bank, sixth formers run Midbank once a week for the benefit of pupils. Work experience for pupils in Year 10 is currently organised through an external agency. There is a very supportive interest taken by the community police, and initiatives for senior citizens and children with learning difficulties often involve pupils and members of staff. Links with the feeder primary schools are good - all are visited each year by the head of Year 7, and some make use of the schools facilities for technology, science and drama. Some older pupils help in local playgroups and nursery schools.

Point for action:

- improve partnership with parents to promote pupils' learning.

### **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

## **Leadership and management**

95. The leadership and management of the school is satisfactory, although some of the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report remain. Under the leadership of the headteacher, the school has made satisfactory progress in raising pupils' levels of attainment since the last inspection. While passes at grades A\* to C grades have been inconsistent from year to year, the percentage of pupils obtaining five or more passes at GCSE at grades A\* to G is close to the national average. Numbers gaining one or more A\* to G passes are above the national average and well above average for similar schools. While the headteacher retains overall responsibility for management of the school, she sees her principal function as to maintain a high profile in communicating the school's values effectively within both the school and the community. This she does very effectively. She is accessible to parents and resolves problems quickly. Within the school, she ensures that pupils receive good standards of support and guidance within a secure environment. The head's job description has not been updated since she joined the school.

96. Much of the day-to-day management of the school has been passed to members of the senior management team, who have clearly defined roles. They are the deputy head, assistant headteacher (pastoral), the in-service training manager and the special needs co-ordinator. Most senior managers discharge their roles effectively, although the management of special educational needs across the school is unsatisfactory. The deputy head has a very wide and demanding role, which encompasses the organisation of most of the academic provision of the school. The standard of leadership and management is satisfactory in most subjects. Management is particularly strong and effective in modern foreign languages, religious education, design and technology and in the Language and Dyslexia Unit. It is unsatisfactory in some respects in mathematics, geography and in the sixth form. The pastoral systems, which are implemented by the heads of year, are well managed and effective.

97. There are weaknesses in the management of special educational needs across the school. The governing body and senior management team have not resolved the key issues raised about special educational needs at the last inspection and further issues have now arisen. Few changes have been made since the last report, although the special educational needs co-ordinator does have an increased level of non-teaching time. Statutory and other important requirements of provision and practice, however, are still not in place. The division of special needs management responsibilities is not adequately co-ordinated so that the level of need for pupils with emotional and behaviour difficulties is not assessed according to the local authority's criteria.

98. In practice the special needs register is not being effectively maintained. Annual reviews of statements are not carried out within the statutory time frame as records are fragmented. Individual education plans, which were not in place at the last inspection, are still not implemented. The lack of carefully managed and expertly delivered in-service training to the whole school has prevented the effective implementation of Code of Practice. The last inspection report stated concern over no in-class support assistants being provided for non-statemented mainstream pupils with special needs. This situation remains and it is a further concern that the school has yet to appoint some staff to meet its statutory requirements for supporting some pupils with statements.

99. The management within the Language and Dyslexia Unit is very good. Policies and methods of working are well structured, monitored and carefully implemented. Pupils are provided with effective well structured support and regular reviews of the quality and nature of educational provision for each pupil take place.

100. The governors are strongly committed to the school and discharge their legal responsibilities. They have a wide range of expertise and bring appropriate professional skills to bear in the sub-committees for finance, personnel, curriculum, buildings and health and safety. Individual governors visit the school each term and there is some monitoring within the classroom. At present, governors are not linked with individual departments. They do, however, review examination results, investigate inconsistencies and heads of department give presentations to the curriculum committee. The governing body is represented at the planning weekend when the senior management team compiles the school development plan. The governors strongly respect the professionalism of the headteacher and staff.

101. Since January 1999, members of the senior management team have each been linked with a number of departments where they monitor the teaching of heads of department. Formal feedback is provided but the

effectiveness of the process is perceived as inconsistent by heads of department. It is the responsibility of heads of department to monitor their subject teachers. Inconsistencies in standards of teaching indicate that this is not effective enough. Time constraints prevent heads of department from carrying out this role fully and tight financial limits restrict the provision of adequate in-service training.

102. The school has a worthwhile set of aims. There is, however, a lack of rigour in merely 'encouraging' pupils to achieve the highest goals. The school's expectations, particularly of its higher attaining pupils, are not consistently high across all subjects and monitoring and target setting require further development. All policies are appropriate and in place.

103. The school's development planning is unsatisfactory. The planning of individual departments is scrutinised by the senior management team and governors' representatives. This leads to a whole-school programme being compiled. Weaknesses are that the school development plan is too extensive. Absolute priorities are unclear. Objectives are vague, often merely 'to review' without specific targets for improvement. Criteria for success are vague and there is little information about costs. There is insufficient monitoring of the implementation of the plan. Staff responsible for carrying out developments are named but the overall management of the process is unsatisfactory.

104. The school has planned and worked hard to provide a stimulating and effective learning environment. The commitment to high achievement is evident in the increased academic success of lower attaining pupils. The Language and Dyslexia Unit provides a learning environment of very high quality. There are weaknesses in the management of the sixth form. The management structure and responsibilities are inadequately defined and insufficient time is allocated for monitoring and meetings required by examination boards. Relationships between pupils are good, and between pupils and staff are friendly and generally purposeful. The relationships between a few staff and members of the senior management team indicate some strain. There is a lack of clarity amongst some staff about where decisions are made. An effective policy helps the school to provide equality of opportunity for all pupils. The school has shown a good initiative in this by encouraging girls to make better progress in science in Key Stage 4 by working in single sex groups. Boys still occasionally dominate in class but this is less evident than was noted in the previous report. The school meets its statutory obligations in almost all respects. Information technology however, has not been introduced sufficiently across the curriculum, and statements of pupils' special educational need are not reviewed as required by law. Although arrangements for collective worship have improved since the last inspection statutory requirements are not consistently met. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

105. Most of the key issues from the previous inspection report have been resolved satisfactorily. There are however, several areas where progress has been inadequate. In addition to the failure to introduce information technology across the curriculum and to review statements of special educational need and fully implement the Code of Practice, school development planning continues to need improvement. Overall the school shows a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

#### Points for action:

- improve the quality of management of special educational needs across the school;
- improve the effectiveness of monitoring procedures both by senior managers and heads of department in order to improve the quality of some teaching;
- improve the quality of management of some departments;
- improve the quality of development planning to ensure that priorities and targets, success criteria and costs are clear.
  - Improve procedures for monitoring the implementation of the plan.

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

106. The school has sufficient, appropriately qualified teachers to cover the curriculum except for music. At present music is taught entirely by supply teachers due to long-term sickness and difficulties in recruitment. A good proportion of the staff has considerable teaching experience; however, there has been a high turnover of teachers.

Almost half the staff has been appointed in the last two years, with five teachers being new entrants to the profession. The problems caused by long-term sickness of teachers coupled with problems in employing supply staff with appropriate experience and expertise often have a negative impact on pupils' learning. This results in pupils in these classes making insufficient progress. Lessons are well supported by science, design technology and information technology technicians. Two foreign language assistants make an important contribution to lessons. The school has increased the overall provision of non-teaching support since the last report. This makes more effective use of teachers' time. Staff in the Language and Dyslexia Unit are very experienced specialists and very well qualified. Their subject interests and expertise are also well used by their links with departments in the main school. Teachers in the Skills Centre are appropriately qualified and experienced. Appropriate training of learning support assistants for mainstream pupils with statements has now begun. Currently there is insufficient clerical support for mainstream special educational needs. There is still an inadequate level of support for children with special educational needs in main school lessons.

107. The arrangements for the training and professional development of staff are adequate but there is limited evaluation of the impact on educational standards within the classroom. Since the last report, some general information technology training has been provided for teachers, but little subject specific training has taken place, so that information technology is still not used within subjects as required by the National Curriculum. The prioritising of professional development needs from the school development plan is not explicit and therefore not understood by all staff. The need to strengthen the links between personal professional development and whole school priorities was mentioned in the last inspection report. This is still an area of weakness. All teachers have individual development plans that target specific needs and are used for professional development purposes. When funds allow, training is directed at the identified areas in these plans. The appraisal monitoring system involves the observation of lessons by line managers but the target setting for development is insufficiently linked to the individual development plans. There is a great commitment to very high quality in-service training in the Language and Dyslexia Unit and this has contributed to the establishment of the Unit as a centre of excellence. Currently, there are insufficient whole school opportunities to share this expertise through in-school training. A structured programme of activities, led by senior staff, provides very good support for the induction of newly qualified teachers and other new staff.

108. There has been inadequate improvement in two areas identified in the key issues in the last inspection report. There has been insufficient subject specific information technology training and the relationship between development planning and training needs is still weak.

109. The overall accommodation is satisfactory, and while it does not impose limitations on the teaching of the National Curriculum, there are weaknesses in the facilities provided. These have a negative impact on staff and pupil morale and affect the activities which can take place. Some of these have existed since the time of the last inspection. The school sports hall is currently not in use as it requires refurbishment, the tennis court adjacent to it is also not in use; physical education lessons take place in the gym and upper school hall, but neither of these is suitable for the teaching of GCSE badminton. There are currently no showers in the school. One tennis court is still in need of repair, as was indicated at the last inspection. Most departments are accommodated in groups of rooms in a specified area of the school, allowing subjects to be taught in specialist rooms. Exceptions are the GNVQ leisure and tourism course, which lacks a base room, religious education where some non-specialist rooms have to be used, and the science laboratories which are located in two buildings. There is an urgent need for refurbishment of the older science laboratories, plans are in place and funds have been allocated for this development. The teaching areas within the Skills Centre are cramped and become particularly overcrowded when two classes have to be taught at the same time.

110. While most areas of the school buildings are quite well-maintained and in a reasonable state of repair and decor, there are some parts which do not provide particularly stimulating learning environments. The music department has spacious accommodation but this area is unattractive, requires redecorating and parts of the floor need to be repaired. Other areas, however, such as the art and technology block are pleasant and welcoming, with interesting displays of pupils work.

111. Sixth form accommodation is satisfactory, although there is limited space for personal study. The Language and Dyslexia Unit is a comfortable and welcoming environment with bright spacious rooms. The school is situated on a

large site with generous grounds including a lake, wooded area and playing fields. Although some litter is evident around the school grounds, the area is generally well cared for, with no signs of vandalism or graffiti.

112. Overall, the resources for learning are adequate. Since the previous inspection, there has been considerable improvement in the resources for information technology across the school. There are however, inadequacies in subject resources in science, mathematics, modern foreign languages and art. Specific needs include the provision of practical equipment in mathematics, sketchbooks in art, textbooks for home use in mathematics, modern foreign languages and science in Years 7 and 8. There is no computer or satellite provision in modern foreign languages. The science department has insufficient funding to permit the replacement of equipment on a rolling programme. Further resourcing will be needed for religious education to meet the needs of the revised Kent Agreed Syllabus soon to be introduced.

113. The library contains around 6000 books and provides a well-managed, stimulating, effective learning environment. It is well used by pupils at break and lunchtimes though not after school. During lesson time, class groups or individuals frequently visit it for research purposes. The stock of fiction is satisfactory but there are deficiencies in the provision of reference material and subject specific books in religious education, modern foreign languages, leisure and tourism, performing arts and design technology.

114. Resources in the Skills Centre and The Language and Dyslexia Unit are well chosen and effectively contribute to pupils' progress. In the Skills Centre, there are some inadequacies in resources, particularly for mathematics. At present, there is a lack of provision of laptop computers or word processors for pupils attached to the Unit, although provision of this equipment is mentioned in the development plan.

115. Since the last inspection, religious education resourcing has improved but science is still unsatisfactory. The provision of information technology equipment has improved in geography but is inadequate in modern foreign languages.

Points for action:

training for staff in the main school to ensure the effective implementation of the Code of Practice for special educational needs;

strengthen the links between personal professional development and whole school priorities;

continue to improve aspects of accommodation, such as the sports hall and tennis court;

improve the quality and quantity of learning resources in some subjects.

### **The efficiency of the school**

116. Careful financial planning is well established within the school, which appropriately involves the governors, the headteacher, and senior teaching and administrative staff. The annual budget is well considered, but links to development plan priorities are not always clear. The governors have had to consider the financial consequences of the change from the school's Grant Maintained to Foundation status. Governors discuss and agree the annual budget and are regularly informed about expenditure. The finance committee considers alternative budgets and then recommends a final version to the full governing body. Realistic forecasts of income and expenditure have been made and the headteacher and governors are very careful and cautious with the school's finances. Expenditure patterns have been reviewed and savings made to ensure that the school keeps a balanced budget. This has led to a financial situation where staffing and curriculum levels have been maintained. However, there are some shortages of educational resources and limited funds for staff development.

117. The school has been improving the condition of the buildings and has generated valuable income by letting accommodation which is surplus to requirements. Appropriate plans are in place for further developments and some grant income has been obtained, for example, to improve the science accommodation. The school faces a significant problem with the sports hall, which is closed as it is in need of refurbishment. Further grants are being sought to fund this major project. The school has planned to carry forward approximately 11 percent of the budget to support these developments.

118. Financial procedures and administration are very good. The bursar and his financial assistant have excellent systems and detailed records. They are efficient and effective. Regular audits are carried out and financial management systems have been found to be of a high standard. The recommendations made are acted upon.

119. The school's resources for learning and its accommodation are generally well used. A substantial amount of money has been spent to improve information technology resources. This equipment is being used effectively in specialist information technology lessons. There are, however, inadequacies in resources in a number of subject areas such as science, mathematics, modern foreign languages and art. Funding is allocated to subjects using a formula and this is currently being reviewed. The library is used regularly by classes and individual pupils. Pupils have access to its resources at break, lunchtime and after school. Overall, funds allocated to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs are used effectively. However, there are no in-class support assistants being provided for non-statemented mainstream pupils and some staff have yet to be appointed to support some pupils with statements of special educational need.

120. Good use is made of non-teaching support staff. Very good use is made of the teaching staff who work with pupils with special educational needs. The learning support assistants are well used in lessons in the main school. There is however, still an inadequate level of support for pupils with special educational needs in main school lessons.

121. The deployment of teaching staff is satisfactory. Most subjects are taught and managed by teachers who are qualified in the relevant subject. Where supply teachers are used to cover for long-term sickness or difficulties in recruitment, the standards of pupils work are often adversely affected. The improved provision of technician help enables teachers to make more effective use of their time, for example in information technology.

122. The strengths of financial management identified in the last report have been maintained. The last report referred to the need for greater involvement of the governing body in monitoring and financial planning, prioritising spending in the school development plan, and review of the potential for savings in heat and light energy. The governors are now appropriately involved in planning and monitoring the budget and there have been savings made in the amount that the school spends on heating and lighting. Further improvements are needed in prioritising spending in the school development plan and ensuring that appropriate learning resources and training are available to help further raise standards.

123. The school has made satisfactory progress in most of the areas identified in the last report, although important issues do need further attention. These include the introduction of information technology across the curriculum, the review of statements of special educational need, the full implementation of the Code of Practice for special educational needs and the need to improve school development planning. The school has continued to improve the quality of education it provides. The attainment of most pupils when they enter the school is well below average and many have weak literacy skills. Pupils make satisfactory progress and the quality of teaching and curriculum provision are satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in lessons, good progress with literacy in the Skills Centre, and pupils in the Language and Dyslexia Unit make very good progress. Pupils' attainment still remains well below the national average, but results have risen steadily. Provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development is sound and provision for moral and social development is good. There is satisfactory use, overall, of the school's resources. Expenditure per pupil is high due to additional funding for the high number of pupils with special educational needs. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Point for action:

prioritising spending in the school development plan and ensuring that appropriate learning resources and opportunities for training are available in some subjects to further raise standards.

## **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

### **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

#### **English**

124. At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results in 1999 were well below national average in terms of grade A\*-C passes in English language (30 percent) and English literature (34 percent). The overall level of attainment is better than it appears as the percentage of pupils entered for GCSE is increasing and most take exams in both language and literature. Only one pupil has failed to gain an A\*-G grade in the past two years; and A\*-C and A\*-G pass rates in drama are well above average. The attainment of current Year 11 pupils is not yet as high as the previous year because a number who could gain grade C or D either lack basic skills, or are not able to write confidently and at length in a sufficient range of styles.

125. Results of national tests show pupils' attainment to be well below national average at the end of Key Stage 3, and well below the average for similar schools. The proportion achieving the expected level 5 increased to 59 percent in 1999, but the percentage at level 6 fell to a low 8 percent. In both 1998 and 1999, some teacher assessments were generous, notably at levels 6 and 7. Over the period 1996-1998, results fell. Girls performed better than boys but the performance of both was below the national average. Scrutiny of the written work of current Year 9 pupils shows their attainment to be well below national average.

126. Progress is satisfactory during Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in both key stages because teachers are aware of and sensitive to their needs, and give much encouragement. Teaching which focuses on reading and literature has increased pupils' vocabulary and understanding of the written word. Some higher attaining pupils make insufficient progress in Key Stage 3 since neither they nor their teachers pay sufficient attention to how they can develop and demonstrate higher order language skills. There are examples of such pupils in Years 8 and 9 who can analyse and evaluate literature and use ambitious vocabulary. Their written work, however, is brief, disorganised because of a limited understanding of paragraphing and structure, and flawed by serious spelling inaccuracy. The good progress in Key Stage 4 derives from teachers and pupils sharing a clear understanding of GCSE standards and requirements. Pupils show more mature attitudes and teachers devise more imaginative approaches. Putting pupils in the "hot seat" enabled a Year 11 group to see changes and contradictions in characters from 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', and they were able to refine their ideas and express them more precisely. During the key stage, higher attaining pupils progress well, and both boys and girls have achieved the top two GCSE grades in the past two years.

127. Pupil attitudes to learning are almost always satisfactory and often good. They are better at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. Most pupils are willing to work, courteous and well organised. Many, however, do not expect enough of themselves and their involvement in both oral and written tasks is superficial. Almost all have good conversational skills, but are too easily satisfied with simple answers and predictable ideas. There is no challenge to teacher authority but low level disruption affects over a quarter of lessons. In Key Stage 3, this is invariably initiated by a minority of boys, but in Key Stage 4 it is sometimes encouraged or inappropriately responded to by small groups of girls.

128. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. Whilst all lessons observed were at least satisfactory, a number had weaknesses. Just under half the lessons were good, but very good teaching was rare. Teachers have a better understanding of how to teach older pupils. For all lessons, teachers plan thoroughly and they are skilled at explaining the purpose of the lesson to the class, but they rarely give it a context or explain how it will benefit pupils' learning. A happy and positive atmosphere exists in almost every lesson, but praise

is sometimes given too easily, and the level of demand on pupils can be too low. Class discussion is effective, but can be over-long; group work is under-used. Question and answer sessions are brisk, but in relying on fact and recall, they do not encourage pupils to be original or thoughtful. Classroom management is competent and consistent rather than challenging and stimulating. Reading, drama and literature, especially Shakespeare for younger pupils, are well taught. Homework is set regularly though some tasks do not encourage effort or initiative. There are examples of excellent marking which indicates levels of achievement, and advises on the next steps for improvement, but marking overall is unsatisfactory. In the scrutiny of pupils' work much poor marking was seen at Key Stage 3. Short and untidy pieces of work are accepted; too many basic errors of spelling and punctuation are ignored. It is rare for pupils to be given a clear indication of their level of achievement relative to either past performance or that of their peers. Marking was judged to be 'often outstanding' in the last report.

129. The head of department provides positive and intelligent leadership. She provides a good role model to less experienced English teachers, who appreciate the advice and support offered. The department is well organised and there is a commitment to teamwork and raising standards. Staff development to provide a greater range of classroom strategies and tactics has been limited. The department does discuss its performance, but rigorous monitoring of teaching does not take place. There is insufficient use of information technology skills within the curriculum.

130. The introduction of GCSE drama into the options, and the increase in the drama element of the English curriculum are important and beneficial developments. Drama is taught with skill and enthusiasm. Pupils respond very well to it and relate together well in group work by supporting and encouraging each other. Attainment is good, especially in terms of freedom and confidence of the use of voice and expression, and the sensible use of space and movement. Some pupils show limited ability in reflecting on and evaluating performance. Pupils make good progress and this is the result of consistently demanding teaching. They are provided with a wide range of opportunities in the newly created performance area.

131. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection because teaching is more consistent, and exam results have improved. There is the capacity for further improvement as the successful strategies to teach reading and drama to younger pupils extend through the school.

Points for action:

- increase what is expected of pupils' written work in terms of amount and style;
- ensure that major pieces of work produced by all pupils are marked reasonably quickly, with clear indications as to the level of achievement, and precisely where and how improvements can be made;
- give more emphasis in class and group discussion to 'How?' and 'Why?' questions, to enable pupils to reach a deeper understanding of issues and a greater ability to explain and justify opinion.

### **Literacy across the curriculum**

132. In subjects other than English, standards of literacy are poor. The school is aware of the low literacy levels of many pupils on entry. It sees the raising of literacy levels as of fundamental importance and a staff working group meets to discuss the issue. Much work has been done to improve reading levels, and this has been supported by rehousing and beginning to develop the library. Many subjects encourage its use, or refer pupils to the local library. The use of pupils' listening, speaking and writing skills by other subjects is haphazard, with the exception of the support offered to pupils with learning difficulties. There is no literacy policy and no subject apart from English makes any reference to literacy skills in its planning. Whilst many teachers want to help improve them, there is little understanding of the responsibility for all teachers to be involved in a planned and systematic focus to raise literacy levels. Key words are referred to, but are too rarely displayed or reinforced; spelling errors are usually ignored. There are good question and answer sessions in most subjects, but few apart from art, religious education and physical education make effective use of group discussion. Pupils generally are expected to listen quietly rather than being taught to listen closely and to think about what is being said. Pupils are too rarely expected to write at length, even in subjects such as geography and history, until Key Stage 4. Yet in art and modern foreign languages younger pupils show themselves to be capable of extended writing. Significantly, it is in these subjects that the standard of presentation is highest. In some other subjects, it is unsatisfactory.

#### Points for action

Devise a strategy across all subjects to improve the literacy levels of pupils by:

increasing the number of occasions when pupils are expected to write at length in a suitable style;  
being more demanding of accuracy and consistency in spelling and grammar, and pointing out errors more systemically;

displaying in classrooms key words appropriate to each year group and ensuring they are correctly used in discussion and written work;

using focused group discussion more regularly to develop listening and thinking skills.

#### Mathematics

133. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, 20 percent of pupils achieved grades A\*-C, with all pupils attaining A\*-G grades. Over the period 1996 to 1998, results fluctuated but attainment of the higher grades remained well below the national average for modern schools.

134. In the 1999 Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests, 47 percent of pupils achieved the level 5 expected of them at fourteen years of age. National data with which to compare this result is not yet available. Taking the three years 1996 to 1998 together, results were well below the national average for both boys and girls. During this period, pupils' attainment in mathematics was lower than in either English or science. When a comparison is made with similar schools, overall attainment in the 1998 tests was well below average. This information is not yet available for 1999.

135. For the majority of pupils just beginning Year 9, current attainment is well below the national expectation for their age. Some pupils are achieving standards in line with national expectations, and a small minority are achieving above this. Attainment by the majority of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is below or well below the national average, with a minority in line with or above that level. Pupils do not study the National Curriculum to appropriate levels, and do not cover attainment targets in a balanced way. At Key Stage 3 they do not, for example, have sufficient opportunities to develop understanding through using and applying mathematics, and this has an impact on the standards achieved at Key Stage 4.

136. Progress is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3 in most of the National Curriculum's attainment targets for the majority of pupils. Upon entry to Year 7, most pupils have attained standards below the national expectation, with a significant minority attaining standards in line with or above this. Teaching does not build upon this attainment well, and pupils waste time repeating work they have already mastered in their primary schools, such as in Year 7, when average attaining pupils spend time drawing tally and bar charts. The scheme of work for Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory, although it is systematic, it imposes a limit on pupils' attainment. This restricts levels of study and inhibits the progress that pupils can make. Throughout this key stage, teachers focus on making sure pupils can calculate both mentally and when using pencil and paper methods. Over time, higher attaining pupils make sound progress in this key skill, and in Year 9, can, multiply and divide fractions accurately. Most lessons consist of written exercises in which pupils try to get the calculations right. The pace of lessons is slow, and teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to develop understanding of mathematical ideas and processes through discussion, problem solving and investigative work. Some teachers emphasise an appropriate use of mathematical language, but this approach is not consistent. Teachers do not use information technology to support pupils' learning of mathematics, and pupils do not make appropriate progress in the use of calculators.

137. Progress at Key Stage 4 is poor for the majority of pupils. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of particular topics is not secure and many lack confidence. At this key stage, pupils' progress continues to be inhibited by lack of appropriate teaching methods, and by the ceiling imposed on their attainment by schemes of work. Over time, higher attaining pupils make insufficient progress across a broad range of mathematics. Teaching programmes do not give these pupils the opportunity to study more demanding mathematics at the higher grades of GCSE. The pace of work

lacks rigour and challenge. Some teachers do not make the links between consecutive exercises explicit. In Year 10, for example, higher attaining pupils spend time drawing straight line graphs, but these graphs are ignored as they move on to study the general equation of a straight line. Average attaining pupils in Year 11 repeat work, such as calculating percentages and identifying three-dimensional shapes, previously covered at Key Stage 3. At this key stage, lower attaining pupils continue to struggle with basic numeracy.

138. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory in the main school. When planning work, teachers generally, do not make reference to their pupils with special educational needs. They do provide individual help in lessons, however, and some teachers make effective use of learning support assistants. Teachers make little use of practical work to help lower attaining pupils understand the mathematics they study; standards of numeracy among these pupils is poor. In contrast, pupils working with staff in the specialist Language and Dyslexia Unit make good progress. Teachers use an appropriate range of teaching methods, including information technology, to help pupils develop their knowledge and understanding.

139. Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally sound. Although most pupils are not enthusiastic about learning mathematics, they want to do well and are diligent about completing classwork and homework. Pupils show liking and respect for their teachers, and generally respond well to their high expectations of standards of behaviour. The majority are well behaved, polite and courteous. In a minority of lessons where teaching is confusing, or where pupils are expected to spend very long periods of time on routine tasks, some pupils behave inappropriately. They are rude and do not make sufficient effort to do their work.

140. The quality of teaching at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory overall. In a minority of lessons, the quality of teaching is good or very good, and in a further minority of lessons teaching is poor. Teachers work hard and this provides sound support for pupils' learning. In the best quality lessons, teachers use discussion well to assess pupils' knowledge, and to stimulate their thinking about mathematics. These lessons are lively, stimulating and interesting, and contribute significantly to pupils' positive attitude to, and enjoyment of, mathematics. Most teachers, however, show little understanding of how children learn mathematics. They use a limited range of teaching methods, the pace of lessons is slow and this contributes to the lack of enthusiasm shown by some pupils. The departmental scheme of work does not provide effective support for teaching and learning. Expectations are too low for the majority of pupils. Much more could be demanded of pupils, in both classwork and homework, across the full range of attainment. With the exception of higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11, pupils are not given textbooks for use at home, which is unsatisfactory. Although teachers use formal and informal assessments regularly and frequently to assess pupils' progress in the National Curriculum, this information is not used accurately to match work to pupils' needs. The mathematics department has satisfactory accommodation. Classrooms are close to each other and the resources room, and there is a mathematics office. There is little use made of this area to celebrate pupils' achievements in mathematics or to stimulate and motivate their interest in the subject. During the inspection the subject area was being run by an acting head of department. Since the last inspection there has been no improvement in mathematics education.

Points for action:

- improve the quality of teaching;
- develop the scheme of work to meet the needs of the pupils;
- improve the quality of subject management;
- increase the availability of textbooks for use at home.

### **Numeracy across the curriculum**

141. Overall standards of numeracy across the curriculum are unsatisfactory. In science, although pupils make sound use of data handling techniques to analyse and display numerical data, and can substitute numbers into equations, they become confused when asked to re-arrange simple equations and are unsure about positive and negative numbers when reading meters. There is no whole school policy for numeracy, and few subjects make any contribution to the development of this key skill. In a small number of subjects, the use of number is well integrated in the curriculum. Pupils' ability to use measurement accurately supports their work in food technology at Key Stage 3, while at Key Stage 4 they demonstrate sound skills in using spreadsheets in information technology. In art, they

learn an appropriate mathematical vocabulary to describe their work, and use scaling techniques well when making three-dimensional models. Calculators are not used appropriately to support work in numeracy.

Point for action:

- devise a strategy across subjects to improve the numeracy levels of pupils by increasing the number of occasions when pupils are expected to use their mathematical skills and vocabulary.

## Science

142. Attainment is below national expectations at the end of both key stages. In 1998, the percentage of pupils gaining grades A\*-C in GCSE was below the national average for all schools and below the national average for similar schools. The percentage of A\*-G pass grades however, was above the national average. In 1998, the proportion of girls attaining A\*-C was for the first time higher than that for boys. The proportion of the age group entered for GCSE science has increased over the last few years indicating that the results have improved overall.

143. In the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998, attainment was below the national average but broadly in line with the average for similar schools. Boys performed better than girls. The school's science results for boys were better than in mathematics and English whereas the science results for girls were better than in mathematics but below those attained in English. The test results follow the national trend, with a decrease in 1998.

144. The work seen during the inspection is consistent with the attainment shown in the national tests and GCSE examinations. Pupils' experimental and investigative skills are sound. Their ability to plan and carry out an investigation is better than their ability to evaluate the results. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils can record observations and measurements systematically and present data in the form of graphs. In an experiment to investigate the relationship between the length of a wire and the current that passes through it, the lower attaining pupils drew bar charts rather than line graphs. The average attaining pupils had difficulties with the scale of their graphs, and the higher attaining pupils were able to make predictions based on the relationship between the length and the current. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils have gained a greater awareness of variables and the need to control them.

145. The ability of pupils in both key stages to recall scientific facts is better than their ability to apply their knowledge. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on the factors affecting reaction rates, pupils knew that the particles moved faster when the temperature was raised but needed help to realise that reactions involve particle collisions. Literacy skills are weak and pupils have few opportunities for extended writing in science. Numeracy skills are unsatisfactory and this hinders the analysis of numerical scientific data. Pupils are competent in using computers to collect and investigate scientific information.

146. Progress is satisfactory in both key stages. The pupils' exercise books show continuity of learning and sustained progress over time. Progress in the lessons seen was satisfactory overall and good in lessons where there was effective teaching. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The higher attaining pupils made least progress, because in many lessons they were not sufficiently challenged. Pupils made good progress in lessons where there was a variety of activities, with clear time limits set for each task and careful monitoring of pupils. A Year 9 lesson on rocks and minerals included a teacher introduction, a practical activity, written work and a question and answer review. The teacher questioned pupils while they were working to check their learning. In the oral review, questions were used to test pupil understanding, for example "what do we mean by a solid?"

147. Pupils' response to their work is good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. In Key Stage 3, pupils have a positive attitude to their work and enjoy their science. In practical work, they work safely and sensibly and take care of the equipment. They follow instructions carefully without fussing and work co-operatively in groups. In a Year 8 lesson on energy with pupils from the Language and Dyslexia Unit, their concentration was sustained throughout the lesson because of careful teaching. They were able to work out the energy changes in the circus of experiments demonstrated. A homework challenge was given to make up a mnemonic to remember the different types of energy. The pupils' involvement in this lesson resulted in them making good progress. In Key Stage 4, pupils are

more apathetic and teachers have to work harder at motivating them. They do not willingly volunteer answers to questions posed by the teacher or indeed ask many questions themselves. In a few lessons in both key stages, pupils were slow to start work, and poor behaviour limited progress. Presentation of work in science is unsatisfactory throughout the age range.

148. Overall, teaching is satisfactory in both key stages. More good lessons were seen in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of science is satisfactory. Expectations are variable. At best, teachers expect pupils to listen carefully, work hard, make progress and present their work neatly. In some lessons, however, not enough is expected of the pupils. Untidy or incomplete work is not challenged sufficiently, lack of concentration goes unnoticed and pupils are not helped to think carefully about their science. Lessons are generally well planned and objectives are made clear to pupils at the beginning of the lesson. In good lessons question and answer is used at the end of the lesson to review what pupils have learnt. The quality of questioning to assess pupils' progress is variable. The best makes pupils think and keeps them on their toes; in a minority of lessons, pupils are allowed to ignore questions or to make little effort to answer. The organisation of lessons is satisfactory but a narrow range of teaching and learning styles is used in the department. Pupil management is good though weaknesses in a minority of lessons hindered progress. In many lessons learning was not as effective as it could be because of the lack of a crisp focused pace ensuring pupils work really hard throughout the lesson. Marking is not analytical or detailed enough to motivate pupils to make further progress. In many lessons, the work was not sufficiently demanding for the higher attaining pupils. In a good Year 11 lesson, in which pupils were investigating the relationship between the resistance and the length of a wire, the teaching aims were clear, pupil management was excellent and the lesson progressed at a lively pace. The pupils clearly understood the factors that had to be considered in the planning of their experiment. The teacher constantly checked that all pupils were working and used individual questions to extend pupil understanding and make them think for themselves. Pupils of all attainment levels made good progress, in this lesson.

149. The department is soundly managed. A particular strength is the positive departmental team spirit. To improve pupils' learning, more consistency is needed within the department. More rigorous and formal monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department can only achieve this. The departmental development plan needs fewer but more specific targets and more specific success criteria if it is to help the department to raise standards. Continuity and progression of the science curriculum is hindered by some classes in Key Stage 3 having their lessons shared between two teachers. Some Year 9 groups have double and single science lessons on the same day with different teachers. Grouping in Key Stage 4, where science is blocked with English, does not enable fine setting on science ability and this impedes progress. There is insufficient use of assessment results to provide pupils with short-term targets on how to improve their progress. The use of assessment results to inform the curriculum needs further development. Pupils from the Language and Dyslexia Unit receive good teaching and support from Unit staff, who work very closely with the science department. This enables these pupils to make good progress in science. The resources are managed effectively by an efficient team of technicians. Resourcing however, is inadequate. The present level of funding does not permit the replacement of equipment on a rolling programme and this hinders the effective coverage of the curriculum. The science accommodation is unsatisfactory and in urgent need of refurbishment to give an effective learning environment. This has been recognised by the school. In the week following the inspection, governors allocated funds for a major upgrading programme for science accommodation.

150. Since the last inspection, there has been an improvement in overall attainment. The quality of teaching has been maintained. The opportunities given to pupils to use information and communication technology to collect, handle and investigate scientific information have improved but marking is still an area of weakness. The department has the capacity to improve further because of effective leadership and management.

Points for action:

- increase the level of expectation for higher attaining pupils;
- improve timetabling arrangements for some Key Stage 3 classes;
- improve literacy and numeracy skills and presentation of work;
- increase the use of assessment results in order to improve pupils' progress;
- improve the adequacy of resources;

improve the quality of accommodation.

## **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

### **Art**

151. In the 1998 GCSE examinations, the percentage of A\*-C grades was well below the national average (58 percent). In-line with the national average, girls generally achieved most of the higher grades in examinations, but in contrast to national averages, and reflecting the gender imbalance in the school as a whole, the number of girls who opted for art was smaller than the number of boys. Results in 1999, although below the national average and averages for schools of similar character, were considerably higher than previous years. 42 percent of pupils gained A\*-C grades and several attained the higher grades. The quality and standard of textiles, ceramics and sculpture were particularly high; so too were some sketchbooks. The most successful included personal notes and evaluations and experiments with different materials, techniques and textures. Attainment in lessons showed pupils in Year 10 to be achieving average standards for their age but in Year 11 standards overall were lower. Pupils work with confidence, often on a large scale. The breadth of experiences at Key Stage 3, working in two and three dimensions, provides a good foundation for more ambitious work in GCSE classes.

152. Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 show that the majority of pupils attain standards in-line with national expectations. Attainment on entry is well below the standard expected for pupils age 11. In the lessons seen, and the samples of pupils' work provided by the school, the majority of pupils attain standards in-line with expectations by the end of Key Stage 3. The attainment and long-term progress of some pupils are hampered because, for several consecutive weeks in each year, they do not have homework or art lessons.

153. Overall, pupils make good progress in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4. Most pupils with special educational needs work conscientiously, make good progress in lessons and achieve success in GCSE examinations. Teachers use a range of teaching styles and have very good specialist knowledge. Progress is good because they use these to very good effect by combining their understanding of pupils' learning needs with an understanding of how they can be addressed through the subject. Progress was marked in lessons where short-term learning objectives were clear and specific. Since the last report, considerable progress has been made in helping pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of the work of artists, craftspeople and designers. Many strategies, which boost pupils' confidence and improve literacy skills, are successfully helping them to express ideas about their own and others' work.

154. Pupils' response to the subject is good. By the end of Key Stage 3 most have positive attitudes to learning. They benefit from one-to-one discussions with teachers and enjoy the chance to demonstrate what they have learnt when they make short presentations to the class. The affirmation they experience motivates them and fosters an enthusiasm for learning. Some of the younger Key Stage 3 pupils, by contrast, have poor attitudes and limited concentration. Some arrive late to lessons, miss homework deadlines or fail to take enough care over presentation of work in sketchbooks.

155. Teaching was satisfactory overall and had many strengths. Subject specialists offer pupils high quality experiences, for example, in ceramics and three-dimensional work, textiles, drawing and painting. The task of improving pupils' knowledge and understanding has been tackled with imagination and skill. Teaching was particularly effective where, in the process of searching for information and explaining possible links with their own work, pupils were able to gain considerable insight and understanding. The standard and range of three-dimensional work is a particular strength of the department. The quality of these activities and relationships established with pupils provides good support to those with behavioural and learning needs. The progress of groups of younger pupils was unsatisfactory where the lessons lacked urgency and expectations about behaviour, attendance and time keeping had not been established. The quality of day-to-day assessment in Key Stage 3 lessons was mostly good. Insufficient account however, was taken of teacher assessments made at the end of the modules to shape and refine the curriculum, over the longer term. In Key Stage 3, teaching needs to focus on improving standards in drawing and the use and presentation of work in sketchbooks. The expectations, quality and frequency of homework, as an aspect of

the art curriculum, need to be established within the school with parents and pupils.

156. Currently the department is developing portfolios of pupils' work, to help teachers monitor attainment and progress and track curriculum coverage, this could prove very beneficial, especially at Key Stage 3. This aspect of the school assessment policy is in the early stages of development in the department.

157. Progress since the last inspection has been good in some areas and unsatisfactory in others. Resources are inadequate to meet the demands of the curriculum; pupils are asked to buy their own sketchbooks, which are a requirement at Key Stage 3. The use and access to computers remains unsatisfactory. Teachers have limited expertise in this area of the curriculum and this has a negative impact on pupils' attainment. In all years, pupils are not given the opportunities to use and apply the skills they have acquired in information technology to their work in art. The school has addressed health and safety concerns raised in the previous report and acted promptly to address a concern raised during the inspection.

Points for action:

make more use of assessment information to refine the curriculum;

improve standards of drawing, and the use and presentation of sketch books and homework at Key Stage 3;

improve resources;

extend the use of computers and computer generated imagery.

## **Design and technology**

158. The percentage of pupils gaining an A\*- C grade in technology subjects at GCSE varies between subjects. The results in 1999 showed improvement on those for 1998. In both years, boys performed better than girls and high proportion of pupils obtained an A\*- G grade. The best results were obtained in resistant materials with the proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C grades being above the national average for all schools. In other subjects, the number of higher grades varies with a satisfactory number in textiles and a lower number in food technology and child development. The results for all technology subjects are improving.

159. Current evidence indicates that standards at the end of Key Stage 3 will be in line with those expected nationally. Pupils develop a satisfactory range of skills using a variety of materials. In textiles, they can mark out, cut and join fabric. When using resistant materials, they are able to design and make toys using a range of materials and mechanisms such as cams. Pupils acquire satisfactory knowledge of electronics by designing and making artefacts, such as an illuminating badge in Year 8. Year 9 pupils showed themselves adept in making a variety of foods wrapped in pastry. They were able to follow the mixing instructions in the recipe and the standard of the finished product was good. Overall, however, the design skills of pupils are less well developed than their making skills. By the end of the key stage, pupils do not have sufficient research, graphics and planning skills to enable them to develop a range of design ideas and this limits attainment.

160. In Key Stage 3, pupils make satisfactory progress overall. They acquire a basic knowledge of the areas required by the National Curriculum. Although written work is neat the content is not of a particularly high standard. The booklets provided for pupils require responses in sentences, but often pupils wrote a single phrase. This does not allow higher attaining pupils to develop and extend their written work and limits how well that are able to write evaluations. The graphics skills of many pupils are not developed sufficiently as they move through the key stage. This has been recognised by the school and a programme is being implemented to teach a range of skills.

161. Key Stage 4 pupils make satisfactory progress overall. As they move through the key stage, the quality of design work improves. This was evident in samples of examination assignments which showed a range of design ideas being developed and satisfactory evaluations of completed work. Skills learnt in pneumatics and control technology courses help pupils develop design skills. In child development, pupils produce written assignments of satisfactory quality. Teaching is stimulating and often takes examples from the teacher's own experience as a parent, and pupils make satisfactory progress. In both key stages, lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in making, but overall their progress is slow in their presentation and

evaluation skills. Homework was set regularly in both key stages but was a fixed task for all pupils. During the inspection, a number of pupils were observed using information technology to design and present work.

162. Pupil's responses ranged from good to unsatisfactory. Almost all were satisfactory or good. Pupils' work conscientiously and are often enthusiastic. They are keen to talk about their work and respond well to individual teaching. Several pupils attend sessions at lunchtime to catch up their work in the subject. Pupils remain on task in lessons and respond well to questions. They have good relationships with their teachers. All pupils appreciate practical help and watch demonstrations closely. Where necessary, pupils cooperate with each other and share equipment without fuss. In the very few lessons, where pupils' response was unsatisfactory it was because teachers did not deal effectively with inappropriate behaviour.

163. The quality of teaching was satisfactory overall, the range was from very good to unsatisfactory. Almost all was satisfactory or better. All lessons were thoroughly planned and discipline was maintained. In the most effective lessons, pupils receive good individual help and encouragement. Teachers have a good level of subject knowledge, for example in electronics. They show enthusiasm for the subject and are able to successfully motivate pupils. Teachers demonstrate new techniques effectively and check pupils' understanding by careful questioning. The work to be completed is discussed at the start of the lesson and pupils know what they have to do in the time available.

164. Teachers give encouragement to pupils in lessons especially with the use of commendations. They effectively use a new assessment system, providing helpful feedback which enables pupils to improve their work. Where teaching was unsatisfactory or there were weaknesses, teachers did not ensure time was used effectively. For example, spending too much time on routine matters such as giving out paper and books. Tasks were not well matched to pupils' needs with work sheets that demanded too little of higher attaining pupils. Teachers ignored rather than dealt with noisy behaviour which limited the progress made.

165. The management of the department is good. Schemes of work are in place, which are well linked to the National Curriculum and examination syllabuses. The accommodation is satisfactory and very well looked after by both teachers and pupils. There is good technical support in the workshop area, which is effectively used. At present there is no technical support in the food and textiles area. The control technology room is underused and requires updating and there is no computer controlled machinery. Overall, the range and quality of resources is satisfactory. The number of resource books is relatively low in the school but, in the textiles and child development area, there is a useful selection of catalogues, magazines. The consumable resources in the resistant materials area are sufficient but lack variety. There is a clear health and safety document and a proper risk assessment.

166. There have been a satisfactory number of improvements since the last inspection. There is a new food technology room. Computer aided design and control technology are taught. There are recent innovations to increase the use of information technology in food technology lessons. There is a new assessment system linked to the National Curriculum. Standards at GCSE are rising in all areas.

Points for action:

improve the quality of work books to enable higher attaining pupils to develop and extend their written work

improve the quality of pupils' graphics skills;

ensure that time is well used in all lessons and teachers are consistent in their approach to dealing with inattentive behaviour;

- improve the range of control technology equipment and its use.

## **Geography**

167. As at the time of the previous inspection, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is well below national expectations. The work of higher-attaining pupils often matches national expectations. The results of teacher assessment have improved a great deal since 1997. For GCSE, the department provides courses in geography and travel and tourism. Results in both are well below national averages and averages for similar schools, which was the case at the time of the previous inspection. The average examination grade achieved by pupils in these two courses is

well below the average for the school as a whole. There has been insufficient progress in raising standards at GCSE since the previous inspection. The current attainment for the GCSE courses is well below average. For example, in travel and tourism, pupils write very straight forward descriptions on employment in the transport industry, and describe the effects of tourism on a seaside town in brief and very general terms.

168. During the lessons observed, pupils' progress varied from very good to unsatisfactory, but was unsatisfactory overall at both key stages. In a lesson where progress was very good at Key Stage 3, all pupils were fully involved in the lesson and learnt the main processes of coastal erosion and the landforms these help create. In a GCSE lesson where progress was unsatisfactory, although some pupils worked conscientiously, about one-third of the pupils only completed a simple bar chart using Excel and wrote very brief notes about this.

169. Progress over time at Key Stage 3 is mostly satisfactory across the range of necessary geography topics for all pupils. They study many different geographical examples, but written work tends to be brief and they have insufficient opportunities for extended writing to develop their ideas in more detail. Progress during the GCSE courses is unsatisfactory because of weaknesses in curriculum planning and unsatisfactory teaching. For example, coursework for the travel and tourism course is insufficiently challenging and the poorly structured geography coursework does not allow pupils to show what they know and understand as they use inappropriate fieldwork techniques and maps. During both courses, work is not clearly structured around the key ideas and skills of the courses. For travel and tourism, there is insufficient case study of specific tourist attractions and centres, including those in Kent. Progress of pupils with special educational needs is also unsatisfactory.

170. Pupils use their numeracy skills in, for example, constructing charts and diagrams and then interpreting these. There is not however, a plan to show how these skills will be developed and improved as pupils move through the courses. There are some weaknesses, as when some GCSE pupils drew population pyramids as line graphs rather than bar graphs, and pupils have few opportunities to interpret data as part of the travel and tourism course. Pupils complete plenty of written work, particularly for GCSE. Much of their written work however, consists of short answers to questions and they have relatively few opportunities to write at length. There are some examples of good teaching which includes a clear focus on key words which are displayed in the classrooms. Insufficient use is made of information technology at present, but there are now very good opportunities as a new computer network room has recently been opened next to the geography classrooms.

171. Pupils' response is good at Key Stage 3, even when there are weaknesses in the teaching. They usually behave well, sustain their concentration and have positive attitudes to work, and these help them make progress. Occasionally, pupils do not have enough opportunities to use their initiative. Pupils' response at GCSE relates closely to the quality of teaching. Where teaching is sound or better, they are well behaved, interested and concentrate well. Where the teaching is unsatisfactory, a significant number of pupils have negative attitudes, complete little work and hinder the progress of other pupils.

172. The quality of teaching is worse than the quality recorded at the previous inspection. An improvement since the previous inspection is that learning objectives are shared with pupils at the start of many lessons. Just over half of the lessons seen were satisfactory or better but the other lessons had significant weaknesses. Overall, the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. In lessons where teaching is effective and helps pupils make progress, there is effective classroom management, key terms are clearly explained and pupils have to explain their answers to questions fully. In a Key Stage 3 lesson with lower-attaining pupils where teaching was very effective on coastal erosion and landforms, the learning objectives were shared with the pupils at the start of the lesson and reviewed at the end. There was good use of the overhead projector to illustrate landforms, a brisk pace with time limited tasks, resources were well matched to pupils' needs with the practical illustration of erosion processes linked to the pupils' own experiences, and questioning ensured that both boys and girls were fully involved. The pupils made very good progress.

173. Significant weaknesses in some lessons included ineffective classroom management so that some pupils disrupted the work of the rest of the class, and too much whole-class discussion so that pupils had insufficient opportunity to engage in interesting practical tasks with maps, photos and case studies. Also, teachers' marking comments are often general and do not identify specifically how pupils can improve. For the GCSE courses, past

exam questions are not used as an integral part of the ongoing work.

174. There is a good range of fieldwork for geography courses at both key stages, although the pupils do not make enough progress in the GCSE fieldwork. Travel and tourism fieldwork consists of a visit to Chessington. Because all the students taking the travel and tourism GCSE course do not undertake work experience in related businesses, the school provides simulations for the required coursework, but these are not effective in enabling pupils to reach appropriate standards. There are schemes of work for the Key Stage 3 geography course but not for the GCSE courses, which is a weakness which makes it difficult to improve the courses and teaching activities. As at the time of the previous inspection, marking needs to include comments that help pupils understand how to improve, and there is too much text-based work for GCSE geography. Assessment is being developed but much still needs to be improved. There is not a portfolio to illustrate pupils' work at different National Curriculum levels.

175. There has been a recent change in the management of the department and satisfactory progress has been made in a short time since then. Responsibility for the curriculum needs to be shared more equitably amongst the staff. There is a good departmental development plan which includes raising pupils' attainment. Since the previous inspection, insufficient progress has been made especially in improving pupils' attainment at GCSE.

Points for action:

improve the quality of teaching;

improve curriculum planning at Key Stage 4;

increase opportunities for extended writing and development of pupils' ideas;

continue to improve assessment procedures.

## **History**

176. The results of GCSE examinations were well below national averages and averages for similar schools in 1999, and were lower than in 1998. In both years, some pupils achieved A grades. The standards of current pupils are a little higher and are below the averages for similar schools. Higher-attaining pupils have good levels of knowledge and understanding about World War I battles between Russia and Germany, and know why Rasputin was an important figure. Pupils' oral work is of a higher standard than their written work.

177. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is well below national expectations. The results of teacher assessment have improved since 1997. Higher-attaining pupils have sound levels of knowledge. Pupils use sources to answer specific questions and to draw out relevant information. They are weaker at commenting on the usefulness of sources for a particular enquiry. Pupils are able to write brief arguments supporting William's claim to the throne against Harold. They use dates and terms correctly as they evaluate the significance of events in the early life of Elizabeth I, and are aware that portraits do not give reliable information about her appearance. Pupils' attainment is hindered by weak literacy skills.

178. During the lessons seen, pupils made good progress at both key stages. For example, in a Key Stage 3 lesson, pupils built up a good understanding of the reasons for the French Revolution. In a Key Stage 4 lesson, pupils learnt why Japan invaded Korea and Manchuria, and the impact this had on the League of Nations. During Key Stage 3, pupils' progress is sound for most key elements of history but weaker for the understanding of historical interpretations, and the organisation and communication of their work. Most of pupils' written work consists of relatively short answers to questions. GCSE pupils make sound progress in both their knowledge and in the quality of their writing, as they write at length and begin to structure their work to give clear arguments. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress over time. Pupils make very little use of numeracy skills as part of history but the recently opened information technology room next to the history rooms provides the opportunity, for example, to use data handling with census data and other numerical information.

179. The pupils' response to the lessons was good at Key Stage 3 and very good at GCSE. Younger pupils are interested and keen to ask their own questions. They are very well behaved and sustain their concentration well although they do not find it easy to use their initiative or write at length. Older pupils are very well behaved, willing

to contribute fully to lessons and sustain their concentration very well.

180. At the time of the previous inspection, too little use was made of information technology in history teaching and this is still the case. In the lessons observed during the inspection, teaching was good at both key stages. Strengths of the teaching include clear learning objectives for lessons, making the subject fun and relating it to the pupils' own knowledge, building up clear sequences of arguments, good use of the correct vocabulary, very effective classroom management which secures good behaviour and positive attitudes, and the setting of relevant homework. In some classes, there is the very effective recording and classification of key information in clear, interesting diagrams on the blackboard. Demanding questions are often used that require the pupils to think rather than just remember information. Occasional weaknesses are copying tasks that limit pupils' progress and comments in marking that do not make it clear to pupils what they need to do in order to improve.

181. Since the previous report, an improvement is that more materials are used to match tasks to pupils' varying levels of attainment. Some improvements have been made in planning for progression but there is the need to plan for pupils to make clear progress year by year in each of the key elements of history during Key Stage 3. Also, there is insufficient planning during Key Stage 3 to improve pupils' writing skills and their ability to write longer answers and essays. The sound scheme of work does not identify which parts will be covered in depth and in outline. There is a good range of visits to historical sites which help pupils make progress.

182. The subject is well managed. Both teaching and pupils' work are monitored but the monitoring of work needs a sharper focus on attainment and the progress pupils are making if it is to help raise standards. There is a well structured development plan for the subject but the targets for improvement are not always explicitly linked to raising pupils' attainment and improving teaching.

Points for action:

improve the standard of pupils' written work at Key Stage 3;

improve the planning at Key Stage 3 for progression in the key elements of history;

improve the use of information technology;

improve the effectiveness of monitoring by focussing on the attainment and progress made by pupils.

### **Information technology**

183. The school entered Key Stage 4 pupils for the short course GCSE in 1998 and 1999. The number of pupils gaining a higher grade was very low. In 1998, no pupils obtained an A\*-C grade and in the most recent examination around 4 percent gained a higher grade. The school has decided that the present course is unsuitable as there is a considerable inappropriate coursework element and a change is planned. In the sixth form students use information technology in GNVQ, as well as in GCSE and AS course lessons and attainment is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs attain at an appropriate level. There is good provision both in the Skills Centre and in the Language and Dyslexia Unit in Key Stage 3. The 'Successmaker' reading scheme has raised attainment.

184. The evidence of pupils' previously completed work and the lessons observed during the inspection show that by the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is below the standard expected nationally. A few pupils, however, attain standards in line with those expected nationally. Pupils have an information technology lesson each week; almost all of the teaching is done within these lessons and very little in the other National Curriculum subjects. Pupils can apply their knowledge by using a range of software in a few subjects, such as design and technology and science.

185. From evidence of previously completed work and the lessons observed, pupils make satisfactory progress in specialist information technology lessons at Key Stage 3. Progress overall, however, is unsatisfactory as pupils do not consistently apply the skills and knowledge they learn in other areas of the curriculum. At Key Stage 4, the progress made by pupils following the short course varied in the lessons seen and was dependent on the expertise of the teacher. In a few subjects such as business studies and in some work completed by pupils in the Language and Dyslexia Unit, pupils make good progress with applications such as spreadsheet work and word processing. Overall in the sixth form students make good progress.

186. In most lessons, pupils respond well and work well together. They show interest in lessons and enjoy their work; they listen attentively to instructions and settle to practical work quickly and willingly. They cooperate with their teachers and their behaviour is nearly always good. A few examples of silly behaviour however, were seen in lessons and this limited the progress made as pupils wasted time. Relationships between pupils are good and they collaborate well. They think about what they are doing and concentrate on their work. They take care of the equipment.

187. The quality of teaching in specialist lessons ranged from satisfactory to unsatisfactory. Overall, it is satisfactory. Strengths in the teaching included good relationships with pupils and a good level of subject knowledge. Clear and precise instructions were given which enabled pupils to start tasks with a minimum of fuss. Good support for pupils with special educational needs was provided by learning support assistants. Teachers in the department plan their work thoroughly and make good use of available resources. Where teaching was weaker, lessons were not planned in sufficient detail and the work was not clearly explained. Pupils were left waiting a long time when they experienced difficulties and consequently made unsatisfactory progress. Teachers did not ensure that pupils understood what had to be completed by the end of the lesson and pupils completed insufficient work during the lesson. Teachers lack sufficient subject knowledge to use information technology to support their work in other areas of the curriculum.

188. Insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to apply and extend their information technology skills in other subjects of the curriculum. Little use of computers across the curriculum was observed during the inspection. The exceptions were in Key Stage 4 business studies, design and technology and GNVQ lessons where pupils were observed word processing aspects of their coursework and showed sound keyboard skills and understanding of the programs. Little use of information technology was evident in pupils' previously completed work. Good use is made of the available computers in the Language and Dyslexia Unit, the Skills Centre and for research in the library.

189. Planning of the curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum but the implementation does not yet closely follow the planning. The subject departments throughout the school do not fulfil their statutory obligations to deliver information technology across the curriculum. Departments are not aware of what happens in other areas hence duplication and gaps appear. As a consequence, continuity and progression suffers. The co-ordinator is appropriately collecting information from departments in order to plan future developments. Currently, there is no common assessment format, and this is a weakness. All work is well marked in specialist lessons. End of unit assessments are made but there are no marks or grades on the individual pieces of work to inform pupils of their attainment level or progress. There have been significant improvements made to resources and the available computers now provide a good resource for learning. The co-ordinator has made many innovations and has been responsible for the introduction and updating of much of the hardware. Data logging has been introduced to science, 'Successmaker' reading software to the Skills Centre, computer aided design and 'Lego dacta' control technology to the technology department. The technician in the department has shown considerable expertise in updating some of the machines and in reorganising the network system. Some courses have been run to improve teachers' expertise. Overall, however the professional development of staff has not been effective and is unsatisfactory. Future progress will depend on how successful the school is in making the staff more computer literate and then using this skill efficiently within the subject departments.

190. There have been considerable improvements since the last inspection. New networks have been set up, much new software has been installed; new hardware has been purchased and machines updated. The school, however, has not been successful in introducing sufficient information technology teaching into the subject departments. Consequently, pupils have been deprived of sufficient practice and National Curriculum requirements have not been met. There is satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Points for action:

improve the use of computers across the curriculum to fully meet National Curriculum requirements;  
fully implement the planned curriculum in all subjects and improve assessment procedures;  
improve staff expertise.

## **Modern foreign languages**

191. The pupils' results in the 1998 end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments were above national averages. Results in the 1998 GCSE examinations in French were very low in comparison with national averages and similar schools. In the 1998 Spanish GCSE examination, results were average when compared with similar schools but below national averages.

192. Over the past three years, results of the Key Stage 3 teacher assessments have fluctuated from well below national averages in 1997, to above in 1998 and below in 1999. Results in GCSE French were rising and were particularly high in comparison with national averages in 1997 but suffered a significant drop in 1998 when the school changed examination syllabus from a modular course to a course with a final assessment. Results for 1999 in French, improved significantly and are just below national averages and above averages for similar schools. Results in Spanish declined between 1998 and 1999, from in line, to below, in comparison with similar schools. The proportion of Year 11 pupils taking a GCSE language examination is higher than in many schools.

193. The attainment of pupils currently in Year 9 French groups is below national expectations for all but the higher attainers whose attainment is above. The attainment of pupils currently in Year 11 French groups is in line with expectations for similar schools but below when compared with schools nationally. The attainment of pupils studying Spanish in Year 9 and Year 11 is below expectations for similar schools. Attainment is higher in French than in Spanish at both key stages. The attainment of students studying for NVQ qualifications in the sixth form is below national averages.

194. At Key Stage 3, progress is sound overall and at Key Stage 4, it is good. In the sixth form, students make good progress in both languages. Pupils make a good start to learning French and lower attainers make very good progress in Spanish. In a Year 7 Spanish class, for example, lower attaining pupils rapidly developed their basic skills of concentration, literacy and oracy whilst increasing their knowledge of Spanish. In some Year 9 French groups, however, recent changes in teachers to cover for maternity leave, have resulted in unruly behaviour and unsatisfactory progress. Higher attainers in Year 9 who have made very good progress in the past are currently making unsatisfactory progress. At Key Stage 4, pupils make particularly good progress in French and good progress in Spanish in Year 10. Progress in Year 11 Spanish is unsatisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress at both key stages. Pupils withdrawn to the Language and Dyslexia Unit to study French make very good progress.

195. Attitudes to learning are positive overall. In the best lessons, pupils are keen and motivated. They respond well to teachers' high expectations. Attitudes to learning in the sixth form are good. Less positive attitudes were seen in Year 9 French lessons where pupils lacked respect for unfamiliar teachers and were rude. The Year 11 group of higher attainers studying Spanish contains a small group of boys who are preventing the group from making appropriate progress.

196. The quality of teaching varies from very good to poor but is good overall. Teaching in the sixth form is good. At Key Stage 3, teaching is satisfactory overall with some very good teaching and a small amount of unsatisfactory and poor teaching in Year 9. In Key Stage 4, teaching is generally good, and often very good in French. Strengths of the teaching were seen in a Year 8 Spanish lesson, where using Spanish for real purposes and constant checking by the teacher to ensure that pupils understood her fluent Spanish, ensured that listening skills improved. In a Year 10 French lesson, detailed planning relating closely to the demands of the modular GCSE course and constant review of the main learning objectives of the lesson, kept every pupil on task and resulted in increased confidence in reading and speaking. Unsatisfactory teaching was seen in Year 9 French lessons, where supply teachers were unable to manage difficult groups resulting in unruly behaviour and restricted progress.

197. Information technology is not being used as a part of language teaching in a structured way. Some timetabling difficulties result in long lessons, which restricts the progress of all but the most able pupils. The leadership of the department is good. Schemes of work identify the needs of particular groups of pupils well and teachers provide good individual support for pupils encountering difficulties. Few teachers, however, provide a choice of task to cater for the wide abilities of pupils within groups. Work is well marked and, in some cases, particularly effective in

identifying points for improvement. The department does not assess pupils' competency in French as they enter the school although many have already studied French at primary school. When available, support assistants contribute effectively to the progress of pupils with special educational needs. Foreign language assistants are used well to support the development of speaking skills within lessons and give of their free time to support pupils. The department's involvement with a teacher training institution has a positive effect on the strong ethos for learning by encouraging teachers to question their teaching methods. There are insufficient resources to ensure that every pupil has a textbook. The department plays an active role in maintaining Comenius links with France and Spain, funded by the European Union, which enables sixth form pupils to undertake work experience in Spain. Other trips include visits to France and Spain for younger pupils which are subsidised by the school and these make a positive contribution to pupils' progress.

198. Since the last inspection, pupils' skills in speaking and in writing have improved. With the exception of supply teachers, most lessons are conducted almost entirely in French and Spanish. Imaginative approaches are now in use by some teachers and most provide appropriate challenge for pupils at all levels. Reading comprehension is being developed, particularly in Year 10.

Points for action:

- conduct baseline assessment to identify exactly what pupils have been taught in the primary school and to serve as a marker for future assessment of progress;
- analyse available data to identify trends over time and set individual targets for pupils as they move through the school;
- provide differentiated materials for pupils within groups;
- increase the use of information technology.

## **Music**

199. The inspection took place in the absence of the head of music who is on long term sick leave. Continuity in the teaching of music has been further impaired by a difficulty in securing specialist supply teachers. There was no written work available for scrutiny during the inspection.

200. Small numbers of pupils take GCSE music and detailed analysis of results is not possible. In 1999, the three pupils gained B or C grades. In the previous three years, ten of the seventeen candidates gained A to C grades. None achieved below grade E.

201. Attainment in Year 9, as indicated in the one lesson seen, is well below average. Pupils had a very limited working knowledge of the elements of music in the National Curriculum. They were uncritical in their assessments of items from a recording of Top of the Pops. Technical analysis was poor, but most revealed a sound knowledge of current trends in pop music. Despite discontinuous provision of teaching, the three pupils in Year 11 are attaining standards in performing which are in line with their abilities. Composing is less well advanced and below expectation for the stage in the course, but pupils compose with a good knowledge of the instruments for which they write. There was no opportunity to judge pupils' musical knowledge or their skills in analysing music.

202. Progress has been poor over time, but was satisfactory in the lessons observed. Two lessons were observed in Year 7. In one, pupils gained a ready understanding of how sound is produced in brass instruments. In another class, pupils made satisfactory progress in identifying percussion instruments used on a CD. Both classes made good progress in singing within the short time available. Pupils with special educational needs took part wholeheartedly in all practical activities and made satisfactory progress. In Key Stage 4, the two pupils in Year 10 receive very little active teaching, but have work set and explained for them and subsequently marked by a supply teacher. Progress in these circumstances is poor.

203. Pupils' responses match the quality of teaching. Pupils are generally well behaved and prepared to show an interest in what they are asked to do. Their positive attitudes were clear from the readiness of several to bring in and demonstrate the instruments they play. The pupils in Key Stage 4 are very committed and enthusiastic and show a good level of independence in their learning.

204. Teaching in Key Stage 3, was good, satisfactory and poor in the three lessons observed. Sometimes the pace was brisk, the teacher communicated a real enthusiasm for the tasks and made realistic demands on the pupils. The teacher's subject knowledge was very good and good use was made of unplanned opportunities, for instance when they were prepared to demonstrate their own instruments. Where the teaching was poor, an undemanding activity was practised for far too long and discipline was unsatisfactory. Teaching in Key Stage 4 was good. The teacher gave pupils a clear idea of standards required, monitored their general progress and supported her teaching with good resources, including a carefully produced pamphlet to aid their composing.

205. The difficult recent history of the department has resulted in standards of attainment and progress which are well below expectation. The school's good schemes of work are currently in abeyance. Despite a lack of satisfactory management and co-ordination, there are isolated patches of good progress. The visiting instrumental teachers, whose work is a strength of the department, have organised themselves effectively and continue to provide good standards of tuition and to organise instrumental ensembles which have a real sense of purpose. The subject requires closer monitoring and more active organisation by the school until staffing difficulties are resolved. The good level of resources is not having a suitably beneficial effect on pupils' progress at present because some of the equipment, particularly the keyboards, is stored in a state of considerable disorder.

206. It is not possible to make a meaningful comparison between present standards of provision and those described in the previous inspection report. The department does not at present have the capacity to function efficiently or to develop.

Points for action:

the recruitment of staff with specialist expertise;  
improve the management and co-ordination of the subject.

### **Physical education**

207. Results in the 1999 GCSE examinations were well below average for similar schools. These results are similar to those in the previous inspection.

208. The evidence from lessons observed indicates that attainment meets national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils' games skills are better developed than their gymnastics skills. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment levels are below expectations in the core curriculum, and the standards of those pupils studying the GCSE course are well below average in their written work and just below average in the practical work seen during the inspection.

209. In dance, pupils in Year 7 have a sound awareness of space although they have yet to express themselves imaginatively through movement. The quality of pupils' movement skills, particularly boys, is underdeveloped in dance, and in gymnastics where pupils in Year 8 lacked co-ordination in their movements. During the inspection, a significant proportion of pupils in Year 8 showed a disregard of safety procedures when handling gymnastics apparatus. By Year 9, however, pupils show confidence in ball handling during rugby and the small proportion of higher attaining pupils pass the ball with accuracy and appropriate pace. In trampoline, pupils follow sound safety procedures and can demonstrate a routine which includes conventional tasks. Throughout the key stage however, pupils have yet to identify weaknesses in their own performances and refine their work.

210. By Year 11, a small proportion of pupils display good levels of racquet and ball control in tennis. The large majority of pupils however, have yet to become aware of their own strengths and limitations and develop an appropriate understanding of technique. Pupils are beginning to understand the importance of preparation for physical activity although they can suggest just a limited range of warm-up activities.

211. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 studying the GCSE course will need to improve substantially their study skills and attitudes to learning if they are to successfully meet the course requirements. In Year 10, pupils showed little interest

in improving their skills during a practical badminton lesson and they made unsatisfactory progress. In a theory lesson, the large majority of pupils were passive, showed little interest, and had difficulty applying their knowledge. Again, these pupils made unsatisfactory progress. Evidence from a scrutiny of work however, shows that the small proportion of higher attaining pupils are working successfully towards a sound understanding of the body, exercise, and other related topics, and they produce examples of accurate and well presented work.

212. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in lessons through Key Stage 3, but they make unsatisfactory progress through Key Stage 4. Throughout the school, some average and all higher attaining pupils are not given sufficiently challenging tasks. Below average and some average attainers consolidate their skills well during practices but higher attaining pupils are given the same practices, although they are more accomplished performers. Pupils are encouraged to plan their work in gymnastics and dance, but their evaluative skills are not sufficiently developed through the key stages.

213. The large majority of pupils are keen to participate in physical education and co-operate well within lessons. Pupils' listening skills however, are not well developed and pupils are easily distracted. In Year 8, the disruptive behaviour of a small proportion of pupils significantly affected the learning of others in the class.

214. The quality of teaching seen was satisfactory overall, and ranged from good to unsatisfactory. Teachers' subject knowledge is good in games skills and trampolines. The most effective features of teaching include well-established relationships, effective use of time and resources, and a brisk pace to lessons. Pupils benefit most when teachers use accurate demonstrations and incisive questioning to help them evaluate and improve their performances. Weaknesses in teaching include a number of common features, a slow start to lessons, inconsistencies in preparing the body for exercise, lack of pace, insufficient use of demonstrations, and the lack of challenge for the most skilful performers, which was a weakness identified in the previous report. Pupils studying the GCSE course would benefit from a varied range of teaching methods to capture their imagination and relate the theory to the practical work; this was a weakness reported in the previous inspection.

215. Pupils engage in a balanced range of conventional activities within mixed and single gender groups. In Key Stage 3, pupils would benefit from spending more time on a reduced range of planned activities. The timetabling of a once-weekly lesson in Key Stage 4 does not give pupils enough opportunities to develop their skills sufficiently well and improve their health-related fitness. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 would benefit from the introduction of nationally accredited courses to help focus their work and raise standards further. The extra-curricular provision gives pupils opportunities to develop their skills further. School teams and individuals gain some success in local competitions.

216. The subject is soundly managed by an experienced and supportive head of department. The documentation provides comprehensive guidance, although the development plan lacks focus and does not include enough detail. Assessment procedures have yet to be used in a systematic way to guide short- and medium-term planning.

217. The school has an extensive landscaped grass area which provides spacious outdoor teaching facilities. Currently, just one small hard court area is available as a teaching area but its surface is unsafe. The range of indoor facilities is limited and a cause for concern. The entrance to the gymnasium is dowdy and unwelcoming, the gymnasium is adequate but one edge of the wooden flooring is unsafe (a similar judgement to that in the previous inspection report). Changing rooms have been redecorated but they are small in size and inadequate. Pupils do not have access to showers, and the sports hall has been closed.

218. The department is in a position to further improve because of its commitment to raise standards by improving the quality of teaching, reviewing the curriculum and seeking advice.

Points for action:

improve the quality of teaching;

improve assessment procedures;

improve the quality of accommodation.

## **Religious education**

219. In the GCSE short course taken by all pupils in Year 11 in 1999, pupils achieved 35.7 percent A\* to C grades. There are no figures by which to make national comparisons, but these results, which include 3 A\* grades, were very good for the school. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3, as indicated in the scrutiny of work from last year and pupil's work so far this year, is below the expectations of the Kent Local Agreed Syllabus. In Year 9, pupils produce written work which is carefully presented but usually brief. They have a satisfactory understanding of, for instance basic concepts concerning religious customs, dress and artefacts associated with Sikhism. Pupils' descriptive powers are limited in discussion, as is their capacity to evaluate religious beliefs and apply them to their own lives. By Year 11, pupils' understanding of religious issues is more developed. They can appreciate both sides of an argument, for instance on prejudice with examples in the Old and New Testaments. Most can present carefully selected information in support of their viewpoints, but their skills in discussion remain below expectation. Standards of presentation of written work are good in Key Stage 4 and most pupils are careful to spell key words accurately.

220. Pupils make good progress through Key Stage 3 and satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4. Teachers usually adapt well their method of presentation to the needs of the classes which are in broad ability groups, and this assists the rate of progress that pupils make. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory and often good progress in both key stages. Pupils in Year 7 soon learn the need to have values in their personal lives and they relate this to their families by devising shields representing desirable components in their families' lives. Pupils acquire substantial information about Christianity and, by Year 8, all pupils understand the teaching of St. Paul that everyone is an important member of a community, family or 'body'. When studying the Parable of the Talents, they learn the importance of valuing everyone by listing the positive qualities of classmates. Pupils make satisfactory progress in all aspects of the GCSE short course. Their understanding of the various kinds of human love develops in Year 10 and this leads to a consideration of relationships, marriage and social conventions. Standards of writing develop satisfactorily and higher attaining pupils produce examples of written work which are extended and thoughtful.

221. Pupils behave well in lessons and almost always take the work seriously, despite the difficulty of some of the concepts they encounter. Individuals are often reluctant to express themselves in front of the class, but can engage in purposeful discussion in groups. Groups work is generally purposeful. Pupils listen well to the teacher and each other in class. Lower attaining pupils are not good at working independently and achieve a better pace and standard of work when closely directed. Most pupils are keen to do well, take a pride in their written work and soon learn to respect the religious beliefs they encounter.

222. The overall standard of teaching was good. There were regular examples of very good teaching and some lessons were excellent. All teachers prepared lessons thoroughly, used regular question and answer sessions to confirm and extend pupils' understanding and enjoyed purposeful relationships with their classes. There was often a good range of interesting resources which were carefully organised. Marking is careful, regular and constructive, and the school's merit system is constantly used to reward and encourage pupils. In general, teachers have a good knowledge of the pupils' capabilities. Homework was always carefully set. In an excellent lesson in Year 10, the teacher maintained a very good pace of learning by allocating time carefully to topics, and developed pupils' understanding of the implications of marriage and family life by the use of carefully targeted questions. She increased the pupils' confidence by clearly valuing their thoughtful opinions. A significant minority of the teaching is by non-specialist teachers. In some of these lessons, there was a lack of rigour and pace. In one, the girls were neglected in discussions in favour of the boys, who were more confident in responding.

223. The head of department manages the subject very well. She maintains close contact with the non-specialist teachers who carry out a significant minority of the teaching, but has no time to monitor them in the classroom, and colleagues have no opportunities to benefit from her very high standard of teaching. All resources are of a high standard but some extension of these is required to meet the requirements of the revised Local Agreed Syllabus, which will shortly be introduced. The departmental handbook is a model of clarity and completeness. Religious education provides in both key stages very significant opportunities for pupils to develop their moral and spiritual understanding and to acquaint themselves with multicultural aspects of religion and society. A small amount of religious education is taught as part of the general studies course in the sixth form. Only one lesson was seen and few

pupils attended. The course, as planned, does not have the substance or range envisaged in the Kent Agreed Syllabus and requires extending. Issues raised in the previous inspection report have been resolved. There is now a satisfactory match of work to pupils' abilities. This will shortly be improved further by the introduction of worksheets at differing levels. The use of non-specialist teachers in religious education is a result of expediency in the deployment of staff. Standards of teaching and learning are better than at the time of the previous inspection. The department has the capacity to develop further and this will be enhanced by the appointment of additional suitably qualified staff.

Points for action:

improve the knowledge of some non-specialist teachers;

continue to extend the range of resources;

extend the religious education course in the sixth form.

## **Other Courses**

### **Business education**

224. Attainment of pupils on the GCSE business studies course at Key Stage 4 is well above the school average. For 1999, it is above national average and well above the average for similar schools. This represents a huge ten-fold rise from 1998, reflecting staff changes to a full-time, experienced team and a new more appropriate syllabus, which is relevant to pupils' needs.

225. In Year 10 lessons seen during the inspection, pupils produced well presented reports on local business ownership, using information technology effectively to produce a database of firms and tables of results based on their homework surveys. Year 11 pupils make clear group presentations to each other on marketing a new product for which they have designed colourful packaging. Coursework folders are well presented, and higher attaining students have produced clear break-even charts on the computer from data researched from local businesses. Their evaluations are well written and in sufficient depth to demonstrate clear understanding of business concepts and an ability to apply them in a variety of practical business situations.

226. Pupils enjoy their work and make good progress in lessons seen so they consolidate theoretical knowledge through practical activities, often working well in groups to develop key communication skills. Pupils co-operate well with each other and their teachers, and can also work independently to plan and evaluate their coursework assignments. The majority of pupils use their initiative well, and make good use of individual research in local organisations to add depth to their understanding.

227. Teaching in lessons seen is good in Year 10 and very good in Year 11. Teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge and plan lessons well using topical case studies and relevant material from newspapers and local organisations. Tasks are generally well-matched to pupils' varying abilities. Homework is regularly set and marked to examination criteria, although some pupils are not fully aware of the exact GCSE grade level at which they are working. Teachers are beginning to use constructive targets successfully to improve pupils' day to day progress. Teachers ensure that pupils' information technology capability is further improved through the additional GCSE information studies lessons. Teachers give pupils of all abilities close individual support where required.

228. Courses are well-structured and staffed by experienced teachers and enable pupils to progress easily to advanced GNVQ courses in the sixth form. The business studies department is ably led and is well focused on maximising pupils' attainment and progress. Staff monitor courses regularly and use up-to-date textbooks and other materials from industry and the media. Teachers use the Internet as a valuable source of financial and marketing data. Business studies teaching and the progress made by pupils has improved significantly since the last inspection, and the department has a good capacity to make further improvements.

Point for action:

- make pupils more aware of the GCSE level at which they are working.

### **General National Vocational Courses (GNVQ)**

229. In 1999, sixth form students on the advanced business course achieved a completion rate of 90 percent, well above the national average and representing a rise from average levels of around 75 percent in 1998. Students on the advanced level leisure and tourism course attained only 25 percent completion, well below national expectations. In all subjects, intermediate students attained at an average rate of 60 percent, slightly below national averages but reflecting ability on entry.

230. In the lessons seen, advanced business students are able to work on research tasks suited to their ability levels in order to consolidate previous learning and demonstrate sound knowledge of business concepts related to information systems in firms. They have satisfactory key skills for information technology and communications. Following a visit to a national motoring organisation they produced clear notes for their reports and several extended evaluations of previous tasks.

231. The higher attaining students in the intermediate leisure and tourism group are able to use information technology effectively to produce clear health and safety warning posters, with desktop publishing. The writing of some lower attaining boys is too untidy and brief and contains many errors. One advanced level student, in the same group, used her own initiative to produce a computer-drawn floor plan of a leisure centre with disabled access. Students in the performing arts group at both the intermediate and advanced levels show a keen interest in theatre careers through relevant questioning of a visitor from a local theatre company, but most students currently lack the ability to evaluate some of the information given.

232. The combination of advanced and intermediate teaching groups places unreasonable demands on teaching staff, leads to ineffective planning and frequently results in lessons which do not sufficiently motivate both levels of student. With less teaching time, leisure and tourism students who remain on the course take longer to complete. In 1999, only one of the four students at advanced level in leisure and tourism completed the course. This was at merit grade level.

233. Inspection of GNVQ coursework portfolios indicates that business students have written assignments in sufficient depth to attract grades of merit and distinction. Most coursework is neat and well presented, including a variety of information technology applications and incorporating a good deal of individual research from local and national organisations. The majority of advanced business students have previously studied GCSE in business studies and have the skills to research local firms for coursework reports. In all of the GNVQ areas, including health and social care, which is not running at the moment, a total of 15 students in 1999 out of 38 obtained merit grades. They planned and evaluated their assignments well and achieved satisfactory levels in the key skills of number and information technology. Although there was evidence of oral presentations to achieve key communication skills, most commonly in business, the presentation of written assignments was often spoilt by uncorrected spellings. Written answers at intermediate level in leisure and tourism and health and social care frequently lacked sufficient depth and some computer-drawn tables were not correct or clear.

234. Students make good progress on GNVQ courses in business and performing arts, and in their information technology lessons. In the leisure and tourism lessons seen progress was variable; it was satisfactory and sometimes good for advanced students. Most intermediate students however, lack the skills at this early stage of the course to independently research in libraries and Internet, and often waste considerable time looking in the wrong places, consequently progress is unsatisfactory. In the majority of GNVQ lessons seen students' progress was supported by close and effective individual guidance from subject teachers. Target-setting for students is still in its early stages of development, and is quite often determined by teachers rather than negotiated with students. Progress for intermediate students would be aided by more structured guidance on how to study and greater supervision of private study time in the early stages of their course, as many students have little previous examination success and lack confidence.

235. Most GNVQ students respond well to the increased responsibility sixth form teachers aim to give them. The

majority organise their work well in lessons and at home. A sizeable minority, however, mostly at intermediate level in leisure and tourism, are too dependent on teachers to organise their work for them. In lessons seen they do not make the most efficient use of their time and do not use tutor time to plan their work. Nearly all students, however, use information technology effectively to improve the presentation of their assignments. Tasks with shorter-term deadlines help students establish more effective work schedules, and the good practice that currently exists in business advanced classes could be shared in other areas to co-ordinate the expectations of pupils in different subject areas.

236. Overall, teaching in the sixth form is at least satisfactory and often good. Teaching in GNVQ and information technology lessons is good when teachers in all subject areas work with one level of GNVQ attainment in the class, either intermediate or advanced. Teaching is weaker, however, when staff work with students of more than one level of attainment in the class. Teachers are well organised and plan lessons well, making good use of local contacts. In a very good performing arts lesson, the teacher had brought in a visitor to develop students' ideas of possible careers in all aspects of theatre. In all subjects, GNVQ teachers are mostly experienced, have good subject knowledge and, mostly in the business subjects, an industrial background. They use a variety of teaching methods, focusing on practical activities such as designing leaflets about local tourism facilities and encouraging students to visit local organisations and write reports about their visits. Teachers support students closely for the most part, and assess them carefully using criteria laid down by the examining board, grading work accurately. In a good business lesson, the teacher provided students with very supportive individual feedback on their assignments and helped them plan the best way to write reports on a recent visit. In a less effective lesson in leisure and tourism, the supply teacher struggled to give students numeracy assignments that were suited to their ability and experience as he had not been aware that intermediate and advanced level students would be combined in one class.

237. The co-ordinator for GNVQ, who has only recently been appointed, is working well to manage administrative aspects of GNVQ, and the head of year is effective in overseeing students' pastoral guidance. Currently there are weaknesses in the management of the sixth form. The management structure and responsibilities are inadequately defined and insufficient time is allocated for monitoring and meetings required by examination boards for teachers' GNVQ assessments. This leads to an unnecessary burden on staff, which is not helped by combined classes and insufficient administrative support. Although development plans for the future lack sufficient detail, they provide an opportunity for the school to review the way the sixth form curriculum is planned and managed, in the light of forthcoming National Curriculum changes.

Points for action:

- consider establishing separate intermediate and advanced teaching groups;
- improve pupils' spelling and the presentation of written assignments at intermediate level;
- provide structured guidance to intermediate students on how to study and provide more supervision of private study to improve progress;
- improve the management structure and definition of responsibilities in the sixth form;
- improve the time allocation for meetings;
- improve the detail of development planning.

## PART C: INSPECTION DATA

### SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

238. The inspection was carried out by a team of 13 inspectors, who spent a total of 50 days in the school over a period of one week. Over 180 lesson observations were carried out, taking approximately 143 hours. All permanent teachers present during the week of the inspection were observed teaching at least once. A substantial amount of additional time was spent on examining samples of pupils' work in each subject and on scrutinising the subject and management information provided by the school. Planned discussions were held with pupils from all year groups, as well as conversations with pupils in lessons and at breaks and lunchtimes. Discussions were held with governors about their roles and responsibilities. The headteacher, all members of the senior management team, heads of year, heads of department, a number of other teaching staff and some support staff had discussions with inspectors. 24 parents attended a meeting to express their views about the school and the 36 questionnaires returned by parents were analysed.

### DATA AND INDICATORS

#### 239. Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y13	786	64	249	120

#### Teachers and classes

#### 240. Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)

50.38

Number of pupils per qualified teacher

15.6

241. **Education support staff (Y7 – Y13)**

Total number of education support staff	20
Total aggregate hours worked each week	515

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	65.9
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	24
	KS4	23

242. **Financial data**

Financial year:	1998/9
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	£
Total Income	2047987
Total Expenditure	2061980
Expenditure per pupil	3119
Balance brought forward from previous year	195420
Balance carried forward to next year	181427

243. PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:

786

Number of questionnaires returned:

36

**Responses (percentage of answers in each category):**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	8	69	19	0	3
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	33	58	8	0	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	8	58	25	8	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	11	58	17	14	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	22	50	11	14	3
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	22	58	8	11	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	39	44	8	8	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	8	56	14	17	6
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	17	47	28	6	3
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	8	61	25	0	6
My child(ren) like(s) school	28	58	3	6	6

**Other issues raised by parents**

244. Over 20 parents attended the parents meeting held before the inspection and just under five percent returned the questionnaires. Most were positive, although concern was expressed over the quality of teaching in some mathematics classes, issues relating to homework and inconsistency in the use of pupil contact books.