

INSPECTION REPORT

KING EDWARD VI SCHOOL

Bury St Edmunds

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124856

Headteacher: Mr M W Moran

Reporting inspector: Mr W Keast
1522

Dates of inspection: 22-26 May 2000

Inspection number: 185678

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	13 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Grove Road Bury St Edmunds Suffolk
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R G Emery
Date of previous inspection:	27 November 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
W Keast	Registered inspector		The school's results and achievements
			How well are pupils taught?
R Ibbitson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
J Lovgreen	Team inspector	English	
		English as an additional language	
W Ashby	Team inspector	Mathematics	
P Fyans	Team inspector	Science	
O Hall	Team inspector	Art	
		Special educational needs	
J Lockett	Team inspector	Design and technology	
G Rayner	Team inspector	Geography	
		Information technology	
B Stoneham	Team inspector	History	Sixth form
T O'Sullivan	Team inspector	Modern languages	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
		Equal opportunities	
R Coulthard	Team inspector	Music	How well is the school led and managed?
		Religious education	
J Challands	Team inspector	Physical education	How well does the school care for its pupils?
P McGregor	Team inspector		
T Browne	Team inspector		

The inspection contractor was:

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The Registrar
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	11
The school's results and achievements	
Students' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?	15
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS?	17
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?	20
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	21
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	22
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	24
SIXTH FORM	25
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	26
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	31

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a popular school for 13 to 19 year old students of the full range of abilities. With 1097 students on roll, it is larger than most secondary schools. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals (4 %) is below the national average. The proportion of students with special educational needs (7.6%) is well below average and the proportion with statements of special educational need (1.3%) is below average. Students come from a wide area which reflects broadly average socio-economic characteristics. The less than one percent of students for whom English is an additional language is well below average and reflects the nature of the area. The attainment of students on entry to the school, as indicated by the cognitive ability tests, is broadly average. Nearly three-quarters of students continue in education at the end of Key Stage 4. Most students in the sixth form follow a two year course and more than half of these continue into further or higher education.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is very effective. The results achieved in 1999 were well above the national average at each key stage and the standards of work observed during the inspection were above national expectation at each key stage. These high standards are a result of the good teaching in Key Stages 3 and 4 and the very good teaching in the sixth form. The quality of the education provision in the school is a result of the excellent leadership and management provided by the governing body, headteacher and senior management and the commitment to improvement shared by all the staff. The school has higher than average expenditure per student which represents good value for money.

What the school does well

- Provides an excellent standard of management and leadership
- Achieves well above average standards through good teaching and very good student attitudes
- Provides a very good range of learning opportunities, including provision for personal development
- Cares for its students very well through monitoring and support
- Maintains very effective links and works very well with parents and carers

What could be improved

There are no key issues, but the school should maintain the current high standards and quality of provision, continue to implement the strategic development plan and seek to incorporate the smaller points for improvement recorded in the report.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has maintained the high, or very high standards, in the many aspects reported from the previous inspection in November 1995. Some small improvements on these high levels, for example attendance, have been made. All the key issues raised in the previous report have been addressed. At least satisfactory improvement has been made in all of them, except in the provision of daily collective worship where governors, after much debate, have determined to maintain the previous situation. They argue that the outcomes for students from the good quality assemblies are comparable with those anticipated from more formal acts of worship. There has been an improvement in the quality of teaching. In addition to the improvement

which might have been expected, many other areas have been developed. These include, the dramatically increased standards in the sixth form, the introduction of monitoring of teaching, the increased use of information and communication technology across all subjects and the introduction of a whole school approach to monitoring and target setting. This represents very good development and improvement over this period of time and the capability is there for further improvement to occur.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

In this report, the term 'standards' refers to students' attainment relative to some clear benchmark, such as National Curriculum levels, or descriptions, at the end of a key stage. 'Above average' standards, for example, means that a higher proportion of students of a particular age are succeeding at or beyond the level set in the majority of schools. 'Achievement' on the other hand, reflects the accomplishment of students in relation to what you would expect of these particular students. The students' prior attainment, what they can already do, is the reference point for students' achievement.

At the end of Key Stage 3, test results in 1999 were well above the national average, and average in comparison with similar schools. Results in science were well above national and similar schools' averages. In mathematics, results were well above the national average and above the average for similar schools. This year's English results dropped, for no apparent reason, from their usual high level to be similar to the national average and below the average for similar schools. All three subjects have, when averaged over the last four years, been well above national averages, with a trend which is similar to the national trend. At GCSE, the proportion of students gaining 5 or more grades A*-C was also well above the national average and above the average for similar schools. Results in English and science were significantly above the national averages and in mathematics were above, but not significantly so. In most other subjects, results were above or well above national averages. Results were below average in physical education, last year, and in the small drama group. The trend at this age is similar to the rising national trend. Based upon their average Key Stage 3 levels in 1997, students' overall results at GCSE in 1999 were above those of students with similar prior attainment. Their progress in most subjects was similar to, or above, that of students with similar prior attainment but their progress in mathematics was below. At A level, the results in the sciences were particularly high and in French and history were lower than the national average. GNVQ results were high.

The standards seen during the inspection mainly relate to Years 9, 10 and 12 because of the time of year. At each stage these were, overall, above national expectation for students of similar age and reflect the examination and test outcomes. Standards in subjects ranged from the nationally expected levels to being well above these expectations. Currently, students are,

overall, achieving well. Their achievement in mathematics is sound and in science and music it is very good.

The school had not declared targets for 1999, although students' results were above those predicted from the standardised tests carried out on entry to the school. Reasonable, but challenging, targets have been agreed with the local education authority for the next two years, carefully based on school and county experience and standardised testing.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Students enjoy coming to school and expect to work hard while they are there. The work ethos is strong.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. The school presents a calm and orderly environment with a notable absence of oppressive behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Students show initiative and take responsibility in many situations. Relationships within the school community are very good.
Attendance	Very good. Well above national average with low unauthorised absence

The school, in common with many, has a very small minority of students who are not as well self-motivated as their peers and whose behaviour, if unchecked, can reduce the learning of the whole group.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 11-14 years	Aged 14-16 years	Aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall: 152	Good	Good	Very good

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

Teaching, in all but 2% of the lessons seen, was satisfactory or better. In four out of every five lessons it was good or better. Teaching in 32% of lessons was very good or excellent. Teaching in English was good throughout the school and in mathematics it was sound in Key Stages 3 and 4, and good in the sixth form. Science was well taught in Key Stages 3 and 4 and very well taught in the sixth form. The major strengths in teaching are the knowledge and understanding that teachers have of their subject and of the examination requirements, and the quality of lesson planning which stems from this. Students' learning is closely linked to the teaching they experience. It was good in Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good in the sixth form. Students with special educational needs, and the very few for whom English is an additional language, learn well.

Students' literacy and numeracy levels are at least satisfactory and often good, enabling access to the taught curriculum. They are reinforced through work in many areas and specific skills are soundly taught where and when needed. The school has begun to recognise the increasingly apparent impact of national strategies for literacy in the primary sector and will need to extend its developing strategy in this area into numeracy as well.

The school meets the needs of all its students well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. Provision in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form is particularly strong. Very good extra-curricular provision.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Well managed and effective. Classroom support staff work closely with teachers but are stretched to cover need.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good The very small number of pupils are supported well and are making good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory but should be brought up to the very good provision of all other aspects.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. Progress, behaviour and personal development are very well monitored and effective support and guidance provided.

The school works very well in partnership with parents and carers. They are kept very well informed about school affairs and their children's progress, and are consulted about proposed changes. School and parents work closely via a home-school agreement.

The school does not currently meet the statutory requirement to provide religious education for all students in the sixth form.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. Very clear vision for the direction of the school is widely shared and all staff are actively involved in planning for, and implementing, school development and improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. Governors know the school well, are actively involved and fulfil a supportive but critical role.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. School, subject and individual performances are closely monitored, trends or anomalies recognised and action taken.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent. The use of all resources is tightly linked to developments planned to support the experience and learning of students.

The school is well staffed with sufficient, appropriately qualified staff to deliver the curriculum. The teaching staff are very well supported by their non-teaching colleagues. The accommodation facilities, notably for physical education, music and latterly drama, are very good as is the provision of resources for learning.

Great care is taken to ensure that the use of the financial resources available to the school has the most effective impact on classroom experience and practice. The governing body is fully involved in the decisions reached, collaboration with other organisation is used to very good advantage and the business manager ensures that the best value for money is achieved.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the school is well led and managed • That their children like school • That their children are expected to work hard • That the teaching is good and that their children make good progress • That the school helps their children mature • That the school is approachable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consistency with which the quantity and frequency of homework is set

The inspectors fully agree with the parents and carers in the strengths that they recognise in the school. From the questionnaire returns, a comparatively high proportion of parents were uncertain whether the school offered an interesting range of activities outside lessons. The inspectors would assure parents that, in their judgement, students are fortunate in both the interest and breadth of the range of activities offered. The evidence from the week of inspection is that good use is made of homework, which is appropriate to the subject and set to a timetable. Opportunity exists for students to begin, or complete, this work using school facilities and there is often a period of time within which it may be completed. This flexibility, part of students' personal development, may account for the perception of some parents that the setting of homework is not regularly spread throughout the week.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

- 1 Results in the end of Key Stage 3 national testing in 1999 were well above the national average and were in line with the average for similar schools. The average performance of both boys and girls over the past four years has been well above their respective national averages and the trend over this same period is broadly in line with the national trend. In English, results were similar to the national average and below the average for similar schools. Judged by other test scores, the previous accuracy of teacher assessments, and the quality of work seen from the same students who are now in Year 10, the level of achievement is above national average. It has to be assumed that the 1999 English tests for the school were harshly marked. In mathematics, results were well above the national average and above the average for similar schools. Results in science, in 1999, were well above both national and similar schools' averages.
- 2 In 1999, the proportion of students who gained five or more grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations and the average point score of students, were well above the national average and above the average for similar schools. Over the last three years, both boys' and girls' overall results have been above the national average, and the trend over the same period has been similar to the national trend. Differences in the results of boys and girls were similar to the differences nationally. Results in English, science, art, design and technology, German, geography, and music were well above average. Results in mathematics were above average and in history, French and business studies they were average. However, the school enters nearly all pupils for French compared with the national proportion of approximately 60 per cent and results in business studies were noticeably lower than the previous several years. In physical education, results were below average, a drop from previous years, and in drama they were well below average. Students made greater progress in art, science, geography, German, history and home economics compared with their progress in all the subjects they studied and less progress in business studies, drama and physical education.
- 3 In 1999, the average point score for students entered for two or more A Levels was well above the national average. Results have risen very significantly over the last three years. The average over the last three years is close to the national average. Results in all three sciences were well above average in 1999 and in geography, music, physical education and religious education, results were above average. In English, mathematics, art and design and technology results were average, and in history and German, below average. The results of the small number of students entered for fewer than two A Levels were in line with the national average in 1999 and with the average over the last three years. The students who studied for a vocational qualification gained very good levels.
- 4 Students' attainment on entry to the school, as indicated by the results of nationally standardised testing, has been broadly average. The 1999 Key Stage 3 results show that students' achievement was very good in this key stage. Overall in Key Stage 4, students made progress that was in line with that made by students with similar prior attainment. Comparison of students' average A Level point score with their average GCSE point score on entry to the sixth form, shows students made at least satisfactory progress, with the weaker students doing particularly well.
- 5 At the time of the inspection Year 11 students were on study leave so Key Stage 4

judgements relate to students at the end of Year 10. Year 13 had reached the end of their courses and were involved in revision and a number of examinations so that judgements in the sixth form relate primarily to students at the end of Year 12.

- 6 From scrutiny of work and classroom observation, the overall standards being demonstrated at the end of each key stage are above national expectation for students of the respective ages. Standards in English at the end of both key stages and in the sixth form are above national expectation and achievement is good in each stage. GCSE examination results in 1999 were well above national average and well above those of students with similar prior achievement. Results in the three A Level courses were in line with national averages. In mathematics, standards at the end of both key stages and in the sixth form are above national expectations and achievement is sound in each stage. GCSE examination results in 1999 were above the national average but below those of students of similar prior attainment. Results in the A Level examinations were in line with the national average. Standards in science are well above national expectation at the end of both key stages and in the sixth form, and achievement is very good in all stages. In 1999, GCSE examination results were well above the national average and well above those of students with similar prior attainment. Results at A Level were well above the national average in each of the three sciences.
- 7 At the end of Key Stage 3, standards are in line with national expectation in art, history and physical education and are above in the other subjects. Students' achievement in this key stage is sound in history and it is good in all other subjects. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards in design and technology, music and German are well above expectation, in physical education they are in line with expectation and in all other subjects they are above expectation. Students' achievement in this key stage is very good in design and technology, information technology, music and German. It is good in the rest of the subjects except in mathematics and French, where it is sound. In the sixth form, standards in music and religious education are well above expectation, in art they are broadly in line with expectation and in other subjects they are above national expectation. Achievement is very good in history, music and religious education, it is sound in mathematics and it is good in the rest of the subjects.
- 8 The most able students make good progress overall. They do not make as much progress as they could in mathematics where there could be greater challenge in their work. They make satisfactory progress overall in history but make good progress in the sixth form. In other subjects they make good or very good progress.
- 9 Students with special educational needs achieve well at Key Stages 3 and 4. In art, most are attaining in line with other students at Key Stage 4 in achieving high grades in GCSE. Where students are withdrawn for additional literacy skills they make good gains in improving their reading and spelling. Year 10 students are withdrawn for extra support that includes preparation for the Certificate of Achievement in English. This well-structured approach to improving their basic skills, which includes GCSE guidance in a student handbook, is effective in increasing their confidence and self esteem. Students make very good gains in the special needs study centre because planning between subject teachers and learning support staff is good, and effective use is made of teaching resources. Students are well supported in most lessons and make good progress because work is successfully adapted to their ability. Examples of very good progress can be found in information technology, where a specialist programme is proving beneficial to dyslexic students, and in physical education, where there is very good monitoring of special needs students' achievement.

- 10 The number of students for whom English is an additional language is very low. They are very well known, and receive appropriate specialist help through the local authority's Ethnic Minorities Achievement provision. Their progress is monitored by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) who deals with any concerns about language issues affecting their ability to achieve in subject areas. They make good progress, all but one (who was a late arrival) in recent years having been successfully prepared for a range of GCSE examinations. The school is successful in enabling such students to handle a wide range of technical vocabulary with confidence, as evidenced by a year 12 student who, in an 'A' level politics lesson, handled specialist terms like 'Thatcherism', 'monetarism' and 'militarism' notably well.
- 11 Students' numeracy skills are generally sound within mathematics. Where necessary, students are adequately supported in other subject areas to ensure they can cope with numeracy requirements. In science, at Key Stage 3, students use graphs and handle algebraic formulae, although only the most able bring these skills with them. At Key Stage 4, students' numeracy skills continue to be reinforced. In art, Year 9 students learn to scale-up work. In physical education, good graphical work and interpretation of statistics is common. There are good examples of numeracy being reinforced in a number of subjects. However, there is little current attempt to ensure uniformity of approach or to utilise these skills more widely across the curriculum .
- 12 Students have good literacy skills, which enable them to learn more quickly, more precisely or to a greater depth in most subjects. However, many teachers are insufficiently aware of the primary literacy hour experiences and expectations which new intake students will soon be bringing with them. Many students have good speaking and listening skills, and are able to use discussion to clarify and develop ideas. The very good student-teacher relationships in the school encourage this mode of learning. Students' folders, and corridor and classroom displays, show a high level of care and effort in presenting written work. Students are skilled at note-taking and the majority of students have been taught a range of ways to plan written work. Extended writing is a strength of many subjects, including history, science, design technology, and modern foreign languages. Spelling and punctuation errors are too common, even in the work of able students, and can inhibit their achievement. Students have good mechanical reading skills, but can be un-adventurous in their choice and use of books. Some teachers are aware of this and try to stimulate reading as in the case of a geography teacher who read an extract from 'The Grapes of Wrath' to bring alive for students the effects of soil erosion on both the landscape and its inhabitants.
- 13 Students have many opportunities to develop their information and communication technology skills in the subjects of the curriculum. Most learn how to use the main applications during Key Stage 3, with word processors in particular being used widely to enhance the presentation of work in all years. In Key Stage 4 there are good opportunities to develop skills in using computers, to take measurements and control machines in specialist contexts, in subjects such as science, music and design and technology. Skills in using the Internet for finding information, often during individual research, and for email, are well established in both key stages and the sixth form. However, while the development of basic skills is good, few pupils demonstrate the highest levels of information and communication technology capability, which require a considerable degree of autonomy and creativity in applying the skills in carrying out tasks.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

- 14 The school is an orderly community that provides a very good learning environment to

which students respond well. They enjoy coming to school and have very good attitudes to learning. There is a strong work ethos in the school, particularly in the sixth form where students make very good use of the facilities for private study. Students concentrate on their work and take pride in its presentation and completion. Many are involved in the wide range of activities provided for them outside the taught curriculum. Parents speak highly of, for example, the annual Year 9 activities week. Students with special educational needs are keen to come to the study centre, before school and during breaks, where they are made to feel secure and become involved in the range of activities, including information technology. Where the level of support is good in lessons, these students' attitudes and behaviour are very good, due largely to the commitment and sensitivity of learning support assistants. Students withdrawn from lessons are positive, conscientious and willing to work collaboratively and on a one-to-one basis with learning support staff and sixth form students. A small minority of students, particularly in Key Stage 3, sometimes lack the personal motivation which is conducive to learning.

- 15 The behaviour of students is very good and makes a significant contribution to students' learning. Students' behaviour when withdrawn for additional support is often excellent. Movement around the school is orderly and calm and behaviour in the dining room at lunch time, quiet. Students are polite and courteous. In discussion, students said that what they like most about the school is the way they are treated as adults. This is reflected in the less formal uniform adopted by the school and worn consistently by all students below the sixth form, and in the very good relationships that exist between students and teachers. Students are trustworthy and show respect for property. They take pride in their school environment, as evidenced by the noticeable lack of graffiti and by the lack of litter on the school site. Works of art displayed around the school remain undamaged.
- 16 There were no signs during the inspection of any aggressive or threatening behaviour. In discussion, students report that any incidences which do occur are treated very seriously by the school and dealt with promptly. The number of fixed term exclusions in the last year was below average for the size of school. These exclusions were mostly for minor assaults on other students. There were no signs of racism or sexism in the school.
- 17 Students' personal development is very good. Relationships between students and with adults are very good and contribute positively to learning. In all subjects, students participate sensibly in class discussions and enjoy the opportunities to work collaboratively in groups. From entry into Year 9, students are encouraged to develop the habit of organising themselves and to use their school planners. In discussions, students showed a willingness to listen to others and to speak in a mature way about school life. Students represent their tutor group on year councils and these, in turn, are represented on the school council. Mature and sensible discussions take place on a wide range of issues at the weekly meetings of the school council. The meetings are jointly and competently chaired by the head girl and boy. Two parent governors are regularly attending members of this council. Two student observers attend the governing body meetings. One of the students found the experience extremely interesting and a major contribution to her personal development.
- 18 All Year 10 students have two weeks work experience where they acquire knowledge and skills in environments quite different to school. Some sixth form students widen their language experience with work experience abroad. Sixth form students participate in a paired reading scheme with Year 9 students requiring additional support, work with a local special needs school providing help with information technology, and assist physically handicapped students in swimming. Other students, concerned about the environment, are presently forming a group to recycle aluminium cans and the school council has arranged

with the Borough Council for a can-crusher and two containers to be supplied to the school.

- 19 Attendance is well above the national average. Unauthorised absences are below the national average. Most students arrive in good time for school, registers are completed accurately, and lessons begin promptly.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 20 The quality of teaching overall is good. Nearly all the teaching observed was at least satisfactory, four-fifths was good or better and one-third was very good or excellent. In Key Stages 3 and 4, where teaching is good, the statistics were very close to the overall picture. In the sixth form teaching is very good. Here, there was no unsatisfactory teaching and in all but one lesson it was at least good. Two-fifths of the teaching was very good or excellent. Overall, in only three observed lessons was teaching unsatisfactory.
- 21 The various features which contribute to teaching are all strong. One of the strongest features is teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject and what is required for examination success. This enables them to teach with enthusiasm for their subject and to draw out and develop students' understanding through perceptive questioning. It enables them to plan their lessons very effectively, both to respond to students' individual learning needs and to develop good examination techniques. This is the other very strong feature of teaching in the school. Teaching was unsatisfactory when the majority of students in the class made insufficient progress during the course of the lesson. On two occasions this was due to weak planning, leading to insufficient challenge and, on one occasion, to the poorly managed behaviour of a few students adversely affecting the learning of the majority.
- 22 Teaching in English is good throughout. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to carefully plan lessons in which the context and expected outcomes are clear to students. Group work is particularly well used and, combined with high quality resources, this results in the challenge of mixed ability teaching being successfully met. In mathematics, teaching is satisfactory in Key Stages 3 and 4, where at least four-fifths of the teaching was satisfactory or better, and is good in the sixth form. Teachers' subject knowledge enables them to give clear explanations and to match work to students' individual needs and this results in good learning and the gaining of skills. The heavy reliance on students' written responses tends to restrict students' creative effort and pace of working to a level which is satisfactory but which could be higher. Teaching in science is good in Key Stages 3 and 4, and is very good in the sixth form. Teachers' own very good knowledge, their excellent planning and the high expectations that they have of students, contribute to lessons in which a good atmosphere and brisk pace result in good learning.
- 23 Teaching in Key Stage 3 is good in all other subjects and is very good in French, German and information technology. In Key Stage 4 teaching is good in all other subjects and is very good in art, music and German. Sixth form, teaching is good in design and technology, French and physical education and is very good in the other reported subjects.
- 24 In art, teaching and the subsequent learning of students is good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Lessons begin well with a good use of questioning to reinforce previous learning. Good subject knowledge leads to enthusiastic, well-planned lessons which are challenging to students. In the very best teaching, students, led by skilful questioning, are engaged in orally evaluating their own and other's work. In design and technology, good teaching throughout leads to good learning in Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good learning in the sixth form.

- 25 Teaching in geography is good throughout all stages. Well-planned lessons clearly link what is to be covered to previous learning, and set appropriate learning outcomes. A good knowledge of students' prior understanding results in work that is well-matched to individuals' needs and this supports the learning of lower attaining students particularly well. The teaching provides many opportunities for students to consolidate their literacy and numeracy skills. The teaching results in good learning. In history, teaching is also good in Key Stages 3 and 4, and very good in the sixth form. Teachers' knowledge and understanding lead to well-planned lessons that use a variety of interesting and stimulating tasks. Effective questioning helps to reinforce and develop students' understanding. Tasks requiring extended written responses help develop students' literacy skills and promote analysis and critical awareness. This results in good learning.
- 26 Students' skills in using information and communication technology (ICT) are being developed by good teaching across the curriculum. The development of these skills is built into the teaching, and the skills are reinforced by use, in all subjects of the curriculum. Teachers, well-supported when needed, make good use of the computers available to support learning within the subject being taught, as well as enhance students' individual work. Teaching in French in Key Stage 3, and in German in all stages, is very good. Teaching in French in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form is good. In both languages, lessons are well-prepared and tasks are well-matched to students' needs. Lessons are carried out in the language being taught, move at a brisk pace and combine challenge with good reinforcement of previous learning. The independence which is encouraged, and the effective involvement of students in feedback and assessment, results in good or very good learning. German, being the new language, benefits from students' greater motivation.
- 27 In music, teaching is good in Key Stage 3 and very good in the other stages. Teachers' excellent personal knowledge and accomplished musical skills combine to provide imaginative and well-organised lessons. Brisk pace, a good range of teaching methods and much individual support ensures that all students made good progress. Teaching and learning in physical education is good throughout all stages. Thorough planning results in an effective mix of group and individual work. Students gain a secure knowledge of the subject through good questioning by their teachers. Standards of performance are developed through perceptive teacher observation and students' involvement in assessment and evaluation. In religious education, teaching and learning is good in Key Stages 3 and 4, and very good in the sixth form. Thoroughly prepared lessons, carefully prepared resources and a good communication of the teachers' wide personal knowledge, lead to good increases in students' knowledge and understanding. Very good use of questioning, particularly in the sixth form, extends students' thinking and develops their oral skills.
- 28 The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall for students withdrawn for additional support. Teachers and learning support assistants keep comprehensive records on students and use these effectively in their planning. Teachers manage students' learning and behaviour well through sensitive questioning, clear explanation, demonstration and instruction, which motivates them and helps them achieve success. For example, by testing their spelling ability in progressive, short tasks or by asking the student to explain the meaning of a word in the context of a story. Teachers and learning assistants are good role models and have very good relationships with special needs students. This assists in maintaining the calm, reflective, learning ethos within the study centre. The quality of support for students on the special needs register is good in the majority of lessons. However, the limited quantity of support available means there is insufficient, in some groups of lower attaining students with behavioural difficulties, to ensure that all students

make steady progress. Individual education plans are used effectively in teachers' planning and teachers use good strategies for improving literacy skills. For example, enlarged text is used for visually impaired students in most subjects, or effectively adapted work sheets to enable them to engage in writing up experiments in science.

- 29 Homework was raised as an issue by some parents, prior to the inspection, who felt it was too little, too much or that it was set irregularly. Observation during the course of the inspection showed that, although subjects varied in the use made of homework, overall, good use was made in each stage. The use being made of homework in the sixth form was a little better than in Key Stage 3. Students were observed making good use of the facilities and opportunities provided to undertake homework.
- 30 Since the previous inspection the school has devoted time and resources to developing teaching and the subsequent learning. This investment has been effective and has further improved the quality of teaching provided. The concern, raised in the previous report, that work was not sufficiently matched to students' needs, has been successfully addressed. Many examples were observed, across the curriculum, of teachers' knowledge of students' prior attainment resulting in well-matched work. This improvement is reflected in the continually rising standards.
- 31 Points for development:
- continue to work to bring all planning up to the standard of the best
 - review the allocation of learning support to assist in behavioural support so as to ensure consistent progress of lower attaining students.

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

- 32 The quality and range of learning opportunities offered in Key Stage 3 are good. In Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form they are very good. The full National Curriculum is offered in Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4, a core curriculum includes a good, wide-ranging integrated humanities course, and students choose from a broad range of options. This range, together with alternative forms of accreditation, provides for a wide range of needs and aspirations from strongly academic to practical and vocational. The sixth form opportunities include a wide range of A Level options, GNVQ courses, the Foreign Languages at Work scheme in three languages, GCSE Latin and re-sit opportunities in English and mathematics. Plans are well advanced for the introduction of Curriculum 2000 and have led to the consolidation and enhancement of links with the neighbouring college of further education.
- 33 Equality of access to the curriculum is good, particularly at Key Stage 4, through course options and alternative means of accreditation, and in the sixth form. The school is strongly committed to equal opportunities through its aims, its policy and its practical approach to equalities issues. In Key Stage 3, students studying German as a second language have insufficient time to cover the National Curriculum requirements for physical education and are not able to study drama. This weakness was identified in the last inspection. The school has confirmed plans to resolve the issue, in September 2000, by a curriculum re-organisation. For a small number of students, withdrawal for literacy support adversely affects their timetabled experience of art. Provision for students with special educational needs is good and meets the requirements of the Code of Practice. Students with statements, and those on the lower stages of the register, have access to a broad and balanced curriculum and all are well integrated in lessons.

- 34 Curriculum planning and organisation are at least satisfactory in all subjects. They are good in geography, modern foreign languages, physical and religious education, and very good in English, science, music, art and information technology. Setting is effectively employed in a number of subjects at Key Stages 3 and 4 and the overall level of planning to meet the full range of students' abilities is good. This has improved since the previous inspection. The school's strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are satisfactory, although there is a developing need to provide co-ordination across the school.
- 35 The curriculum meets statutory requirements in most respects. Religious education now meets the requirements of the Locally Agreed syllabus. This is an improvement since the last inspection. However, the school does not fully meet the requirement to teach the subject to all students in the sixth form. The curriculum, overall, cannot therefore be judged satisfactory, though its strengths far outnumber its weaknesses and there are many very good features.
- 36 Provision for extra-curricular activity is very good, with particular strengths in music, sport, art, languages, business studies, English, drama and science. Thirteen different musical ensembles perform to high standards and a number of students have achieved regional and even national representative honours in sports. Students visit France, Germany and Spain, and others undertake work experience placements abroad. Good study support is available in a number of subject areas and through the open access to the school's ICT facilities.
- 37 The weekly tutorial programme is very well organised and includes the required sex, health and drugs education. Personal relationships and the choices students have to make at the end of each educational stage are addressed. The programme is regularly monitored and evaluated for its effectiveness. Tutors are well prepared for delivery of the programme through training and development work. The quality of teaching and students' response to the programme were good, or very good, in all sessions observed during the inspection.
- 38 The careers education and guidance programme is very good across all key stages. The programme starts through tutorial sessions in Year 9 and includes two weeks' work experience in Year 10. Students are made aware of possible options post-16 from Year 10 onwards. There are good links with the Local Authority's careers service, which has validated and certificated the school's work.
- 39 Many links with the local community enrich the school's curriculum. These include local placements for the work experience programme, visits and residences from local artists, musical and educational links with the cathedral, the Green Light (world environmental) Trust, the local District Council and links with local businesses with a European languages perspective. Students have many opportunities to gain experience and insights into the adult world.
- 40 Links with other educational institutions are very good. There are particularly strong links with the adjacent further education college, liaison with feeder middle schools is good and there is much beneficial collaboration with all local schools. The well-established training partnership with a Cambridge college provides a forum for curriculum development and innovation, for example, work on improving the attainment of boys in modern languages. The school has all the attributes necessary to be an effective provider of initial teacher training.
- 41 The provision for spiritual development is satisfactory but it is not sufficiently promoted in all subject areas. Religious education provides opportunity to learn of the beliefs of others

and, for example, to consider the impact of Christianity upon art. Good displays of art in the school, including several examples by students, encourage reflection. The self-portraits of some students show that the students have attempted to see themselves from a different perspective. Music provides opportunities to encounter the varied styles of great music and become aware of the genius of composers. The school has an active Christian Union that meets once a week and is attended by a significant number of students who welcome the opportunity to discuss spiritual matters. The school does not meet the statutory requirement of a daily act of collective worship; this is the focus of a separate report. Year 9 students in an assembly, followed, in rapt attention, an enactment of racial scenes by Year 11 students. They were clearly moved by the dramatic portrayal of racial bigotry and the humiliation of the victims. Opportunities for reflection at registration times are limited.

- 42 The school provides a very good framework for students to learn how to conduct themselves. Staff lead by example, treat students with respect and value their opinions. The school has an established and well-understood system of rewards and sanctions. Within these rules, students develop an understanding of right and wrong which is reinforced through frequent consideration of moral issues within the curriculum. For example, in English the rights and wrongs of censorship were debated and the situations in Zimbabwe and Rwanda formed the context of teaching about persuasive writing. In Geography, the impact on the environment of the destruction of rainforests was considered. An active group of Amnesty Youth International considers moral questions in various countries, such as human rights in China. The group also take part in assemblies to explain current moral issues to other students. Assemblies are generally well-used as a means of encouraging consideration of topical moral issues.
- 43 Very good provision is made for the social development of students. In lessons, students frequently work together in groups where they develop a trust in each other and form good relationships. Students believe that in a mixed school boys and girls learn to respect one another. Through drama, students discover the necessity and pleasure of working together as they prepare for performances. Music and physical education also provide many opportunities for students to work co-operatively together. The year and school councils provide opportunities to show initiative and for debating and making decisions on issues that affect their fellow students. A variety of student-driven fund-raising efforts demonstrate student initiative and a committed response to local and world needs.
- 44 The provision made for the cultural development of students is very good. Music provides opportunities for students to appreciate their own and other cultural traditions. For example, students learn about 'blues' and 'reggae' and the associated social and racial values. The school has strong musical links with the cathedral; groups perform in each other's venue. Through study of different religions, students learn how others worship and what values they hold. The study of languages provides very good opportunities through visits, exchange visits and work experience abroad. Teachers themselves are excellent models in their enthusiasm for the language and its associated culture. Annually, an artist in residence, offering guidance to sixth form students, adds to their understanding of art.
- 45 Since the previous inspection the opportunities for moral, social and cultural development have improved, the requirement for religious education in Key Stage 4 has been met and curriculum planning now caters effectively for differing levels of students' ability.
- 46 Points for development:
- provide religious education for all students in the sixth form
 - raise the provision for spiritual development to the same level as other provision
 - resolve the impact on curriculum provision of the study of a second language

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

- 47 Overall provision is very good. The school has an effective discipline policy that stresses personal responsibility and contains a suitable range of rewards and sanctions to encourage good behaviour. These are well understood by the students and are consistently applied by the teachers. The school's procedures for the monitoring and promotion of discipline and good behaviour are very good and this makes a positive contribution to educational standards. Students come to lessons in a very positive frame of mind.
- 48 Teachers know individual students very well and an atmosphere of mutual trust prevails between students and between students and staff. The school council plays a very real role in certain aspects of school decision making. Year 12 students act as mentors as part of a very thorough induction procedure for students arriving from middle schools. These Year 12 students have been carefully selected and rigorously trained for this role, and their performance is regularly evaluated. Form tutors develop close, ongoing relationships with students and are very effectively involved in monitoring both academic performance and personal development. They work closely with subject teachers and heads of year. A very proactive approach by pastoral staff leads to early identification of students requiring extra support. There is a commitment to pupil support through time being made available to year heads and their deputies to maintain regular monitoring interviews with students. General and subject-specific targets are set and progress regularly reviewed through tutor and student interviews.
- 49 The behaviour policy in the school is effective and is closely linked to a home school agreement. A commendation system is well used by staff; praise is encouraged and is a feature of teaching throughout the school. Sanctions are well-known and used sparingly but very effectively, still with an emphasis on highlighting the positive whenever possible. An internal exclusion system is effective in reducing the need for formal exclusion. A very strong link with the Community Education Service has led to a pilot provision of an alternative curriculum for a minority of students for whom the traditional school curriculum is not appropriate. A student support centre, offering alternative curriculum provision, is being developed using grant aid. A policy on bullying is well-known by both staff and students and any incidents are dealt with immediately.
- 50 Attendance is closely monitored by form tutors and heads of year and students who have problems with regular attendance are well known by staff and receive very good support from both the school and the Education Welfare Officer. Overall, procedures for monitoring and the promotion of good attendance are very good, although attempts to dissuade parents from taking family holidays during term time have only been partially successful.
- 51 The school has an effective child protection policy and all staff have had appropriate training. Procedures and overall arrangements are good.
- 52 Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are very good and have helped the school to raise standards. The school policy on assessment clearly and usefully describes its purposes and identifies responsibilities. All departments have a written assessment statement. Assessments are carried out accurately in most subjects and, at the end of Key Stage 3, relate appropriately to the National Curriculum. Assessment procedures for students' ICT skills indicate when students have reached a specified level but do not distinguish individuals' capabilities beyond this. Assessment procedures in mathematics have an over-reliance upon end of module assessments. The intervening teacher assessments are inconsistent.

- 53 Students' progress is monitored within each faculty and across the curriculum. The target-setting pilot, which has just been completed for Year 11 students, was appreciated by them and felt to have had an impact on their learning. The evaluation of the scheme will form part of the next phase of the school's development. Monitoring of progress is a particular strength in the sixth form where the use of value added data adds support to the success of students, particularly weaker level candidates.
- 54 An excellent data bank is maintained by a member of the administrative staff whose ability to manage the system rapidly provides senior management with appropriate analyses. Individuals' progress is tracked from their earlier education through to post-16. Analyses support senior management in setting appropriate school targets, monitoring progress, and investigating issues such as variation of results with gender, and provide the basis for individual target setting, currently in Year 10 and 11. Professional development has made many more staff familiar with the range and interpretation of the data available. This is improvement since the last inspection and has enabled heads of faculty to put the information to good use in planning of subject developments.
- 55 Scrutiny of written work showed that some inconsistencies in marking remain, in particular in providing students with written comments to help them understand how to improve.
- 56 Students with special educational needs are identified early and good contacts with middle school staff ensure a smooth entry to the senior school. Visually impaired students have full access to classrooms and mobility training. Students with statements, and those who need additional literacy skills support for reading, spelling and comprehension, are withdrawn on a rotation basis from most subjects in Years 9. However, there are a few pupils who are withdrawn regularly from art, limiting their access to the art curriculum, particularly when they are often quite good at practical and creative work. Students' individual education plans are used effectively in teachers' planning and assessment. Targets are realistic and are reviewed regularly. However, progress is inconsistently monitored on daily basis. Students with statements are effectively monitored each term, and interim and annual review assessments meet statutory requirements.
- 57 Points for development:
- develop a more discerning assessment procedure for students' ICT skills
 - continue to seek greater consistency in the application of marking and assessment procedures
 - improve the consistency of day-to-day recording of progress for special needs students

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 58 The strength of the partnership with parents, noted at the last inspection, has been maintained and improved, and is very good. Parents hold the school in high esteem and, as shown by the many positive replies to the parents' questionnaire, are satisfied with the education that the school provides.
- 59 The quality of the information given to parents is very good. Very regular newsletters, covering a wide range of school events, student achievements and aspects of school life, are sent to parents. These are well-written in a friendly style and are very informative. When appropriate, letters commending individual students' particular achievements are sent to their parents. The school is equally quick to communicate with parents whose children cause concern. Where, for example, there is behaviour likely to lead to exclusion the parents are immediately invited into school to discuss the matter. Annual reports fully

comply with statutory requirements and give parents a good impression of how their children have progressed and developed over the year. They are well written and incorporate students' comments and targets for the following year. Consultation evenings allow parents to discuss their children's progress and targets with subject teachers. The programme of occasional evenings for parents, to discuss topics such as drugs awareness, are well attended.

- 60 Parent committees operate for each student year and this good involvement allows parents to give their views on any aspect of the school. The idea of school surgeries, planned to start in September, emerged from these meetings. The two parent governors who sit on the school council, give valuable support to council members as well as keeping themselves in touch with school events. Extensive consultation preceded the home-school agreement being finalised and signed by the majority of parents. The agreement clearly describes the responsibilities of school, parents and students.
- 61 Parental involvement in their children's work is very good and is effectively encouraged, by the school, through the use of the planners given to all students. This support is an important contribution to students' learning. From the parents' questionnaire and meeting it is evident that parents also take a keen interest in their children's homework. Parents' meetings at the school are very well attended. Parents also give valuable support to students who go on residential visits in this country and abroad.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 62 The leadership and management of the school are excellent. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school's development that is based on the over-arching aim to make the best possible provision for the welfare and development of students. The headteacher is assisted by very able deputies whose responsibilities are complementary and which reflect their individual strengths. The three are enabled in their management role by the capable support of three senior teachers and a business manager and, together, they form an effective senior management team. The very efficient line-management system and excellent communications ensure that the school's aims and principles are embedded in everyday practice and routines. Staff at all levels fulfil the responsibilities of their job descriptions in a dedicated and professional way. Heads of faculty have the major responsibility for students' academic development and they work in close liaison with heads of year, who have responsibility for students' welfare. The standard of management of individual departments is good and, in many cases, very good.
- 63 The school's development planning is excellent. The five-year strategic development plan incorporates short, medium and long-term issues. The primary focus of these is, in accordance with the school's aims, on activities that will lead to better outcomes for students. Issues are broken down into detail and appropriate details of costs, criteria for success and accountability are incorporated. Each department devises its own development plans to reflect the school's priorities. There is discussion at all levels to ensure that development is coherent across the whole school. All staff are therefore able to influence planning. As a result, there is a conspicuous sense of common purpose in the school and a shared commitment to improvement.
- 64 The headteacher and his deputies monitor teaching in the classroom. Heads of faculty also have time each week to monitor teaching. The excellent procedures ensure that all staff are observed teaching at least annually, or more often if needed. Monitoring may focus on specific aspects of teaching, such as the use of questioning. The process is constructive; there is written feedback, and targets are set for development. The style and

criteria for monitoring are chosen to suit the individual teachers' needs.

- 65 The governing body is very well informed and closely involved in the school's development. They appreciate and share the headteacher's philosophy and are aware of the high quality of management. The headteacher and the chair of governors maintain regular contact. Governors carefully scrutinise the school's results and are vigilant over standards. However, they monitor the developments in the classroom with a light touch, acknowledging the excellent systems the school has in place for this. The governing body plays a full part in the school's strategic planning, they discuss and approve the development planning and individual governors are assigned to follow the progress of specific items in the annual action plan. An appropriate committee structure reports to the termly full meeting of the governing body. Governors fulfil their statutory duties very well but have not ensured the provision of daily collective worship for all students and religious education for all sixth form students. Following the last report, the governors carefully considered the provision of daily collective worship and decided that the good assembly programme provided students with experiences which were comparable with those anticipated from more formal acts of worship.
- 66 Financial planning is excellent. The headteacher and business manager rigorously control expenditure and seek best value for all expenditure. All requests for in-service training are closely scrutinised and, for approval, must be relevant to current priorities for development. All specific grants are scrupulously spent on their designated purpose.
- 67 Administration is very efficient and enhanced by the widespread and very well-established use of information technology. All policies are up-to-date and appropriate, and the school's handbook, which is available on the school's intranet, provides staff with instant access to all necessary information on current practices and procedures.
- 68 The special educational needs department is led with considerable skill, expertise and sensitivity. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in addressing the issues that were raised. As a result, planning between subject teacher and learning support assistant has been strengthened and there is a greater consistency, across the curriculum, of work which is matched to students' needs.
- 69 Since the last inspection the number of teaching staff has risen in proportion to the increasing size of the school. The school has sufficient staff to meet its expanding needs and there is now sufficient subject expertise to cover the curriculum. There is a good balance between male and female teachers. The school benefits from its involvement with a Cambridge college in the initial training of up to six student teachers a year. An effective, two year induction course operates for newly qualified teachers. The two-thirds of the staff development fund, devolved to faculties to support the training needs of department development plans, is well used. The remaining third effectively supports whole school requirements and individual teachers' training needs. There are sufficient, well qualified, non-teaching staff to meet the range of needs of the school in its present size. These staff efficiently support teachers and students. Learning support assistant numbers have increased, effectively reducing the high cost of subject teachers used to support special needs students at the time of the last inspection. However, the present number of support hours is low in proportion to the number of pupils in the school and there are some areas of the curriculum where the use of learning support staff is limited. Students have experienced some staffing instability recently, in the mathematics department, as the school has sought to manage maternity leave as well as it could.
- 70 Since the last inspection, the good quality and number of resources and facilities have

been improved still further, as has their usage. In each subject, teachers have the resources they need to teach effectively and they use them well. The accommodation, although fragmented, is good, with sufficient specialist facilities such as workshops, laboratories and sports areas. The athletics track is a national resource from which the students benefit greatly. Sixth form areas for social activities and study are excellent and are used most effectively by the students. One of the two very large areas provided for sixth formers has been created most imaginatively, by roofing a courtyard. Accommodation is very good for music, art, business studies and modern foreign languages. Very high quality display in many areas of the school provides an interesting and pleasing working environment. Students appreciate the high quality of accommodation and look after it very well. The bench arrangements in some laboratories result in a number of students sitting with their backs to the teacher, which is unhelpful when work is being explained to whole classes.

- 71 The main school library is very well organised and resourced for the benefit of the students. It is open before and after school and provides students with opportunities to read a range of newspapers and good quality magazines. The stock of fiction and non-fiction books is substantial and added to each year. Videos and videoplayers, photocopied articles and other paper resources are available. Departments are involved in purchasing new books to ensure a good balance and to reflect needs in each subject area. All library resources are on a database which enables staff to identify trends, for example, that over 350 books are issued each week and that six books are taken out by girls for every four issued to boys. This database information is used most effectively by English department staff to promote the use of the library in Year 9.
- 72 ICT facilities are very good and excellent use is made of them throughout the school. Several areas, including business studies, design and technology, modern foreign languages, the sixth form area and the library, have their own mini-networks of computers, all with access to the Internet and the school's own intranet. Students have been using computers to access the Internet for several years and consider this resource just as accessible as the books in the library. The reliability of the computer system, the positive approach of staff, and students' clear understanding of the great value of ICT in their studies are all factors which result in this excellent usage.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 73 There are no key issues for the school to address. Governors and staff should continue to work together to maintain the current high standards of attainment and the high quality of the provision. They should continue to implement the school's strategic development plan and should consider including the following smaller points for improvement in their action planning:

Work towards greater consistency by raising everything to the standard of the highest (*para 12, 21, 41, 55, 56, 79, 80, 87, 96, 97, 104, 119, 124, 126, 152, 168, 170, 182*); seek to further improve progress in mathematics (*para 6, 22, 87-90*); raise standards in drama (*para 149-152*); try to improve the motivation of a small group in Year 9 (*para 21, 95, 126, 159, 178*); reduce the impact on other subjects of the introduction of a second language (*para 33, 100, 152*); develop, or continue to develop, whole school strategies to achieve greater uniformity in promoting literacy and numeracy, ensuring all students receive full coverage of ICT skills and that these are assessed in more detail (*para 11, 12, 34, 52, 78, 131, 132*); include religious education for all students in the sixth form (*para 35, 75*);

THE SIXTH FORM

- 74 The attainment of A Level students who completed their courses in 1999 was well above the national average. Students following vocational courses also gained results that were significantly in excess of national averages with all students completing their studies and gaining either merit or distinction grades. Results in many subjects were particularly impressive. In terms of A and B grades, results in biology, chemistry, general studies, geography and physics were significantly above national averages. A number of subjects, including biology, chemistry, communication studies, design and communication, English language, geography, music, physical education, politics, religious education and sociology all recorded 100 percent pass rates. Current Year 12 A Level and vocational students are also making good progress. A major factor contributing to the high levels of attainment is the quality of teaching. Sixth form teaching seen during the inspection was of a very good standard. All lessons were at least satisfactory, with very good, or excellent, teaching occurring in some 40 percent of cases. Attainment on post-16 courses is further enhanced by the quality of challenges consistently presented to students.
- 75 The curriculum is successfully enriched by a wide variety of extra-curricular activities. Students are offered ample opportunities to pursue their interests in art, drama, music and sport. The provision of general studies offers opportunities for students to widen their knowledge and the option of an additional A Level subject in Year 13. Social responsibility is enhanced in many ways. Sixth form students act as mentors in Year 9 tutor groups and are also involved in paired reading schemes. Students raise significant amounts of money for charity, can undertake additional work experience abroad, and support community ventures. The work of sixth form students at a local special needs school is especially appreciated by the staff, students and parents at the school. Cultural awareness is addressed in a number of ways, including attendance at an annual conference hosted by the Development Department at the University of East Anglia. At this year's conference, entitled 'The World in Pieces', students investigated such diverse topics as the relationship between dance and politics in Cuba and the life of political prisoners in Chile. Currently the school is not meeting its legal obligations for the provision of religious education for all students. In addition, opportunities for spiritual development are insufficiently planned.
- 76 Sixth form provision is very well managed and planned. A team of committed tutors, effectively led by an experienced and dedicated head of sixth form and her deputies, have established a clear set of objectives. A strong aspect of their work is the monitoring of students' academic performance. An analysis of last year's A Level results indicates that value is being added in the sixth form and that particularly good value is being recorded by students with a mediocre GCSE average points score. All sixth form courses are well-planned and most groups have a viable number of students. A series of conscious decisions have been taken regarding the composition of the post-16 curriculum, with emphasis being placed on a traditional academic provision supported by a narrower range of vocational options. Such careful planning has avoided duplicating courses offered by the adjacent further education college and has helped to ensure the financial efficiency of the school's post-16 programme.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	152
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	58

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4.6	27.0	50.7	15.8	2.0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y9 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	862	235
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	36	

Special educational needs	Y9 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	12	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	66	

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	28

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	5.5
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	146	153	299

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	85	114	111
	Girls	116	115	107
	Total	201	229	218
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (84)	77 (71)	73 (80)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	27 (64)	49 (51)	37 (53)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	109	97	116
	Girls	130	100	120
	Total	239	197	236
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	80 (80)	66 (66)	79 (79)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	43 (43)	34 (33)	38 (37)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	114	126	240

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	60	85	112
	Girls	85	121	122
	Total	145	206	234
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	62 (61)	96 (97)	97 (98)
	National	46.6 (44.6)	90.9 (89.8)	95.8 (95.2)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	45 (46)
	National	38.0 (36.8)

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

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	49	49	98

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	20.4	18.7	19.5 (16.5)	3.5	2.7	3.0 (4.1)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	11
	National	82.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	4
Black – other	4
Indian	5
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	6
White	1063
Any other minority ethnic group	11

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	19	
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y9 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	71.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y9 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	318

Deployment of teachers: Y9 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77
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Average teaching group size: Y9 – Y13

Key Stage 3	21.0
Key Stage 4	21.0

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	2878086
Total expenditure	2860422
Expenditure per pupil	2594
Balance brought forward from previous year	96405
Balance carried forward to next year	114069

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1097
Number of questionnaires returned	302

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	37	57	5	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	48	47	3	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	59	3	0	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	49	18	3	3
The teaching is good.	33	63	0	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	41	48	9	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	38	4	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	37	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	31	55	9	1	4
The school is well led and managed.	43	51	1	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	53	2	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	45	7	1	16

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

The clear satisfaction expressed by the responses to the questionnaire reinforce the very positive comments at the parents' meeting. A small number of parents added written comment to their questionnaire returns. Again, several of these were very positive. At the meeting, and in the questionnaire responses, some concern was expressed about homework. Some felt there was too much, others that there was too little, and still others that its setting tended to be in clusters rather than spread throughout the week.

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

ENGLISH

- 77 Results in the national tests in English at the end of Key Stage 3 fell dramatically in 1999 to be at the national average, and below that for similar schools. This contrasted with the previous three years, when results were well above the national average, and with the teacher assessments. Judged by other test scores, the previous accuracy of teacher assessments, and the quality of work seen from the same students who are now in year 10, the level of achievement is above national average. It has to be assumed that the 1999 English tests for the school were harshly marked. There has been a marked improvement in GCSE results since the last inspection. In English language and English literature in 1999, results were well above the national average. More pupils gained the highest grades, A*/A, in language than in literature. Results in the three 'A' level courses, each with good numbers of students, were at the national average in 1999.
- 78 Standards, as seen in lessons and from samples of work, are above average at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, and in the sixth form. The majority of students are confident speakers, able to express themselves clearly and at length and to summarise the views of others. The most able question ideas logically, hypothesise, and come to conclusions. The work of some younger students, of average attainment, is restricted by their mediocre listening skills. Most are good readers, able to understand fact, narrative and opinion, and many are able to infer meaning or interpret themes. Some more able readers choose insufficiently challenging texts for their private reading. Written work is of a high standard, and the process of taking notes, planning work, drafting and redrafting is well understood, as is the need to match the style of writing to the intended purpose. Frequent errors in spelling and punctuation inhibit the achievement of many students, and this contrasts with the accuracy of their vocabulary and their ability to structure writing. In GCSE assignments the work of too many students of average ability is neat, lengthy and diligent, but dull and predictable.
- 79 Teaching in English is good, being best in the sixth form and least consistent at Key Stage 3. All lessons observed were at least satisfactory, and the proportion of lessons which were good or better was much higher than in most schools. Teachers ally very good subject knowledge with careful planning for lessons so that the context of the lesson and its purpose are clear to students. Materials prepared by teachers are of a high quality. Group work is particularly well used, both to set materials and approaches appropriate for the various ability groups within classes, and to stimulate good social relationships. As a result, the challenge of mixed ability teaching is successfully met. Students learn well: they are aware of the ability range in the class and their current position in it, but they are sensitive to, and appreciative of, the personality and skills of others. In a Year 10 class looking at sequencing ideas, a group of boys had sufficient confidence in each other to think aloud to help the group. They came to good conclusions: "Yes, but 'also' means that the idea has to follow from the previous sentence and it doesn't." Regular homework is set, most students completing it conscientiously as it extends work from a past lesson or prepares for a future one. Many teachers helpfully correct some basic errors in written work and some give excellent written advice about how students could develop their work. In the case of a small minority of teachers, such comment is irregular and gives little specific advice on how to improve. Generally there is too little consistency in what students are expected to write in their workbooks, and the attention to accuracy of spelling and punctuation. Hence some average attaining GCSE students make only a limited effort; other higher attaining students

do not create the impression which their writing deserves because of the number of basic errors.

- 80 The faculty rightly stresses the importance of oral work as a thinking and learning discipline, but not enough thought has been given to how students can best learn and demonstrate speaking and listening skills, and too much inattention and background chatter are allowed in some lessons. Students with special needs make good progress because they feel valued, they are set suitable tasks which expect them to think and work, and there is good liaison between support assistants and teachers. The very ablest students are sometimes challenged by extra tasks, but this is too reliant on the awareness of the teacher, and could be more systematically planned for. In one very good example, an able year 10 group studying articles about genocide in Rwanda were asked to explain why a leader might have been killed by people of his own race and to link this in with the concept of 'extremists'.
- 81 Students' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory in Key Stage 3, good in Key Stage 4, and very good in the sixth form. Most are calm and sensible. They develop very good relationships with teachers and with each other. They accept the need to work in a variety of ways, respect teacher authority, and are co-operative, if a little unenthusiastic at times. They are responsible when working in groups and can take initiative. In contrast, on two occasions where a whole class discussion was taking place, behaviour was unsatisfactory. In a Year 9 class, students looking at the sonnet form were bored with the task and became lazy, casual and disinterested. The situation was not managed well and consequently some students did not produce the quality of work of which they were capable.
- 82 The faculty benefits from very good leadership and management, a testament to all those who have responsibilities within it. There is a strong sense of teamwork and a cheerful acceptance of the need to work hard. The head of faculty has prepared a clear and well articulated vision of the way forward, which is supported by a very good development plan and sensible, intelligent and accessible paperwork. There are effective systems for reviewing what happens, a regular programme of classroom observations, and a constant focus on how the quality of teaching and learning can be improved. A strength of the curriculum is at Key Stage 4, where most students are encouraged to take GCSE English literature in addition to English language, and an increasingly popular GCSE media studies course is offered within the options.
- 83 Since the last inspection, there has been good improvement in standards and the quality of teaching, teaching approaches to cater for students' varying abilities, and the usefulness of schemes of work. The faculty has the ability, self-awareness, and strategies to make further improvement.
- 84 Points for development:
- more consistent teaching to Year 9 groups, with a clearer understanding of what is expected from students in terms of attention levels and work rate when they are working as a whole class
 - standardisation of the use of the students' workbooks so that there is much less variation in the amounts of written work, the regularity of marking and written advice, and the levels of accuracy of spelling and punctuation expected
 - a greater focus on improving oral skills, by both teachers and students being more alert to the criteria for different levels of achievement

MATHEMATICS

- 85 Results in the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were well above national averages and above the average for similar schools. They have been rising in line with the national trend since 1996. Results in the 1999 GCSE examinations were a little above the national average but below those for students of similar prior attainment. Over the last three years, boys have outperformed girls. A Level examination results, overall, were in line with the national average. The proportion of students reaching the highest grades is improving but remains below the national average. Over the last three years the small number of girls have generally performed better than the boys.
- 86 Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are above the national expectation. Despite the efforts made by the department, discontinuity in teaching through staff absences during the year has affected students' attainment. At the end of Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form standards are also above national expectation. Students are successful in using graphical calculators and computers to aid their learning. For example, through an investigative approach, a lower Year 10 set gained understanding of the equation of a line. In contrast, students are not skilled in tackling written investigative tasks since their work often lacks a systematic approach and their reasoning and communication skills are not well-developed. Students' standards in algebra are often lower than in other areas of mathematics.
- 87 Achievement, overall, in all key stages is sound. In most lessons in Years 9 and 10 and post-16, students make at least satisfactory progress. In a Year 9 middle ability set, dealing with pie charts, progress was good as the teacher assessed students' learning at frequent intervals and moved them through the work at a suitably brisk pace. The need to re-assess and reinforce students' prior knowledge in Year 9 results in an emphasis on curricular content coverage at the expense of subject skills. However, students are given good opportunity to develop their own methods for solving problems. In general, students' mental recall skills are not sufficiently sharpened. An insistence on high standards of rigour, precision and presentation in students' written work is inconsistent resulting in many students' exercise books that do not support independent learning well. Regular marking and written feedback by teachers provides good guidance for low attaining students and some examination groups. Elsewhere, not enough attention is paid to students' written answers. Very able students are not always sufficiently stretched.
- 88 Students' attitudes to learning are good. Behaviour in lessons is good, any chatter is usually focused on work. Students listen, follow teachers' instructions and aim to meet teachers' expectations. They concentrate for reasonable periods of time. Frequently, students are trusted to mark their own exercises and relied upon to follow up their mistakes. Despite teachers' intervention, this technique is not sufficiently motivating for some students and they fail to recognise their own potential. Each student maintains a record of mathematical attainment and where students come to terms with taking responsibility for their own learning, these records prove useful.
- 89 The quality of teaching was good in half of the lessons seen, unsatisfactory in two lessons and satisfactory elsewhere. Teaching in the sixth form was good and in Key Stage 3 and 4 it was, overall, satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge, their explanations are usually clear, concise and pitched at the right level for their students. When planning lessons, they try to create stimulating ways for their students to learn. A good lesson in Year 12, requiring students to investigate centres of gravity in a practical way, captured their enthusiasm and interest. In Year 10, a timed activity which involved matching equations, tables of data, and pictures of curves, provided ideal challenge for average attaining students. In the weak teaching seen, planning was not sufficiently thorough

resulting in wasted lesson time and little learning. Teachers manage students well but most rely too heavily on written work in lessons. Thinking and visualisation skills are not sufficiently promoted to get the best out of younger students.

- 90 Assessment procedures and their usage are weakened by teachers' inadequate record keeping of students' day-to-day performance. The curriculum is well sequenced but with insufficient detail to ensure the best learning opportunities for students of all abilities. The range of strategies used to challenge and enthuse the most able students is narrow.
- 91 Improvements since the last report have been satisfactory. The department has taken action on most of the issues raised, extended the use of ICT in teaching and has begun to monitor teaching and learning.
- 92 Points for development:
- an urgent review of the departmental marking policy
 - to ensure greater consistency in the practices of the department
 - to extend the use of mental methods, oral work and teachers' questioning

SCIENCE

- 93 Results in the 1999 Key Stage 3 tests were well above the national average for all schools and for similar schools. This level of performance has been sustained for the last three years, boys and girls performing equally well. The trend over the last three years has been similar to the national trend. In 1999, the GCSE results were well above the national average for both boys and girls and well above the average for students with similar prior attainment. This level of performance has been maintained over the last three years. The progress that these students made in science is greater than the progress they made in the other subjects they studied. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Results at A Level were well above the national average in 1999. Results have been improving over the last three years.
- 94 Standards at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, and in the sixth form are well above national expectation and students' achievement is very good. In a second set in Year 9 developing their skills of investigation, students were thinking hard as they joined in the discussion about the investigation using a high level of technical vocabulary. They were surprised when the reaction they were investigating showed a drop in temperature. A visually impaired student was able to carry out the investigation due to modified resources and the help of a support teacher. In a third set in Year 10, a student working at foundation level explained how some particles in a hot liquid have enough energy to evaporate. He was keen to attempt higher level questions. The very high standards are the result of good teaching by subject specialists and an eagerness to succeed on the part of the students.
- 95 The great majority of students are interested in science, responding very well to the teaching they receive. In most lessons the attitude and behaviour of students is very good. Teachers use a variety of methods to refocus students who have gone off task. Students are very articulate on the whole. They respond very well to questions and set about their work in a business-like manner.
- 96 Teaching in science is good. In the sixth form it is very good. It leads to very good learning. The strengths of the teaching in the sixth form lie in the very good subject knowledge of teachers in all three science subjects. Teachers understand the requirements of the national curriculum and examination courses. Excellent planning is based on clearly laid out schemes of work. Very good collection and use of national and

school data allows teachers to track individual students. Good classroom management, where prompt starts to lessons with resources to hand, and the very high expectations that the teachers have, lead to an atmosphere conducive to learning. Students' high levels of literacy and a command of basic numeracy skills coupled with their desire to succeed helped them to maximise the good teaching they received. Throughout all key stages, lessons are constructed to develop scientific skills in students. Students are enabled, through the marking of investigations and examination questions, to develop the skills necessary for coursework and examination success. A few weaknesses occasionally slowed the pace of learning. These included too much input by the teacher, thus reducing the opportunity for students to take responsibility for their own learning, the negative attitudes of some students, and the length of the double period which challenged the concentration span of lower attaining students.

- 97 The department is very well led and managed at all levels. The monitoring of teaching and learning has been developed since the last inspection. Inconsistencies in marking of written work still exist but are being actively discussed within the department. Science makes a good contribution to the development of students' ICT skills. The availability of equipment to enable experimental demonstrations, such as data logging, to be viewed more easily by whole classes would improve the delivery further. Teachers use their resources well and are ably supported by an excellent team of technicians. The health and safety issues relating to fume cupboards have been resolved since the last inspection.
- 98 Points for development:
- continue to look for ways to make the marking of work more consistent and helpful to students
 - consider ways of managing the length of the double period for less able students
 - consider the balance between teacher input and student activity in order to increase the opportunity for students to take initiatives in lessons

ART

- 99 In 1999, teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 indicated standards which were in line with those reported nationally. In the GCSE examinations, results in art and design were well above the national average and those in the art and technology expressive arts course were significantly above the national average. Attainment in GCSE has increased rapidly since the last inspection when attainment was significantly below average. Results at A Level were in line with the national average. Numbers were small with the boys performing slightly better than the girls. A Level results have been more consistent although the proportion of students gaining passes at the highest grades is lower than at the last inspection.
- 100 Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with national expectations with more girls than boys showing the highest levels. Standards in ceramics and printing are above average. Achievement is good as students with a wide range of prior attainment make good gains in learning new techniques and acquiring an understanding of artists' methods. Students experiment with a wide range of materials and techniques. Most students transfer a design to a block using tools confidently, to produce a three-colour print. Most know about colour theory and mix paint and pastels with increasing understanding of the different media. Students draw from direct observation and select and enlarge areas of their studies to produce designs, showing an understanding of line, tone, pattern and texture. However, many average, lower attaining and students with special educational needs have limited drawing skills and critical and contextual studies are under-developed. The standards in the art course followed by students who take it instead of a second

foreign language are lower than that observed in other art groups. This is because both art components often follow each other on the timetable, over-stretching student motivation. The use of art vocabulary for many students is limited because oral evaluation does not always engage them in discussion.

- 101 At the end of Key Stage 4, standards are above national expectations. Achievement is good as most students show an increased awareness of the formal elements of art and make rapid progress in investigating and evaluating ideas systematically. Lower attaining students and those with special educational needs make good progress through effective teacher support, explanation and demonstration which helps them improve their planning. A well-structured approach to investigating and developing ideas in sketchbooks shows high levels of planning and research for the majority of students. They know how to apply the skills of batik, dyeing, colour and appliqué to construct a textile piece. The standard of exploitation of materials and presentation is high for the most able while the majority produce technically sound work in textiles. The majority of students are developing increasing knowledge of artists through good quality research into their painting, drawing and three-dimensional techniques and the majority use cultural references with increasing understanding to extend their own ideas. Students use art technical language well.
- 102 In the sixth form standards are in line with national expectations for the course. Achievement is good as progress is supported through individual assessment tutorials. The standard of sophisticated thinking is high for the most able when describing the personal qualities in each others' work and in their oral contributions in class, where the majority of students are developing sound analytical skills through the study of artists. Year 13 personal studies work observed shows outstanding attainment for higher attaining students where the use of information communication technology makes an impressive contribution to presentation overall. Numbers choosing the subject have increased dramatically and students are on course to achieve in the higher grades through a well structured approach to coursework which is raising the standard of experimentation overall.
- 103 Students respond well to the positive climate for learning. Most enjoy art, expect to work hard and concentrate on learning and improving their skills and understanding. Students at all key stages are independent, keen to learn and show confidence in working creatively and independently. Behaviour is very good. Most share views in class and in one-to-one discussions when prompted by the teacher, for example, in a Year 12 lesson where very good levels of students' questioning raised the assessment expectations of the group. However, many students in Years 9 and 10 are reticent in contributing to whole-class discussion during evaluation sessions and this has an adverse impact on the quality and use of art vocabulary to extend the most able and talented students.
- 104 The quality of teaching and learning overall is good, characterised by enthusiasm and good subject knowledge. In Key Stage 3 it is good and in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form it is very good. Teachers have very good expertise and plan and prepare thoroughly. They have high expectations for students' learning and are skilled in preparing them for examinations, which contributes to significantly above average GCSE results. Most teachers use effective questioning at the beginning of lessons to reinforce past work and get the lesson off to a good start, though this is inconsistent in a few Year 9 lessons. Where teaching is excellent, the teacher demonstrates and explains tasks and skills effectively and engages students orally in evaluating their own and others' work through skilful questioning. Where teaching is less inspiring, students are not sufficiently engaged at the beginning of the lesson, which results in a lack of challenge in the range of materials used. This impacts unfavourably on the development of their knowledge and understanding of historical and critical studies.

105 The art curriculum is broad and well balanced with excellent provision for after school clubs, visits and artists-in residence visits to the school, all of which have a positive impact on students' learning and attainment. The subject makes an excellent contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through its reflective teaching and assessment strategies. It is very well led. Very good progress has been made in addressing the issues raised at the last inspection, particularly in raising standards at GCSE. There is capacity to make future improvements in the attainment of A-level students.

106 Points for development:

- raise attainment in the higher grades at A-level
- improve the quality of students' oral skills and use of art vocabulary, in Year 9, through more consistent questioning, demonstration of techniques and involvement of students in evaluation of their work
- develop research skills consistently across Year 9 for average and lower attaining students in critical and contextual studies

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

107 In 1999, teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 indicated standards in line with those reported nationally. Results in the GCSE examinations were well above the national average, a trend which has been maintained over several years. At A Level, results are in line with the national average. The results of students following the motor vehicle engineering course were high.

108 Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are above national expectation and achievement is good. Students with special educational needs integrate well and achieve good standards, especially in the practical parts of the department's work. Designing and making are effectively integrated. For example, in work on 'packaging an egg', students generated some novel designs. Designs were subject to critical analysis to choose the best solution. Students were adept at drawing out their model and most careful when it came to cutting out and modelling their chosen solution.

109 Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are well above national expectation and achievement is very good in the wide range of course options offered. In a project on children's playgrounds, students had carried out their research well and collected valuable information on the location and use made of local playgrounds. Designs they produced paid due regard to health and safety aspects, and the models of their chosen solution were of a very high standard of finish and accuracy. There is little difference between the achievement of boys and girls and a good proportion of girls are in the graphics and product design subjects and boys in home economics classes. Students with special educational needs achieve well with additional help in reading. Many students enhance and extend their work through use of school and home computers.

110 The achievement of students in the sixth form is good, especially by students studying graphics who have not used technical drawing equipment much before. Work in a Year 13 class required high levels of drawing skills and the use of orthographic and isometric projection to produce drawings for the easy manufacture of a kettle which would pour properly. The achievement of students in the motor vehicle course is very good. Very high standards of practical work were evident in a wheeled literacy cupboard for a primary school. Good use is made of ICT to research on the Internet and enhance project folders using word processing and graphics. Students' ICT skills are reinforced through this use

and the projects are often supported through computer aided design and the use of computer controlled machines.

- 111 Teaching is good in all stages. Teachers' planning is a strength, for example in a Year 10 lesson, where students were designing an estate agent's board. Model boards were made available as a focus for students' designs and to assist in understanding how the board and post might be joined.
- 112 Students' attitudes to learning and their behaviour was particularly good. Students in Key Stage 3 listen carefully, concentrate hard and produce work in quantity and quality. Students in Key Stage 4 have very positive attitudes. They show a lot of interest in their work and their project folders showed that they take pride in what they produce. In the sixth form students are most mature in their attitude and, as a result, lessons proceed at a good pace and relationships between students and teachers are very good.
- 113 The accommodation and resources available make a major contribution to the good work of the faculty. The health and safety issues, relating to a room used for food technology, reported from the previous inspection have been addressed. Although there have not been sufficient resources to upgrade this room to the standard of the second food technology room, there have been annual improvements in the learning resources, storage and services. The faculty is well led. The team of motivated and skilled teachers receive good technical support, although the time allowed is minimal. Students following the child development option are taught in three single lessons which inhibits visits and the contributions of outside speakers.
- 114 Improvement since the last inspection has been good. New schemes of work have been written, professional development has increased teachers' competence in more technology areas, the use of ICT skills has been increased and a greater consistency in implementing the assessment scheme has been achieved.
- 115 Points for development:
- continue the rolling programme to upgrade the second home economics room

GEOGRAPHY

- 116 Teacher assessment at the end of Key stage 3, in 1999, indicated standards which were a little higher than those reported nationally. Results in GCSE were well above the national average and were a significant improvement on the previous year. There has been a generally improving trend over recent years. Results at A Level were above the national average and again there has been a rising trend
- 117 Standards in lessons and work are above national expectations at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, and in the sixth form. Students in Year 9 present their knowledge, of a range of places and geographical themes, using maps, graphs, charts and diagrams. They analyse data such as comparative population figures for world cities. Most students have an understanding of geographical relationships, such as that between the climate of Singapore and its geographical location, and of the advantages and disadvantages of nuclear power. Students in some classes have a good understanding of factors leading to changes in lifestyle in Japan. The levels of knowledge of most students in Year 10 are good although the understanding of some, for example the link between factors in a case study of the River Tees and general principles of hydrology, is limited. Sixth formers know well the significant factors causing such processes as soil degradation and can analyse photographic and written evidence about these. They demonstrate high levels of

understanding and the ability to engage in informed discussion, for example when working on case studies of demographic patterns in less economically developed countries.

- 118 The attitudes of students are good in geography lessons. They are generally well behaved, although for some students, this is in response to a high level of supervision and control by teachers, rather than being internally motivated. Students work willingly, although sometimes rather passively and with limited enthusiasm.
- 119 The overall quality of teaching is good in all stages. Most teachers are experienced and well qualified and those whose first subject is not geography are well supported by the department. This is an important factor in enabling them to teach the subject well. In most lessons, teachers have a good awareness of the needs of individuals within their classes and provide well for these. This supports the achievements of lower attaining students particularly well. Lessons are well planned, so that there is usually good integration of the way in which students develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. Many lessons support the development of an appropriate investigative approach. Tasks are explained well and there is good linking with preceding and following work, so that students have a clear idea of the purposes, requirements and time limits to which they are working. This promotes a good pace of work in most classes. Questioning is good, often succeeding in promoting concentration and interest. Many opportunities are provided for students to develop and practise their literacy and numeracy skills and there is good focus on developing and practising a geographical vocabulary. The subject makes a significant contribution to the Key Stage 4 humanities course and when geography is the focus for lessons in this, teaching successfully promotes an appropriately integrated approach, while still maintaining a clear subject identity. In some lessons, the challenge for higher attaining students is insufficient, with inappropriate tasks provided, so that motivation, work-rate and achievement levels are lower than they should be. Students learn well how to interpret statistics about such themes as weather. Occasionally the teaching does not support them sufficiently in using these to develop an awareness of the characteristics of the places to which they relate. This inhibits their understanding. On occasions, teachers dominate the feedback sessions following investigations to the extent that students are denied the opportunity to present and discuss their own findings.
- 120 The subject continues to be well organised and managed. A well-balanced curriculum of good quality has been developed, which provides good fieldwork opportunities in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. There has been significant improvement in standards in GCSE. Assessment in Key Stage 3 is now against National Curriculum criteria. Very good feedback to students on their assignments clearly indicates the National Curriculum Levels achieved, with detailed and supportive written comments providing clear identification of necessary improvements. However, students need further help in learning how to use it to have maximum impact in supporting improvement and achievement. Long term planning for Key Stage 4 supports teachers in achieving consistency in their lesson planning. There has been a good development of strategies to match work to meet the needs of lower attaining students, and of study guides to support achievement at all levels in Key Stage 4.
- 121 Points for development:
- greater consistency in the challenge provided for higher attaining pupils
 - greater consistency in opportunities for students to present and discuss their findings from investigations
 - strengthening Year 9 students' understanding of the detail of the assessment feedback they receive

HISTORY

- 122 In 1999, teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 indicated standards in line with those reported nationally. Results in GCSE examinations were broadly in line with national averages for grades A*-C and, at 100%, were above the national average for grades A*-G. Over the last three years results have been a little above the national average. At A Level, results were below the national average. Boys have consistently performed better than the girls at this stage.
- 123 Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with national expectations and achievement is good. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4, and in the sixth form, are above national expectation. Achievement is good in Key Stage 4 and is very good in the sixth form. At all levels students are developing their understanding of historical events and are learning that interpretations of events can vary significantly according to the source. This was especially apparent in Year 9 lessons where students were encouraged to reflect on whether the evacuation of Dunkirk was a triumph or disaster. By examining and discussing source material, students were able to see how interpretations varied. Higher attaining students could give balanced answers reflecting the views of both German and allied commentators. A level students were similarly adept at offering explanations of historical events citing several possible causes. Higher performing students, especially in Year 13, were able to offer detailed analytical answers that showed how bias and perspective can alter views.
- 124 Teaching, overall, is good. In the sixth form it is very good. The quality of teaching is making a significant contribution to the students' learning. Staff are knowledgeable, they plan well, students are managed well and, in lessons, a variety of interesting, and often stimulating, strategies are used. The effective use of questioning in lessons helps to reinforce knowledge and understanding and also helps students to develop their knowledge further. The range of challenges set, enables students to formulate their own ideas and to use their skills to analyse events in a critical way. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on The Battle of Britain, students were asked to consider the impact of the German bombing campaign. Many could identify the problems for civilians and key industries. Some higher attaining students linked the outcomes to the morale of British troops, fighting overseas but hearing reports of civilian casualties at home. In a Year 13 lesson, some students offered varied and detailed motivations for the increase in naval explorations from the Iberian Peninsula in the 15th and 16th centuries. The quality of the reasoning offered was impressive, as was the acknowledgement that many factors were working in association. High attaining students were able to explain a number of these influences. Students' understanding of historical events is further enhanced by the frequent use of extended writing tasks at all levels. Such a strategy helps the development of literacy skills, as well as promoting analysis and critical awareness. The effectiveness of such tasks could, however, be further enhanced if there were greater consistency in the quality of marking offered, especially in Key Stages 3 and 4. Overall, the quality of teaching in history is making a significant contribution to learning.
- 125 In the majority of lessons students behaved well, were attentive and showed positive attitudes towards their own learning. Many students clearly enjoyed their history lessons and participated well and enthusiastically in class discussion. A pleasing feature of the students' attitude was their willingness to work independently, or sensibly in groups. Such good behaviour was evident in each key stage.
- 126 The subject is well managed and the teachers form an effective team. Attempts have been made to enliven the subject matter. For example, Year 12 students undertake a residential field visit to Ironbridge. Students are beginning to access the Internet to aid their research

and some use is made of CD ROMS. Most lessons are taught in well-equipped specialist rooms, though occasionally some teaching is undertaken in non-specialist accommodation, creating problems when source material and reference to maps is required. In some instances, especially where the special educational needs students exhibited behavioural problems, the absence of classroom support detracted from the quality of learning for all students.

127 Points for development:

- further develop the use of ICT in the teaching

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

128 Teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 3, in 1999, indicated standards which were above those reported nationally. The school does not enter candidates for GCSE or A Level examination.

129 The school integrates its information technology curriculum fully into the subject curriculum and when students are working in this context, their standards are above national expectations at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. Insufficient evidence was available during the inspection to provide a basis for judging standards in the sixth form. In Year 9, students know about the main applications available to them and are able to use them to support work in subjects. Word processors are used well to enhance presentation of work, in biology for example, where an assignment on the digestive system incorporated well-formatted text with ClipArt pictures and graphics imported from a CD Rom. Students in Year 10 are able to use specialist software in music lessons to compose and sequence and can design and make printed circuit boards, using programmable machines, in design and technology. Many students use the Internet well, including some who were individually researching to support their revision for examinations. The use of email is well established.

130 Attitudes of students are very good. They are highly motivated by opportunities to use computers and behaviour is invariably very good. Students support and assist each other, share ideas and take good advantage of opportunities to work independently. Productivity and pace of working are consistently high.

131 The quality of teaching is very good in Key Stage 3, and some teaching in Key Stage 4 is excellent. It was not possible to see any teaching in the sixth form. Although not generally specialists in ICT, teachers prepare themselves well, so that they are able to use the computers effectively. The ICT manager is generally on hand to provide high quality support when required, which has a significant impact on the confidence of non-specialist colleagues. There is a good balance between active teaching of classes and facilitation of individual work. Teachers give clear guidance and instruction and are able competently to provide hints on useful techniques. They exercise high expectations by reinforcing and requiring good practice. The quality of teaching ensures that computers enhance learning in the host subject and that the subject provides an effective context for the development of ICT capability. One lesson in Key Stage 4 was an outstanding example of good practice in integrating ICT into the subject curriculum. The Year 10 lower set mathematics group were highly motivated and significantly raised the quality of their work in the subject. The teacher stimulated a high level of independent investigation and discussion of the effects of changing the components of graphs. The only weakness is in the level of detailed awareness that teachers have of the National Curriculum levels. This means that they are not equipped to accurately assess the standards that students achieve, or to ensure that opportunities are provided for those capable of reaching the highest levels to do so. This also means that students' own self knowledge of their learning and progress is inadequate.

They are insufficiently aware of how they might improve.

132 The leadership and management of information and communication technology are very good, being highly enthusiastic, energetic, innovative and founded in a clear vision of how its role should develop in the school. This is well supported at a senior level by the determination that the ICT manager has no timetabled teaching commitment, so as to be able to focus fully on developing resources and curricular opportunities and supporting colleagues. Resource management is excellent, with a thoughtful focus on developing resources to be widely available, easily accessible, up-to-date, relevant to the needs of individual departments and useful. This has enabled a wide range of departments to make a significant contribution to information and communication technology capability and to benefit from the power of computers to enhance learning. The school is developing an intranet that is already having a significant impact throughout the curriculum, with many departments actively involved. Computers are used well to support literacy, for example by providing opportunities for students to enter work into writing-frame structures or through the collaborative development, by English and history teachers, of a historical investigation of the Tollund Man bog body. Numeracy is supported through computer use in a large number of mathematics lessons and the use of spreadsheets in several subjects. However, while there is an effective cross-curricular working group, there is no map of overall coverage to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and no identified individual to oversee this. While there is no evidence that the school fails to meet the statutory requirement for information technology, neither, in Key Stage 4, is there certainty that these are guaranteed for all and not dependent upon students' option choices.

133 Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good, because, while limited need for improvement was identified then, the significant strengths have been maintained and further developed. The good range of curricular opportunities has been well supported by extension, renewal and upgrading of computer resources.

134 Points for development:

- identify a key member of staff who will map coverage and identify and address any gaps in current coverage
- improve assessment to ensure it accurately identifies information and communication technology capability
- develop the awareness of teachers so that they are better equipped to provide opportunities for students to reach the levels of which they are capable

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

135 Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, as indicated by teacher assessment, were well above the average reported nationally. GCSE results were in line with the national average for all schools. However, this is not a particularly valid comparison as the school enters nearly all students in the year group whereas, nationally it is only in the region of 60 per cent of the year group. The number of students taking GCE A and AS levels was too small for valid statistical comparison but was below the standard achieved in previous years. The school's grade predictions and the evidence of work seen suggest overall improvement this year.

136 Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are above national expectation. **Students'** listening, speaking and reading skills are well developed and they are capable of very good written work, often reaching National Curriculum Level 6. Particularly good work with computers

was seen in one class: students showed high levels of competence on tasks in which their listening, reading and writing skills were effectively used in combination. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards are above national expectation with good results already having been achieved in Year 10 in the modular GCSE examination. The achievement of students in lower ability groups is very good in relation to their ability and prior attainment. Some of the least able could successfully perform a role-play arranging a social engagement. Standards in the sixth form are above average expectation for the course. Year 13 students show well-developed listening skills, identifying detail in challenging extracts of spoken French, and Year 12 students show the ability to debate issues.

137 Teaching is good in all stages. Teachers conduct lessons in French at a good pace and have very good rapport with students of all levels of ability. Lessons combine challenge and good consolidation of learning, using well-chosen resources. Students are encouraged to work independently and are actively involved in feedback and assessment.

German

138 GCSE results in 1999 were well above the national average for all schools. A level results were lower than in recent years, with only three of five candidates attaining pass grades. The school's predictions for GCSE results in 2000 point to even higher standards, with significant improvement in A level results. This was confirmed by evidence of work seen during the inspection.

139 Students begin German as their second foreign language in Year 9. The standards they reach are above national expectation and their achievement in their first year is good. They make rapid gains in knowledge, understanding and skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are well above national expectation, notably in listening and speaking. For example, students are able to work independently in groups, discussing and debating social arrangements. Results of the first module of the GCSE examination attained by students in the top Year 10 set were outstanding. In the sixth form, the standards of students observed were in line with course expectation. Written and taped evidence of the whole group, however, showed standards above the national expectation. This was notably so in researched coursework and in extended speaking, comparing and contrasting English and German cultures and education systems.

140 Teaching is very good at all key stages. The approach is intensive, with German as the teaching medium. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and are very well planned and resourced. Teachers have the capacity to engage and motivate all students, promoting very good learning and rapid progress with successful outcomes. The German assistant is used very effectively as a source of support and enrichment.

Languages

141 The quality of teaching is consistently high across the faculty. Lessons are planned with the individual needs of students in mind. Learning objectives are routinely shared and outcomes are reviewed with students and carefully monitored through marking and the assessment system.

142 Students' response and attitudes to language study are very good overall. Year 9 students are enthusiastic and responsive and show a very good capacity for independent work - for example in their use of information technology. Year 10 students show willingness to learn at all levels of ability: they make sustained efforts and express themselves effectively in

speech and writing in the target language. Sixth form students have a mature and committed attitude and take full advantage of the range of experiences on offer.

143 Management of the faculty is very good. There is effective delegation of responsibility, very good monitoring of standards of teaching and learning and well-focused development planning. A culture of co-operation has been established and the faculty operates as a cohesive team. The languages curriculum is broad, particularly at sixth form level, with a balance of academic and vocational courses. Schemes of work are under revision. Those at Key Stages 3 and 4 would benefit from closer cross-referencing to National Curriculum Programmes of Study.

144 There has been good improvement in the faculty since the last inspection, notably in the matching of planning to cater for all students' abilities, in the improvement of students' extended speech and writing, in links with middle schools and in National Curriculum assessment.

145 This is a successful faculty which has the capacity to maintain its standards and to improve further.

146 Points for development:

- to revise schemes of work to incorporate National Curriculum Programmes of Study
- to improve recruitment into language courses in the sixth form

PERFORMING ARTS

147 Drama has recently been moved into this faculty so that the recognised weaknesses may be addressed. The move has improved the emphasis on creativity and performance, but has resulted in a weakening of the valuable links to English in terms of speaking and listening skills and their assessment, and the teaching of Shakespeare. It has led to the teaching of drama, this year, taking place in the performing arts centre and has been one of the influences leading to the determination to modify the Year 9 curriculum, in September 2000, so that all students have an equal chance of studying the subject.

Drama

148 Drama is taught to most Year 9 students, it is a GCSE option, and forms a part of the GNVQ performing arts course in the sixth form. At GCSE all candidates have gained a pass in the last three years, but the proportion gaining a pass at grades A*-C has declined to a low 32%. This is less than half the national average, and for the past two years many students have underachieved in the subject. The recent decline in numbers opting for the course has been reversed, and the present Year 11 group are predicted to reach the national average in terms of A*-C passes.

149 Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are well below national expectation, and below expectation at the end of the present Year 10. A Year 9 class studying mime, and how to give dialogue significance, worked willingly, but showed little ability to create original ideas or to plan how best to create the desired effect on the audience. Whilst very co-operative, less than half were able to sustain concentration for more than a few minutes when working in groups, and few had any idea of the value of learning from watching others perform. This lack of ability to appreciate and evaluate performance continues into Key Stage 4, and is increased by the lack of confidence which many students show when asked to take part in large group discussion. This was not the case when actors from the local Theatre Royal ran a workshop for a Year 10 class which involved students 'hot seating' the actors, who

kept in role.

150 The teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory. Teachers know their subject, manage classes well in practical work, and make good and sensitive use of group work. There is, however, too great a focus on performance and self-expression, and too little emphasis on students' knowledge and understanding of techniques, skills and conventions. As a result many students present predictable ideas and quickly resort to stereotyped characters. Few Year 9 students realise that they should be quiet and attentive as audience. Many do not understand the need to think about what they have done or seen, or to analyse where and how improvement is possible. Some teaching is dull and does little to enthuse students, and team teaching is used too unquestioningly.

151 Students have a positive but rather casual attitude to drama. Their best work is done in groups where they can relate what they are doing to their own experience, or to building drama skills. They can show considerable interest and concentration, but in most classes there are too many moments of inattention or off-task chatter. When well taught, students are appreciative and become more involved.

152 There is satisfactory leadership and management of the subject. Schemes of work are in place, although that for Year 9 lacks cohesion. An assessment scheme is well used. Examination statistics are analysed but insufficient action is taken to modify teaching as a result. Drama teachers struggle to manage the poor curriculum structure provided for Year 9. Students come with vastly differing drama experiences from middle school and they have to be taught in ten week blocks, with gaps, which makes the development of skills difficult. More able students who take a second foreign language cannot have drama lessons. This gives unfortunate messages about the status of drama, and deprives significant numbers of students of what could be a valuable academic discipline. There are good opportunities for students to become involved in extracurricular activities. Groups have performed locally and regionally and work, such as a play to warn old people about the dangers of trusting callers, is much valued in the local community. During the inspection, students gave an excellent assembly presentation on the theme of racism, which had a profound effect on its audience. Accommodation is now excellent, providing a range of well equipped areas for drama work.

153 There has been no improvement in drama since the last inspection although there has been a major improvement in accommodation. There is the potential for improvement. The school is aware of this and has planned a strategy to raise standards, including more monitoring of teaching.

154 Points for development:

- increase the rigour of departmental organisation so that it becomes more self-critical
- give more emphasis in Year 9 teaching to the basic skills, techniques and conventions of drama
- raise standards at GCSE
- use more opportunities for students in Years 9-11 to prepare, and evaluate the effectiveness of, group presentations to the school community

Music

155 Teacher assessment, at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, indicated standards that were above those reported nationally. Music is a popular subject in Key Stage 4 and results at GCSE were well above the national average. These results maintain the existing trend. Numbers taking A Level are too small for comparisons with national figures to be of great

significance. However, results are very good. In the last three years, all 16 students have been successful, with 12 achieving A to C grades.

156 Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are above national expectation in performing and composing. They are below in students' musical knowledge and the range of music appraised. In the course of the year, they gain a thorough grounding in the elements of music prescribed in the National Curriculum. All students make good progress, including those with special educational needs. Some higher attaining students make very good progress. Their good understanding of elementary chord structures was evident in their performances on keyboards and tuned percussion. Students can improvise with varying degrees of fluency, for example, on xylophones, and in Reggae style. They have the good listening skills required for proficient ensemble performance. They can analyse the style, structure and technical content, for example of a Blues song, and they are aware of the social and historical context from which the music grew. Students have composed using vocal sounds and are familiar with the principles of composing programme music through a topic based on 'Macbeth'.

157 Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are well above national expectation and achievement is very good. Students have a good knowledge of musical devices, such as sequence and ostinato. In group composing, based on pentatonic folk songs, they experimented confidently, using the high levels of instrumental and vocal skill which most of them possess, and create variations showing imagination and flair. Their knowledge of technical terms is very good and the stylistic and technical characteristics of music they hear is analysed accurately.

158 Standards in the sixth form are well above national expectation and reflects the ability of individuals in the group. Students analyse representative pieces from the classical era and compare and contrast these with baroque pieces. They have a very good command of musical vocabulary and a good knowledge of many examples of music. They are articulate and readily share ideas about the music they discuss. Their knowledge of form and harmony in connection with the analysis of a movement from a piano sonata by Mozart was very good. They are skilled at stylistic analysis. Academic studies are supplemented and supported by participation in a wide range of extra-curricular choral and instrumental activities. Achievement in the sixth form is very good.

159 Students' attitudes to music are good, overall, in Year 9. Many respond very enthusiastically to the lively teaching, but a few do not have enough personal motivation to match the required pace of work. In one lesson observed, some students found it hard to work productively on their own. Music is an important part of the creative and recreational lives of those taking GCSE and A Level. Their commitment is exemplary. They are keen to attain high standards and they work efficiently. They collaborate with each other maturely and productively.

160 Teaching is good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Occasionally, it is excellent. Teachers communicate their enthusiasm well to students. They have excellent academic knowledge and accomplished musical skills that they use effectively in class. They impose high expectations on students. Lessons are imaginative and well organised, with carefully chosen topics calculated to appeal to students and to increase their skills and knowledge appropriately. Lessons are taught at a very good pace and tight deadlines are set to stimulate students' productivity. A good range of teaching methods is used, and teachers give much individual support so that all students can make good progress. There is a good mixture of individual and group work. The good range of instrumental resources and all worksheets are of a high standard, which further enhances

students' progress. Teachers use praise regularly to stimulate and reward good work. In an excellent lesson in Year 10, the teacher used the theme music from 'The Simpsons' to further the students' abilities in analysing different styles of music. The lesson was very carefully prepared, enabling them to learn to identify technical features in the music and understand how musical parodies can be recognised and composed. Students' progress in this lesson was excellent. They made significant gains in understanding and advanced their analytical skills significantly. They worked very efficiently and with conspicuous enjoyment.

- 161 The leadership of the department is outstanding in its commitment, dynamism and vision. The organisation of the department is exemplary. Day-to-day organisation is excellent, all painstakingly carried out. The handbook is a model of clarity and a comprehensive and useful working document. Schemes of work are excellent, assessment is well schematised for all levels, with criteria clearly explained. Plans for the development of the subject to increase the use of computers are excellent.
- 162 Fifteen instrumental and choral ensembles provide students with excellent opportunities for social and cultural development. The overall quality of direction of these is very good and sometimes outstanding. Rehearsals are very efficient. One hundred students receive instrumental tuition of a very high standard from visiting instrumental staff, who also contribute significantly to directing school ensembles. The ensembles give a demanding programme of performances through the year in school and in the community. These are a source of prestige and pride to the school and parents readily acknowledge their excellence.
- 163 As at the time of the previous inspection, music is a strength of the school. In the meantime, accommodation has been improved and is now very good. Health and safety issues connected with the previous accommodation no longer apply.
- 164 Point for development:
- seek ways of more productively channelling the energies of the few students in Year 9 who are inadequately motivated

Physical Education

- 165 Teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, indicates that standards were in line with those reported nationally. Results in the GCSE examination were below average, although results over the last three years have been above the national average. A Level results were above the national average.
- 166 Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with national expectation and achievement is good. The majority of students apply the techniques, skills and competition rules to several aspects of the physical education curriculum, including athletics, cricket and tennis. Basic skills are sound and provide a platform for future development. In athletics, average ability has been successfully converted into expertise in many field events including shot and javelin. Students are encouraged to develop, not only skills, but also a good understanding of the techniques and rules. Good progress was made, for example, in a Year 9 athletics lesson where students consolidated basic javelin throwing skills taught in a previous lesson and then developed these skills through refining aspects of the approach to the throw and developing a more technically correct arm action.
- 167 At the end of Key Stage 4, standards are in line with national expectation and achievement is good. Basic fielding skills have been refined and tactical awareness is apparent in most

students. A developing ability to plan and evaluate is apparent in several activities at both key stages. The role of exercise in establishing and maintaining health is emphasised in most lessons through a good range of warm up routines, and through lessons specifically dedicated to health, exercise and fitness. All students are developing a good understanding of the skills necessary to enable them to devise and evaluate an appropriate exercise programme for a healthy lifestyle. Students demonstrate confidence in all aspects of physical education taught and are learning to plan their work and to observe and evaluate what they and others achieve. Progress in lessons is also usually good and is achieved through an emphasis on both the consolidation of previous skills and on refining techniques and improving performance. For example, in a lesson on fielding in cricket some well chosen activities combined with precisely focused instruction and teacher evaluation of individual performance resulted in very good progress.

168 In most lessons progress is equally good for students of all abilities including those with special educational needs but at both key stages there are occasions when the most able students are not being stretched. A register of students with special needs specific to physical education has been developed and supports the teaching and learning of these students. Evaluation of individual performance, by students and staff, is used to significantly improve standards in most lessons. A very good range of extra-curricular activities, and fixtures with other schools, provide opportunities for both boys and girls to extend and develop their skills, with many students achieving representative honours and many teams also being very successful.

169 Students' attitudes to learning are very positive. They are enthusiastic, well behaved, and co-operative, demonstrating a real enjoyment of the subject. They are attentive and their capacity to sustain concentration is good. Relationships between students and between students and staff are very good. There are many opportunities for students to work independently or collaboratively. Opportunities for students to take responsibility or to undertake different roles such as coach or official were limited during the inspection.

170 The quality of teaching is good in both key stages, and is sometimes very good. A secure knowledge of the subject is regularly conveyed to students through perceptive observation of performance and good teacher directed question and answer sessions. Thorough planning, incorporating varied teaching strategies and an appropriate sequence of activities for both individual and collaborative learning, is a feature of most lessons. Planning for quality and improvement at both key stages is also a feature of most lessons. Discipline and class management is very good. Ongoing assessment of performance during lessons is regularly used to enhance teaching and learning. The recording of assessment, and the involvement of students in this assessment, is being used to inform and further motivate students. This information is not yet consistently used to inform progression or to set individual student targets during lessons. Appropriate diagnostic assessment is not always being used in GCSE theory work. The marking and checking of this work does not indicate, in enough detail or regularly enough, how students can improve; nor is marking clearly related to GCSE levels or criteria.

171 The curriculum meets statutory requirements at both key stages but, as noted in the last inspection report, the time allocated is not appropriate to cover National Curriculum requirements for some Year 9 students. Single lessons restrict the time available for development in some games lessons. The broad range of activities at Key Stage 4 provide a good preparation for post-16 leisure activities and provide the flexibility to allow students to follow particular interests and develop new interests. Schemes of work are very detailed and are good working documents. They reflect the National Curriculum requirements and support what is being taught, though they do not consistently include sufficient detail to

support the most effective development of higher attaining students. Reporting procedures are good and involve students in setting targets. All students following examination courses make good use of ICT to enhance their learning.

172 The department is very well led with a clear educational direction being given by those with management responsibility. The influence of recent inclusion in the performing arts faculty is having a very positive impact in the area of the monitoring of teaching and learning. A good working relationship exists between members of the department, ensuring good day to day communication. A very good handbook offers essential guidelines for all staff in the department. The staff give generously of their time and provide very good role models for the students. Accommodation, both indoor and outdoor, is excellent

173 Points for development:

- greater consistency in using assessment data to monitor progress and inform short term targets
- clearer relation of assessment to GCSE criteria with more detailed written feedback to provide guidance for improvement

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

174 Religious education is examined at GCSE only in so far as it is an integral part of the humanities course. Results in this course, in 1999, were above the national average. A Level results were above the national average.

175 Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are above the expectations of the Locally Agreed syllabus. Religious education is taught through a series of topics that enable moral, social and religious issues to be studied. For example, 'Beliefs and values', 'Work, money and religion' and 'What it means to be human'. Students formulate their own views on each issue through research and evaluation of Christian and other viewpoints. Students state their views proficiently in class. They use sources of information with discrimination and are sensitive to beliefs that differ from their own. For example, in a topic on different attitudes to organ transplantation, they contrasted Christian, Muslim and humanist attitudes and compared them with their own views. Worksheets of different levels of difficulty ensure that all students are suitably challenged and make good progress. Written work is of a good standard. Students record much information in the form of carefully expressed notes. The limited amount of extended writing is also of a high standard. In an innovative topic on 'art and religion', students skilfully used computers to examine religious paintings and increase their understanding of symbolism and their knowledge of styles of painting.

176 In Key Stage 4, religious education forms part of the GCSE humanities course. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are above the national expectation. Discussion is widely used and is generally of a high standard. Students continue to make concise notes, for example, about what they believe and value. Students gain perceptive insights into a wide range of religious, moral and social issues. For example, in considering the purpose of life they devised their own 'Five Commandments' for the betterment of humanity. Their understanding of 'absolute and relative morality' was developed through comparison of the 1967 Abortion Act with the views of the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child. They understand how slaves were robbed of their identity in America and the significance of Martin Luther King in restoring civil rights to the coloured population. Their social awareness develops well, for example, through gaining good understanding of how intolerance can be generated within a society from watching the video, 'The Making of Schindler's List'.

- 177 Standards in the sixth form are above national expectations. For example, Year 12 students have a good understanding of difficult ideas, such as conceptual relativism. The quality of discussion varied but students' understanding of the writings of various religious philosophers was good. They are making good progress in all aspects of the course.
- 178 Students' attitudes to religious education are satisfactory in Year 9. Most are strongly motivated by the nature of the topics, but a few find difficulty in focusing on abstract moral and religious issues. Attitudes are very good in Year 10 and excellent in the sixth form. Some students, at all levels, are diffident when required to speak in class and this inhibits their progress in absorbing religious and moral concepts.
- 179 Teaching is good in Key Stages 3 and 4, and very good in the sixth form, where occasionally it is excellent. Teachers prepare lessons very thoroughly and have very wide subject knowledge which they communicate very effectively. They make very good use of carefully prepared and informative worksheets, as in the topic on 'slavery' in Year 10. There is some very good use of questioning at all levels, but this is used most skilfully in the sixth form, where teachers regularly pose supplementary questions to encourage students to extend their thinking and oracy. Teachers ensure a good pace of learning by organising lesson time well. Marking is regular but sometimes does not follow the guidelines of the handbook, for example, over the correction of the spelling of key words.
- 180 The subject is well managed. Schemes of work are excellent. In particular, the topic-based approach and methods used in Year 9 prepare students very well for the demands of the GCSE course. The schemes of work are thoroughly debated to ensure a consistent approach amongst staff. The range of teaching methods is very good and guidelines for assessment are clear and sensitive. Staff make use of students' personal achievement data so that work can be judged fairly in relation to each student's aptitudes and capacities.
- 181 Local clergy and a Christian youth worker contribute regularly to the teaching of religious education and local churches are occasionally used as a resource. Religious education makes a very important contribution to the students' opportunities for spiritual development and it significantly extends their understanding of multicultural dimensions of society.
- 182 Points for development:
- make the spelling of key words a higher priority in marking
 - greater consistency in the use of rigorous questioning as a means of extending students' understanding
 - explore ways of focusing the attention of those students in Year 9 who are not strongly motivated