

INSPECTION REPORT

St Edmund's Catholic School
Portsmouth

LEA area: Portsmouth

Unique Reference Number: 116505

Headteacher: Mr Barry Wright

Reporting inspector: Anthony Shield

Dates of inspection: 29 November – 3 December 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708134

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Philip Haestier
Date of previous inspection:	February 1995

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Susan Stock, Lay Inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Pupils' support, guidance and welfare Partnership with parents and the community Staffing
Terry Bailess	English Drama	
Andrew Bird	Mathematics	
Nye Davies	Science	
Chris Shaw	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
Ian Stuart	Geography	
Stephanie Matthews	History	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Dennis Johnson	Modern foreign languages	Curriculum and assessment
Ged Gast	Art	Staffing
Derek Kitt	Music Equal opportunities	Accommodation Learning resources
Malcolm Butterworth	Physical education Special educational needs	

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Its values are strongly promoted through a strong sense of purpose and community
- Parents and pupils are very supportive of the school's ethos
- The governing body gives committed and effective support
- Management systems and procedures are securely in place
- It monitors and promotes pupils' academic and pastoral progress very well through effective pastoral systems
- The quality of its provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good
- Above average standards in English, particularly at Key Stage 3, reflected in good standards of literacy across all subjects
- It provides good teaching across most subjects enabling pupils to make progress
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress
- The arrangements for staff development are very good

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Progress could be improved in Years 10 and 11
- II. The progress of some pupils could be higher in mathematics, in science during Key Stage 3, and in art and design and technology throughout the school
- III. Accommodation in some subjects is inadequate
- IV. The quality of teaching is not consistently good in all subjects
- V. The behaviour of a small minority of pupils, particularly in Years 7 and 8, is inconsiderate

The school has many more strengths than weaknesses. These weaknesses will form the basis of the action plan to be prepared by the governors and circulated to all parents.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has made sound progress since the previous inspection report. Standards in GCSE examinations have improved in line with the rising trend nationally. The quality of teaching is more consistently good than at the time of the previous inspection. The school has responded positively to most of the issues raised in the previous inspection report. In particular:

The school has continued to develop its good practice in a number of areas, in particular its procedures for monitoring and evaluation. Good progress has been made in improving the performance of boys and of below average pupils. There is now much good practice in the level of challenge given to high attaining pupils, although this is not consistent across all subjects. The school has made good progress in offering a wider range of subjects at GCSE. The quality of teaching and in particular the need to provide work appropriate for the whole ability range is now better in most though not all subjects. Schemes of work have been revised and now provide a good framework for progression. Departmental developmental planning is now good, although the school development plan does not articulate the school's vision clearly and some targets are not sufficiently sharp in relation to success criteria and timescales. Sound progress has been made in reviewing the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development although not all departments take every opportunity to promote these in lessons. Accommodation remains an issue for the school, although good progress has been made in improving the library and some of the science laboratories. There are no major health and safety considerations affecting the school.

The school is committed to further improvement and its ethos and management systems indicate that it is well placed to secure continuing development.

• **Standards in subjects**

The following table shows standards achieved by 14 year olds in national tests, and 16 and 18 year olds in GCSE and A/AS-level examinations in 1999:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key	K
Key Stage 3	B	A	<i>well above average</i> <i>above average</i> <i>average</i>	A B C
GCSE Examinations	B	A	<i>below average</i>	D
A/AS-levels	D	n/a	<i>well below average</i>	E

At Key Stage 3, results in English were well above both the national average and very high in comparison with similar schools. In mathematics, results were in line with the national average and with the average for similar schools. In science, results were in line with the national average and above the average for similar schools. Overall results at Key Stage 3 in 1999 were above the national average and well above the average for similar schools.

GCSE results were above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. Results have been improving steadily, and although girls do better than boys, the difference is not significant. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more grades A* - C was 48 per cent, close to the national average. The percentage of pupils achieving A* - C grades in English was above the national average, while the percentage achieving A* - C grades in both mathematics and science was close to the national average.

In 1998 results at A-level and advanced GNVQ were below the national average. However the 1999 results were better, although the numbers of candidates entered were small. The average points score of pupils taking two or more A-levels was 14.3, below the national average. One hundred per cent of candidates entered for advanced vocational qualifications achieved a pass, which was above the national average.

• **Quality of teaching**

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	English, Information and communication technology	Design and technology
Years 10-11	Good	English, history, geography	Design and technology, art

Sixth form	Good	English, history, geography
English	Good	
Mathematics	Satisfactory	

The quality of teaching is good overall, although there are some variations between subjects and key stages. Teaching was judged to be at least satisfactory in over ninety per cent of lessons observed during the inspection. In over fifty-six per cent, teaching was good and in nearly fifteen per cent it was very good or excellent. In the sixth form, around four out of five lessons were good, and none was unsatisfactory. There is no significant difference between the quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, although the percentage of unsatisfactory lessons observed was higher in Key Stage 3. In most cases this was because of poor behaviour management strategies by some inexperienced teachers and supply teachers.

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	Most pupils behave well, but a small minority, particularly in Years 7 and 8, is sometimes inconsiderate.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The school's considerable efforts to improve overall attendance are having an impact.
Ethos*	Good. The school is committed to high achievement, good relationships and equal opportunities for all its pupils. Most pupils are keen to learn.
Leadership and management	Good. The school's managers are experienced, committed to school improvement and providing very sound leadership at all levels. The governing body provides committed and effective support. The support and monitoring of the school's teaching and developments is good.
Curriculum	Sound. The curriculum at both Key Stages 3 and 4 is broad and reasonably well balanced. The sixth form curriculum is less broad but caters well for the small number of students involved.
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school provides good opportunities overall for pupils' personal development. The strong moral framework in which the school operates is particularly effective.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Temporary staffing difficulties during the inspection were having an impact on the quality of teaching. Normally the school is adequately staffed with both teaching and support staff. Resources are adequate in all subjects. The new library is a valuable addition to the school's resources. Accommodation is inadequate in a number of subjects, and is affecting science, technology, physical education and art in particular.
Value for money	Income is above average, but funds are used well to provide a good quality education for all pupils. Taking into account the attainment of pupils on entry, the good quality teaching, sound progress made by pupils through the school, and the educational outcomes, the school gives 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**

What most parents like about the school

- VI. The caring ethos and sense of community
- VII. The strong sense of discipline
- VIII. That pupils are encouraged to achieve their full potential
- IX. The approachability of the staff
- X. That their children like coming to school

What some parents are not happy about

- XI. Lack of sports facilities
- XII. Lack of lockers for pupils to store their books and

Inspectors agree with the positive comments made by parents about the school. They also confirm that the lack of sports facilities is impacting on overall progress in physical education. The school is aware of the problem concerning lockers, and has investigated where to site them. However, the school has decided that there is insufficient space in corridors and classrooms to accommodate them.

· **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

In order to sustain the improvements already made and ensure further effective developments, the governors, headteacher and staff should continue to address the following areas where there remain weaknesses:

- 1) Ensure more consistently good progress in Years 10 and 11 (paragraphs 24,25) by:

- XIII. improving the use of test and assessment data to set targets (paragraphs 25,39,57,59,78);
- XIV. ensuring work is planned to meet the learning needs of more able pupils (paragraphs 28,39,43,53,131,143,149);
- XV. providing more planned opportunities for open-ended investigative work to develop independent learning skills (paragraphs 28,39,47,131);
- XVI. reviewing and refining the system of pupil/tutor reviews to analyse which strategies work best and to provide more focused support for individual pupils (paragraph 57).

- 1) Ensure more consistently good teaching (paragraph 39) by:

- reviewing the school's systems for monitoring and support of teachers to ensure action points are followed up and good practice shared (paragraph 78);
- ensuring that pupils are actively engaged in the learning (paragraphs 39,44);
- ensuring the pace of lessons is consistently good and driven by the teacher (paragraphs 39,173);
- using the results of assessment and marking to plan the next step (paragraphs 39,46,59,151);
- continuing to engage pupils themselves in the process of planning their next target (paragraphs 44,46).

- 1) Improve the progress of pupils in mathematics (paragraphs 6,7,24,129) by:

- continuing to develop consistent approaches to numeracy across the curriculum (paragraph 40);
- ensuring pupils have sufficient opportunity to use and apply their mathematics' skills in different contexts (paragraph 40);
- planning sequences of lessons which build on previous learning and consolidate and deepen understanding (paragraphs 129,131);

-) making better and more consistent use of test and examination results to monitor pupils' progress and improve classroom practice (paragraphs 129,131);
 -) ensuring lessons have rigour, pace and momentum (paragraphs 129,131);
 -) ensuring sufficient time is available to teach all aspects of the subject in Year 10 (paragraph 129).
- 1) Improve the progress of pupils in science during Key Stage 3 (paragraphs 6,7,24) by:
-) reviewing the deployment of teachers to ensure pupils in Key Stage 3 are taught by experienced teachers (paragraph 136);
 -) encouraging more girls to opt for double science GCSE at the end of Year 9 (paragraphs 134,144);
 -) continuing to support those teachers whose behaviour management skills are unsatisfactory (paragraphs 44,143);
 -) improving the quality and consistency of the monitoring of pupils' progress (paragraph 143).
- 1) Improve attainment and progress in design and technology (paragraphs 15,24,37,162,163) by:
-) reviewing the management structure of the department to ensure a more coherent view of the subject (paragraphs 78,167);
 -) ensuring thorough coverage of the curriculum, particularly in resistant materials, construction, and electrical and mechanical components (paragraphs 49,50,83,162,166).

- 1) Improve progress in art (paragraphs 21,34,37,155) by:
 - improving planning to ensure clear learning objectives are defined (paragraphs 43,54,157);
 - broadening the range of media taught (paragraph 154);
 - adopting more varied teaching and learning strategies (paragraph 157).
- 1) Continue to seek improvements in the accommodation (paragraphs 90-94).
- 2) Improve the behaviour management strategies of some teachers in lessons where poor behaviour is adversely affecting learning (paragraphs 31,36,44,67,164,187).

8) **INTRODUCTION**

8) **Characteristics of the school**

1. St Edmund's Catholic School is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 – 18, situated in the heart of Portsmouth. It draws its pupils from a wide catchment area. Around ninety per cent of pupils live within the city boundary. The remainder travel from the nearby towns of Gosport and Fareham. There are currently 1030 pupils on roll, including 89 in the sixth form. Most pupils transfer from four city Catholic primary schools, although the school draws from up to twenty primary schools altogether.
2. Pupils come from a variety of backgrounds. Most pupils who live within the city come from areas of relative social and economic disadvantage; other pupils, about one third of the school roll, are from more advantaged areas. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average at 10.9 per cent. This figure has been falling in recent years. The number of pupils from ethnic minorities is well below average, and very few pupils come from homes where English is not the first language.
3. The range of attainment on entry in Year 7 reflects a fully comprehensive intake of different abilities, but there are more pupils of below average ability than the norm. This ability profile of the school on entry has been similar for the last three years. In previous years, there were even fewer pupils of higher ability within the cohort on entry. One hundred and seventy-nine pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs, broadly in line but just above the national average. Nine of these pupils have Statements of Special Educational Need, mostly related to learning and behavioural difficulties. As a proportion of the school roll, this is below average.
4. The school has recently revised its aims and is now committed to the promotion of a climate which encourages and celebrates achievement in all activities, through a secure and orderly environment; and to improve and succeed through everyone feeling safe, secure and valued; working together; doing their best to develop the skills of working alone and with others; having chances to succeed; respecting each other and feeling good about themselves; feeling part of the school and the wider community; and developing the knowledge, skills and confidence to become successful adults.
5. Challenging developmental targets in the school development plan are appropriately related principally to raising achievement and improving attendance.

5. **Key indicators**

Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	95	101	196

5. National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	76	73	64
	Girls	89	65	53
	Total	165	138	117
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	85 (75)	71 (67)	60 (64)
	National	63 (65)	62 (59)	55 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	52 (36)	41 (39)	23 (26)
	National	28 (34)	38 (36)	23 (27)

5. Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	66	64	65
	Girls	86	60	69
	Total	152	124	134
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	78 (75)	63 (65)	68 (73)
	National	64 (64)	64 (60)	59 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	21 (29)	37 (32)	27 (40)
	National	31 (34)	37 (39)	28 (27)

Attainment at Key Stage 4²

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	92	96	188

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	37	83	84
	Girls	53	90	94
	Total	90	173	178
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	48 (43.9)	92 (87.3)	95 (91)
	National	47.8 (46.3)	88.4(87.5)	93.9 (93.4)

.....
 1 Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year
 1 Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year
 2 Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attainment in the Sixth Form ³

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 who were entered for GCE A/AS examination in the latest reporting year:

Year	Male	Female	Total
1999	11	19	30

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	15.3	13.9	14.3 (9.0)	1.3	4.7	2.7 (3.3)
National	n/a	n/a	n/a (17.6)	n/a	n/a	n/a (2.8)

Number in final year of approved vocational qualifications and percentage of <i>such students</i> who achieved these qualifications:	Number	% Success rate
School	8	100
National		70

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:			%
	Authorised	School	7.5
	Absence	National comparative data	7.9
	Unauthorised	School	0.5
	Absence	National comparative data	1.1

3

3 Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	98
	Permanent	2

3 Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	14.8
	Good or better	56.6
	Satisfactory or better	90.8
	Less than satisfactory	9.2

3

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

3 EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

3 Attainment and progress

1. The average level achieved by pupils in National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, taking all core subjects together, was above the national average, and well above that achieved by schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Taking the three years 1996 – 1998 together, the performances of pupils in English, mathematics and science has been above the national average. Although girls do better than the boys, both boys' and girls' results are above average and the difference is no greater than the difference nationally. Results have been improving in line with the rising trend nationally. In 1999, the performance in English was well above the national average, while the performances in mathematics and science were broadly in line with the national average. In comparison with schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, pupils' performance in the English tests was very high; in mathematics it was close to the average, and in science it was above average. The much better performance of pupils in English than in either mathematics or science is an important issue for school improvement.
2. At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more GCSE grades A* - C was close to the national average in 1999, and similar to the average in similar schools. The proportion of pupils obtaining five or more A* - G grades was also close to the national average, but below the average for similar schools. The average total points score per pupil in 1999 was 40.3, above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. The average total GCSE points score per pupil has been in line with the rising trend nationally. In recent years, both boys and girls have achieved GCSE results close to the national average, and there is no evidence from examination data to suggest significant underachievement by boys. However in 1999, while 57.1 percent of pupils achieved A* - C grades in English, only 38.6 percent in mathematics and 38.1 percent in science achieved A* - C grades. As at the end of Key Stage 3, pupils do much better in English than in mathematics and science. Other subjects in which the proportion of pupils achieving higher grades was above 50 percent in 1999 were art, technology (graphics and food), drama, French, geography, history, media studies, music, physical education and religious education,
3. In the sixth form, the number of pupils taking A-levels is small, and national comparisons are not entirely reliable. The average points score of pupils taking two or more A-levels was 14.3 in 1999, an improvement on results in the previous two years, but below the national average. Some individual pupils do very well, and three students each achieved three A grades. Boys did better than the girls at A-level in 1999. Pupils in the sixth form taking GNVQ advanced courses in business in 1999 did well. One hundred per cent passed with one half of the students achieving merit. Three out of four students taking the GNVQ Intermediate business course achieved the qualification.
4. Evidence from inspection, based on classroom observation and from looking at pupils' work, indicates that overall attainment is above the nationally expected levels at the end of Key Stage 3 (age 14) and in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 4 (age 16). The difference is explained partly by the higher attainment levels on entry of pupils in the current Years 7, 8 and 9, compared with Years 10 and 11, and partly by the better progress made by most pupils during Key Stage 3. In the sixth form, standards for the current students are above expectations at this stage in their courses.
5. In English, standards of attainment are above expectations at the end of Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, and broadly in line with expected levels at the end of Key Stage 4. Improving standards in literacy was a recognised priority for the school at the time of the last inspection. The school has made good progress in addressing this issue and the school's language and learning policy has had a strong impact on work across the curriculum. Effective practice and good standards were identified in a range of subjects during the inspection. Literacy skills are a strength in geography, with a wide variety of well-

written assignments at all key stages. These include reasoned arguments on environmental issues, empathetic accounts of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions and personal writing evaluating the quality of life in contrasting environments. A good range of writing tasks was similarly seen in history. Most pupils are fluent and accurate writers, taking care over presentation. Speaking and listening skills are satisfactory throughout the school. Most pupils can make good contributions to a discussion, and as they progress through the school it is clear that their confidence in speaking grows. Listening skills are less secure for a number of pupils at both Key Stages 3 and 4. While many pupils listen effectively and with concentration, others do not listen well to teachers or their peers. Most pupils are good, independent readers, able to read aloud accurately and with some expression. As they move through the school, pupils increasingly develop more sophisticated approaches to reading, understanding nuance and inference.

6. Progress in literacy is good particularly during Years 7 – 9. It has been helped considerably by the summer literacy school organised for pupils before they come to school in Year 7. Pupils are involved in a range of activities and clearly gain in confidence from the experience. Assessment records show that pupils who attend the summer school continue to make good progress in literacy skills after they have joined the school.
7. In mathematics, attainment in lessons and in pupils' work is broadly in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages. In the sixth form, standards in work seen are above the levels expected at this stage in the A-level course. By and large, pupils are able to use number in a satisfactory way. During Key Stage 3 most pupils are able to perform simple calculations confidently without the aid of a calculator. In the top sets, higher attaining pupils have good numerical skills, but lower attaining pupils are much less secure. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form the use of number is more widespread and algebra is used confidently. Pupils increasingly use other applications of number with ease and accuracy, such as the collection and interpretation of statistical data, and the use of the calculator, including the graphic calculator. In science, music, design technology and information technology, pupils have sufficient fluency and accuracy in their use of number to make at least sound progress.
8. In science, standards in work seen are broadly in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages, although during Key Stage 3, there are variations between different teaching groups, mostly in the pupils' confidence to undertake investigative science. Standards at Key Stage 4 are more consistent. Higher attainers have a good knowledge and understanding of materials, physical and life processes. Planning and carrying out of investigative science is better developed at Key Stage 4. Sixth form A-level students in biology, physics and chemistry are attaining in line with expectations, and some students demonstrate an excellent understanding of the topics covered. Progress is satisfactory overall, although not consistently so in Key Stage 3. Progress made by A-level students is good.
9. In information technology, overall attainment is above expectations at the end of Key Stage 3, but only in line with expectations at the end of Key Stage 4. In the sixth form, GNVQ students in particular have reasonable skills, but do not use computers with the same confidence as in earlier years. All pupils effectively use different programs and can enter, store, edit and print out information. They are confident in solving problems including database inquiries, using desktop publishing and searching for information on the Internet. Progress is good during Key Stage 3, but only satisfactory during Years 10 and 11 when opportunities across all subjects are not consistently good
10. Attainment is below expectations and progress unsatisfactory in design technology at the end of both key stages, although standards and progress in food technology and graphics are more consistently satisfactory. In these areas, pupils effectively learn the design process and apply it to their work. However, standards are much less secure in resistant materials and electronics and control technology, and construction work is poorly made. Unsatisfactory progress continues through Key Stage 4, although again work in graphics and food technology is better. Most of the GCSE work in graphics shows a good level of skills and understanding.
11. The school offers GNVQ courses in business studies at both intermediate and advanced level. The numbers taking these courses are small but all students are able to meet the course requirements and in

1999 half of those who entered were awarded a merit grade. Students on the advanced course are able to complete assignments in a variety of areas including the planning and management of an event - the school's sixth form ball at Southsea castle. They were also observed coping very well with the complexities of company balance sheets. Intermediate students progress well in the development of an understanding of the business world and in the key skills of numeracy, communication and the use of information technology.

12. In GCSE business studies, attainment is in line with expectations, and, in one class above expectations overall. Attainment in work seen is above 1999 examination results. In one class, oral attainment was particularly good in a series of mock interviews; both those asking questions and those being interviewed spoke in an articulate way, recognising the qualities needed, and understanding the concept of matching the person for the job. In another class with a very wide range of attainment, most pupils understood the main types of business and had a firm grasp of factors affecting production. Most understood examples of entrepreneurship, though some lower attainers were struggling. At A-level attainment is in line with average A-level standards. Students have well organised notes in their files. In one observed lesson, oral contributions showed a fundamental understanding of key points of mergers, though clarity of expression varied between individuals. There was sound analysis of a case study of recent mergers in the telecommunications industry.
13. In economics, attainment is in line with average A-level standards and much above the 1999 examination results. All students can cope with the mathematical demands of the subject. Students show good knowledge of key terms such as real costs, and good analysis of data on passenger transport in Britain. In both lessons seen, good progress was being made.
14. In geography, standards are above national expectations at both key stages and in the sixth form. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of geographical facts and concepts. They draw accurate maps and diagrams and some pupils have good analytical skills, enabling them to present arguments with persuasion. Written work is often of a high quality. Numeracy skills are sufficient to enable pupils to present graphs, read maps and use statistics confidently. Progress is good at all key stages, including A-level.
15. Attainment in history is in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3, well above expectations at the end of Key Stage 4, and above average in the sixth form. Pupils make good progress throughout the school. Most pupils have a sound knowledge of historical events and many confidently use a range of sources to interpret and understand events from different perspectives. Written work is usually well presented. Many pupils make good use of computers to research information, and present their work. As pupils progress, they are confident to ask as well as answer questions.
16. In art, attainment is close to expected levels nationally at the end of both key stages and in the sixth form, but there are weaknesses in some aspects. While pupils develop their drawing and painting skills satisfactorily, the range of media used and three-dimensional media in particular, is limited. Some pupils develop imaginative approaches, but their understanding and application of the work of other artists is narrow. Progress is satisfactory throughout the school.
17. In music, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the national expectation. Most pupils read notation with some fluency, and listening and appraisal skills are well developed. In GCSE classes, standards are above the national expectation. Some individual's performance skills are very good and most compose and play in ensemble with confidence. Standards in the choir are very good. Progress through the school is good.
18. In physical education, overall attainment is in line with expectations at the end of Key stage 3, and above expectations in Key Stage 4. Progress is good throughout the school. Standards in swimming are particularly good, although some individual pupils also demonstrate good standards in gymnastics and games.

19. Progress overall is good through Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, but only satisfactory during Years 10 and 11. On entry, although the range of ability reflects a comprehensive intake, there are more pupils of below average ability than the norm, and fewer of a high ability. Most pupils are reaching expected levels by the end of Year 9, and in some subjects the proportion reaching expected levels is above average. This represents good progress for most pupils in most subjects up to the end of Year 9. Good progress in English and literacy skills in particular, is helping promote good progress in history, geography, and modern foreign languages. However, progress is only satisfactory in mathematics, science and art, and is unsatisfactory in design technology. In general, good teaching within revised schemes of work is proving effective in raising standards.
20. However, during Key Stage 4, progress is only satisfactory for most pupils, although in some subjects, history, geography, music and physical education, progress remains good. The challenge for the school is to ensure more consistently good progress during Key Stage 4, by improving the use of test and assessment data to set targets, and continuing to develop consistent approaches to numeracy across the curriculum. Progress for the small number of sixth form students following A-level and GNVQ courses is good, except in modern foreign languages and art where it is only satisfactory.
21. The school has addressed the issues of boys' underachievement mentioned in the previous report. Boys and girls are now both making good progress, and the recent work done in English in particular has proved very effective in raising the attainment of boys. However, boys do not make as much progress as girls in French and German. In science, it is the girls who underachieve at both Key Stages 3 and 4.
22. The school has also made good progress since the previous inspection in addressing the progress of pupils of below average ability. Apart from in design technology, where there is a lack of consideration for their needs, and in modern foreign languages, where inappropriate methods and a lack of active learning inhibits progress by this group of pupils, below average pupils make at least the same progress as other pupils. In English, these pupils are well catered for and in both English and mathematics, small sets for pupils of below average attainment ensure more individual attention. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs is good throughout the school. The school organises an effective curriculum and programme of support. Individual education plans are well written and progress in reading and numeracy in particular is good.
23. The progress made by high attaining pupils is satisfactory overall, although in some subjects, English, geography and music, progress is good. However, there is insufficient challenge in modern foreign languages, even at A-level, and in mathematics, little extension work and few opportunities for open-ended investigative work are planned. In general, homework is not used to offer more able pupils additional challenge and opportunity to understand concepts in more depth. In the sixth form, stimulating teaching, particularly in science and geography provide the right level of demand for more able pupils.

28. **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

24. The vast majority of pupils has good attitudes towards their lessons and responds positively to all aspects of school life. This is illustrated through the way in which pupils, in conversation show pride in their school and speak appreciatively of the encouragement and support their teachers give them.
25. Across all key stages most pupils respond positively to their lessons, are keen to learn and are motivated to do well, particularly when the teaching is stimulating and matched to their needs. The majority of pupils can sustain concentration, work independently and when given the opportunity take the initiative to extend their learning. However, there are occasions when some pupils are not fully engrossed in their work and this leads to a restive, unsettled atmosphere, which detracts from the learning of their fellow pupils.
26. Overall, the pupils' behaviour, in all key stages is satisfactory. In lessons most are well behaved and show respect towards their teachers. However, there is a significant minority of pupils who are discourteous

and confrontational towards their teachers. These pockets of unsatisfactory behaviour are found in both Key Stages 3 and 4, although it is more marked in Years 7 and 8. Around the school the pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. Generally pupils are polite and helpful when spoken to. However, there is a tendency for behaviour to become over boisterous, particularly on the stairs between lessons and in the playgrounds at lunchtime. Overall the pupils feel confident and happy at school and believe that incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with swiftly and effectively. The majority of parents corroborate this view. The numbers of pupils involved in exclusions is falling, although the numbers of girls involved has risen since the previous inspection.

27. Relationships in the school are mostly good. The school works hard to build good, caring relationships between all the adults in the school and the pupils. This has resulted in a school with a strong, community atmosphere, where the majority of pupils work and socialise well together. However, there are occasions when a small minority of pupils is un-co-operative and this leads to strained relationships between pupils and teachers.
28. Pupils' personal development is good overall. They respond well to the opportunities they are given to show initiative and take responsibility, for example, being part of an effective school council and peer-mentoring, when older pupils give support and guidance to those lower down the school, to help them make progress with their work. Pupils also raise money for charities and organise an annual party for local senior citizens. In lessons, opportunities for personal development are less well used, although there are some good examples for pupils to take the initiative to extend their learning through personal study and research particularly in art, history and geography. Generally pupils are confident contributors to class discussions although they do not always listen well to each other's contributions. However it is clear, that as pupils move up through the school, The vast majority develop good social and learning skills which make a good contribution to their attainment and progress.
29. The school has maintained the pupils' good attitudes, behaviour and personal development as reported at the time of the previous inspection.

34. **Attendance**

30. The school has maintained a satisfactory level of attendance since the previous inspection, and attendance is broadly in line with the national average. Unauthorised absence is below the national average. As at the time of the previous inspection attendance rates vary in different year groups. The vast majority of pupils come to school and lessons on time. Overall the pupils' attendance is satisfactory and makes a positive contribution to their attainment and progress.
- 35.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

35. **Teaching**

31. The quality of teaching is good overall at all levels, although there are some variations between subjects and key stages. Teaching was judged to be at least satisfactory in over ninety per cent of lessons observed during the inspection. In over fifty-six per cent, teaching was good and in nearly fifteen per cent it was very good or excellent. In the sixth form, around four out of five lessons were good, and none was unsatisfactory. There is no significant difference between the quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, although the percentage of unsatisfactory lessons observed was higher in Key Stage 3. In most cases this was because of poor behaviour management strategies by some inexperienced teachers and supply teachers.
32. There were some excellent and very good lessons observed in most subjects. The teaching is particularly effective in English throughout the school, IT at Key Stage 3 and history and geography at Key Stage 4

and in the sixth form. Teaching is less effective in design technology and art, particularly during Key Stage 4, where the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is high.

33. In almost all subjects examples of good teaching were observed. Some of these are set out below:

- In a Year 10 English lesson with a lower ability set, clear learning objectives were set and the lesson was well structured and planned. Pupils themselves came well prepared having made notes for the previous night's homework. High expectations were set, and the vocabulary used was demanding and ambitious. Relationships with individual pupils were very good, and the working atmosphere established was purposeful. This was an active, motivating lesson in which the teacher made good use of open and closed questions to establish understanding and facilitate good progress.
- A Year 13 geography lesson was characterised by very good subject knowledge, a clear exposition, lively teaching and an ability to encourage and handle students' responses effectively. A well-prepared worksheet gave a clear structure to the students' thinking. The pace of learning was excellent as the teacher maintained enthusiasm and responded to the students' ideas. High expectations were characterised by an insistence on accuracy and detail. The students made very good progress in understanding national and county transport plans and relating them to local developments.
- In a Year 7 mathematics lesson with a lower ability set on the areas of rectangles, the teacher gave a clear introduction and identified key vocabulary and concepts to be learnt. Effective use of resources enabled understanding to be reinforced. The teacher insisted on high standards of work and expectations were high throughout. A summary of work covered at the end of the lesson effectively consolidated learning. Marking of pupils work was clear and up-to-date.

1. Where teaching was judged only satisfactory, the most common issues preventing it from being judged good were:

- Teaching at the pupils and not actively engaging them in the learning
- Teaching which played safe and did not give pupils the opportunity to discuss, ask questions and probe beneath the surface
- Lesson in which the pace was dictated by the pupils themselves and not the teacher
- Group work which was not focused on specific outcomes, was not time-limited and was allowed to drift
- Teaching which was aimed at the middle ability group of pupils and failed to address the needs of the more able pupils
- Failure to consolidate learning with a summary at the end of the lesson
- Failure to use the assessment of progress to plan the next sequence in the learning

1. Many teachers have adopted the school's literacy policy successfully and ensure that their teaching reinforces language development. In these subjects, teachers pay close attention to the marking of errors in these subjects. In science, spelling and the appropriate use of technical vocabulary is taught on a systematic basis. Literacy is also encouraged by structured learning of vocabulary and grammar in modern foreign languages. In music, work on song-writing and the interpretation of song lyrics provide a sound focus for literacy work. The department also ensures clarity in worksheets they produce, and teachers adapt published worksheets appropriately where necessary. With these and other examples, the school's hard work over a period of time is clearly bearing fruit. The teaching of numeracy is not however, embedded in practice so consistently. History and geography effectively reinforce number work; reference is made to teaching number skills in the schemes of work, but in general, numeracy is not promoted well.

2. Teaching on the GNVQ and A-level business courses in the sixth form and GCSE courses in Key Stage 4, is good and well managed. Teachers are very knowledgeable and they teach the course well. GNVQ teachers have completed the required assessment training and they all have experience in working in

business, commerce or industry. Some very good teaching observed was dynamic and enthusiastic, very successfully using pupils' responses to move the lesson on. There was a very brisk pace with plenty of individual attention. Lessons were very well organised, with a range of resources, some with different elements suited to different abilities, progressively introduced into the lesson. All teaching is successful; in one lesson, very good organisation enabled a variety of activities to take place simultaneously, successfully blending occasional intervention by the teacher with scope for pupils to develop their talents. At A-level, teaching is good. Pace is brisk, with good opportunities for active learning. The observed lesson was varied and well planned, with plenty of challenge and a good balance between teacher input and student involvement.

3. The quality of teaching in economics A-level is good, and some is very good. Teachers are secure in the subject knowledge and lessons have a high intellectual content. For example, one lesson related relevant examples of traffic congestion to economic theories of supply and demand, and made challenging demands on the students. Another lesson made very effective use of resources which provided a firm structure for the lesson. They were steadily introduced, each with a different slant, giving variety and pace to the lesson, which was a good blend of teacher input, discussion and individual work.
4. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach is invariably good, enabling high expectations to be set and in most cases suitable challenges to be made. Planning is good and mostly effective in responding to pupils' needs and builds on what pupils know. Most schemes of work have been revised since the last inspection and now provide an effective framework for progression. Where planning is less satisfactory, as in art, learning objectives are not clearly identified and therefore progression is not assured. In general, planning and lesson activities are geared to meet the learning needs of all pupils in the group. However, some teachers are not consistently successful in providing work to challenge the more able pupils, particularly in mathematics and technology.
5. Most teachers use at least sound methods to engage the interest and motivation of pupils. The use of a range of strategies including group work, discussion, role-play and presentations is particularly successful. Some less experienced and supply teachers lack the necessary control and class management strategies to ensure effective learning. This was particularly the case in science and design technology lessons in Years 7 and 8. Some just satisfactory teaching did not engage pupils actively in the learning. In most lessons, teachers make good use of time and resources and some lessons make effective use of timing to break the learning up into small and realistic steps. Good use is made of outside resources to stimulate and interest pupils.
6. The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers have a good awareness of the needs of individual pupils in their class and the nature of their difficulties. Planning is thorough and related where appropriate to the pupil's individual education plan. The specialist support provided by the special educational needs co-ordinator and support assistants is sensitive and effective.
7. Assessment in general and marking in particular are usually soundly used by teachers to assess progress and set targets for the next step. However marking of pupils' work is inconsistent at times. Subject teachers broadly follow the school's marking policy but often do not provide pupils with a clear indication of the level of attainment or indicate what the pupil needs to do to improve. The response of teachers to pupils' work is invariably positive, and praise is usually well used to motivate and encourage.
8. Homework is usually set regularly and is used effectively to extend and reinforce classwork. On a small number of occasions it is used merely to finish off work not completed in class, and does nothing to advance progress. On other occasions, opportunities are missed to provide more challenging open-ended work for more able pupils, which promotes research skills, problem-solving activities and encourages independent learning.
9. The school has made good progress since the previous inspection in maintaining the quality of teaching and addressing the issues related to planning and teaching strategies identified as weaknesses.

48. **The curriculum and assessment**

10. The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory at both key stages and in the sixth form. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 has appropriate breadth and balance. The school is not meeting statutory requirements in design and technology because of the lack of provision for the study of control, electronics and mechanisms, or in physical education because one half unit is omitted from the planning. The art curriculum is too narrow because it does not place sufficient emphasis on knowledge and understanding, and pupils are not given enough teaching on three-dimensional work and printing. In most subjects, pupils are taught in attainment sets and the grouping arrangements are sound. There is, however, some inequality of access to a second modern foreign language at this stage because the German course is effectively only available to high attaining pupils. In many subjects, the setting arrangements are used to produce slightly smaller teaching groups for low attaining pupils. Sex education at Key Stage 3 is taught as part of the religious education and science courses and effectively promotes the spiritual, moral and social development of pupils. The personal, social and health education course is well taught and covers topics such as smoking, alcohol, asthma, solvent abuse and substance abuse.
11. The improvements to the Key Stage 4 curriculum represent an effective response by the school to the criticism at the last inspection that the curriculum was narrow and unbalanced for some pupils. The curriculum now is suitably broad and balanced, with the addition of new GCSE courses such as physical education, media studies and drama, French with business, and German with business. Pupils still have a choice of three option subjects but most pupils are provided with a balanced curriculum thanks to the school's effective guidance procedures. There has also been an improvement, since the last report, in the composition of GCSE teaching groups, with little evidence of groups with an inappropriate spread of attainment or motivation. There is, however, some inequality of access and opportunity in the Key Stage 4 curriculum. There is still a lack of information technology teaching at Key Stage 4, as reported at the last inspection, which prevents pupils from fully developing capability across all strands. The proportion of girls studying dual award science is well below the national average; and the time allocated to mathematics in Year 10 is barely sufficient to cover the GCSE course. The design and technology curriculum is unsatisfactory because the full range of experiences required in the National Curriculum programme of study is not available to pupils. The Key Stage 4 personal, social and health education course includes an effective drug education programme, drawing on the expertise of the police and health promotion workers in the community.
12. The sixth form curriculum is a little broader than the limited number of A-level and GNVQ courses reported at the last inspection. Teaching in key skills is offered to all students and there are now A-level courses in English language and literature, religious education and both French and German. There is also now better access for sixth form students to personal, social and health education and to physical education courses. The GNVQ courses in business studies at both advanced and intermediate level are a valuable addition to the sixth form curriculum. The course is closely related to the work place, links with and develops students' own experience of employment and provides them with valuable transferable skills for either higher education or the job market. The breadth of the sixth form curriculum remains, nevertheless, unsatisfactory.
13. The curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is good, and the learning needs of these pupils are effectively met. In most subjects, pupils are grouped according to attainment and are taught in a way which helps those with special educational needs to make progress; resources such as worksheets and texts are provided which pupils are able to read and understand. Individual education plans are of a good quality with appropriate targets and activities designed to ensure pupils meet the targets. In particular, individual literacy and numeracy targets are well planned and raise subject teachers' awareness of pupils' attainment and areas of difficulty. At Key Stage 4 the school plans for some pupils to follow a well-planned LINCS (Language and Number in the National Curriculum) course in place of one GCSE option. In this respect, the school is responding well to pupils' needs and ensuring that they have the best possible chance of success.

14. Provision for very high attaining pupils at the school is not consistent. The school relies to a large extent on its setting arrangements but there is little evidence of different, more demanding work being regularly provided to these pupils in many subjects. There is, however, good evidence of challenge and rigour in the provision for higher attainers in English, geography and music. A-level teaching in many subjects is good; and master classes are available to younger pupils in mathematics. The school is beginning to make better provision for supported self-study and for more independent learning in the new library and learning resources centre. This provision benefits all pupils, including higher attainers.
15. The planning of the curriculum is generally good throughout the school. Curriculum links with primary schools are good and are assisted by close links between primary school staff and the English and science teachers at the school. The school works hard to explain its curriculum to pupils at primary school; and also organises a summer literacy school to ensure that pupils make the best possible progression to secondary school. The schemes of work provided to teachers to ensure progression and continuity within subjects are mostly good. Planning is very good in geography, history and mathematics but is unsatisfactory in art because the schemes of work do not make the learning objectives clear to teachers. The planning and co-ordination of the personal, social and health education course is very effective. Governors exercise good oversight of curriculum planning and provision through the governors' curriculum committee. Governors are also linked to specific subject areas and regularly visit the school to meet teachers and to observe lessons.
16. The school provides a sound programme of extra-curricular activity. Pupils take part in a wide range of musical activities, including the choir, the chamber choir, the orchestra, rock groups; and in a number of sporting activities and team games. The library club, computer club and drama club also offer pupils good opportunities. About forty pupils a year participate in well-established exchange links with schools in France and Germany. Pupils also organise fund-raising activities for charity in Lent.
17. The careers education and guidance provided by the school are very good. The school works very effectively to raise pupils' expectations and gives them sound advice on planning further study or seeking employment. Pupils follow a well-planned programme from Year 7 to 11 in which the school collaborates with local business, the naval dockyard and the city's university to provide a range of stimulating and informative activities for pupils. Through active learning, they become aware of the range of career possibilities open to them. The school also works closely with the local careers advisory body to ensure that pupils' own abilities and interests are the basis for the advice they receive. Mentors from the world of work are invited into school to provide pupils with further guidance and support. The good work of the school in the area of careers education and guidance has been recognised by its recent achievement of the *Investors in Careers* award.
18. The school's overall arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment are sound. The school has followed the recommendation in one of the key issues of the last inspection report, to continue with the positive developments in reviewing and monitoring standards. There are clear whole-school policies on both monitoring and on assessment, recording and reporting; and the majority of subject areas organise their assessment procedures in line with these policies. Procedures are particularly effective in English, geography and history where assessment tasks fit in naturally with the teaching programme. They are unsatisfactory in art because the criteria for making judgements on pupils' attainment are unclear. Many subject areas in the school have yet to assemble a collection of pupils' work to illustrate levels of attainment in the National Curriculum or at GCSE, and to improve subject teachers' competence in assessing the quality of work. Subject areas are becoming increasingly adept at using school data, as well as nationally available data, to assess the progress of pupils. Assessment data is well used within subject areas to set pupils targets for improving the standard of their work. Particularly good practice in target-setting of this kind was observed in English, geography and science. A significant achievement of the school has been the additional involvement of tutors in setting and monitoring targets, using assessment data, through the imaginative PTR (pupil/tutor review) scheme. Within subjects, there is very good monitoring of assessment arrangements in geography, history, physical education and science. The school's non-compliance with the national testing procedures at the end of Key Stage 3, reported at the last inspection, has now been fully rectified.

19. The assessment of pupils with special educational needs is good. There are thorough systems in place to identify pupils' special educational needs on entry, and to place them on the appropriate stage on the school's register and to review progress continuously. Regular testing enables the learning support department to monitor progress effectively and plan support programmes which effectively address pupils' learning needs. Reviews of pupils' progress against their individual education plans appropriately involve parents.
20. The use of assessment to inform curriculum planning in the school is broadly satisfactory. Individual subject teachers make particularly good use of assessment information to inform the planning of their lessons, in English, for example. Other subjects, such as art and physical education, have yet to find ways of using the data to shape their lesson plans. Subject areas use assessment information to modify the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils more effectively and to plan the composition of teaching groups. Good practice in this area was observed in design and technology, English and history. Insufficient use is, however, being made of this information for curriculum planning in art and mathematics. At a whole school level, there has been good use of assessment information to inform planning. For example, analysis by senior staff of the Key Stage 2 test results of prospective pupils prompted the decision to run a summer literacy school; study of the GCSE results identified the need for the LINCOS course for low attaining GCSE pupils; and scrutiny of average A-level points scores caused the school to introduce a more rigorous attendance policy and target-setting procedures for sixth form students.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

21. The school continues to make good provision to meet the spiritual, moral, social and cultural needs of its pupils. It has a clear set of aims and values and seeks to enable pupils to become caring and considerate individuals. The school provides an effective social and learning ethos and an environment within which pupils can successfully develop their own individual talents. The successes of pupils are celebrated within a very supportive school community. Since the last inspection an audit of provision has been completed and a new personal, social and health educational programme developed. Focus days, for example a multicultural day in Year 7, are now held. Each department now has the responsibility for developing aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development within their schemes of work. However the quality of each subject's work in this area is not consistently good.
22. The provision for spiritual development within the school is good. The school sets an appropriate tone for each day with a range of assemblies and tutor periods. A selection of prayers for the millennium is prominently displayed in the reception area. Opportunities for reflection and spiritual development in the curriculum are strong in subjects such as history and music and in English in the sixth form where students have the opportunity to reflect on the religious imagery in King Lear. However the provision of opportunities to reflect on the spiritual aspects of life are still underdeveloped in some subjects.
23. Provision for moral development is very good. The school has a comprehensive behaviour policy and the school's values are clearly understood and followed by pupils. Opportunities to develop moral values underpin most curriculum subjects. For example, pupils discuss issues such as slavery in history, genetic engineering in science and environmental issues in geography. Personal, social and health education (PSHE), religious education and English make a particularly strong contribution in enabling pupils to discuss a variety of issues in depth, for example the role of charities in PSHE, and the conduct of Macbeth in English. The school places a high priority on developing a strong moral code, and its efforts in this area have a very positive effect on pupils' attitudes to each other and the wider community. The example set by adults in the school provides a clear role model.
24. The school makes good provision for the social development of its pupils. They are encouraged to take responsibility and to demonstrate initiative. Most pupils have a powerful ethic of hard work which leads to success in academic subjects and in music. Pupils play a full part in the community by entertaining senior citizens and are involved in a variety of day and residential visits. The school is particularly involved in the catholic community and attendance at services in the cathedral is frequent. Within the city itself, the school plays an active role. The school council gives pupils the opportunity to discuss and

resolve real issues and problems. Many pupils are able to take up real responsibilities within the school and in the community, making a very valuable contribution to their understanding of citizenship.

25. Pupils have the opportunity to participate in a range of cultural activities, and provision overall is good. Many subject areas make a strong contribution - including English, art, music and history. In modern foreign languages, pupils are involved in well-established exchange links with France and Germany. During the inspection, colourful and inspiring displays related to many aspects of culture and to the Millennium celebrations. Pupils have the opportunity to attend plays and to create and to listen to good music, and to visit art galleries locally and in London. The school promotes multicultural education well, and pupils have the opportunity to consider the issues the debt burden of countries in Africa and to appreciate the art and music of the world outside Europe. One day is devoted to understanding and appreciating multi-cultural issues. Visits to Hindu temples, a visiting priest from the Cameroon, and Afro-Caribbean dance groups all contribute to an understanding of cultural diversity and the complexities of living in a multi faith society.

64. **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

26. Overall, the school's procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare and their effective support and guidance are good. Procedures for monitoring and promoting pupils' progress and personal development are very good. The school has worked hard to establish a good pastoral system which supports the pupils both academically and socially. This involves a wide range of staff and outside agencies working closely and effectively together. This is a strength of the school. For example the pupils benefit from good quality termly pupil/tutor review sessions, which offer pupils well-focused academic and pastoral advice. These help to strengthen relationships between tutors and pupils and raise pupils' attainment through appropriate target setting. The pupils benefit from a well organised personal, social, health, and education programme taught by their tutors, which involves appropriate input from outside agencies, such as the educational welfare officer who helps promote good attendance and the local policewoman who contributes to the drugs education programme. A very good careers education programme which begins in Year 7 and which continues into Year 13 is very well organised and implemented.
27. The school is very sensitive to the needs of different groups within the school and has put in place various initiatives to help them. For example the LINCIS scheme which helps to raise standards in literacy and numeracy for some Key Stage 4 pupils, pupil mentoring involving members of the business community and senior pupils to help raise pupils' self-esteem and levels of attainment. Support from an out-reach worker helps individual pupils improve their behaviour and attitudes to school. The school nurse and chaplain also give valuable advice and support to pupils.
28. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are satisfactory. Most pupils and parents felt that the atmosphere in the school is friendly and conducive to good behaviour and this is corroborated to a greater extent by the inspection. The school has put considerable emphasis on raising standards of behaviour through re-assessing and implementing a well thought out code of behaviour, 'Behaving to Learn'. The school monitors pupil's reasons for less satisfactory behaviour in order to re-focus their approach to improving pupils' attitudes. However, although the policy makes a good contribution to improving behaviour, there remain a small number of pupils whose response is not satisfactory. The school's bullying policy is clearly published around the school and in pupils' diaries, and both pupils and parents comment that reported incidents are followed up and dealt with effectively.
29. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are good. The school works closely with the educational welfare officer who contributes to the PSHE programme for Year 7 to ensure that pupils understand at an early stage the importance of good attendance. The school monitors pupils' attendance on a daily basis and all staff are kept well informed. The school has set targets for attendance for all pupils, including those in the sixth form.
30. Child protection procedures are good. One of the deputy head teachers is the child protection liaison

officer. All staff are trained and have access to formal written guidelines. The school makes appropriate use of outside agencies when necessary. The very good pastoral organisation of the school and the PSHE programme contributes well to pupils' well being and safety. Issues are raised to enable pupils to discuss openly in PSHE lessons any concerns they may have or more privately through the PTR sessions or via the 'drop-in' system run by the school nurse and chaplain. All staff work closely together to ensure consistency of approach.

31. Procedures for promoting and monitoring pupils' health and safety are satisfactory. The school has appointed a health and safety representative who co-ordinates health and safety within the school satisfactorily. Written reports are presented to the governing body as appropriate. However the governing body is not involved closely enough in monitoring health and safety through a named representative. Nor are full risk assessments carried out through a formal and regular cycle in order to plan for future needs.

70.

Partnership with parents and the community

32. The school's partnership with its parents and the community is good. Parents receive good quality information from the school through the prospectus, the annual report of the governing body, regular newsletters, and the home-link series of pamphlets on curricular issues such as homework, special educational needs and reading. . A useful induction pack for parents of Year 7 pupils gives good advice about a variety of aspects of school life, including supporting their children with homework, promoting good attendance and an insight into the school's code on behaviour. The recently introduced home-school agreement is well designed. Parental involvement and commitment to meetings with teachers to discuss their child's progress is strong.

33. Pupils' diaries are a useful link between home and school, and are used well, particularly in the lower school. They contain pupils' personal and academic targets set during the termly PTR sessions, together with behaviour, attendance and achievement records, which keep parents informed on a regular basis. Arrangements for reporting to parents on pupils' attainment and progress are generally satisfactory and each parent receives an annual report in respect of each subject studied. The quality of the reports is inconsistent, however. Some subjects provide a precise and clear indication of a pupil's attainment in relation to National Curriculum levels or GCSE or A-level grades. Other subjects provide little or no indication of attainment. In some reports, there is a clear statement of what pupils can do in the subject and what they need to do to raise the standard of their work; in others, teachers' comments are too general to be of benefit to pupils and their parents.

34. Parents' involvement with their children's learning is satisfactory. Each year group apart from Year 8 has a meeting specifically designed to meet the needs of its pupils, for example Year 9 options evening and Year 10 work experience advice and guidance. All year groups have an annual meeting for parents to discuss their children's annual reports. Other non-curricular meetings for parents are organised such as 'drugs awareness' and promoting the 'behaving to learn' policy. All meetings are generally well supported. Parental views are sought for example over the behaviour policy and special initiatives such as the LINC'S scheme. The school is supported by an active parent/teacher association which organises fund raising and social events which benefit the pupils directly for example financing a school mini-bus as well as contributing to the sense of family which the school is keen to promote.

35. The school's links with the community are very good. These are enhanced for example through the very good links which the music department has with local feeder schools and through musical performances in the community at home and abroad. The science curriculum also benefits from a range of activities such as visiting Ark Royal, a number of 'engineering' tasks organised through the Neighbourhood Engineers held at a variety of venues in the city and industry days held in the school. The very good careers provision which permeates the whole school makes very good use of local businesses and industry to give pupils 'hands on' experiences and problem solving tasks for example raising a 'wreck' from the bottom of a local swimming pool. The school has established and improved these very good links over a number of years which not only contribute to the curriculum but also give pupils good support and

guidance through a well established and committed team of mentors from the local community. A large number of pupils across all year groups are involved in a city-wide initiative known as 'Rock Challenge' which enables them to take part in music and drama activities alongside pupils from other schools in the city. Also the well organised PSHE programme makes very good use of outside speakers from the local community to contribute to the pupils' personal development.

74.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

74. Leadership and management

36. Since the last inspection, the overall quality of leadership and management, praised then, has been sustained. It can now demonstrate improvements in the standards achieved by pupils, and improvements in the quality of provision, particularly teaching. Management is well structured and the school is well placed to sustain its improvement.

37. The quality of leadership provided by the headteacher and deputy headteachers is good. They are a well-balanced and experienced team with complementary skills who offer a good model of management practice for the rest of the school, including consistent and effective monitoring of teaching and learning. Committed and supportive governors help ensure the school's clear educational direction and sense of purpose. Other staff in management positions give the headteacher effective support, and work together well to maintain and improve expectations in all key areas of academic standards, the quality of teaching and the overall school ethos. The school's action plan in response to the previous inspection has been fully implemented, and the school has made sound progress in dealing with most of the issues raised. The school sets itself challenging targets, and has been largely successful in meeting them. The school's commitment to reviewing its sixth form provision and the three year budget plan are good examples of the forward looking nature of the headteacher and the school governors.

38. The deputy headteachers and senior staff carry out their duties well within their areas of responsibility. At all levels of management, there are good examples of teachers reviewing and evaluating practice, and making changes where appropriate. Responsibilities within senior management are clearly defined and followed through effectively. The senior team is also taking a strong lead in training teachers to use assessment data well and this is having a good effect on teachers' approaches to planning, classroom practice and learning outcomes.

39. Heads of department and heads of year work well to support the school's aims and help establish the corporate and positive school ethos which is committed to raising standards, equality of opportunity and good relationships. Academic and pastoral staff are working together to monitor attainment and progress, and the effective use of the weekly pupil/tutor review is ensuring a sharp focus on raising attainment. Work in the school has benefited from the regular monitoring of teaching and learning by senior staff and heads of department. These are thorough and useful exercises, carried out in a spirit of school improvement and sharing good practice. They enable the school to hold heads of department accountable for standards within their subjects. The quality of departmental leadership is generally good, although not in all cases. Some heads of department, notably the English department are making a real difference to the quality of provision and the overall expectations of standards. Others are having a less marked impact. In design technology, divided lines of responsibility inhibit a coherent approach, and in art, unsatisfactory planning and management of the team are not ensuring consistently good teaching. Most heads of departments are beginning to understand the impact of assessment data analysis and the monitoring of individual pupil's progress on the work in their own department.

40. There is a sound three-year development plan which takes a review of progress made since the last inspection as its starting point. The plan is coming to the end of its three-year cycle and does not articulate the school's vision clearly and some targets are not sufficiently sharp in relation to success criteria and timescales. The one-year action plan in the staff handbook provides a good focus for the

school's work. Individual departments plan their own priorities in relation to the agreed whole school framework. Many of these plans are effective working documents. Priorities for school improvement have been appropriate. As the plan approaches the end of its three-year cycle, the school is beginning to plan ahead through the governors' strategic planning committee. The current plan gives little detail beyond the current year, although three-year budget projections give a secure financial framework within which to plan. Although the relationship between the budget plan and school development plan is not made explicit, the process of establishing both plans is interwoven. Governors are involved in drawing up and approving the development plan, and in monitoring progress towards meeting the targets set.

41. The governing body has an appropriate range of committees to oversee the work of the school, and provides good support for the headteacher and senior staff without ever trying to take over management responsibilities. Each governor has a link responsibility and most visit the school regularly, and have a detailed knowledge of issues facing the school. Relationships between the school and its governors are based on mutual trust and understanding. Governors' decisions are well informed and carefully thought through. Individual governors bring a good range of experience and expertise to the school's work.
42. The school meets the requirements of the Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs, and the whole school benefits from the good work of a dedicated learning support co-ordinator. Governors are kept informed through the designated SEN governor. Good management and organisation of the provision for pupils with special needs is ensuring these pupils make good progress through the school.
43. The school is very secure in its purpose, ethos and values it wishes to promote. It has a strong sense of community, and its values are strongly supported by parents and pupils. It is committed to high achievement, and most indicators suggest the school is doing well in relation to similar schools. Although the quality and extent of the accommodation is a weakness, the school has taken action to improve the learning environment. The school has an appropriate set of policies, and most of these are consistently followed, for example in monitoring attendance, where recent improvements have been marked, and in monitoring individual pupil's progress. The school has successfully established an ethos in which constructive and friendly relationships help pupils to learn in a positive way.
44. Most statutory requirements are met, although the school does not do so in the following areas:
 - The provision of a design and technology course for all pupils in Year 10
 - The full implementation of the National Curriculum for physical education
1. The school has moved forward soundly since the last inspection, continuing to provide a very positive ethos for learning. The school is committed to further improvement, and its ethos and management systems ensure that it is in a good position to maintain its improvement.

84. **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

2. The school has sufficient staff to enable the demands of the curriculum to be met effectively in the majority of subjects. However, difficulties of recruitment and ill health have led to temporary arrangements in design technology, modern foreign languages and music. These arrangements are working satisfactorily, with the exception of design technology where this is having an effect on standards. There has been a relatively low turnover of teachers in recent years and this has enabled the school to maintain a well-qualified and experienced teaching force, as at the time of the last inspection.
3. The arrangements for the induction of new staff are extremely thorough and of a high standard. Teachers take part in a well-structured programme and newly qualified teachers receive additional external training. This is all well supported through professional mentoring and is very thoroughly monitored.

4. Overall the match of number, experience and qualifications of support staff to the demands of the school's curriculum is satisfactory. There is a good level of administrative staffing. Levels of technician support are satisfactory, except in design technology and information technology, although a service level agreement has recently been taken out to secure more technical support for ICT. Guidance from special needs staffing is of a high quality and effectively supports the work of many subjects assisting them in meeting the needs of low-attaining pupils.
5. Teachers and support staff are all extremely committed to the school and promote a collegiate attitude of support and development. A very good staff development programme ensures that both teachers and support staff are able to acquire additional knowledge and skills. This programme makes a valuable contribution to the quality of education offered by the school. Appraisal procedures are very good and well supported by effective line management, that helps to support and develop all staff, despite the non-involvement of some staff through union action. These arrangements are effectively linked to subject development plans and the professional needs of individual teachers, where for example, a teacher received training and work-shadowed a head of year for six months, before being successful in gaining a similar post in the school.
6. The school based training programme is carefully considered and well matched to the needs of the curriculum and staff. There is also good access to external courses through a funding formula devolved to departments. All of these arrangements are rigorously monitored and systematically evaluated, resulting in a bi-termly sharing of course materials to more widely promote and share appropriate materials for the benefit of all staff. The success of these arrangements are acknowledged through the school being re-awarded 'Investors In People' status up to 2002.
7. Accommodation is inadequate to meet the needs of the school. There continues to be limited scope for expansion as indicated in the previous inspection report. However, the school remains clean and well maintained and has developed some facilities imaginatively, the most successful being the new Library and Learning Resource Centre and the environmental area, both of which are used regularly by all year groups. There is one extra small group workroom in music. Other specialist facilities have been improved through refurbishment, for example two science laboratories, the staff-room and the school administration area, which is now of good quality, quiet and spacious. The base for the special educational needs co-ordinator has also been re-sited suitably as part of the administration complex. Site security has been significantly improved through alterations to the perimeter fencing, replacement of school gates and the instillation of closed-circuit television. The outside play area has been completely re-surfaced. However, flooding occurs in wet weather rendering areas of it unusable. Toilet facilities for girls have been completely refurbished and the boys' facilities have been re-decorated. They are now satisfactory and are well maintained, along with all other areas of the school, by the premises manager and his staff. The health and safety issues in science and design and technology have been successfully addressed.
8. Communal areas are good such as the library, which now has the capacity to house whole classes of pupils with additional spaces for other users. It has an up-to-date and suitably positioned bank of computers. Facilities for dining are satisfactory. The small sixth form is generously housed in a separate, functional building. Access for wheelchair bound and those with mobility difficulties is severely limited. New yellow safety lines and handrails are helping to make the previously hazardous steps around the school much safer.
9. Teachers and pupils have created attractive and informative displays in classrooms and around the school which celebrate achievement and enhance the environment. There is a stimulating display in the school entrance area where the current focus is on the forthcoming millennium. Particularly stimulating work can be seen in the history department.
10. The quality of teaching accommodation is good in history and information and communications technology. One of the music rooms is a substantial space, which can accommodate more than one class at a time to facilitate, for example, two class groups singing together. Other subjects have considerable problems and are often taught in non-specialist accommodation. Rooms for mathematics are dispersed

around the school, some rooms are too small and relationships between pupils are undermined due to the fact that they are in such close proximity to others. The cramped rooms also have a negative effect on learning in design and technology and in music, which has the additional problem of intrusive noise pollution from the adjoining pool plant machinery. Subjects taught in poor accommodation include art, drama and media studies. Accommodation for science remains unsatisfactory overall in terms of both quality and quantity, and the roof over the laboratories on the top floor leaks when it rains. The school has tried unsuccessfully to attract funding to further develop suitable accommodation for this area of the curriculum. The indoor swimming pool enhances learning in physical education and is used by the community. Currently lighting is insufficient to enable users to see the floor of the pool. Storage is adequate in all subjects except art.

11. Staff continue to work hard to compensate for the inadequacies of some of the accommodation. Most subjects extend opportunities through the use of off-site facilities, for example the Mountbatten Centre, HMS Temeraire, Portsmouth university, Winchester and Portsmouth cathedrals, the naval dockyard and the local astro-turf pitch as well as museums and galleries.
12. The school has increased resources for learning significantly since the last inspection, and resources overall are now satisfactory. Spending has been maintained at 1998/99 levels during the current year resulting in a diminution in the quality and quantity of resources in some subject areas. Since the last inspection the school has developed a new library and a learning resource centre with very good facilities and wide ranging resources for all subject except mathematics. Investment in resources for information and communications technology, including access to the Internet and networked computers has begun to address the issues raised in the last inspection and has resulted in the school being adequately equipped to offer enhanced opportunities for learning in most subjects. This is less well developed in modern foreign languages, science, art and design and technology. The school recognises the need to improve learning through ICT for all pupils and to continue to upgrade hardware in particular, as shown in the current whole-school action plan.
13. There is a centrally sited reprographics room, which offers a useful service for pupils and staff including copying, booklet production and other facilities. It is co-ordinated efficiently and effectively by the Director of Resources who additionally authorises all purchasing and repair work for all departments.
14. The quality and quantity of resources such as textbooks is good in geography, modern foreign languages, physical education, music and history and satisfactory in mathematics, English and science. The range and quality of classwork is inhibited by inadequate resources in design and technology and in art, where there are limited opportunities for three-dimensional work, visual resources are poor, books are old and most of the useful resources are the property of the teachers. Audiovisual resources are adequate to support learning.
15. The curriculum is enhanced in most subject areas by the use of facilities and resources off-site such as galleries, museums, churches, theatres and libraries. There is good industrial liaison in science, good use of fieldwork in geography and residential visits to Hardy's Dorset in English. Visits abroad are facilitated through modern foreign languages where regular study visits to France and Germany are organised and in music, the school choir visits Malta once every two years. Learning in physical education is enhanced through the use of the local astro-turf pitch and facilities at Portsmouth University.
16. The school draws on resources from the community to broaden pupils' experiences. For example in music a performer from the West End musical 'Grease' recently ran workshops and there is valuable liaison with Hampshire Music Service. The English department has involved poets in the schools' poetry days. There is regular input from the police on drug education, counsellors, neighbourhood engineers and a range of other bodies, all of which enhance learning. The school also promotes additional opportunities for around ten percent of pupils through regular participation in the City-run Rock Challenge.

99. **The efficiency of the school**

17. Overall, the efficiency of the school is good. The school's financial planning is good. The budget plan is drawn up on the basis of historical costs and planned priorities within the school development plan, although the link with the school development plan itself is not made explicit. However, the finance officer who is responsible for the budget has a good understanding of educational issues and regularly discusses the implications of budget decisions with senior staff and governors. A detailed budget forecast, which includes forecast pupil numbers as well as income and expenditure figures, is appended to the school development plan. Prudent budgeting has ensured that the school has made necessary improvements to the library and information technology facilities.
18. The recent change to voluntary aided status has imposed some financial restraint, and current expenditure exceeds income. Governors are very concerned to plan sensibly for this reduction in funding. The school has an agreed three-year budget recovery plan and is confident that financial targets will be met. The school is carefully reviewing the cost effectiveness of retaining the sixth form as measured against the current costs of providing a suitable range of courses. In some subjects, sixth form numbers are very low. Otherwise the school makes satisfactory use of its resources and limited accommodation, and by and large deploys its staff efficiently. However, the deployment of more inexperienced staff in the science department in Years 7 – 9 is having an impact on the progress of pupils during Key Stage 3. Recent improvements in the library and computer resources are leading to a review of how efficiently and effectively individual subjects are making use of these resources to improve teaching and learning and to make pupils more independent in their learning. Currently not all departmental computers are fully used.
19. Financial control is good. The school's finances are regularly audited, and the most recent audit found that financial systems are of a good standard, and that there are no significant weaknesses in the school's procedures. Budget monitoring reports are produced regularly for senior staff and governors to examine. They are clearly presented by the school's finance officer who attends governors meetings to answer questions and explain the budget process. The school seeks value for money in all its transactions.
20. The school's administrative systems work smoothly and unobtrusively, providing an efficient support to the academic and pastoral work of the school. Administrative staff work effectively to present a welcoming face to parents and visitors.
21. The school allocates and uses the funds available to support pupils with special educational needs appropriately and efficiently. Learning support staff are effectively deployed.
22. Income per pupil in 1998/9 was above the national average for comprehensive schools with sixth forms. However, funds are used well to provide a good quality education for all pupils. Taking into account the attainment of pupils on entry, the good quality teaching, sound progress made by pupils through the school, and the educational outcomes, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

105. **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

105. **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

105. **English**

23. The profile of pupils' attainment in English when they enter the school is broadly average, though levels of ability have risen steadily since the last inspection. Taking this into account, pupils make good progress in the subject during their time in the school. Standards of attainment are above average overall. This represents an improvement on the main findings of the last report, when attainment for almost all pupils was described as in line with the national expectation.
24. In 1999, the results of the national tests taken by 14-year-olds at the end of Key Stage 3 are well above the national average for pupils gaining Level 5 and above. They are also well above the national average at the higher levels, Level 6 and above. Results are very high in comparison with similar schools. Within the school, pupils do better in the English tests than in maths or science. Girls perform better than boys at all levels, though the difference is no greater than that seen nationally. Notably, a significantly higher proportion of boys gained higher levels in 1999 than in previous years. Over the last three years, attainment at this age improved from just above national average levels overall.
25. At the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999, the proportion of higher grade passes in GCSE English is in line with the national average. Results in English literature are slightly below national figures, although all pupils are entered for the literature examination; this is not usually the case in most schools. In both subjects, a good proportion of pupils gain the highest grades of A*- B. Girls again achieve better results than boys, though the figures remain in line with the national position. Results in both English and literature examinations were better in the previous two years, when standards of attainment were just above national averages. Smaller numbers of pupils take either drama or media studies as separate options at GCSE. Results in GCSE media studies in 1999 are above the national average. They have been consistently above average over the last three years. Results in drama in 1999 are also above the national average. In this subject, standards have fluctuated over a three-year period. The 1999 results represent a considerable improvement on the previous year, however. A greater number of pupils also chose to do the subject this year. Boys, in particular, were better represented.
26. In the sixth form, English is a successful subject. Numbers taking the subject have remained constant over a three-year period. Options are offered for the English literature and English language and literature examinations at A-level. There has been a 100 per cent pass rate at grades A-E in the English literature examination over the past three years. In 1999, over half the candidates obtained either A or B grades, a considerable improvement on previous years. Over three years, only two pupils have failed to obtain pass grades in the language and literature option - but fewer pupils gain the highest grades in this examination. In some years, numbers of pupils taking one or other option are small, however. Some pupils also drop out before the end of the course.
27. In work seen during the inspection, standards of attainment were above expectations at the end of Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, and broadly in line with expected levels at the end of Key Stage 4. Speaking and listening skills are satisfactory throughout the school. The great majority of pupils make constructive contributions to whole class, paired and small group discussions. They are encouraged to develop their own opinions and to support them logically, with reference to objective evidence. In most classes, teachers also place a sound emphasis on the importance of listening carefully to other people. Listening skills are less secure for a significant minority of pupils, however, at both Key Stages 3 and 4. In some lessons, where expectations are not set out clearly or observed consistently, small groups of pupils do not listen well to teachers or their peers. Though this never disrupts the class as a whole, in such cases the atmosphere is made less purposeful by lack of close attention. At the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils speak confidently in class and show insight in discussions of literature studied. At Key Stage 4, more able pupils speak with some fluency and maturity, demonstrating the ability to evaluate and

respond relevantly to each other's ideas. Pupils also show an understanding of the use of standard English in situations that require it. Particularly for those who choose to take the subject at GCSE, drama sessions develop clear and expressive speech. The level of participation in A-level discussions varies from group to group. However, at this stage, pupils are well motivated and show good levels of interest in language-based discussions and analysis of literary texts. They generally put forward their ideas articulately, supported by detailed argument. In one Year 12 lesson, several pupils gave sophisticated personal presentations based on detailed research of essay topics of their own choosing.

28. Standards of reading are good at each of the key stages. Throughout the school, pupils are given the opportunity to study a range of high quality literature by major authors, poets and dramatists. These include 'Beowulf' in Year 7 and works by Dickens, Hardy and Coleridge, amongst others, at appropriate ages. Laurie Lee and William Golding are among more recent writers. Shakespeare is studied in each year group. Close reading skills are well developed from an early stage through the study of shared class texts such as these. Personal enjoyment of books is fostered from Year 7 onwards. At Key Stage 3, the use of reading logs and a silent reading period help pupils to establish sound habits of wider personal reading. Most pupils are good, independent readers. By the end of the key stage, the majority are able to read aloud accurately and with some expression. They are also beginning to come to grips effectively with sustained written commentaries on texts studied in class. At Key Stage 4, analytical reading skills are developed significantly through the study of novels, plays and poetry in preparation for the GCSE. Higher ability pupils in particular are able to explore, with considerable depth, character and theme in prose and drama scripts studied. Pupils were also able to comment effectively, in two lessons seen, on non-literary texts and the impact of language used in the media. For example, one Year 10 class responded sensitively to nuances of meaning and tone in the use of language and presentational devices in an advertising campaign by an animal charity. Analytical, close-reading skills are further developed in studying an appropriate range of demanding literature for A-level work.
29. Attainment in writing is also good throughout the school and across the ability range. At Key Stage 3, pupils write well for a range of purposes and audiences: narrative and descriptive essays; poems; personal and factual writing; letters and diaries. Technical aspects, spelling, punctuation and grammar, are strong, and pupils understand the importance of re-drafting work and reviewing standards achieved. There is also evidence of good progress in structuring critical responses to literature before the end of the key stage. At the end of Key Stage 4, progress for all students is consolidated, and improved for those at the higher end of the ability range. For most, essays are well structured, with a clear focus, using a range of vocabulary appropriately. In the sixth form, pupils write intelligently and in considerable detail about language topics and literature studied. Overall, standards achieved in written work are a strength in the subject. Throughout the school, pupils take pride in their work. The great majority of students write clearly and present their work carefully. As noted at the time of the last inspection, the department is not generously provided with computers. However, staff use them well to assist in the drafting and re-drafting of written work throughout the school. All pupils have the opportunity to develop word processing skills, including the use spelling and grammar checks.
30. Pupils' response in English lessons is good. Most are interested in tasks set and behave well in lessons. In some lessons, however, a minority shows less motivation and application, allowing themselves to become distracted in small group and individual work in particular. Relationships among the pupils and between pupils and staff are nevertheless friendly and supportive. Collaborative work in class and drama activities is usually constructive, with purposeful discussion and effective development of ideas. Most pupils organise their time and effort appropriately. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, they cope well with tasks which require individual study and research. When given opportunities for reflection, whether individually or as a group, assessment of their own progress is sound, based on a clear understanding of the relevant criteria for success at each of the key stages.
31. Taking into account test and examination results, and the evidence seen in lessons inspected, pupils make good progress in English during Key Stage 3. Value-added analyses show that their progress is above average at this stage compared with pupils in similar schools. Most build effectively upon their previous learning and move forward at a good pace in developing formal skills in reading and writing. In general, progress is satisfactory at Key Stage 4, where it is in line with the average for similar schools on the basis

of value-added analyses. Progress in terms of the development and range of written work for more able pupils remains good, however. The demands of public examinations clearly maintain such pupils' motivation and commitment. Progress is also good in the sixth form, with high levels of individual support and guidance available for pupils.

32. Pupils at all ages with special educational needs also make good progress, in line with their abilities. They are very well supported by teaching staff and classroom assistants during lessons and clearly benefit from the help provided. In particular, there is good provision at Key Stage 3 with a detailed intervention programme in Year 7 to reinforce the development of basic literacy skills. An innovative 'buddy' scheme, pairing some forty sixth formers with younger pupils who have more difficulty in reading and writing, has also been successfully introduced. At Key Stage 4, many pupils with special educational needs benefit from additional literacy and communication work in the LINCS scheme, which focuses on the practical application of skills in a vocational context.
33. The standard of teaching overall is good. This judgement takes into account not only lessons observed but also planning and preparation for teaching, and its outcomes in terms of pupil attainment. Teaching was never less than satisfactory in all lessons observed. It was good or very good in just over half of lessons. Very good teaching was seen in detailed literary criticism in the sixth form and in work on Shakespeare and modern drama, Russell's 'Our Day Out', for some lower ability sets at Key Stages 3 and 4. Such lessons were brisk, well planned and clearly focused on specific learning objectives. The evident enthusiasm and good humour of teachers encouraged students to learn effectively. In other successful lessons, strengths were seen in teachers' good subject knowledge; high expectations for achievement, in particular in written work; effective use of audio-visual resources to enrich the teaching of literature and very good use of assessment to monitor pupils' progress. The results of assessment are shared openly with pupils. There is particularly good practice in this respect in detailed English logs which are kept jointly by teachers and pupils at Key Stage 3. Pupils have a clear record of their achievements and also set their own targets for improving their work further. These approaches clearly improve pupil motivation and interest.
34. Relative weaknesses, in comparison with the strengths outlined above, are seen in the management of pupils in some classes, especially those groups of pupils who are less motivated to learn. Expectations of behaviour could occasionally be more consistently set out and observed, in particular in terms of the importance of listening skills. An appropriate range of teaching methods and organisational strategies are used by teachers, but these are not always best-fitted to detailed learning objectives. In lessons in Year 7 and Year 9, activities in pairs led to less progress than might have been expected from a demonstration by the teacher and shared discussion with the whole class. Pupils are also not always well prepared for small group work. Teachers can waste time in repeated explanations and the pace of the lesson suffers as a consequence. In some cases, this means that the final plenary session can lack clarity or development of thought. Explanations of homework in particular may be rushed. More detailed lesson planning would be helpful in these cases.
35. Homework is set regularly and is generally well planned to develop subjects begun in class. Written work is marked by all teachers very conscientiously, to a common grading system which has been clearly explained to the pupils. Full written comments are given at the end of a piece of work. These are particularly detailed at Key Stage 4 and at A-level, where they focus attention on strengths and weaknesses and give some ideas for how work could be improved in future. Standards of teacher assessment are very good throughout, and in general well aligned with National Curriculum test and public examination results. There are regular internal meetings for moderation of standards at Key Stage 3 and for coursework at GCSE. Teachers work hard to know their pupils and keep very detailed records of progress. Assessment is used effectively to inform curriculum planning for students setted by broad bands of ability. It is used less often to differentiate lessons by task or learning objective in light of the needs of individuals or smaller groups of students. For example, there was limited evidence during the inspection of extension work for the most able pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4.
36. Management of the department is very good. The head of department shows considerable commitment

and determination to improve standards of teaching and learning, which should have further positive effects over time. There are clear policies in place for all aspects of work. National Curriculum requirements are met at Key Stages 3 and 4, with detailed and helpful schemes of work which ensure continuity in planning and progression for all pupils. All of the staff are conscientious and hard working. They co-operate effectively as a team to share and develop good practice. A particularly striking example was in class-based research on the achievement and motivation of boys in English lessons. Classroom observations led to a range of innovations in more active teaching styles and the introduction of models and frameworks for writing. A positive effect has already been observed in terms of improved attainment by boys at Key Stage 3. The curriculum in English also contributes effectively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is successfully achieved through the study of literary texts and promotion of class discussion on such issues: for example, during the period of the inspection, pupils in Year 7 considered the impact of apartheid in the story 'Journey to Jo'burg'; issues of good and evil in human nature, raised by the GCSE texts 'Lord of the Flies' and 'Macbeth'; and the spiritual dimension to imagery and subject matter in 'King Lear' in the sixth form.

37. The staff are appropriately qualified and all are experienced in teaching the subject. Several of them hold senior pastoral or administrative positions in the school. Classroom assistants are also well deployed in English lessons and provide valuable additional support in a range of classes, particularly for pupils with special needs. Resources for the subject are adequate, but not generous. Staff cope effectively with some limitations in access to audio-visual and ICT equipment in particular. There are no specialist facilities for teaching media studies or drama at GCSE. As noted in the last inspection report, this is particularly disadvantageous in drama. Pupils are limited by the space available in classrooms and competing pressures for use of the school hall. This constricts their ability to develop more imaginative approaches to practical work, and means that drama cannot be offered as an A-level subject. A range of opportunities to enrich the curriculum is provided through use of a large number of theatre visits, however, particularly for older pupils. Museum visits and external study days on poetry, novels, drama and Shakespeare also provide valuable experiences for pupils. Reading, drama and media weeks occur regularly, along with book festivals and visits by theatre companies. Poetry, drama and library clubs are run by staff each week either in lunch-times or after school.
38. Overall, with the exception of some long-term and intractable issues affecting resources and accommodation, the department has made good progress against key issues for action raised by the last inspection report. In particular, the range of teaching and learning styles is broader. This has improved levels of motivation and attainment overall. Attainment in English, particularly at Key Stage 3, is a strength in the school. The work of the department makes a very good contribution to standards of literacy seen in the school.
39. The literacy policy is currently under review following a recent curriculum audit. A literacy action plan for the current academic year is in place, however. This establishes a range of whole-school activities and requirements, including a training day in teaching literacy for the whole staff which took place at the beginning of November. Consistent approaches to marking and assessment, the use of writing models and frameworks and pupil access to the library and learning resources centre also feature. There is a detailed literacy intervention plan for pupils in Year 7 and additional support for lower ability pupils through the LINC programme at Key Stage 4. Most subjects are making a good contribution to the development of literacy. Staff in the English department have a pivotal role to play and make a strong contribution to raising standards of reading and writing in the school.

Mathematics

40. The results of the Key Stage 2 national tests for 1999 show that the attainment of pupils entering the school is broadly in line with the average for their age.
41. Based on average points scores in national tests taken in 1999 at the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is in line with the national average and the average for similar schools. The proportion of pupils achieving level 5 and above was above the national average, while the proportion achieving level 6 and above was close to the average. Teacher assessment in 1999 for both levels was close to the national average for all

pupils. Results have improved in recent years, and boys achieve as well as girls.

42. The percentage of pupils achieving A* - C grades in GCSE examinations in 1999 (38.6 per cent) was below the national average (45 per cent). Results have been declining in recent years. More girls than boys obtain A* and A grades, but fewer girls continue to study mathematics at sixth form level than boys. However, the proportion of pupils obtaining grades A* - G is above the national average and is an improvement on the previous year. In 1999, A-level results are close to the national expectation and indicate improved performance compared to the previous year.
43. From the lessons observed and scrutiny of pupils' work, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations. Pupils can develop strategies for solving problems and conducting investigations through planned exercises included in the scheme of work. Pupils use and apply mathematics, extend a concept and articulate their thinking through set tasks. For example, Year 7 pupils of average ability can successfully determine the maximum possible area of a rectangle given a fixed perimeter length, reinforcing their appreciation of the factors of numbers. In Year 9 high attaining pupils are accomplished at investigating the comparative value for money of a set of books using a variety of statistical methods. Pupils' numerical skills are satisfactory. Pupils successfully calculate the area of regular shapes and can extend this to the surface area and volume of compound objects in Years 8 and 9. High attaining Year 7 pupils investigate methods for finding the area of a circle leading to a definition of 'P'. Pupils set their work out logically, explaining the process and use the correct units for both area and volume. The use of the calculator is discouraged where mental skills can be applied. At Key Stage 3, knowledge of the rules of algebra are not widespread although high attainers move onto applying the rules to a variety of topics, for example, they can substitute values into expressions, simplify equations and transpose formulae. Pupils have a good understanding of shape, space and measure. Work is always presented accurately and neatly.
44. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in work seen is in line with national expectations. Pupils' work in the open extended task requirements for GCSE is satisfactory. High and average attainers use algebra as a tool, from formulating expressions from simple data to solving simultaneous and quadratic equations successfully, applying all the appropriate skills and checking the results. In general standards of work in using and applying mathematics are less secure than other aspects of pupils' work. This is because there are insufficient opportunities to practise skills in different contexts with sufficient frequency. This is particularly true for high attainers. Pupils continue to develop a good understanding of shape, space and measure. Special educational needs pupils are able to examine and learn the properties of regular solids achieving a unifying relation successfully. High attainers can apply Pythagoras' theorem well and solve problems involving trigonometry. Levels of attainment in handling data are good, and pupils compare experimental and theoretical probability applied to real data. High attainers distinguish between discrete and continuous data and understand the differences between the representative values.
45. In the sixth form, standards in work seen are above expected levels at this stage in the A-level course. Students make statistical comparisons easily, and they apply their work to models of real life situations and surveys. They consolidate knowledge, skills and understanding of number and algebra effectively. Difficulty in distinguishing between integration and differentiation and interpreting outcomes was a problem for some pupils. Shape, space and measure continue to be a strength. Students apply the theory of normal distribution, utilising their knowledge of variance and standard deviation.
46. Progress at both key stages and in the sixth form is satisfactory for both boys and girls. Through the school pupils make appropriate gains in skills and understanding as a consequence of sound teaching. However, progress is not good and on a few occasions during lessons unsatisfactory. This is because lessons do not build successfully on previous learning or consolidate and deepen understanding from one lesson to the next. The department analyses its test and examination results but does not use them to monitor pupils' progress during the key stage nor improve classroom practice. Knowledge of pupils' strengths and weaknesses is not recognised in lesson plans, for example, in a Year 7 lesson, high attaining pupils' knowledge of 'P' was set aside whilst finding the area of a circle from first principles undermining good progress. In Year 8 lesson observed, an investigation into determining the probability

of a drawing pin landing with its point uppermost, was not pursued to a satisfactory conclusion undermining good progress. Progress is unsatisfactory where lessons lack rigour, pace and momentum. For example a Year 10 class investigating the patterns of shapes and sequences took too long before arriving at an algebraic expression. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into the department and make satisfactory progress. As in the previous report there remains scope for a significant minority of high and middle attaining pupils to achieve higher standards and make more progress. Internal tests based on National Curriculum attainment targets and levels of attainment have recently been introduced at Key Stage 3 and are intended to inform pupils of their attainment and strengths and weaknesses, but have yet to make an impact. Monitoring pupil progress and performance at Key Stage 4 is not standardised across the department. In Year 10 there is insufficient time available within the curriculum to facilitate adequate progress in all aspects of the subject. As a result, the application of trigonometry using 'realistic' data is, for example, not sufficiently secure. Sixth form progress is satisfactory and monitored through 'end of module' tests, assessed internally to criteria determined by the examination boards.

47. Pupils' response to mathematics is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Pupils show a high degree of interest in their work and are able to sustain their concentration, particularly at Key Stage 4, and develop a capacity for personal study. Behaviour is usually good, and pupils are courteous and show respect for one another and for property. They form constructive relationships with one another and with the teachers and work well together. Relationships between pupils and teachers in the sixth form are particularly good. Pupils with special educational needs have a good attitude to work, are well motivated and endeavour to emulate the standards of the rest of the class with some success.
48. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at both key stages and good in the sixth form. Overall it has improved since the last report. Specialist teachers' knowledge of the subject is good at all levels and is a strength of the department. Teacher explanation and target setting at the start of lessons is good. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good. Control is effective but not in an overt manner. There are clear expectations of good behaviour by the pupils and the focus of teaching is on work for the whole lesson. The use of time can be effective, particularly for the low attaining pupils where work is broken down into 'bite' sizes, reflecting their capacity to concentrate. However, this is not consistently so. The school marking policy is fully implemented with books marked and up to date. The record of pupils' work is generally good with accurate diagrams, detailed examples and full exercises aiding understanding and progress. Where classwork is unsatisfactory, it is a result of poor diagrams; inaccurate results and poor written work often going unchallenged by the teacher. Diagnostic and evaluative comment by the teacher, in exercise books and end of year reports, to aid learning and understanding is not common. The pupils are unaware of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Homework is fully implemented and used effectively to reinforce what is learned in school although there continues to be an absence of stimulating open-ended tasks designed to extend pupils thinking, particularly for high attainers. In the most effective lessons, the teacher's expectations are high and activities are planned to meet the needs of the group and challenge pupils in order to deepen their knowledge, skills and understanding, as in a lesson observed in Year 10 on direct and inverse proportion. Despite clear objectives, the detailed planning of teaching strategies, work exercises, timing and use of resources is in general, unsatisfactory at both key stages. There is no planning of differentiated materials or extension work for high attaining pupils and time is wasted on lower order skills such as drawing tables, for example, in a revision lesson observed on data handling in year 11. Lessons that are less effective tend to focus on process rather than on understanding, with the textbook as the only resource. Links between some lessons are poor with little or no follow up. Unsatisfactory lessons are marked by a lack of analysis of pupil performance as a determinant for future work. Opportunities for pupils' personal development through group work, open ended tasks, discussion and the use of everyday reference points are not common. Provision for pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning, establish and test hypotheses and pose questions is limited and has not been developed since the last report. This pattern is consistent at Key Stage 3 and 4. At sixth form level, teacher exposition and explanation are satisfactory, identifying connections between mathematics topics to provide pupils with an understanding of the central and unifying ideas. Expectations are high and lessons well conceived although there is little effort to capitalise on available resources.

49. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides for equality of opportunity. The number and qualifications of the teachers match the demands of the curriculum closely with an appropriate distribution of responsibility for personal and professional development. Accommodation is satisfactory although the distribution of rooms is inefficient and impedes the operation and development of the subject. Some rooms are small which limits teaching and organisational strategies; for example, a Year 8 class conducting an investigation on probability could only operate in groups of two. Small rooms coupled with large classes lead to an uncomfortable learning environment. There is an extensive range of resources available within the department, which are used well but library provision is poor. The scheme of work for all levels of ability is detailed and reviewed. The department is led and managed well, providing clear educational guidance and support. Teaching and curriculum development are monitored and evaluated, and priorities identified in the departmental development plan.

132. **Science**

50. The most recent entry to the school shows attainments for boys and girls in line with the national average. In the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, the proportion of pupils gaining levels 5 and above and levels 6 and above is in line with the national average for all maintained schools. When test results are compared with schools of similar intake, results are above average. Test scores in science over the previous three years show attainments in line with national averages. The teachers' own assessments of the pupils' attainments are higher than test scores. In 1999 the proportion of boys attaining levels 5 and above was significantly higher when compared to the attainments of girls.

51. In the 1999 GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4, results in double science are broadly in line with the national average. Results in 1999 show a drop when compared to those in 1998. In single science the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*- C is well above the national average. The comparisons with national results must be used with caution as the school has a large proportion of pupils who opt to take single science rather than double science. Many girls in particular do not take up the option for double science. Comparisons with results in previous years are also invalid, due to the varying proportions of pupils opting for single science.

52. In the sixth form A-level results show that students are generally achieving A-level grades as predicted from their GCSE results. The low numbers of students taking A-level Biology, Chemistry and Physics make comparisons with national averages invalid.

53. In work seen at the end of Key Stage 3, attainments are overall in line with national expectations. There are, however, significant variations between different teaching groups. In some of the groups taught by inexperienced teachers, standards achieved by pupils are below what they are capable of. This underachievement is directly related to poor classroom management and in some cases poorly developed teaching techniques. The difference in standards is highlighted in pupils' ability to undertake investigative science. For example, pupils in a middle set in Year 9 had difficulty in carrying out a simple experiment, investigating the cooling of liquid salol; pupils lacked confidence with equipment and basic safety rules in a laboratory were not adhered to. In contrast lower attaining pupils in Year 7 were enthusiastic and competent undertaking a series of experiments investigating energy changes.

54. Similar variations are evident in pupil's knowledge of other areas of science, where a higher attaining Year 9 group demonstrated a good understanding of food chains and webs and were able to discuss differences in pyramids of numbers and biomass. In contrast a Year 8 group achieved very little during a lesson introducing food groups. In lessons observed and from work seen in exercise books there is no significant difference in the attainments of boys and girls.

55. In work seen at Key Stage 4, attainments are overall in line with national expectations. Standards attained are much more consistent than at Key Stage 3 due to consistently better teaching. Higher attainers have a good knowledge of the effects of force and mass on the acceleration of an object and are able to use graphs well to explore relationships and predict results. Lower attainers showed a good

knowledge of the physical effects of smoking on the body and are able to debate the social and health issues relating to smoking. Planning and carrying out of investigative science is better developed at Key Stage 4 and a middle set were able to understand how the various fractions in crude oil can be separated in the laboratory.

56. Sixth form A-level students in biology, physics and chemistry are attaining in line with expectations. Some students are working at a very high level and demonstrate an excellent understanding of the topics covered. For example in A-level physics, students were able to describe and undertake the measurement of internal resistance of dry cells and power packs demonstrating a very good understanding of all the issues.
57. Pupils with special educational needs attain in line with expectations at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Teachers know which pupils have special needs and work closely with learning support assistants. Pupils demonstrate a wide range of numerical skills in science from competent use of equations by higher attainers at Key Stage 4 to poor mental arithmetic skills from some pupils at Key Stage 3. Teachers take opportunities to develop mental arithmetic skills and in one lesson, the teacher banned the use of calculators insisting that the sums were simple enough to be done mentally. Literacy skills are well developed and there are opportunities for extended writing. In lessons speaking and listening skills are well developed in some groups, but are much more limited in those groups where teaching is unsatisfactory. There is very limited use of information technology, very limited resources and restrictions in accommodation are hampering development.
58. At Key Stage 3, overall girls and boys make satisfactory progress in lessons. As with attainment, progress varies significantly depending on the teaching group. In groups where teaching is less than satisfactory, the behaviour of some pupils and poor teaching techniques undermine progress of the whole group. Progress at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory overall both in the development of investigative skills and in the pupils' knowledge and understanding of scientific topics. There are no significant differences in the progress made by boys and girls and pupils with special needs also make satisfactory progress. Progress made by A-level students is good and is directly related to the high quality of teaching.
59. During Key Stage 3, pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour are satisfactory, but in a significant proportion of lessons observed, their attitudes were unsatisfactory. Where this is the case, it is always related to unsatisfactory or poor teaching by a small number of inexperienced teachers. In these classes expectations of behaviour are too low and underdeveloped behavior management techniques lead to confrontations between teachers and some pupils. Pupils' attitudes at Key Stage 4 are always at least satisfactory and usually good. Pupils arrive at science lessons ready to work and good relationships are evident between teachers and their pupils. Good co-operation is seen between groups during practical work and pupils listen to and respect each other's views during class discussion. The attitudes of students in the sixth form are always good, there are very good relationships between students and their teachers and students work hard and enjoy their lessons.
60. The quality of teaching in science is overall satisfactory. It is good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form but some inexperienced teachers in Key Stage 3 deliver unsatisfactory or poor lessons. The most significant shortcoming in teaching is the inability of teachers to deal effectively with the poor behaviour of a number of pupils in particular in Years 7 and 8. Poor classroom management skills are compounded in a few cases by poorly developed basic teaching techniques. For example, inability to settle a class at the start of a lesson and poor question and answer skills. The standards achieved and progress made by all the pupils is reduced. The last inspection report noted that although teaching was mostly good, in a few lessons work was over-directed. Teaching is still mostly good but urgent support is needed to address the unsatisfactory teaching at Key Stage 3. Teachers have a sound knowledge and understanding and lessons are well prepared, although during the inspection, extension work for higher attaining pupils was not evident. Pupil's books are regularly marked and evaluative comments are written to help pupils improve. Teachers set targets with the pupils and these are well monitored at Key Stage 4. Monitoring of progress over Key Stage 3 is less well developed. Homework is regularly set and reinforces classwork.

61. Arrangements for assessing and recording work meet statutory requirements. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 offers both double and single science. Pupils have a free choice as to which science course they follow and this results in disproportionate number of girls opting out of double science. There are many more girls in the single science groups than boys and far fewer pupils take double science that is seen in schools nationally. These gender imbalances were present during the last inspection and there has been no improvement in rectifying the imbalance. Sixth form classes are small and therefore costly; the most experienced teachers are timetabled to teach in the sixth form while newly qualified teachers and inexperienced teachers are deployed largely in Key Stage 3. The overall leadership of the department is good, and the department has undertaken considerable development in the schemes of work. The quality of teaching is monitored and shortcomings in teaching at Key Stage 3 have been identified and support is being provided to those teachers. The department has good links with feeder schools and provides support for some of their teachers. Strong links have been established with local business and industry and various activities enhance pupils' experiences at Key Stage 3, including working with local engineers and visits to the naval dockyard. Resources within the department are barely adequate but are well used and deployed. The accommodation for science remains unsatisfactory, although some refurbishment of laboratories has improved the position since the last inspection. The remainder of the laboratories remain in need of refurbishment. There are still too few laboratories and too many classes are taught in non-specialist rooms, involving much additional work in preparation and moving of resources.

144. Information and communication technology (ICT)

62. Teacher assessments of pupils' attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) indicate that overall attainment is above average at the end of Key Stage 3. These assessments are confirmed by evidence from the inspection. This is an improvement since the last inspection when attainment was in line with national expectations. All pupils use the different operating systems effectively to run programs and enter, store, edit and print out information in a variety of forms. They can use a wide range of programs to solve problems in different contexts including complex database inquiries, desktop publishing and searching for information on the Internet. Higher attaining pupils write control programs using procedures and combine pictures, text and logos in different ways for different audiences.

63. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations. This is an improvement since the last inspection when there was considerable underachievement. The school has consolidated and broadened recent improvements in attainment. Most pupils are comfortable with a good range of applications and use them in different subject areas to help their learning. They use desktop publishing and graphics particularly well in design technology, and composing software in music. In most subjects, pupils have opportunities to use word processing and in this they usually demonstrate skills, such as editing and formatting, which are adequate to the task. Those pupils seen using the Internet for research, used a sound range of search strategies. However, there were no examples, outside the GCSE ICT course, which showed the pupils' ability to search a database, for instance, or to interpret data from data logging equipment. Sixth form students use computers on A-level courses, particularly GNVQ courses in business studies, but not to the same extent or to such good effect as they do lower down the school.

64. Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 3 due to the good teaching, challenging curriculum and the good use made of computers in other subjects. Pupils are learning to evaluate their own work. In some lessons, lower attaining pupils make less progress because the teacher has not set work at an appropriate level. Pupils at Key Stage 4 make less, but still satisfactory, progress because they have fewer opportunities to use ICT than they do at Key Stage 3. They make sound use of knowledge and skills learned earlier, and consolidate this understanding in many areas of the curriculum. The school has not yet entered pupils for a GCSE examination in information technology but the current Year 10 pupils on this new course are making good progress.

65. Attitudes to learning in ICT are good. Pupils enjoy working with computers and work hard to do well. They co-operate and collaborate effectively when they have to share a computer and most work confidently as individuals. Occasionally, when there is a large class in the small ICT room, pupils can

become restless which means the teacher has to spend a lot of time getting their attention. Pupils can be trusted to work safely and responsibly at break and lunchtime with the minimum of supervision.

66. Teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and in the GCSE information technology classes. Lessons have clear aims, which teachers communicate well to the pupils. They expect high standards and set challenging and relevant tasks. In most lessons teachers provide work that enables pupils with different levels of ability to make progress. They also assess progress regularly and involve the pupils in evaluating their own attainment. In lessons where progress is only satisfactory, the teacher provides challenging work but fails to offer the opportunity for higher attaining pupils to move on or for lower attaining pupils to make enough progress. For instance, in a Year 9 class observed, the teacher explained the task in words and provided a worksheet, but did not give enough visual information. In the most effective lessons, the teacher uses careful questioning to determine what the pupils know and understand and uses this information to plan the next task. Where subject teachers are incorporating ICT into their teaching at Key Stage 4, this is well done and serves the pupils' subject learning effectively but is not allowing the higher attaining pupils the chance to extend their ICT skills. The teachers' knowledge and skills throughout the school are good, enabling them, for instance, to use computers, the Internet, multi-media and data-logging equipment, such as the weather recorder, to enhance pupils' understanding.
67. The ICT co-ordinator has worked hard since the last inspection to ensure that there is a broad curriculum that covers all the aspects required. Teaching and learning are monitored to develop and improve provision. Pupils in Key Stage 3 have one ICT lesson a week, taught by well-qualified specialist teachers but also use computers in a range of subjects, including mathematics, history, geography and science. ICT specialists also provide assistance to teachers in some lessons, especially when the ICT rooms are operating at full capacity. Each department provides a link teacher who is responsible for working closely with the ICT co-ordinator. This enables the specialist ICT lessons to be relevant and helpful. It also means that subject teachers have some understanding of what level the pupils should be working at. ICT is taught effectively in business studies lessons, for both GCSE and GNVQ. The curriculum for Key Stage 4 is insufficiently developed and there are not enough planned opportunities for pupils to use ICT on the GCSE courses. However, this is improving and most departments expect pupils to use a computer for writing essays or gathering research data.
68. At Key Stage 3 the assessment system is carefully built into the programme of study and pupils learn in advance what is expected of them and what they need to do to reach a higher level. At Key Stage 4, the system is less successful because the recording process is not precise enough to capture attainment levels nor indicate what pupils need to do to reach the higher levels.
69. Since the last inspection, the school's provision for ICT has improved, due to the good leadership and management of the department and the investment in modern hardware, software and accommodation. It provides a rich and varied experience that prepares pupils well for life beyond school.

152. OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

152.

Art

70. Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 indicate attainment above national averages. Although the majority of pupils achieve the expectation, fewer than normal achieve higher levels. GCSE results over the last three years show some variation, but in the last year they were slightly above national averages, with girls achieving more highly than the boys. A-level results from the same period are well below national averages and there have been no higher grades achieved.
71. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment in work seen meets national expectations but with some shortcomings. The majority of pupils learn to use a range of graphic media, paint and a limited range of three-dimensional media with some accuracy. Their understanding of colour and pattern is sound, but few have the understanding and skills to properly develop a design and investigate the creative and expressive use of media. Pupils do not have a broad knowledge and understanding of the work of other artists and of other cultures, and they have only a limited specialist vocabulary to describe their work. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is close to expected levels nationally. The majority of pupils can select and sustain investigations of a topic or theme using a limited range of graphic media, paint and three-dimensional materials. Their work is often imaginative and personal, but their use of techniques and the skills they gain are limited in breadth. Attainment by the end of the sixth form is average overall. Most students demonstrate a range of drawing and research skills, but not all can sustain investigative approaches to inform their understanding and apply their developing knowledge of the work of artists.
72. By the end of Key Stage 3, progress is satisfactory. Pupils have improved their drawing and painting skills and many have learnt to control broad and fine media and a narrow range of print and three-dimensional materials. However, there is some underachievement as a consequence of a lack of both, breadth in pupils' practical skills and their understanding of design, resulting in pupils not making the best use of the artists they study. By the end of Key Stage 4, progress is broadly satisfactory, but with some unsatisfactory features, principally in the lack of design skills and the inability of some pupils to be able to apply their study of the work of artists and cultures to properly inform their personal response. Many pupils were unable to sustain investigation of media and technique and as a consequence outcomes demonstrate some underachievement. Pupils with special needs are equally served and make satisfactory progress in line with most of their peers. By the end of the sixth form, students are making satisfactory progress and a few make good progress because of their commitment to the study of artists and willingness to learn through experimentation and investigative approaches.
73. The attitudes of pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 are satisfactory overall, but this can be variable in Key Stage 3, when not fully interested and involved in their work. Pupils were generally courteous and respectful, they behave well and can be well motivated and interested. They demonstrate good co-operative practice and perseverance, where for example, Year 11 pupils review work begun in Year 10 to complete as a unit for examination coursework. Media and equipment is used safely but not all pupils clean up properly after lessons. Some pupils demonstrate greater independence and effectively use books and the Internet for research. In the sixth form, the response of students is consistently good.
74. In Key Stages 3 and 4, the quality of teaching is satisfactory, but with some unsatisfactory features. Classroom management and the guidance given to individuals are good, but planning is unsatisfactory and does not specify learning objectives. Lesson planning often fails to specify how pupils will improve or how skills and understanding are to be acquired. A limited range of teaching strategies is adopted and teachers do not demonstrate techniques to ensure pupils understand the skills involved. While lower attaining pupils are well supported and encouraged, more able pupils are insufficiently challenged. Assessment is used well to encourage pupils, particularly lower attaining pupils. In the sixth form, teaching is satisfactory with some strengths, particularly in the teaching of Year 13, where students are effectively supported and ideas are given well considered technical guidance. Overall, much of the teaching lacks rigour, with an overemphasis on teaching individual pupils rather than ensuring learning for the whole group.

75. Much of the departmental documentation is useful in directing day to day procedures effectively. Some aspects of development, for example assessment, have been well led, although not all of the experience gained or pupils' knowledge and understanding of the work of artists, has been fully assessed and recorded. At Key Stage 3, the lesson duration is short and this impacts on learning, although the planned schemes still do not determine a sufficiently broad and balanced experience. In addition, the leadership of the department does not fully direct the teaching and learning through the practice of the team, and the planned schemes do not determine objectives to promote learning and raise standards. The accommodation will need further organisation and the resources will need improving in order to support these developments.

158. **Design and technology**

76. Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 show that pupils were above average when compared with the national average. The school's combined results for GCSE design and technology in 1999 show that the percentage of pupils gaining a grade in the A*- C range was below average. Pupils studying for the food technology and the graphics components of these exams did better than average, whilst those studying resistant materials and electronics were well below average. Pupils taking the child development examination also attained below average grades.

77. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below expectations, contrary to the school's own assessment of attainment at this stage. Pupils learn the design process during their lessons in food, textiles and graphics but do not apply this knowledge effectively in other areas. Their understanding of structures and mechanisms in the resistant materials part of the course is below average, as is their knowledge of electrical or electronic circuits and control technology. Higher attaining pupils draw effective diagrams and use symbolic representation in electronics, but this is unsatisfactorily developed. The few examples of construction that the school has retained, such as note pad holder, are poorly made and show little evidence of the pupils' own ideas or research. The only evidence of work done in electronics is filled-in worksheets. The pupils' overall level of attainment is raised by good designing and graphical communication skills in the graphics component. Here, research and development is good and pupils' drawings and finished designs are often lively and imaginative. In food technology pupils have a sound knowledge of healthy foods and the higher attainers show they can independently plan and make a meal with the desired characteristics.

78. Attainment overall by end of Key Stage 4 is below average. Pupils studying graphics to GCSE level attain a good level of skill and understanding. They make well-researched, imaginative products and the best pupils make very good use of information technology both in the manufacture and the presentation of their work. Pupils following the food technology course attain average levels in their work. They have a solid understanding of health and nutrition as well as manufacturing processes. Skills in the making and presentation of food products are also sound. However, the attainment of pupils studying construction is well below average. Their work is poorly researched from a very limited range of sources, and their understanding and use of tools and techniques are very limited. The attainment of the pupils in the Year 11 electronics group is average overall, with a wide variation of ability within the group. The level of attainment at both key stages has fallen since the last inspection, when it was judged to be average with some underachievement in Key Stage 4.

79. Progress at Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory, despite the good and sometimes very good progress in graphics and the sound progress in food and textiles. Success in these areas is due to the thorough coverage of the curriculum, the high expectations and the often exciting and challenging way that they are taught. Progress in textiles is limited by staff shortages. Pupils do not make progress in the areas of structures and mechanisms in resistant materials or construction, nor in using electrical or electronic circuits or control technology. This is because the department does not teach this part of the syllabus. The evidence of pupils' past work in these areas is dull and limited in scope, and does not show that they have explored or disassembled manufactured products.

80. At Key Stage 4 progress is also unsatisfactory. However, as during Key Stage 3, progress in food technology is satisfactory overall and in some lessons it is good. In graphics the pupils' progress is good through the key stage and in some lessons it is very good. In these areas, pupils are given good models to work to and evaluate their own work using clear targets. However, progress in GCSE construction is poor. Progress in electronics is satisfactory, having recovered from a low base. Progress in child development lessons is satisfactory. Here, pupils develop a sound understanding of how children learn before they go to school, through good observation and interaction with children in a local pre-school group. In all the areas where lessons are at present taught by the specialist teachers, pupils of differing ability and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Teachers make sure that there is work at different levels to challenge all pupils. They give extra help and support to those who need it and provide extra work or more challenging problems to higher attainers. This approach is not often open to non-specialist or temporary teachers, with the effect that few pupils do as well as they could.
81. Pupils' attitudes to design and technology are generally good. They enjoy making things and get on well with each other and the teachers. Behaviour is good and pupils are able to work co-operatively. Behaviour is sometimes unsatisfactory, however, when classes are taken by a new or non-specialist supply teacher. In these cases a few pupils can be disrespectful or disobedient and disrupt the lesson. Even when the relationship with the temporary teacher is good, for instance at Key Stage 4, the attitudes to work can become rather leisurely, particularly when low attaining pupils do not know how to proceed.
82. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory at both key stages. This is largely due to unsatisfactory or inadequate teaching in those areas of the curriculum that are currently without specialist teachers. In these cases no practical work can take place because of health and safety considerations. Work set for temporary teachers to introduce is often insufficiently challenging and inadequately resourced, and teaching lacks continuity from one week to the next. Evidence from pupils' workbooks indicates that teaching in these areas is dull and uninspiring, with pupils making limited progress. For instance, pupils' drawings show a limited depth and range of research and an inability to describe their ideas clearly. Also, the small range of products which pupils are expected to make limits the progress of all pupils, especially the higher attainers. The Key Stage 3 teacher assessments of pupils' attainment in these areas were inaccurate and do not correlate with levels of attainment in the other disciplines. Teaching in graphics and food technology is good. In these areas, challenging tasks are set for pupils of all levels of ability. The teachers provide a lively atmosphere and encourage pupils to work hard by ensuring that they know what they have to do to succeed. Good use is made of the limited resources and pupils are happy to work at home.
83. The curriculum for design and technology is unsatisfactory because at Key Stage 3 it does not provide construction, electrical circuits or electronics, control technology and the study of structures is limited to food, textiles and graphics. At Key Stage 4, two groups of pupils in Year 10 do not study design and technology. In this respect the school does not meet statutory requirements. All these omissions have been caused by the lack of specialist staff. The provision made for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. Pupils are kept up to date with their progress and can analyse their level for themselves with helpful guidelines. All teachers keep model sets of work and example folders. These are especially effective in graphics. However, the ones for construction reveal the weakness in teachers' assessment and overall low expectations.
84. The leadership and management of design technology are unsatisfactory. The department is divided between the home economics and craft areas, and both have separate heads of department, resulting in insufficient co-ordination of teaching and learning both within and between the two areas. Good practice in teaching has been noted but not developed or shared. Both heads of department have analysed examination results and noted where teaching and learning are weak, but few overall decisions have been taken on departmental development. There has been no improvement in this respect since the last inspection. Gender role models have not been challenged, and at GCSE pupils studying food and child development are mostly girls and those doing electronics and construction are mostly boys. However, graphics is popular with both boys and girls.

85. The current staffing situation is unsatisfactory, and is affecting progress in all areas, apart from graphics. The school has been unable to find suitably qualified temporary or supply teachers. Even with the addition of a new appointment, the department is short of at least one teacher. Whilst the number of rooms is adequate the construction rooms have been neglected, the graphics room is very cramped and electronics is taught in a room which is used for non-technology lessons. Apart from food and graphics, the resources for teaching and learning are very narrow, dull and uninspiring. In some instances there have been improvements since the last inspection: the food technology rooms are bright and conducive to learning; there are no health and safety concerns and information technology is effectively used.

168. **Geography**

86. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 show results above the national average, with boys' results well above. GCSE results in 1998 were above the national average with boys' results significantly above, and pupils tended to do significantly better in geography than in the other subjects they took. Overall 1999 GCSE results are similar to 1998, but, unusually compared with other recent years and in work seen during the inspection, girls' results are much better than boys'. A-level results in recent years are below the national average from a relatively small numbers of entries.

87. In work seen by the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is above national expectations. Written work from higher attainers is generally of a high quality covering many styles. For example, reports in which pupils took on the role of a minister of a tropical state recommended which of up to three alternative development plans should be adopted; the best gave perceptive arguments showing a good understanding of the various issues. Most pupils show good empathy with victims of earthquakes and volcanoes through their 'eye-witness' accounts in the form of newspaper articles. On the same topic of natural hazards, most can draw accurate maps to show plate boundaries. Although they are generally less accurate than those of other pupils, lower attainers' diagrams of features such as cliff formations usually convey the key ideas. Similarly, pupils with special educational needs can communicate ideas about deserts in diagrams. In work seen at Key Stage 4, attainment is above expectations. There are analytical notes from higher attainers about the advantages and disadvantages of the Aswan Dam, and similarly thoughtful opinions about whether the Kielder Reservoir in Northumberland should have been built. Most pupils show detailed knowledge and understanding on a wide range of case studies on urban problems from South Wales to Jakarta, including sensitive work from some pupils on the quality of life in Portsmouth and Berlin, and in issues of urban redevelopment in Birmingham and ethnic minorities in Rochdale. The excellent displays on the Meadowhall shopping area show the quality of work produced. Better coursework has thorough research work into factors affecting climate in pupils' own chosen examples, though weaker coursework tends to be descriptive rather than analytical, often copying from sources. Work seen at A-level is above expectations. There is a good range of topics and hypotheses in coursework; in one lesson, there was good discussion on small and large scale forestry activities, and, in other lesson, all students understood the main concepts of national, regional, county and local transport plans. At all stages, most pupils can make effective use of numeracy skills in graphs, map work and in work using statistics. The use of computers enhances some work in geography at all stages, but its use is uneven. Compared with many schools, relatively little use is made of computers and statistical analysis in coursework at Key Stage 4 and A-level. There is no noticeable difference in attainment between boys and girls at any stage.

88. Progress is good at all key stages, including A-level. In individual lessons, it tends to be better at Key Stage 4 and A-level. At Key Stage 3, there is noticeable improvement in work in books between Year 7 and Year 9, with the quality of writing and presentation improving across the ability range. Thorough marking is beginning to bring about improvement in the work of some Year 7 pupils. However, though quite a lot was achieved in one Year 7 lesson observed, lack of full attention by some pupils hindered their progress. In another lesson, there was less progress in geographical understanding because the lesson focused on developing skills at the expense of the geography. By contrast, in another lesson, the choice of four possible base sheets, with differing amounts of structure on each, enabled pupils of differing abilities to choose the most appropriate for them, and, therefore, pupils of all abilities were able to make good progress. At Key Stage 4, a major factor contributing to good progress is the range and quality of case studies and examples, which reinforce key ideas. In one revision lesson, there was good

progress in examination techniques and in consolidating geographical learning. Pupils were required to think about weak and good answers to questions, which helped them to appreciate the difference between the two. Where progress in lessons was uneven, progress was related more to attitude than ability. Good individual work by support assistants in some lessons at Key Stages 3 and 4 is helping some low attainers to make good progress. In an A-level lesson, lively teaching stimulated thinking, and good resources highlighted key objectives; consequently, progress was very good.

89. The pupils' responses are good overall; they are never less than satisfactory, and are very good at A-level. However, there are some concerns, especially at Key Stage 3. In some Key Stage 3 lessons, both in upper and lower bands, pupils are well behaved and motivated. In one lesson, most enjoyed their work producing newspapers and worked well with a minimum of supervision. In another, there was a genuine attempt to engage in role-play, with a good rapport between the rest of the class and those acting. But, in another lesson, some pupils seemed more interested in the mechanics of the task rather than the work itself, and some did very little work. In one Year 7 lesson, there was a mixture of attitudes from good to, from a minority, unsatisfactory; these pupils were noisy and disruptive and required constant supervision. At Key Stage 4, most classes have a good work ethic, though in some, a few pupils are relatively disinterested, with a minority restless and mildly disruptive for parts of the lesson. At A-level, students are encouraged to contribute, and most do so; there is often a real buzz in the room.
90. Teaching is good at all key stages, including A-level. It is stronger at Key Stage 4, and especially strong at A-level where it can be excellent. In all lessons, teachers are knowledgeable and confident in the subject. In one Key Stage 3 lesson, the teacher energetically circulated to help and extend pupils, and had additional tasks for quicker workers; pace was maintained by constant attention to individuals. In a lesson in which all pupils used computers at some stage, a clear concise introduction and very good organisation got pupils working quickly on different tasks; good control and high expectations meant that pupils worked well with little supervision, enabling the teacher to handle the numerous queries. In one lesson, whilst the overall plan was good, the nature of the tasks meant that pace was determined more by the pupils, resulting in different work rates, and the teacher was not entirely successful in keeping all on task. The effectiveness of a potentially very good lesson was lessened because the teacher's expectations of behaviour were not high enough, and the different parts of the lesson were not sufficiently broken up into shorter, sharply timed units. Lessons at Key Stage 4 are generally well planned and conducted at a brisk pace; sometimes, there is too much from the teacher with weaknesses in overall structure. One well constructed A-level lesson raised challenging questions, including issues of bias, and used a provocative video giving an unfamiliar example of the Solomon Islands as a case study of managing rain forests. There was excellent teaching in a lesson on transport policies which provided very good opportunities to extend the students' thinking. The breathtaking pace was related to the teacher's enthusiasm, the use of the students' responses, and the very good planning, including an excellent stimulus sheet which provided a secure framework for the lesson.
91. Geography has made good progress since the last inspection. Its curriculum is now very good, with a very coherent structure and with a firm emphasis on place and on investigative work; fieldwork has an important role, and topics are regularly monitored and updated. The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development, and, to a lesser extent, their spiritual development. Assessment arrangements are very good, particularly in the clear use of National Curriculum levels and in the analysis of assessment data. The team of committed teachers is a well led, experienced and cohesive group.

History

92. Teacher assessments in 1999 at the end of Key Stage 3 indicate that standards are in line with that expected of pupils of similar age nationally. At GCSE, results in 1999 were well above those of other schools. In recent years, results have improved as has the number of pupils choosing to take the subject. Whereas in 1998 sixty per cent of candidates achieved grades A* - C, an improvement of ten per cent on the previous year, in 1999 seventy-eight per cent of pupils reached the higher grades and of those 40 per cent were awarded A* or A grades. There has been a particular improvement in the results of boys

taking the subject at GCSE. At A-level, the number of students taking the subject is small although increasing, and national comparisons are therefore not reliable. However one hundred per cent of candidates passed in the last two years, two candidates achieved A grades in each year. An increasing number of students are choosing to study the subject; there are currently fourteen students in Year 12.

93. In work seen during the inspection in Key Stage 3, attainment is in line with national expectations. Pupils use a variety of extracts to find information about the past and to make judgements about cause and effect and the motivation of individuals. Pupils in Year 7 have some understanding of change over time and confidently use a range of sources. Older pupils acquire a good knowledge of key events in history such as the Reformation, using contemporary written sources, for example to decide whether Mary Tudor has been misrepresented. In Year 8 detailed study of the ships on which slaves who were taken to the Americas enabled lower attaining pupils to empathise with the experiences of people in the past, while higher attaining pupils create forceful arguments against the slave trade. Written work in all year groups is usually well presented. Many pupils make good use of computer based research and are confident in retrieving information, using word processors to present their work. The highest attaining pupils use complex information and detailed sources and have a good knowledge of the topics that they have studied. Pupils in the lower ability range often have poor recall of facts and details but do understand about change over time and have a general understanding about how to find out about the past.
94. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is well above expected levels nationally. Most pupils have both a detailed knowledge of the period that they are studying and high levels of skills in essay and document work. They answer and ask questions with confidence and show a secure level of knowledge and understanding. They base their ideas and judgements on a careful study of extracts and source material, for example when examining events in Germany during the 1930s. High attaining pupils cope very well with the demands of complex GCSE questions, and all pupils acquire a good understanding of change through the study of medicine through time. Course work is of a good quality and pupils have a good understanding the links made between local history and national legislation, for example through the Poor Law Amendment Act.
95. Standards are above expectations in the sixth form. Students in A-level classes show confidence in their own judgement about developments in political history, for example when discussing radical movements in Britain in the early nineteenth century or the reason for the failure of the restored Bourbon kings in France. By the second year of the course they have a secure understanding of the major developments in British and European political history. They are able to interpret difficult and challenging sources in preparation for classroom discussion and they consult a wide range of books in the planning and writing of essays.
96. Progress is good throughout the school and for those pupils with special educational needs. Younger pupils make good progress in using historical extracts and in the development of research skills and the evaluation of evidence. By the end of Year 9, most pupils have a sound grasp of the aspects they have studied, although progress was less secure for some pupils in lower ability groups. Those who choose to take the subject at GCSE make good progress in the acquisition of the knowledge content of the course and in developing skills in answering questions and completing course work. Students also make very good progress in some areas of the A-level course for example in developing the analytical style of essay required. Their contribution in class show that they quickly adapt to the new way of working and to the acquisition of detailed knowledge of political parties and key individuals such as Gladstone and Lenin.
97. Most pupils enjoy history. An increasing number of pupils are choosing to study the subject at GCSE and A-level. Younger pupils take great pride in their work which is generally very well presented and illustrated. They particularly enjoy role-play, for example when involved in a slave auction in class or as penitents on a visit to Winchester Cathedral. However behaviour and concentration levels are less satisfactory in lower band classes in Key Stage 3 and this does adversely affect progress in those classes. During Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, pupils respond well to the intellectual challenge of the subject and to the variety of themes and periods studied.

98. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages and in the sixth form. Teachers use a variety of approaches to teaching and learning and set a variety of tasks which make a valuable contribution to ICT, literacy and to the development of skills in numeracy. However in classes where teaching was only satisfactory, the approach was too teacher centred and there was insufficient focus on the management of less able pupils, many of whom have a short attention span and are easily distracted. Drama and role-play are used to increase the level of understanding of pupils but no evidence was observed of the use of artefacts from the past. All teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the subject. The department has developed an approach which enables pupils to enjoy their work and to succeed at their own level, by ensuring that pupils of varying ability are given appropriate resources and tasks. The quality and variety of resources and classroom activities is good and pupils with learning difficulties are well supported by teaching assistants. Lessons are appropriately planned and resourced, with clear objectives which focus on what should know and understand by the end of the lesson. Work is marked frequently and assessment is used effectively. In examination classes the very careful monitoring of work makes a considerable contribution to progress. A range of well-chosen text and other books is available and good use is made of the library and computer rooms. Teachers ensure that where appropriate reference is made to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding of pupils.
99. Since the last inspection examination results have improved and new courses introduced. The work sheets, tasks and resources developed within the department provide an exciting range of activities for pupils of all levels of attainment. The management of the subject is very effective and there is a strong team ethos. Resources and assessment procedures are effectively used.

182. **Modern Foreign Languages**

182.

100. In the 1999 teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is well above the national average. At the end of Key Stage 4, the 1999 French GCSE results are above the national average with a higher proportion of pupils achieving grades A* - C than pupils nationally. The attainment of girls is markedly higher than that of boys. GCSE results in French have improved since the last inspection. German GCSE results have also improved considerably over the last two years but the 1999 results are still well below the national figure, with a lower proportion of pupils achieving grades A* - C than pupils nationally. In 1999 a small number of candidates sat short-course GCSE examinations in French with business and in German with business. The results in German with business are better than those in French with business but only a small proportion of pupils achieved grades A* - C. No pupils sat A-level examinations in modern languages in 1999.

101. In the work seen, attainments at Key Stage 3 are above national expectations in French, but in line in German. At the end of Key Stage 4, they are in line with expectations in French, but below in German. In the sixth form they are in line with expectations in both languages. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils understand classroom instructions in the foreign language and many can extract key information from speech at near natural pace. They use the language for their routine needs and most pupils can, for example, ask the teacher for permission to open a window. They express likes and dislikes and take part in short conversations about their town or their daily life. Pronunciation is sometimes inaccurate and is occasionally distorted by over-exposure to written text. High attaining pupils have more accurate pronunciation and refer to recent experience and to their future plans. Lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs are more hesitant in speech. However, when they are supported in class by classroom assistants, they can speak in simple terms about their life at home or at school. Most pupils can write sentences in the foreign language, to describe members of their family or their daily routine. Higher attaining pupils write on a wider range of subjects. In one lesson, for example, they wrote articles on environmental issues and in another they composed simple poems. Lower attaining pupils have difficulties with spelling when writing from memory. Pupils with special educational needs can, with support, adapt a model to write a short letter to a pen-friend. At Key Stage 4, pupils are able to cope with more complex language at near natural speed, including speech recorded on sound and video tape. Higher attainers can understand complex explanations of grammar in the foreign language. The majority of pupils can engage in dialogue, asking for and receiving basic information, with mainly accurate accent and intonation. They can also describe their life outside school and home. In one French with business

lesson, for example, pupils were able to describe their experience on local work placements. Lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs sometimes lack the confidence to speak up in the foreign language. Higher attainers are more prepared to take risks in the language. In one German lesson they discussed the issue of healthy eating for example; and, in a French lesson, they described recent experiences in their social lives and their future plans. Reading activity is largely confined to reading from the textbooks, and few pupils read extensively or for pleasure in the foreign language. The writing of pupils is also mainly derived from textbook exercises. Most pupils can write short paragraphs and, despite some mistakes in grammar and vocabulary, the meaning is usually clear. At this level, pupils can write formal as well as personal letters. In one lesson, for example they wrote a letter to a lost-property office and in another to a prospective employer asking for a job. The writing of lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs is mostly limited to copying text, from the textbook or from worksheets. Higher attainers write at greater length, using a variety of different tenses. They also write on a wider range of topics, for example film reviews or their opinions of fast food. In the sixth form, pupils speak confidently and with good accent and intonation on complex social issues. In a French lesson, for example they debated the legalisation of drugs and in a German lesson they examined their experiences of different levels of the education system. They understand factual writing on specialist subjects and cope well with the associated technical language and statistical summaries. They write with some assurance on a variety of current affairs topics, for example on immigration or the media. Their vocabulary is more extensive but the use of grammar is inaccurate. Their writing sometimes lacks sophistication and is occasionally too heavily dependent on textbooks and other printed material.

102. At Key Stage 3, progress is good in both languages. Pupils make good progress in speaking, particularly when they are given opportunities to practise new language and when there is a good variety of speaking activities. They make less progress when writing is introduced too early or when printed text is used as a stimulus. Boys make less progress than girls because they are less attentive in class, less prepared to volunteer answers and less conscientious over recording work accurately in their books. Boys do better when there is challenge in the work or when a competitive element is introduced into language games. In one French lesson for example, boys competed successfully against girls to guess the identity of people based on description of hair and eye colour. Lower attaining pupils make generally satisfactory progress in lessons but their progress over time is limited because they forget vocabulary and grammar and are not given enough chances to practise and consolidate what they have learnt previously. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress when they are supported in class by classroom assistants. Higher attaining pupils make good progress in their knowledge of vocabulary and grammar but are not always sufficiently stretched in class or in the tasks set for homework. At Key Stage 4, progress is generally satisfactory. Progress is less marked in German because in some lessons pupils are less receptive to learning the language, and the quality of teaching is less consistently sound. In both languages, pupils acquire wider vocabularies but their knowledge of grammar becomes increasingly insecure. The most significant factor which prevents the progress of many pupils from being good is their lack of practise at speaking the foreign languages in class. In too many lessons, pupils are cast in a passive role by teachers and spend too long on the receiving end of lengthy whole-class questioning. Progress is also inhibited on occasion, when teachers do not effectively deal with the disruptive behaviour of a minority of pupils. The progress of many lower attaining pupils over time is unsatisfactory because they have a limited vocabulary and very inconsistent grasp of grammar. Higher attaining pupils make good progress when they are stretched by open-ended, challenging tasks. For example in one German lesson, pupils working in groups explored the effect on health of different diets and provided detailed reasons for their assertions. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress when learning materials are adapted to suit their needs and when classroom assistants explain the teacher's expectations and assist with basic literacy needs. Students in the sixth form make generally good progress from GCSE work to A-level, particularly in the breadth of their vocabulary. They also make considerable gains in their fluency and in their confidence to express themselves in discussion. They make particularly good progress when they are required by teachers to prepare a topic in depth and when their lessons have rigour and a clear structure. Some students, however, still have major gaps in their grammatical understanding and are consequently less well equipped to tackle the complexity of work required at this level.
103. The response of pupils in lessons is good at Key Stage 3. Behaviour is generally good and pupils work very well collaboratively when they are given an opportunity to do so. They concentrate on the work in hand and participate enthusiastically in language learning activities. At Key Stage 4, the response of the

majority of pupils is generally satisfactory. Higher attaining pupils, in particular, are highly motivated. They work hard in their lessons and invariably show themselves to be conscientious, independent learners. A significant minority of lower attaining pupils, however, are disaffected and have a negative attitude to their lessons. Some are subdued and bored in lessons, while others engage in disruptive behaviour, showing a lack of respect for their teachers. This unsatisfactory behaviour to some extent reflects weaknesses in teaching. When teachers encourage active learning and provide a variety of learning activities, pupils respond very positively. The response of sixth form students is good. Because of sympathetic teaching, they are prepared to take risks in language and to reflect on complex issues in the foreign language. They work with good humour and show respect for the views and the contributions of others.

104. The quality of teaching is affected by the temporary staffing arrangements to cover the timetables of three experienced teachers. In these difficult circumstances, the teaching in modern foreign languages is nevertheless broadly satisfactory at all levels. In about half of the lessons it is good or better but in a minority of lessons it is unsatisfactory. Teaching is better at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form than at Key Stage 4 and tends to be more effective in French than in German. Teachers generally have a good knowledge of the languages they teach and in most lessons there is an insistence on using the foreign language as the medium of communication. Lessons are usually well planned, with a clear progression of language skills and a variety of activities. The reduction in the use of English and the clarity of lesson-planning both represent a considerable improvement in teaching since the last report. Expectations of pupils' work and behaviour are not always consistent. Where there is challenge and an insistence on active pupil participation, however, pupils make good progress. In one lesson for example, the teacher successfully adopted a comprehension game suggested by pupils and then set them to work on lengthy pair-work speaking tasks requiring research and the use of the foreign language to express routine needs. Teachers use a generally appropriate range of methods to meet the learning needs of pupils. There is an ingenious use of games to sustain pupils' interest; and pupils are provided with helpful strategies for tackling public examinations. In one lesson for example, pupils were given good practical advice on how to prepare an oral presentation for GCSE which displayed their knowledge of verb tenses to maximum effect. In some Key Stage 4 lessons, however, writing is brought in too early and there is an over-reliance on printed text as a stimulus. The most significant weakness in teaching is the failure to provide pupils with opportunities to practise speaking newly acquired language as a means of boosting confidence and consolidating knowledge. In this respect, progress since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory. The management of pupils is good in the lower year groups but, at Key Stage 4, teachers are not always successful in motivating pupils and maintaining proper discipline. Class control was criticised at the last inspection and remains inconsistent. The pace of lessons varies considerably and teaching is noticeably better when teachers keep pupils on task in a brisk and business-like manner. Good use is made of the overhead projector and of competitive games which are successful in motivating pupils. Pupils' work is generally thoroughly marked but rarely features constructive comments to pupils about how they can raise the standard of their work. Pupils are also not given sufficient indication of the National Curriculum level or GCSE grade which their work is likely to achieve. Homework is usually set and marked appropriately but does not always offer pupils enough challenge. Higher attaining pupils, in particular, at all levels of the school, are not sufficiently stretched by the homework they are given.
105. Since the last inspection there have been commendable improvements in both the quality of teaching and in the attainment of pupils. However, the department has yet to develop strategies for encouraging pupils to practise their speaking skills more actively. The need stated in the last inspection report to reassess the modern languages setting policy has only been partially addressed. Equality of opportunity in the curriculum is unsatisfactory because access to the second language, German, is currently largely restricted to higher attaining pupils in Year 8 who are capable of following their French course with reduced teaching time. The proportion of pupils studying two modern foreign languages at Key Stage 3 is well below national averages, and there is no provision for pupils to study two languages at Key Stage 4. The composition of French and German teaching groups is adversely affected by the organisation of French with business and German with business teaching groups at Key Stage 4. The schemes of work provided to teachers give useful guidance but are too brief and do not provide a sufficient indication of the National Curriculum level or GCSE grade of the work being planned. The department also has yet to assemble a portfolio of work assessed by National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades, to improve the consistency of teachers' assessment of pupils' work. The curriculum is enriched by pupils' participation in well-established exchange links with schools in France and Germany. Teachers make the best use of

cramped subject accommodation but are not able to give pupils opportunities to apply their ICT capability because of a lack of access to computers. In the very difficult circumstances in which the subject has found itself recently, the leadership has been both sensitive and effective. As a result, the positive attitudes of the staff are having an increasingly positive impact on the attitudes of the pupils themselves towards learning modern foreign languages.

188. Music

106. Pupils' music experience and skills on entry vary widely. At the end of Key Stage 3, teacher assessments show that a significantly high proportion of pupils meet expectations. Although these results have not been moderated, evidence during the inspection suggests the percentage is slightly lower. At Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades (A* - C) in the GCSE examinations in 1999 was high at 84 per cent compared to the national average. This included a high percentage of A* and A grades. Over the last three years results have shown an upward trend. This supports the whole school target to raise GCSE results by 5 per cent and is a major improvement from the previous inspection. No music courses currently run in the sixth form.
107. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the national expectation. At the start of Year 7 many pupils are unfamiliar with the meanings of some of the elements of music such as timbre or texture. Within a very short period of time, they not only know this musical vocabulary, but understand how to use changes in tempo and dynamics, for example to adjust their vocal performance of sections of the cantata 'Rooster Rag'. They are also able to interpret the meaning of the lyrics effectively when performing. Year 8 pupils build on this earlier work and can recognise and explain the differences between a repeated ostinato pattern and a sequence and then invent their own. The majority of pupils, including those with special needs and those of lower ability, read notation with some fluency, although there is an over-reliance by some on the use of letter names under the printed notation. Their listening skills are well focused, for example when listening to four sections of Moussorgsky's 'Pictures at an Exhibition' they were able to discuss and write about the mood of the music and how successfully the composer had conveyed his intentions. By the end of the key stage the majority of pupils are able to identify a variety of musical structures such as those used by Sting in the song 'Russians', using a well-developed musical vocabulary. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls in this key stage.
108. By the end of Key Stage 4 the attainment of the majority of pupils is above the national expectation. In Year 10 pupils interpreted musical notation fluently and were aware of the contributions of others during an ensemble rehearsal of 'Yellow Submarine'. During this rehearsal exceptional standards were shown by pupils on the clarinet and piano. Year 11 pupils watched an excerpt from 'Walking with Dinosaurs' and were able to analyse the various musical effects used to enhance the animations and then apply their knowledge to create their own effects on a wide range of instruments. Two pupils used computers effectively during this work. In extra-curricular activities, for example the school choir, attainment is very good. During the inspection they sang excellent compositions and arrangements by members of the departmental staff with precision, good diction and vocal projection. A video of the choir taken during a recent trip to Malta also showed the excellent discipline and commitment that both pupils and staff bring to their work. Attainment and progress in instrumental learning is satisfactory.
109. Pupils' progress at both key stages is good and improves by the end of Key Stage 4. In Key Stage 3, knowledge and application of musical vocabulary develops rapidly throughout the key stage due to focused, structured teaching. Pupils get better at reading notation, composing extended pieces of music from given stimuli such as the beginning of a sequence and developing fluency on keyboards. For a small minority of pupils for whom the keyboard is not the most appropriate resource, progress is less good. By the end of the key stage pupils' ability to recognise significant features such as drone, verse, chorus, middle eight and coda when listening to songs in a popular genre is very well developed. In Key Stage 4, Year 10 pupils all make good progress in developing ensemble skills, including some less able pupils who are able to learn their own part individually and then add it successfully into the whole group performance. Others make satisfactory progress when comparing binary and ternary form and aspects of

Baroque instrumentation after listening to the 3rd Orchestral Suite by Bach. By the end of the key stage some Year 11 pupils show improving skills in aural work, for example most made good progress in the lesson based on rhythmic and pitch dictation. Progress in extra-curricular activities is excellent.

110. The large majority of pupils, throughout the school, enjoy musical activities. They show mature attitudes when listening with increasing attention to detail. Practical tasks, which include working co-operatively in pairs and small groups, are undertaken enthusiastically. Pupils show respect, both for the views of others and for the resources available to them. Occasionally, a small minority of pupils responded less well to the high expectations of the teacher. In Key Stage 4 pupils develop these positive attitudes when they work with increasing independence and a high degree of application. Pupils who sing in the choir are highly motivated and a credit to the school.
111. During the inspection, the director of music was absent. The quality of teaching from the other members of the department and the supply teacher is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. In the most effective lessons, work is well planned and resources prepared in advance. The pace is well maintained, and activities cater for the needs of individuals in the class. Pupils are given sufficient time to ensure that they understand the learning intentions outlined by the teacher. This aspect of teaching has improved since the last inspection. However, pupils are not always given enough opportunities to share their work with others and in some cases, lessons do not end with a plenary sessions where pupils' work can be reviewed and targets set for future learning. Team-teaching for example Year 7 singing, motivates both pupils and their teachers and contributes to the good standards of singing across the school. Teaching in Key Stage 4 is often more enthusiastic and better structured than in the earlier key stage. Particularly motivating teaching was seen in one Year 11 group where the film music content was well chosen and supportive teaching was focused on developing the skills of individual students. Although no homework is set in Key Stage 3, pupils in Key Stage 4 extend their knowledge, skill and understanding through a range of suitable tasks. In extra-curricular activities teaching is usually exemplary. Training opportunities for staff are limited. Visiting instrumental teachers have a positive impact on standards.
112. The curriculum is planned in detail and has improved significantly in breadth, balance and range since the last inspection and includes activities to aid assessment at the end of the key stage. National Curriculum requirements are met in all areas although the new computer resources, which have been significantly improved since the last inspection, are not yet integrated sufficiently into lessons in Key Stage 3.
113. The quality of planning is now helping to raise the attainment of lower attaining pupils, but work is not yet sufficiently well matched to all ability levels, including a lack of challenge for high attainers. Assessment procedures have improved since the last inspection but processes for marking in particular, in order to further raise standards, are not yet embedded in practice in the classroom. . The monitoring of the work of pupils is not yet sufficiently well developed. Time allocation for music is good, especially in Years 7 and 8 and this has a positive effect on standards.
114. The department continues to be efficiently managed by an effective Director of Music who is ably supported by two part-time colleagues. The development plan includes suitable targets and supports the development of whole-school planning identified in the last inspection. Links are beginning to be forged with feeder primary schools to address curriculum continuity. Lessons are regularly monitored which has a positive effect on teaching, although staff do not meet regularly enough to focus in sufficient depth on addressing teaching and learning. Line management structures are good and staff feel supported by members of the senior management team and governors, as well as other staff who regularly participate in the choir.
115. The accommodation has been improved since the last inspection by the addition of one small group workroom. However, the number of small rooms remains inadequate and occasional but regular use of non-specialist facilities along with extremely excessive noise pollution in the smaller classroom from the pool plant all have an adverse effect on the range of musical activity and standards of work. The breadth of new percussion resources, the quality and content of worksheets and the significantly improved

information technology hardware and software has suitably addressed the deficiencies in resourcing identified in the last inspection. The support for the improvement of pupil's literacy skills along with their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Library resources are small but broad in scope and adequately support books and materials kept in the recording studio. This is further enhanced by a growing collection of research material on CD-ROM. Extra-curricular activities are narrow in range but of high quality. The choir in particular makes an excellent contribution to the school and the local community, as well as on regular trips abroad.

198.

198. **Physical Education**

116. In 1999 the percentage of pupils achieving A* - C grades at GCSE was above the national average, although numbers taking the examination were small and results have fluctuated over recent years. In work seen at the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is in line with national expectations overall, but good in swimming, where pupils have good techniques in all the major strokes and, in front crawl, quickly develop the tumble turn. Non-swimmers are few, and both boys and girls reach good standards. In gymnastics standards of body control are as expected. A minority of pupils, mainly girls, show good ability to control their weight on hands and to move with awareness of style and tension. In one lesson a special needs pupil attained outstandingly well in gymnastics.
117. At Key Stage 4 attainment for pupils taking the GCSE course is above expectations. Particularly good attainment was observed in badminton, where pupils consistently produced a range of shots successfully and utilised them under game conditions. Attainment in swimming remains good and girls performed well in netball showing good skills and awareness of tactics. Pupils show very good levels of life-saving skills. There is little core physical education in the sixth form where participation is optional and where there is no examination course. Standards in non-GCSE courses meet expectations. Seven students, who are taking the Community Sports Leader's Award, attain well and show good organisational and communication skills.
118. During Key Stage 3 progress is good. In gymnastics, progress is encouraged by effective teaching which allows pupils to plan and evaluate their own work. Tasks are planned which allow for individuals to flourish and to work at their own levels of ability. Boys and girls both progress well under these conditions and some very good progress is seen in pupils' abilities to control their body weight and to increase the quality of their movements. Pupils with special educational needs progress well. In swimming advanced skills such as tumble turns are quickly developed. Occasionally progress is unsatisfactory where poor organisation leaves too many pupils in lessons idle and where teaching is too strongly teacher led. At Key Stage 4 progress is good. Again where pupils are allowed the freedom to plan their work and to show initiative, progress is tangible. This occurs in GCSE theory lessons and in swimming where pupils quickly acquire new skills in life-saving techniques.
119. Attitudes and behaviour are good, although at times a small minority of individuals are difficult to motivate. However, this does not disrupt classes and teachers deal well with these situations. Generally pupils behave well, showing interest in the subject and aspiring to do well. They collaborate very well when required to do so. They are willing to raise questions and to attempt answer those posed by teachers. Pupils always dress in accordance with the high standards set by the department. Good relationships with teachers are to be seen in the great majority of lessons.
120. The quality of teaching is good at all levels. In the most effective lessons, teachers show enthusiasm, demonstrate skills well and plan their lessons effectively. Tasks are set in such a way that individuals are able to respond according to their particular abilities and to plan and evaluate their performances. This is particularly seen in gymnastics at Key Stage 3 and in swimming at both key stages. Where the best practice exists, teachers expect and receive a great deal from students. These lessons proceed with good pace and an air of purpose. Objectives are clearly defined and shared with students at the outset of lessons. All teachers have good subject knowledge and skills.
121. Accommodation for physical education has considerable limitations, as was reported at the time of the

last inspection. There are no school playing fields, and some of the hard courts adjacent to the school are in poor condition. There is no provision for rugby, cricket or athletics. Time allocation at Key Stage 4 is low, and the curriculum at Key Stage 3 is not meeting statutory requirements as an obligatory half-unit of work is omitted. Limited storage facilities, reported last time, have been improved and a gender imbalance in staffing has been rectified.

204. **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

204. **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

122. The inspection team consisted of twelve inspectors. During the inspection 196 lessons, totalling over 151 hours, were observed. In addition, inspectors observed many registrations, assemblies, tutor time, including pupil/tutor reviews and a range of extra curricular activities. All permanent teachers were seen teaching at least once. Planned discussions were held with members of the teaching staff and governors. In addition discussions were held with a number of non-teaching staff. All the available written work of a representative sample of pupils from Years 7 – 13 was examined in detail. Planned discussions were held with these pupils and informal discussions with many more. Documentation provided by the school was analysed before and during the inspection. The Registered Inspector held a meeting attended by 62 parents at which their views on the school were obtained. The team considered 303 responses from parents to a questionnaire seeking their opinions of the school.

205. **DATA AND INDICATORS**

205. **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	1030	9	179	112

205. **Teachers and classes**

205. **Qualified teachers (Y7 - Y13)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	63.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	16.1

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

Total number of education support staff:	26
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	654

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	76.2
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	25
	KS4	20

205. **Financial data**

Financial year:	1998/99
	£
Total Income	2740359
Total Expenditure	2742246
Expenditure per pupil	2624
Balance brought forward from previous year	141351
Balance carried forward to next year	139464

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out: 748

Number of questionnaires returned: 303

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	14	62	16	7	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	32	55	6	5	2
The school handles complaints from parents well	14	55	17	10	4
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	15	62	13	10	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	25	58	7	10	1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	29	59	5	4	2
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	25	54	13	7	1
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	21	53	7	15	5
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	21	56	16	6	2
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	21	48	17	11	4
My child(ren) like(s) school	37	49	9	3	3

Percentages given are in relation to total number of returns, excluding nil replies.