

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **WINCHCOMBE SCHOOL**

Winchcombe

LEA area: Gloucestershire

Unique reference number: 115768

Headteacher: Mr I. G. D. Blaikie

Reporting inspector: Mr R. Palmer  
31198

Dates of inspection: 5<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> February 2001

Inspection number: 186074

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Greet Road Winchcombe Cheltenham Gloucestershire
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R. Roberts
Date of previous inspection:	13 <sup>th</sup> October 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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31198	Mr R. Palmer	Registered inspector	Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Information about the school The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught How well the school is led and managed What should the school do to improve further
19720	Mrs. D. Granville-Hastings	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils How well does the school work in partnership with parents
30899	Mr K. G. Boden	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology	
12985	Mrs. S. Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education	
12475	Mr W. S. Johnson	Team inspector	Music	
23188	Mrs. V. Maunder	Team inspector	Science Equality of opportunity	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils
31986	Mr B. Medhurst	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology	
19214	Mr G. Price	Team inspector	English Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	
31112	Mr M. Simm	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
14516	Mr A. Skelton	Team inspector	Religious education	
20497	Dr. V. H. Williams	Team inspector	Geography History	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Winchcombe School is a foundation comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11-16 years. It is much smaller than other secondary schools and has 391 pupils on roll compared to 383 at the time of the previous inspection in 1995. The school serves the small Cotswold town of Winchcombe and a surrounding, wide rural area. Nearly 40 per cent of pupils travel by school bus. The social background of pupils varies and ranges from economically advantaged to economically disadvantaged. The overall attainment of pupils on entry is close to the national average but in all years there are fewer than expected pupils of the highest levels of attainment, owing to the close proximity of a few selective grammar schools. A small number of pupils in each year, including those with special educational needs, are from outside the school's traditional catchment area. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (5.3 per cent) is below the national average. A low number (less than one per cent) of pupils speak English as an additional language or are of minority ethnic background. The number of pupils with special educational needs (15.2 per cent) is below the national average; most have learning difficulties associated with weak literacy skills and a significant minority has emotional and behavioural difficulties. The number of pupils with statements of special educational needs (3.6 per cent) is above the national average. The community extensively uses the school's facilities.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

The school provides a good and improving quality of education for its pupils within a caring and supportive environment. It is an effective school. Pupils are happy at school and have very positive attitudes to learning. In most subjects, pupils achieve well and make good progress. GCSE results and results in national tests for pupils aged fourteen were above average in 2000. The quality of teaching and learning is good and is sometimes very good. Leadership is good. There are suitable strategies for further improvements. The school has many more strengths than weaknesses and has the capacity and commitment to improve. It gives good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Achievement in Key Stage 3 is very good in history and good in most other subjects. GCSE results are above the national average.
- The quality of teaching and the quality of learning are good. Relationships among pupils and between teachers and pupils are very good.
- Leadership is good. The school has a positive and friendly ethos.
- The quality of care is good. Pupils like coming to school. They receive good support and guidance. Careers education, including provision for work experience, is very good.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to their work, attend well, behave well and make good progress.
- Pupils enhance their learning and their personal development through active participation in a very good range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in physical education and music.

#### **What could be improved**

- Achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) is unsatisfactory overall.
- Pupils underachieve in religious education in Key Stage 4. No reports on progress in religious education in Key Stage 4 are sent to parents
- Lack of consistency in the teaching of literacy slows pupils' progress in writing in a few subjects.
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are not effective in a few subjects.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

Since its previous inspection in October 1995 the school has made satisfactory progress overall. It has maintained its positive and friendly ethos. The quality of teaching and learning has improved. GCSE results have improved but slower than is the case nationally. The school now has suitable procedures to plan for improvements and has developed effective systems to monitor and evaluate its plans, budgets and policies. Arrangements for pupils with special educational needs have greatly improved and are satisfactory. The provision of ICT and other learning resources in the learning resource area to encourage skills of personal research has improved and is satisfactory. The school quickly resolved the health and safety issues relating to accommodation. However, the school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. The school has the capacity and the commitment to make further improvements.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	A	C	B	D

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

The improvement in the school's results in the Key Stage 3 national tests since 1996 is below the national trend but over the last three years has been slightly above it. In 2000, results were above the national average in English, mathematics and science. In comparison with similar schools, results were above average in mathematics and science, average in English and represented good progress over the key stage. In 2000, GCSE results overall were above the national average and below the average for similar schools. The numbers of pupils gaining at least five grades A\*-C and grades A\*-G were above average and in line with those in similar schools. GCSE results have improved over the last five years slower than the national trend partly because the school started from a higher position than most schools. Pupils' overall results in GCSE examinations in 2000 were in line with expectations based on their prior attainment in national tests taken at the age of 14. They indicate that pupils of all levels of prior attainment, including those with special educational needs, made satisfactory progress in most subjects.

In the classes seen, pupils' achievement and progress in English, mathematics and science were good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. Pupils' achievement overall was very good in history and good in most other subjects, although it was unsatisfactory in ICT in Key Stage 3 and in religious education in Key Stage 4. Pupils with special educational needs and the small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language make at least satisfactory progress. The school sets appropriately challenging targets for improvements in pupils' achievements and came close to achieving these in 2000.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes are very positive; they enjoy coming to school and are enthusiastic and interested in their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons, assemblies and around the school is good. Pupils are polite, friendly and thoughtful towards others.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils form constructive relationships with one another and with adults. They benefit from good opportunities to exercise responsibility and independence.
Attendance	Attendance is above average and good. Unauthorised absence is low.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good

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

The overall quality of both teaching and learning is good throughout the school. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 99 per cent of the lessons seen. It was good or better in 64 per cent and very good in 19 per cent of all lessons seen. Teaching and learning are good in mathematics and science in both key stages; in English they are good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. Learning was unsatisfactory in ICT in Key Stage 3. Very good teaching was seen in many subjects in both key stages. Good relationships between teachers and pupils create a very positive learning environment. Teachers manage their classes well. Most lessons contain a good variety of structured activities that ensure pupils make progress. Pupils work hard and at a good pace. They show interest in their work, develop good creative skills and gain a good understanding of the work in most subjects. Pupils with special educational needs and the small number with English as an additional language make at least satisfactory progress because they receive good teaching and support. The teaching of the gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory overall and good in a few subjects such as mathematics, history and physical education. In a few lessons in science, design and technology and religious education pupils' progress slowed when the work was not well suited to the needs of all pupils. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory overall but is inconsistent among subjects. The teaching of numeracy is good in mathematics and satisfactory in other subjects.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum meets statutory requirements except for the provision of daily collective worship. Provision is satisfactory in both key stages. The very good range and take-up of extra-curricular activities of high quality help pupils to enhance and enrich their learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision has improved and is satisfactory overall. Pupils make at least satisfactory progress because they receive good teaching, care and support. Provision for gifted or talented pupils is generally satisfactory; it is good in a few subjects.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision is satisfactory and enables the small number to make appropriate progress in nearly all subjects.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' personal, moral, social and cultural development is good; that for spiritual development is satisfactory. Through a wide range of activities, pupils learn about other societies as well as their own. They respect the views of others and show a concern for those less fortunate than themselves.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The quality of care is good; the school supports pupils well. Very good relationships between teachers and pupils and the good procedures for promoting good behaviour help pupils to enjoy school.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	The school has a good partnership with parents; it expects parents to play an important part in pupils' education and all round personal development.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The head teacher gives good leadership. He is well supported by senior staff to provide effective management. Leadership and management of subjects vary from very good or better in a few to satisfactory in many.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are well informed, supportive and carry out their duties effectively and responsibly. They take appropriate action to secure improvements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance continue to improve and are satisfactory.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes appropriate use of its generally adequate staffing, accommodation and learning resources. It applies the principles of best value in making financial decisions. Accommodation for science, music and physical education is insufficient.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils are expected to work hard and achieve their best.</li> <li>• Pupils like school and make good progress.</li> <li>• Many like the small size of the school.</li> <li>• The school promotes good values and helps pupils to be mature and responsible.</li> <li>• Staff are approachable and responsive.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of homework is inconsistent.</li> <li>• They want to be better informed about pupils' progress.</li> <li>• Some feel that links between the school and parents are not close.</li> </ul>

Inspection findings support parents' positive comments. Pupils enjoy their work in this small school. Inspectors also support parents' views on two of the areas they would like to see improved. Homework of appropriate amount and sufficient difficulty is often provided in most subjects but there is inconsistency of practice among subjects. Teachers do not always follow the timetable for homework so that sometimes there is too much and sometimes too little. The reports to parents about pupils' progress do not give a clear indication of pupils' strengths and weaknesses in subjects and rarely show what a pupil needs to do to improve. In respect of the third point, inspectors find that links with the school are at least satisfactory; the school works hard to involve parents closely in the life of the school.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. Pupils' overall attainment on entry to the school is average. There are fewer pupils of the highest levels of attainment than expected in all years. In the current Year 7, the number of pupils who achieved the national expectation of level 4 or above in the National curriculum tests taken at the age of 11 was average in English and below average in mathematics and science.

2. Pupils' achievements are good overall in both key stages, taking into account their prior attainment, the results in the national tests at the age of 14, the results in GCSE examinations at the age of 16 and the standards of work seen in classes and in scrutiny of work.

#### ***National curriculum assessments at end of Key Stage 3 at age 14***

3. By the end of Key Stage 3, at the age of 14, pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests are usually in line with the national average.

4. In 2000, the school's results in these tests were above the national average overall and in all three of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The performances in all three subjects were better than in the previous year. When compared with the results achieved by similar schools, as defined by the proportion of pupils entitled to claim free school meals, the school's results were above average in mathematics and science and average in English. Boys obtained slightly better results than girls did overall.

5. The improvement in the school's results in the Key Stage 3 national tests since 1996 is below the national trend. This not only reflects the fluctuating attainment levels of successive intakes but also that the school started from an above average position in 1996. In the last three years, the school's results have improved slightly faster than results nationally.

6. Results in the national tests are rising faster in mathematics and science than in English, particularly for the proportion reaching the higher levels.

7. Boys consistently achieve better results than girls in science and usually do so in mathematics. In English, although the results of boys and girls have been similar in recent years, boys' results have been slightly above the national average for boys, the results of girls have been below the national average for girls.

8. In 2000, teachers' assessments showed that the number of pupils achieving the expected National Curriculum level or above was above average in nearly all subjects.

#### ***GCSE results at end of Key Stage 4***

9. Results in GCSE examinations are usually above the national average. They have improved since the last inspection more slowly than the national trend, partly because the school started from a much higher position than most schools and partly because of differences in the capabilities of successive year groups. In recent years, boys' results have been above the national averages for boys while girls' results have been close to the national averages for girls.

10. In 2000, the average total GCSE points score per pupil was well above the national average but below the average for similar schools. The proportions of pupils achieving the equivalent of five or more passes at grades A\*-C and at grades A\*-G were above the national average and in line with those for similar schools.

11. Pupils' overall results in GCSE examinations in 2000, based on average total points scored, were just below expectations based on their prior attainment in national tests taken at the age of 14. However, the proportions gaining five or more passes at grades A\*-C and at grades A\*-G were in line with expectations.

12. GCSE results in 2000 in English and the proportion of pupils achieving at least one GCSE grade at A\*-C in a science subject were above average and represented satisfactory achievement based on pupils' prior attainment; results in mathematics were average and represented unsatisfactory achievement. Results at A\*-C grades in most other subjects were close to and often above the national average. Pupils of all levels of prior attainment, including those with special educational needs, made satisfactory progress in most subjects.

### ***Achievements in classes observed during the inspection***

13. At the end of Key Stage 3, overall standards of work seen in classes and through scrutiny of work were well above average in history and above average in English, mathematics, science, art and design, design and technology and music. Standards were below average in ICT and average in all other subjects.

14. Standards of work seen in classes at the end of Key Stage 3 were above average in English, mathematics, science, art and design, design and technology, history and music. Standards were below average in ICT and were average in all other subjects.

15. By the age of fourteen, the standards pupils achieve and the progress they make, relative to their prior attainments and as seen in scrutiny of their written work and in classes, are very good in history and good in all other subjects, apart from religious education in which they are satisfactory and ICT where they are unsatisfactory.

16. Standards of work at the end of Key Stage 4 were well above average in history, above average in art and design and in design and technology. They were below average in religious education and average in all other subjects.

17. By the age of sixteen, the standards pupils achieve, relative to their prior attainments are very good in history, satisfactory in English, mathematics, science and ICT and good in all other subjects apart from religious education in which they are unsatisfactory.

18. Throughout Key Stages 3 and 4, most pupils of all levels of prior attainment make satisfactory and sometimes good progress. Their progress is slightly quicker in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4. The work they are expected to do is generally well matched to their needs.

### ***Pupils with special educational needs***

19. Pupils with statements of special educational needs and the small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language make at least satisfactory and often good progress throughout the school in most subjects because teachers prepare work of appropriate levels of difficulty and provide additional support for them during lessons. Other pupils with special educational needs make similar progress in most subjects and very good progress in history.

20. Suitable targets are set for pupils with special educational needs in their individual education plans. Most teachers take careful note of these targets in planning their lessons and accordingly pupils improve their learning at a suitable rate.

### ***Literacy***

21. Standards of literacy are satisfactory. Pupils often speak well in formal situations and their use of talk is very effective when working in small groups. Standards of reading are high for many pupils in the first three years. Reading is a popular activity and pupils of all attainment levels are happy to read aloud. Writing is satisfactory overall. It is unsatisfactory at times when it lacks accuracy in spelling and grammar and pupils use too narrow a range of expression in their written work. Despite this there are many good examples of pupils writing appropriately and effectively for a variety of purposes. Standards of presentation are usually good. Pupils insufficiently develop their literacy skills in a few subjects.

### ***Information and communication technology***

22. Pupils' skills in ICT are below average. They are insufficiently able to develop or use their computing skills to enhance their work in many subjects.

### ***Numeracy***

23. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory. The lack of an effective whole school policy to improve pupils' skills in numeracy means that pupils do not sufficiently develop their mathematical skills to assist their work in several subjects and are occasionally uncertain of which methods of calculation to use.

### ***Targets***

24. The school sets appropriate and achievable targets for pupils and subject departments. Targets for examination performance are based on pupils' prior attainments and comparisons with appropriate national data. The school came close to meeting its suitably challenging targets for GCSE in 2000.

## **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

25. Overall, the attitudes, values and behaviour of pupils are very good and a clear strength of the school.

26. Pupils' attitudes to learning and to school life in general are very good. Pupils enjoy being at school and appreciate the opportunities they are offered. They participate in the vast range of school clubs and activities with gusto and represent their school in competitions and performances with pride. Pupils come to lessons with positive attitudes and a willingness to learn. They show interest in their work, sustain concentration and are willing to apply themselves to the tasks set. They ask and answer questions readily, join in discussions and contribute well during lessons. Most pupils are confident, good-humoured and relaxed. They are generally enthusiastic about most lessons and particularly so in some lessons in English, mathematics, science, geography and history. For example, Year 8 pupils were taken on a journey of discovery when investigating the different rates of chemical reactions and were delighted with the results of their experiments. In English, Year 9 pupils were totally absorbed in their work on 'Twelfth Night' and, in geography, Year 7 pupils concentrated very well on the topic of urban development. Pupils in Year 10 showed genuine interest in the events surrounding the Gallipoli campaign in their history lesson.

27. Behaviour of pupils around the school and in lessons is very good. Staff have high expectations of how pupils should behave and pupils respond accordingly. Pupils socialise well outside the classroom and the atmosphere is good-humoured and calm even when busy. Anti-bullying is given a high priority throughout the school in tutorial time, assemblies and personal and social education lessons. Pupils report there is little bullying and, if it arises, it is dealt with quickly and sensitively. Pupils have a strong sense of loyalty towards the school, and there is very little litter, graffiti or vandalism.

28. Relationships between staff and pupils and among pupils themselves are of a very high quality and create a supportive and caring atmosphere in which pupils feel secure and comfortable. These very good relationships have a positive impact on pupils' response and attitudes in lessons. Pupils are valued both as individuals and for their contribution to the daily life of school as can be seen from the mature way the head boy and girl and house captains perform their duties. Discussions in many lessons well illustrated pupils' acceptance and tolerance of others. They respect each other's feelings and are supportive of each other in lessons, working in pairs and groups productively. Pupils are very polite and friendly and welcome visitors into their school.

29. During the last academic year there were no permanent exclusions and nine fixed-term exclusions involving six pupils. This is higher than reported in the last inspection but is still quite low for a school of this size. Exclusions are the final stage in a clear, structured approach to dealing with unacceptable behaviour and are not a sanction that is used lightly. All exclusions are fully documented and parents are involved at all stages.

30. Pupils respond very well to the opportunities to take on responsibility within school. Each tutor group is represented on the school council and pupils feel that they have a genuine voice in school. Their views are listened to and they receive feedback or reasons why some of their ideas are not possible. Pupils in Year 11 can apply to become head boy and girl and house captains, and are selected after interviews. They all take this role seriously and provide support for the teaching staff. Each week a tutor group is on duty to help in the hall after assemblies and at breaks and lunchtimes. Many pupils join in the activities offered to them and represent the school in local and national competitions, often with great success. Older pupils develop a natural responsibility towards younger pupils through the ethos of the school and help each other naturally and genuinely. Careers education guidance, including the work experience programme, introduces pupils to a wider community outside school. Employers are very complimentary about pupils' attitudes and approach. Throughout the year, pupils take part in producing assemblies and organise many charity events on large and small scales to raise awareness of and alleviate the misfortunes of others.

31. Attendance at the school continues to be good as it was at the last inspection. The attendance rate for 1999/2000 was 92.4 per cent, which was above the national average. Unauthorised absence is consistently low. Pupils register with their tutors in the morning and afternoon, and most subject teachers take a register each lesson. Registers are marked accurately and absences are recorded correctly.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

32. The overall quality of teaching is good throughout the school. This is reflected in the good quality of learning. Pupils made good progress in the great majority of lessons observed.

33. The teaching was satisfactory or better in 99 per cent of the lessons seen. It was good or better in 64 per cent and was very good in 19 per cent of all lessons seen.

34. Teaching in music was very good in both key stages. A high proportion of teaching was very good in modern foreign languages. Very good teaching was seen in all subjects apart from art and design, design and technology, ICT and religious education. The proportion of good teaching was slightly higher in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. The main reason for this difference was that teachers' subject knowledge was more consistently good when teaching pupils in Years 10 and 11. In a few classes in Key Stage 3, teachers were occasionally less confident when teaching their non-specialist subject. Pupils made slower progress in these lessons.

35. The teaching has many strengths. Teachers manage their classes well. The good, and often very good, relationships between teachers and pupils help to create a purposeful learning environment. Teachers generally use a good variety of teaching methods that help pupils to maintain their concentration and interest. Lessons usually have a clear introduction, which gives pupils a good understanding of the aims of the work, and provide a good range of interesting and challenging activities. Towards the end of many lessons, pupils consolidate their understanding of the work through effective plenary sessions that review what has been learned. The large majority of teachers have suitably high expectations for pupils' progress and match the work to the needs of all pupils.

36. However, there are some shortcomings in teaching in the lessons that were judged to be satisfactory overall and in the one unsatisfactory lesson observed. In a few lessons in subjects such as science, design and technology and religious education, teachers did not plan the work effectively to build on pupils' previous learning or to provide suitably challenging work for all and accordingly the rate of pupils' progress slackened. Teachers' planning in ICT and religious education is unsatisfactory. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is not fully developed and is satisfactory rather than good in most subjects.

37. Prominent features in many of the very good lessons observed were the active participation of pupils, a variety of interesting, well planned and carefully timed activities and a suitably brisk pace. For example, in a very good history lesson for a class of pupils of middle attainment, the teacher helped pupils to build well on their previous knowledge and to develop an understanding of life in Elizabethan England. The teacher began the lesson by setting the targets for learning, introducing key words such as citizens, labourers and yeomen and checking pupils' awareness of the social changes that were taking place during that period of history. The teacher had thoroughly prepared the lesson and used a very good range of learning materials to cater for all levels of attainment within the class. Pupils used these resources enthusiastically to complete the set tasks. They enjoyed making their own interpretations of the evidence provided in ten photographic sources. They made very good deductions in determining whether events occurred in town or country and what social classes were involved in various activities. These exercises and good discussions in class and in groups helped pupils to improve their analytical skills. The teacher made effective use of the overhead projector to reinforce and test pupils' learning at appropriate and regular stages in the lesson. Throughout the lesson, the pace of learning was quick and the activities were of sufficient difficulty and interest to keep pupils working at full stretch. The teacher skilfully guided the pupils towards an effective interpretation of a portrait of Elizabeth through consideration of the five main elements of face, body language, dress, props and setting. Pupils' learning in this lesson was very good because they were conscientious, cooperative, hard working and concentrated well.

38. The quality of teaching is good overall throughout the school in mathematics and science; in English it is good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4.

39. Pupils with special educational needs and the small number for whom English is an additional language make good progress in Key Stage 3 in most of their subjects because they receive good teaching and support. Their progress in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. Teachers have an adequate knowledge of the learning needs of these pupils through the ready availability of pupils' individual education plans. Talented and gifted pupils receive good support and make at least good progress in a few subjects such as mathematics, science, history, music and physical education but, in most subjects, they receive satisfactory teaching and are not always tested to the limits of their capabilities.

40. The quality of learning is good overall in all National Curriculum subjects apart from ICT, in which subject it is unsatisfactory. The quality of learning in religious education is satisfactory. Pupils make good progress in most subjects because lessons start purposefully, there is an interesting variety of tasks to complete and, in the best lessons, teachers break the activities down into small blocks of time with clear targets for pupils within each section. Pupils behave well, have positive attitudes, and the large majority maintain their concentration and interest throughout lessons. The large majority of pupils work hard, complete their homework conscientiously and develop good creative skills. Pupils acquire relevant skills and a good overall knowledge and understanding of the work in most subjects. They enjoy working independently and cooperate well with each other in paired and group work. They have a good knowledge of their own learning and what they need to do to improve.

41. The teaching of reading, speaking and listening skills is satisfactory. The teaching of writing skills is unsatisfactory. Across the curriculum there has been little development of the teaching of literacy skills even though all staff have received training aimed at raising awareness of how best to teach these skills. The inconsistent approach among subjects to the teaching of literacy results in pupils not always sufficiently improving these skills, particularly in writing, throughout all years. In most subjects, pupils receive few opportunities to read but, in mathematics, pupils' reading skills enable them to meet the demands of texts, even though lower attaining pupils read slowly. In religious education, pupils read aloud confidently and accurately but rarely read for information. Teachers rarely make pupils produce extended pieces of writing. In subject areas, few teachers make effective use of displays of key words. Pupils benefit from a useful language skills programme in modern foreign languages, which has some links to English language. In religious education, teachers introduce systematic work on technical vocabulary. Many pupils enhance their learning by using the library well to carry out research.

42. The teaching of skills in numeracy is good in mathematics lessons for pupils of all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs. It is satisfactory in most other subjects. It is effective in helping pupils improve their work in subjects such as design and technology and geography. The approach to teaching and using mathematical skills is inconsistent in many subjects and occasionally leads to confusion among pupils about which methods to use.

43. In most subjects, there is insufficient teaching of ICT skills. Many pupils learn how to use computers independently and appropriately. However, they infrequently use and develop their computing skills well because use of the computers is too limited. Pupils are rarely able to apply their computing skills to good effect in many subjects. However, in geography and history, teachers often encourage pupils to use the limited computing facilities available to good effect in enhancing their work. In English, teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to use the computers in the school's ICT rooms for word processing; these opportunities are

particularly beneficial for pupils in drafting and redrafting their work.

44. Teachers and pupils make good use of the library learning resource centre to help to develop pupils' skills in research in many subjects.

45. The school has maintained the good quality of both teaching and learning identified in the previous inspection report. It has increased the proportion that is good or very good. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs has improved greatly and is often good.

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

46. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements except in the provision of a daily act of worship. Curricular provision is satisfactory in both key stages. In Key Stage 3, all pupils, including those with special education needs, have equal access to the full range of National Curriculum subjects as well as drama and a personal, social and health education course. At Key Stage 4, a choice of subjects ensures greater variety to meet the needs, interests and aptitudes of the pupils. Most pupils are entered for GCSE examinations, although the Certificate of Achievement is available to lower attaining pupils in mathematics. Curricular opportunities for nearly 30 per cent of pupils in Key Stage 4 are reduced because they do not study the English literature GCSE course. The lack of provision of pre-vocational courses at Key Stage 4 narrows the opportunities available for some of the lower attaining pupils although they do benefit from the very good programme of careers education.

47. The length of the teaching week at 25 hours is in line with national recommendations. The allocation of time to subjects is appropriate in most instances. However, there has been little improvement since the last inspection in those subjects that were reported as having too little time. The time allocation for art and design and ICT in Years 8 and 9 remains low and also for religious education at both key stages. In addition, there is insufficient time for physical education at Key Stage 4 to ensure good coverage of schemes of work.

48. Within the school's overall curricular provision, there are some deficiencies. Although statutory requirements with regard to ICT are now met at both Key Stages 3 and 4, there is insufficient monitoring of that provision to ensure that all the elements of the programmes of study are undertaken. The provision of ICT in most subjects is unsatisfactory. In art and design, continuity at Key Stage 3 is adversely affected by a combination of the two-week timetable and the design and technology and art and design six-weekly rotation of courses. There are weaknesses in English at Key Stage 3 because teaching is not based on a sufficiently detailed, balanced, agreed and progressive programme for each year.

49. The provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is satisfactory. It includes health education, sex education, and moral and social issues such as bullying and drug misuse. The programme of study remains the same as at the last inspection. There is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of the teaching and success of the programme.

50. Since the last inspection, there have been a number of improvements to the curriculum. The GCSE music course is now taught in school time. The humanities course, which was too demanding for lower attaining pupils, has been dropped. The range of options at Key Stage 4 has widened to include GCSE courses in ICT. The curriculum provided for pupils with special educational needs, which was a key issue, is now satisfactory. Staffing levels have improved and every pupil now has an up-to-date individual education plan, which sets out specific targets. Although subject teachers' awareness of pupils' individual needs is improving, work is not always modified to suit the needs of all pupils. In addition to staff allocated to pupils with learning difficulties, there is some support for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties and a smaller amount for more able pupils. The school is one of a cluster of schools that offer approximately eight 'Master class' sessions on a variety of subjects. Pupils are nominated from each school and are invited to attend. These have proved successful in building pupils' self-confidence.

51. Provision for ICT has improved. There are class sets of computers in two dedicated classrooms and at least one computer in every subject area, though some of these are rather old. There is also a small network of computers in the library, which is now known as the learning centre.

52. The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. Pupils benefit considerably from an extensive programme, which complements, extends and enhances the curriculum. The provision for drama and music is very good, with high levels of participation in the drama club, choir, bands, musical tuition and school musical and dramatic productions. A wide ranging and balanced programme of physical education activities and sports clubs promote competitive sport up to district and county standard. The highlight of the sporting calendar is the annual trip to Barcelona to play Spanish teams in netball and football. Outdoor and adventure activities are a school strength; they enhance pupils' personal and social development through exercises in team building and leadership. Exchange visits with Bavaria and other visits abroad have helped to develop pupils' language skills and their awareness of other cultures.

53. Many subjects provide enrichment activities. These include such valuable learning experiences as the computer and Young Engineers' clubs, public speaking competitions, Christian Union, visits to theatres, museums, galleries, places of historic interest and field trips. These, along with homework clubs and booster classes in subjects such as science and history, provide additional preparation and help for pupils, prior to Key Stage 3 national tests and GCSE examinations.

54. The good social links with the primary schools help pupils to settle easily into Year 7. The curricular links are satisfactory. Whilst some departments are now working closely to ensure continuity of teaching, learning and assessment, this is not true of all. As highlighted in the previous inspection report, some of the work done in Year 7 is too easy and in a few subjects, for example science, repeats Key Stage 2 work. This results in wasted time in Year 7 and leads to boredom among pupils. Links and transfer arrangements to sixth forms and colleges are good.

55. The school has good links with the wider community, which make a very positive contribution to the learning opportunities available to pupils and to their progress and attainment.

56. Provision for careers education and guidance is very good and a strength of the school. Teaching of careers education begins in Year 9 but there are career related elements in earlier years. These include a well-run and effective 'Key Skills' day for pupils in Year 8, arranged in conjunction with the Education and Business Partnership organisation and which was observed during the inspection. All pupils undertake two weeks of work experience, one in Year 10 and one in Year 11. Great care is taken to match placements to pupils' aspirations and expectations. Special lessons are set aside to prepare pupils properly. The completed experience diaries are carefully assessed and used to inform the debriefing sessions, which involve groups of pupils working with representatives of the careers service, governors, employers and the local Rotary Club. The school successfully renewed its status of 'Investor in Careers' in 2000.

57. Overall, the provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good and has a positive and direct effect on pupils' attitudes and approach to school and their learning. The school is strongly committed to the personal development of pupils.

58. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. Whilst assemblies have a spiritual element and convey positive messages to pupils, they do not always allow time for quiet reflection and consideration of those messages. The school has made little attempt to introduce a spiritual element into the registration time when pupils do not have an assembly. Some subjects contribute well to spiritual development despite there being no specific planning behind it. In religious education, pupils are challenged to think about different beliefs. In a Year 10 class, a visiting Buddhist speaker brought religion to life and showed pupils how belief affects individual people's lives.

59. Provision for pupils' moral development is good. Parents feel that the school's attitudes and values are having a positive effect upon their children. The relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Pupils show respect and work hard. The principles of fairness, honesty and respect are embedded into the daily life and reinforced through tutor time, assemblies and personal and social education lessons. Many subjects make a good contribution to pupils' understanding of moral issues. In music, for example, pupils discussed the evils of slavery and its contribution to the development of the blues in American culture. In tutorial periods, pupils gave balanced views on the rights and wrongs of foxhunting and discussed animal cruelty and the work of the RSPCA.

60. The social development of pupils is good. Relationships throughout the school are very good, between pupils themselves and between staff and pupils. The various positions of head boy and girls, house captains and school council representatives offer pupils the chance to take on responsibility and contribute to the day-to-day running of the school. Pupils feel their opinions are listened to and that they can make an effective difference to school life. The personal and social education programme promotes responsible attitudes to, and good awareness of, the problems associated with growing up and life in general. In most lessons, pupils are encouraged to work in groups or pairs and they do this well and productively. The extra-curricular activities, particularly in physical education, provide very good opportunities for pupils to learn to live together and take responsibility. The quality of the provision for moral and social education is at the heart of the schools' success in helping pupils to become responsible young people.

61. Provision for pupils' cultural development is also good. The school's multicultural policy recognises the need to introduce pupils to as many different cultures as possible. It achieves this through drama workshops, the religious education syllabus and the tutorial programmes. A vast range of extra-curricular clubs, trips and visitors are planned into the curriculum and add depth and awareness to broaden pupils' experiences. In English, pupils have a rich cultural diet involving literature from all cultures, frequent trips to theatres, and poetry and drama workshops. Pupils have had many successes in public speaking competitions including winning a silver medal at the Cheltenham Festival. In religious education, there is good coverage of the effect of Christianity on the development of the United Kingdom and of different cultures but there is insufficient use made of visits to sacred buildings other than churches. Pupils enhance their understanding of other cultures through trips, exchanges and correspondence with places in France, Germany and Spain; a recent Internet link with a school in Japan has resulted in an exchange of letters, poetry and e-mails.

### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

62. The school provides a good level of care and support for its pupils that are appreciated by parents and pupils alike. This area was a strength during the last inspection and continues to be so.

63. The school gives a high priority to the physical care and well being of its pupils. The effective child protection policy follows the local authority procedures. The designated officer has attended appropriate training and disseminates information to all staff. Good use is made of outside agencies, and lines of communication are clear. There are good arrangements for dealing with first aid, sickness and accidents. The school follows clear and detailed guidelines for the organisation of and participation in of off-site visits and activities. There are regular checks on fire and electrical equipment. The health and safety policy identifies roles and responsibilities within the school. Staff and governors carry out surveys of the site and premises. Risk assessments are carried out in science, art and design, design and technology and in physical education. The school lacks a formal and rigorous programme of risk assessments of activities and work practice across all departments.

64. Good support and guidance for pupils have created a secure and caring environment. Tutors play a central role in making this so positive. Tutors and pupils stay together for five years. They have assemblies and registration times together and a one-hour tutorial period per fortnight in which the personal and social education programme is followed. This gives plenty of opportunity to build stable and effective relationships. Subject teachers and tutors know pupils well individually and have a genuine concern for their progress, welfare and personal well being. Pupils have trust and confidence in their teachers and find them approachable, responsive and encouraging. The quality of the relationships is the basis upon which much of the personal support is built. This contributes to pupils' confidence and positive attitudes. The school is a happy place and most pupils enjoy being there.

65. Good systems and procedures for encouraging and maintaining good discipline and behaviour are based on a climate of trust, respect and honesty. Pupils understand what is expected of them and consider the 'rules' to be fair. The rewards and sanctions are clearly understood by pupils and are effective in maintaining good behaviour and attitudes. Staff show a lot of respect for their pupils, which contributes strongly towards the calm and friendly atmosphere within the school.

66. Good procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance achieve good attendance. Tutors are the first point of contact for attendance but quickly refer to the head of year if a problem becomes apparent. The school works very closely with the education welfare service to help individual pupils and families. Awards for attendance are given each year and

attendance is included on their interim and full reports.

67. Good systems support pupils' personal and academic development. Pupils understand the different marking schemes within subjects, and many know the National Curriculum level or GCSE grade they are working at. In Years 10 and 11, pupils have individual interviews with a senior teacher to discuss targets and progress, and how to improve their performance to improve their grades. External mentors are used with some pupils. They have a positive effect on pupils' achievements and attitudes. All Year 10 and 11 pupils are offered a mentor in school to work closely with or simply to act as a friendly ear. The school makes good use of outside sources to give extra support for pupils who need it, such as the counselling services of 'Teens in Crisis'. Revision classes and extension classes are offered in Year 11 to help prepare pupils for examinations. Assemblies and prize givings publicly acknowledge success and achievement. Most pupils use their homework planners diligently. They are expected to record their homework accurately and ask their parents to sign weekly. Tutors check planners so any concerns about homework are picked up immediately. Pupils comment on their own performance as part of their annual report and identify their strengths and weaknesses quite well. Teachers use their in-depth knowledge of all their pupils and their good communication with each other to monitor regularly and effectively the overall progress of pupils throughout the year.

68. The school's assessment policy provides a good framework for assessing, recording and reporting pupils' academic and personal development as they move through the school. Assessments made are, for the most part, valid, accurate and reliable. In most curricular areas, suitable policies are in place and operating effectively. Best practice occurs in English, music, mathematics and history in which teachers give good feedback to pupils on performance, written and verbal, and often set targets for future learning. Overall, however, insufficient use is made of information obtained from a wide range of assessments to inform development of the curriculum and the associated changes in teaching and learning styles.

69. The current statutory assessment requirements of the National Curriculum and those of the Code of Practice for special educational needs are satisfied.

70. Pupils increase their motivation to achieve well through the formal review interviews conducted with their teachers in Year 10 and 11 and the associated targets for GCSE performance. They value their involvement in the good practice of self-assessment in mathematics and in peer assessment in history.

71. In nearly every subject teachers maintain adequate evidence of pupils' achievement; in pupils' books, folders of work, artefacts, and records based upon their observations. Overall, teachers give ample consideration to pupils' day-to-day work in assessing performance and in most subjects the marking of this work is satisfactory. However, marking in several subjects is sometimes cursory and uninformative and is inconsistent within departments.

72. The school receives detailed analyses of external examination results and other assessment data, such as that from primary schools, results of tests conducted in school and information provided by the local education authority. Whilst a few departments, such as mathematics, make good use of this data, few departments carry out rigorous analyses to assist in reviewing and monitoring standards, the curriculum, teaching and learning or in setting targets for future success.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

73. The school has maintained the good partnership with parents reported in the last

inspection and is constantly looking for ways to develop the relationship further.

74. Parents have positive views about the school. They feel that staff are approachable and helpful, problems are dealt with quickly and sensitively, and that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. They are less happy with the amount of homework pupils receive, and some parents do not feel well informed about the progress their children are making.

75. Parents receive a good range of information of good quality about the school and its philosophy and approach. The prospectus is professional in appearance and provides detail on how the school works and what parents can expect. The annual report from governors contains all the information that parents are legally entitled to know and is readable and informative. A regular newsletter keeps parents up-to-date with events and activities. All around the school, good displays of pupils' work and photographs provide a good view of school life.

76. Parents are kept informed about their child's progress through at least one parents' consultation evening and two reports each year. In some years, there is an additional meeting. For example, in Year 7, parents are invited to discuss how their child has settled into the new school, and in Year 9 parents discuss the option system. Staff monitor the attendance at these meetings and contact those who do not attend to make alternative arrangements to see parents. The short interim report indicates a grade for effort and attainment and a brief comment for each subject but does not show National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades. The full reports provide little extra information. Although the comments are longer they are too general rather specific to the subject. It is often difficult to tell from the comment alone, to which subject it refers. They do not clearly indicate what pupils can do well within each subject, do not give clear, specific and practical targets, which can help pupils improve, and do not adequately show how parents can help pupils to improve. Parents have the opportunity to reply to the report. The reports do not fully conform to statutory requirements because achievement in religious education in Key Stage 4 is not reported.

77. The school is keen to encourage parents to take an active part in their children's education. Tutors stay with the same group through the years, which gives parents a stable point of contact resulting in good relationships. The informal communication between staff and parents is good. Staff willingly make themselves available to discuss problems and concerns. When the school has a concern about a particular pupil, the parents and pupil are invited in together to discuss strategies for improvement with staff. The home-school agreement clearly indicates what both the school and parents can expect from each other. Parents' views were sought on the draft agreements and the return rate of signed agreements was high. The school regularly seeks parents' views through questionnaires and values their comments. Parents receive copies of the homework timetable and a leaflet explaining the rationale behind the need for homework. The Winchcombe School Friends association actively supports the school in many ways.

78. The links the school has with parents are effective, evidenced by the positive views the parents have of the school. The admission rate for the school has increased each year recently and more parents are selecting Winchcombe as their first choice. Parents are well represented on the governing body and actively influence the work of the school. Attendance at parents' evenings, governors' annual meetings, performances and events is very good. Many parents offer their help throughout the year.

79. Issues highlighted in the previous report have been adequately addressed. There is still room for improvement in the quality of comments made in reports and in the assessment procedures in ICT.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

80. The quality of leadership and management in the school is good. The headteacher provides a clear direction for the school's work and sets a good personal example to pupils and staff. The deputy head and senior staff provide effective support. The participative style of management places a good emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Staff morale is high and there is a generally shared commitment among staff to improve the quality of education further. Pupils like coming to school. There is a positive and purposeful atmosphere within which good learning takes place. The school is making good progress towards achieving its main aim of 'becoming a school where the highest quality, care and loyalty underpin everything that is done to achieve the best possible standards for all pupils', regardless of their religious, social or ethnic background or levels of academic attainment.

81. The governors are very supportive of the work of the school and carry out their duties effectively and responsibly. They carefully monitor and evaluate the school's performance. They take effective action to make improvements, as shown by their strong support for the changes in the school's staffing structure proposed by the head teacher, which have led to improvements in teaching in subjects such as English. They use their links with different departments very effectively to provide support to the subject areas, to increase their awareness of curricular and staffing issues and to identify the school's strengths and weaknesses. The nominated governor for special educational needs keeps the governing body aware of the arrangements and provision made for this important aspect of the school's work that has improved considerably in recent years.

82. The school's procedures for monitoring and evaluating its performance are satisfactory. Suitable systems for the continuous assessment of the performance of pupils and of subject departments are being developed. However, these are inconsistently followed through with the result that the sharing of good practice is very effective in and across most departments but rarely occurs in a few. Governors and senior staff have a good understanding of the school's strengths and those areas for development that will further enhance pupils' standards of attainment. They have made improvements through the careful appointments of new teachers, which have raised the quality of learning and pupils' perceptions of the subject recently in departments such as English, music, history and geography.

83. The quality of leadership and management in subject areas is outstanding in history and very good in geography and music. It is good in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, physical education and special educational needs. It is currently satisfactory in all other subjects.

84. The school fulfils its statutory requirements, including those for special educational needs, apart from the provision of a daily act of collective worship and for annually reporting pupils' achievements in religious education in Years 10 and 11 to parents.

85. Governors and staff are gradually succeeding in their aim to raise academic achievement to the same high quality as that of pastoral care in the school. The school's plans for improvement suitably include targets for pupils to achieve GCSE grades higher than those predicted by prior attainment; training for teachers to increase their effectiveness in the classroom; improving pupils' skills in literacy, ICT and in numeracy. Governors are seeking to enhance pupils' experiences in expressive arts and physical education courses and to increase the school's involvement in the local community through initiatives and partnerships with other institutions.

86. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and has been considerably improved in response to a key issue identified in the previous inspection report. The monitoring of individual education plans is inconsistent among departments. The planning to meet the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language is good.

87. The monitoring and evaluation of the classroom work of teachers carried out by the senior staff are satisfactory and have led to good improvements in teaching and learning in subjects such as English. However, they have not occurred in a few departments and so do not ensure that pupils' progress is equally good in all subjects or that good practice of teaching and learning is effectively shared across the school.

88. The school sets appropriate and achievable targets for pupils' achievements in the end of Key Stage 3 national tests and for GCSE examinations. Most pupils are well aware of the levels at which they are currently working and what their realistic capabilities are. The good assessment data is increasingly used to make pupils and teachers more aware of what progress pupils could reasonably be expected to make. The head teacher and senior staff use this information to help raise expectations of both pupils and teachers.

89. Following a comprehensive review, development planning at both whole school and department level is now satisfactory. The school's plans contain appropriate targets, tasks, timescales for completion and some indication of costs involved.

90. The governing body is fully involved in planning, setting and monitoring the school's budget. It relates spending decisions to the school's educational priorities. Financial administration is detailed and thorough. Specific grants received for special educational needs, staff training and other national initiatives are all spent as intended. They are effectively used to improve educational provision.

91. The governors' finance committee and the school's financial administrative staff keep careful records of spending. They constantly seek to gain good value for money and the school succeeds in providing good value for money overall. The school applies the principles of best value in making budgetary decisions and in the way it uses its resources. It uses its adequate resources of staffing, accommodation and learning resources to generally good effect.

92. The number, qualifications and experience of the teachers satisfactorily match the demands of the curriculum. There is, unavoidably in a small school, a small amount of teaching by non-specialist teachers in a few subjects. This occasionally has a slightly adverse affect on pupils' progress. In mathematics, for example, there are two full time teachers and the rest are part-time including some non-specialists. This partially accounts for GCSE results in mathematics being less good than those in science and English. There

is an appropriate level of support staff, including that for pupils with special educational needs. Overall, the staffing, accommodation and learning resources allocated for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory and are well managed in addressing their identified needs. Procedures for the induction of new and newly qualified teachers are good.

93. The school's accommodation is satisfactory overall. However, pupils' standards of achievement are adversely affected at times because the accommodation for physical education is often unsatisfactory. In music, there is only one small practice room for instrumental teaching that does not cater adequately for the needs of the 130 pupils who are learning to play musical instruments. In science, a sizeable minority of lessons take place in non-specialist rooms, which restricts the range of learning activities and practical work. The work of pupils displayed in classrooms and around the school is good and well used to assist learning in many subjects.

94. In most subjects the learning resources are satisfactory and are well used to support pupils' learning. However, there is restricted access to computing facilities in many subjects that prevents pupils developing and practising their computing skills to enhance their work in those subjects. In science, a shortage of some larger pieces of equipment restricts the range of learning activities. The supply of books and the use of audio-visual equipment are at least satisfactory.

95. The library and resource area is well used particularly by pupils using their research skills. It cannot meet adequately the demands from pupils in respect of access to the Internet. It contains a good range of books in many subject areas, but there is a shortage of good reference materials for science and religious education.

96. Since the previous inspection the school has made satisfactory progress overall. It has maintained its previous strengths which were, particularly, the good quality of pupils' learning, the good relationships among pupils and with their teachers, and its warm and friendly atmosphere. Achievements in GCSE examinations have improved but not as fast as nationally. In respect of the key issues for action identified, the school has improved the way it formulates the school development plan and now ensures fuller participation by staff and governors; it has developed effective systems to monitor its plans, budgets and policies in order to assess their effect on the quality of education; provision for pupils with special educational needs has greatly improved under the good leadership of the special educational needs co-ordinator but the monitoring of pupils' individual education plans is not fully effective within some subjects; the provision of ICT and other learning resources in the library to encourage skills of personal research has improved and is satisfactory; the school quickly dealt effectively with the health and safety issues relating to accommodation. However, unsatisfactory progress has been made on the remaining key issue because the school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. The school has the capacity and the commitment to make further improvements.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

97. To improve further the good quality of education provided and to raise pupils' standards of attainment further, the school should:

- (1) raise standards in ICT, particularly in Key Stage 3, and increase the use of ICT to enhance pupils' learning in all other subjects;  
(Paragraphs: 13-15, 22, 36, 40, 43, 48, 94, 122, 127, 139, 147, 177, 178, 181, 183, 215, 216)
- (2) raise standards in religious education in Key Stage 4 by improving the quality of learning and through the provision of sufficient curricular time for the subject and the reporting of progress to parents;  
(Paragraphs: 16, 17, 213, 215)
- (3) ensure that the policy to develop literacy is implemented consistently among subjects to improve pupils' skills in writing;  
(Paragraphs: 21, 36, 41, 102, 106, 107, 142, 151, 161, 215)
- (4) further develop the systems to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning to ensure that the quality of work is more consistently good in all subjects;  
(Paragraphs: 68, 72, 82, 87, 151, 216, 217)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- monitor the use of individual education plans to ensure that pupils with special educational needs receive work of appropriate difficulty in all their subjects;  
(Paragraphs: 86, 96, 129, 182)
- as resources permit, improve the accommodation in science, music and physical education;  
(Paragraphs: 93, 135, 136, 200)
- review the allocation of curricular time for art and design in Key Stage 3 and physical education in Key Stage 4;  
(Paragraphs: 48, 143, 144, 209)
- improve the reporting to parents so that reports contain more helpful information about pupils' progress and what they need to do to improve;  
(Paragraphs: 76, 79, 133, 215)
- ensure that the school complies with the requirement for a daily act of collective worship;  
(Paragraphs: 46, 48, 58, 84, 96)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	103
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	54

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	18	45	35	1	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	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	391
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	20

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	16
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	62

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	19
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

### Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	7.6	School data	0.2
National comparative data	5.9	National comparative data	0.4

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
	2000	40	25	65

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	22	29	30
	Girls	17	21	17
	Total	39	50	47
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	63 (58)	78 (70)	72 (51)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	32 (15)	44 (38)	38 (15)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	27	30	30
	Girls	22	21	21
	Total	49	51	51
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	77 (63)	81 (71)	80 (50)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	33 (34)	33 (38)	41 (14)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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
	2000	40	37	77

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	21	40	40
	Girls	21	33	34
	Total	42	73	74
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	55 (44)	95 (93)	96 (95)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	School	40 (34.9)

per pupil	National	38.4 (38.0)
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*Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.*

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	390
Any other minority ethnic group	0

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	9	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	25.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.6

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	104

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.9
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	21
Key Stage 4	20.2

### **Financial information**

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1 017 236
Total expenditure	989 546
Expenditure per pupil	2 512
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	27 690

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	391
Number of questionnaires returned	94

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	39	52	9	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	44	7	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	23	63	11	1	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	56	13	7	2
The teaching is good.	34	54	5	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	49	15	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	60	37	2	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	46	44	6	1	3
The school works closely with parents.	27	56	12	3	2
The school is well led and managed.	46	41	4	0	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	52	4	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	54	9	0	5

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

### **ENGLISH**

98. Pupils' attainment in English is average overall.

99. National Curriculum test results for pupils aged fourteen were above the national average in 2000 and in line with levels achieved in schools with similar backgrounds, although boys performed better than girls in relation to national averages. The proportion of pupils attaining level 5 or higher was in line with the national average and the average for similar schools. Over the last six years there has been a downward trend in test results for pupils at the age of fourteen but, over the last three years, English results have improved more rapidly than the national trend. Recent test results have been a little below those in mathematics and science. In work seen during the inspection standards of writing are average. Pupils with special educational needs, including the small number for whom English is an additional language, make good progress. By the end of Year 9 pupils have made significant gains on their levels of attainment on entry to the school, which indicates good achievement in their first three years.

100. By the age of fourteen, achievement is good. Pupils talk effectively to one another when working in groups. Discussions in class are usually lively with many contributions from pupils of all levels of attainment. Pupils read demanding literature and grasp key details about character and plot, as seen in convincing diary entries for characters from George Orwell's 'Animal Farm' and imaginative additional chapters. They complete valuable work on aspects of the English language but their progress would be better if this was organised more consistently and methodically across classes and years. Despite some limitations in expression and language, much of the writing of lower attaining pupils is thoughtful and well presented. Good use is widely made of ICT sometimes to collect data but more often to organise and present work. Higher attaining pupils demonstrate good writing skills in meeting the demands of a variety of written tasks, including media work.

101. In GCSE English results for 2000 the number of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was above the national average. The average GCSE grade achieved by pupils was in line with the national average and above that achieved in schools with similar standards of prior attainment in the Key Stage 3 national tests. Results in English were similar to those in science and better than those in mathematics. Fewer pupils are entered for GCSE English literature than in most schools. Standards of work seen for pupils at the age of sixteen are average rather than good. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, maintain attainment levels in Years 10 and 11, indicating satisfactory achievement.

102. By the age of sixteen pupils of all attainment levels are able to plan, draft and re-draft lengthy stories, essays and articles. Written work is better structured than in earlier years and pupils have a clearer sense of audience. However, much of the writing in books lacks fluency and accuracy. In some instances middle and lower attaining pupils are not completing work. Many pupils find it hard to write well at length without first going through several stages of preparation and revision. This is an important area for development in the quest for raising standards. Higher attaining pupils' essays for literature often reveal a high level of scholarship in response to intellectually demanding questions.

103. Teaching and learning in English are good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teaching was good or better in about 66 per cent and very good in 20 per cent of lessons observed. In the best lessons teachers explain clearly what is to be learnt so that pupils fully understand the purpose behind what they are doing. They encourage pupils to take more responsibility for planning and making decisions, especially when they are working in groups. A good example of this was seen when groups of Year 9 pupils worked on identifying different strands of humour in a scene from Shakespeare's 'Twelfth Night', which they had watched previously on video. Teachers ensure that lessons have a brisk pace with plenty to challenge all pupils, including those with the highest attainment levels. Materials used for lessons with lower attaining pupils are chosen carefully to make a strong appeal at appropriate levels, as when Year 8 pupils compared and analysed the effectiveness of publicity brochures from local schools. Teachers set imaginative tasks which pupils enjoy doing. The best marking clearly indicates specific ways in which pupils can improve their writing and is a valuable extension to teaching in the classroom. Where teaching is less effective it sometimes lacks the detailed planning necessary to involve lower attaining pupils fully and they consequently lose interest and motivation. At times, teachers focus on lesson tasks without making clear what steps in learning are to be taken, leaving pupils uncertain about what they are doing. Occasionally teachers are not rigorous in securing the complete attention of all pupils before speaking to the class to ensure that everyone understands instructions and is aware of the information necessary for good learning.

104. The department has moved forward well in recent months. Well-qualified and committed staff are now working well together to raise standards in English. Schemes of work for pupils in Years 7 to 9 are being revised and should be completely in place by the end of the year. The departmental handbook has also been revised to clarify policies and procedures. Assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress have been improved and are now good. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection but only limited progress has been made on the numbers of pupils being entered for GCSE English literature.

105. The provision of a separate drama lesson for all pupils in Years 7 to 9 is a valuable addition to the curriculum but few take up this subject at GCSE level. Pupils throughout the school derive obvious enjoyment from extra-curricular drama activities such as school productions, workshops and theatre visits. Pupils have a very good record of success in public speaking competitions. The department makes good use of the learning resource centre and the ICT rooms to enrich the curriculum, although ICT is not yet formalised in schemes of work. The resource centre has improved since the last inspection and now has a full-time manager. There is still only a meagre provision of books and computers. There are very good links now with feeder primary schools, which help the continuity of pupils' progress in English.

106. Standards of literacy are satisfactory. Pupils often speak well in formal situations and their use of talk is very effective when working in small groups. Standards of reading are high for many pupils in the first three years. Reading is a popular activity and pupils of all attainment levels are happy to read aloud. Writing is satisfactory overall. It is unsatisfactory at times when it lacks accuracy in spelling and grammar and pupils use too narrow a range of expression in their written work. Despite this there are many good examples of pupils writing appropriately and effectively for a variety of purposes. Standards of presentation are usually good.

107. Across the curriculum there has been little development of the teaching of literacy skills. A committee of teachers from various subject areas has been recently formed, chaired by a member of the English department. English staff have received funding to enable them to gain experience of the National Literacy Strategy and, in particular, the teaching of the literacy hour, in primary schools. All staff have received an in service training day aimed at raising awareness of literacy teaching issues. As yet there has been no great impact upon teaching and learning in subject areas. In most subjects reading is restricted, although in mathematics levels of reading are sufficient to enable all pupils to meet the demands of texts, even though lower attaining pupils read slowly. In religious education there is some confident and accurate reading aloud but little evidence of reading for information. Few religious education books are borrowed from the resource centre. Written work often consists only of short pieces in many subjects such as mathematics, religious education and music. Good examples of extended writing do occur in the GCSE physical education course, the higher tier GCSE mathematics coursework and in art and design. Key words are displayed in a few subject areas but, even where they are, for example in mathematics classrooms, teachers seldom refer to them. There is a useful language skills programme in modern foreign languages, which has some links to English language. In religious education teachers introduce systematic work on technical vocabulary. Overall there is little evidence of a whole school literacy policy helping to raise standards.

## **MATHEMATICS**

108. Attainment in mathematics is above average at the end of Key Stage 3 when pupils reach the age of fourteen and average at the end of Key Stage 4 when they are sixteen. Pupils' achievements reflect the different levels of prior attainment of different year groups.

109. Results in the 2000 national tests in mathematics for pupils at the age of 14 were well above the national average for those attaining level 5 or higher. When compared with results achieved by pupils in schools of a similar nature, the school fares well once again, being above average. Using the comparison with similar schools as an indicator, pupils' results at level 5 or above in the 2000 national tests in mathematics were better than those achieved in English and science. Over the past four years there has been little variation in average scores obtained, but there is a marked difference between the results obtained by girls and boys, with the boys outperforming the girls by a significant amount, well in excess of the national situation.

110. Results in GCSE examinations in 2000 were average for both grades A\* to C and grades A\* to G. It is noticeable that in the examinations the boys outperformed the girls overall, and most significantly for the highest grades A\* and A, with the proportion of boys achieving these high standards being above the national average and equal to three times the proportion of girls. During the inspection such variation was not seen in the work of the above average pupils in Years 10 and 11. The results, however, compare unfavourably with English and science in terms of comparators involving performances of schools with similar populations.

111. Over recent years most pupils in Years 7 to 9 have made good progress in mathematics. This is confirmed by comparing test results at age 11 with those at age 14. This comparison shows that these pupils have achieved well and evidence from the inspection indicates that they are still doing so. The progress made in years 10 and 11 is satisfactory over time, and this again is clearly measured by comparing GCSE outcomes with the previous national tests at the age of fourteen.

112. Factors contributing to pupils' generally good achievement include teaching of good quality, effective procedures for assessment and the often exemplary attitudes and behaviour

of most pupils, whatever their prior attainment. This was confirmed through lesson observations during the inspection, speaking to pupils and from a scrutiny of their written work.

113. Most pupils are confident and competent with the majority of aspects of the mathematics programmes of study, including using and applying mathematics. Basic numeracy is well developed in mathematics lessons and on the whole pupils handle core number work efficiently, recalling and applying basic facts in a variety of situations. Standards of attainment, as seen during the inspection in lessons and in pupils' work, are well above average in the top groups, particularly in Years 9, 10 and 11. Elsewhere many pupils, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9 exceed expectations.

114. Throughout the department teaching is predominantly good. An example of very good teaching occurred in a lesson with high attaining Year 9 pupils. The teacher, whom pupils clearly respect and appreciate, having high expectations of success, began the lesson by challenging them to investigate patterns emerging from a series of applications of Pythagoras's theorem. The pupils responded very well using their knowledge of the theorem and their algebraic skills advantageously to offer conclusions very quickly. Their answers were articulate and well reasoned, worthy of pupils of much more maturity. The lesson then progressed to using the theorem in another context, that of co-ordinate geometry, and here the pupils quickly learned and applied the concepts involved, including visualising situations rather than relying upon drawings or other aids. When the teacher had confirmed that all pupils had understood fully the main theme, she presented even more demanding work to extend pupils' understanding further in this section many pupils spotted valid shortcut methods that they used well. The teacher concluded the lesson by reviewing what had been learned and set homework to consolidate and extend this learning. Hence the pupils learned well, made very good progress in a short time, were suitably challenged and enjoyed their work.

115. It is not only the highest attaining pupils who benefit from good teaching. In a class where a significant minority of the pupils are designated as having special educational needs, the teacher, being well aware of the range of prior attainment in the class, arranged the lesson's tasks so as to allow pupils to make progress at appropriate rates. This they did most enthusiastically, coping with the relatively complex non-practical aspects of probability in a good range of situations.

116. In most lessons teachers begin by telling pupils what they are expected to learn during the session. This usually focuses pupils' attention upon the tasks in hand, and along with good day-to-day assessment and verbal feedback enables them to gauge their progress as they work. Additionally the good self-assessment sheets used in the department encourage pupils to review and evaluate their own progress over time. In the best cases the pupils are expected to draw upon previous learning, use and apply it in new situations and then learn new material. Teachers nearly always provide a good range of activities so that lessons are divided sensibly into manageable sections that keep pupils interested and on task. The grouping of pupils according to attainment is used effectively, but within sets there is still a wide range of prior attainment. Through good planning and class management, opportunities are provided for all pupils to work at rates suited to their capabilities. In this way, high attaining pupils through to those with special educational learning needs are enabled to achieve well.

117. Because of the good teaching, pupils' learning, whatever their prior attainment, is likewise good overall. Most pupils are enthusiastic for the subject, as indicated during interviews, especially with older pupils. Such motivation and enjoyment of the subject do much to maintain a good rate of progress and to extend pupils' understanding and

knowledge. In a number of classes, pupils asked the teacher questions to confirm or extend their understanding, not just accepting the initial information. In other classes, as in Y11 groups in which pupils are developing their GCSE investigations, they work hard, calling upon and using a wide range of previous learning whilst taking the initiative for their actions and not making undue demands upon their teacher. This is good learning. Pupils are often given opportunities to enhance their learning through extra-curricular activities such as mathematical challenges and competitions and problem-solving days at Cheltenham racecourse.

118. Progress made by pupils with special educational needs is good. They benefit from well-planned lessons and teachers who understand their needs. Some also receive good assistance from learning support staff and, where applicable, through the application of their individual education plans.

119. All learning occurs in an orderly but lively environment. No lessons were observed where learning was adversely affected by unsatisfactory behaviour. Pupils' conduct and their attitudes to work are at least good; they respond well to teachers and they concentrate on their work.

120. The department is very well led and is clear about the progress it wishes to achieve. The quality of monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

121. Appropriate mathematical activity takes place within a number of subjects. In design and technology, for example, good individual discussions on measuring and accuracy of marking occur, some formulae are used in ICT, and a wide range of numerical aspects is well used to help pupils develop their work in science. In order to rationalise the teaching of aspects of mathematics across the curriculum and to obtain a measure of consistency in doing so the school is rightly developing a policy to guide and inform teachers. This is intended to help the development and application of pupils' numerical skills across all subjects and thus avoid confusion, which currently occurs among pupils, about which methods or terminology to use.

122. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Very few Key Stage 3 pupils now fail to realise their potential and monitoring procedures are rigorous and effective. There is insufficient use of ICT within mathematics lessons to improve standards further.

## **SCIENCE**

123. Attainment in science is good at the end of Key Stage 3, and satisfactory at the end of Key Stage 4.

124. In the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000, the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 or above was above the national average. The proportion reaching level 6 or above was well above the national average. The average point score based on all the pupils' levels was above average compared to the averages for all maintained schools and was also above average for similar schools. Over the past few years, boys have achieved considerably better results than girls at this stage. Results in science were better than those in English but not as good as in mathematics. Test results in science have fluctuated in the last five years in line with the different levels of attainment of successive year groups. In 1996, results were below the national average rising to above the average in 1998, falling below again in 1999 before rising to the current levels.

125. In the GCSE examinations in 2000 the proportion of pupils gaining at least one grade at A\*–C in a science subject was above the national average for all maintained schools and was satisfactory when compared with similar schools. The department's results have risen

steadily since 1997, again representing an improvement since the last inspection. Boys achieved better results than girls. GCSE results in science were similar to those achieved in English and better than those achieved in mathematics.

126. Inspection evidence shows that pupils are achieving similar standards to those obtained by pupils last year in the national tests for fourteen year-olds. Current results are a considerable improvement compared with those at the time of the last inspection. Standards are now above those expected for pupils of the same age nationally. Most pupils have at least a satisfactory knowledge of the topics they are studying and many have a better understanding than expected for their age. For example, pupils of all levels of attainment have a good knowledge of the nature of electricity and use symbols to draw and explain about series circuits. A Year 8 group made good progress in understanding photosynthesis, when by practical work they were able to test a leaf for starch and discover the factors that affect the process. Though pupils make satisfactory progress overall in developing experimental and investigative skills, these skills are not as strong as other knowledge-based areas of science. This is because there are too few opportunities for them to make their own predictions, to define problems based on scientific knowledge and understanding or to plan their own investigations. Pupils are generally good at carrying out experiments planned by the teacher, are able to record observations, take accurate measurements and present data in the form of charts and graphs.

127. By the end of Key Stage 3, most middle and lower attaining pupils, including those with special education needs, are achieving satisfactory and often good standards. However, there is a small, but significant, number who are failing to achieve their full potential in tests. Generally, the department supports the improvement of pupils' literacy skills, with most using scientific terminology confidently. The presentation of written work is good among higher attaining pupils, but is unsatisfactory for middle to lower attaining pupils, with many keeping records of work that are neither clear nor set out effectively for later revision. Numeracy skills are good overall. Pupils of all levels of attainment have good skills in drawing graphs and higher attaining pupils can use graphs to extract information and make predictions. Pupils' ICT skills are poor because there are insufficient computers available.

128. Most pupils' attainment is in line with the national average when they start the school as eleven year-olds. From the work seen during the inspection, most achieve well by the time they reach fourteen in relation to this, but then slip back to making only satisfactory progress by the time they reach sixteen. The current Year 10 have achieved higher than Year 11 who were affected by staffing problems prior to September 2000 which led to weaknesses in the quality of teaching at that time. Teachers are trying to ameliorate the situation, but standards are currently no more than satisfactory overall showing a slight drop over attainment in recent GCSE examinations. This is against the school trend of improvement. By the end of Key Stage 4, most pupils understand the process of catalytic cracking and why this process is important in the petrochemical industry. Higher attaining pupils understand the chemistry of hydrocarbons and can explain how the burning of these chemicals affects the environment. Others know the laws of reflection and refraction of light rays, understand the meanings of total internal reflection and critical angle whilst higher attaining pupils can explain the use of optical fibres in medicine and communication. Practical skills improve and pupils are able to draw conclusions that are consistent with the evidence seen, explaining them using scientific knowledge and understanding. Investigative skills such as making predictions, planning and evaluating their own investigations are satisfactory.

129. In Key Stage 4, most middle and lower attaining pupils and those with special education needs continue to achieve standards that are in line with, or better than might be expected of them. As in Key Stage 3, a small number of these pupils in some classes are achieving less than might be expected as the tasks set are either too demanding or because

they cannot relate the work to everyday life. There is a small number of pupils with special educational needs who are failing to reach their full potential. This is a result of one or more of the following reasons; firstly, some teachers do not have an adequate working knowledge of pupils' individual education plans; secondly, there is an unfulfilled need for additional support in some lessons; thirdly, work is not always modified to suit their needs; and finally, there is insufficient liaison between the science and special educational needs departments to ensure that support staff are adequately prepared prior to the lesson, which would make them more effective. Whilst higher attaining pupils make good progress, this could be further improved by providing more opportunities for pupils to think critically about the subject by carrying out extended independent research and by tackling more difficult data analysis problems. Overall, pupils attain equally well in two of the attainment targets: life processes and living things and materials and their properties. Attainment is slightly weaker in experimental and investigative science and in physical processes.

130. Pupils' attitudes and responses to science and their behaviour are good. Pupils in Key Stage 3 are enthusiastic experimenters and see science as a journey of discovery. They try out new ideas and techniques and keen to pose questions. Good relationships lead to effective collaboration in practical groups. Pupils in Key Stage 4 have a less positive attitude and a few lack real enthusiasm, though the will to broaden their knowledge and skills is high. Pupils in all years are good listeners, but their responses often lack fluency and they are short on scientific explanations.

131. The quality of teaching is good overall and ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. Though teaching was good at both key stages most of the very good teaching as well as the small amount of unsatisfactory teaching were found at Key Stage 3. The range in the quality of teaching means that not all pupils have the same experience of science as they pass through the school. There is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and insufficient sharing of good practice. The difference in teaching quality between lessons produces marked differences in pupils' responses. The most effective teaching occurs when the teacher's good knowledge and expertise combine with high expectations, enthusiasm and effective planning. These give the pupils confidence and they respond positively and try hard. In these better lessons, teachers share the lesson's aims with the class, challenge the pupils with carefully constructed open-ended questions to explore understanding and to make them think critically. This happened in a top group in a Year 10 lesson exploring the recycling of nutrients in an ecosystem and in particular the carbon cycle. The pace of work was good so that learning was effective and progress good. Unsatisfactory teaching is characterised by low expectations, failure to check pupils' prior knowledge and understanding, slow pace and insufficient learning. In some lessons that were taught satisfactorily, pupils were too passive so they did not learn through experiences and progress was rather slow.

132. Significant changes in the leadership and management of the department have taken place very recently. These indicate the potential capacity to effect necessary changes and improvements. The new head of department has a good understanding of the department's current strengths and weaknesses and is drawing up suitable plans to tackle underachievement and to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning. Another member of the staff was appointed to the department twelve months ago and he together with the other staff share a commitment to raise standards in science further.

133. There has been insufficiently rigorous emphasis upon planning and upon monitoring and evaluation to raise standards in recent times, but this is changing. A new and better scheme of work has been introduced at Key Stage 3. Attention now needs to be focussed on improving schemes of work at Key Stage 4, making reference to resources, assessment opportunities and provision for higher and lower attainers. Reports to parents, though containing detail about pupil's attitude and effort, do not give sufficient detail about their scientific skills, knowledge and understanding or how pupils can improve these.

134. The laboratory technician provides good support to the teaching of science. In general there is adequate basic laboratory equipment but there are shortages of larger pieces of equipment such as, oscilloscopes, trolleys, an environmental monitoring system, potometers and refrigeration facilities. Shortages in resources for ICT and a lack of textbooks at Key Stages 3 and 4 restrict the progress of pupils.

135. The provision of laboratory accommodation is inadequate, resulting in 28 per cent of lessons over a two-week cycle not being taught in laboratories. This restricts the range of practical activities that can be attempted by these classes. The existing accommodation is generally good and the quality and quantity of pupils' work on display enhances the learning environment.

136. Overall there has been generally good improvement since the last inspection. Test and GCSE examination results have improved. The quality of teaching and learning which were both sound are now good. Assessment and recording procedures have improved in that there is now a centralised computer system to allow for better tracking of pupils. Pupils are more aware of the National Curriculum level to which they are working than they were previously. At the time of the last inspection, several classes were taught in non-specialist accommodation; this now occurs for 28 per cent of classes over a two-week cycle and indicates a worsening situation. Other issues raised such as the quality of marking, lots of traditional practical work with insufficient emphasis on investigative approach and insufficient resources, remain much the same.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

137. Attainment is above average at the end of both key stages. GCSE results have been consistently well above average although the number of entrants is usually low. In 2000, over 70 per cent achieved A\*-C grades but pupils' average grade in the subject was lower than their average grade in other subjects. No pupils gained the highest A\* or A grades. The results represent a considerable improvement since the last inspection.

138. Attainment in lessons observed was above average for pupils aged fourteen. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils exercise good control over technique in the use of colour, line tone, shape and form. Pupils benefit from good opportunities to draw from direct observation as well as adapting and manipulating the styles of established artists. After consideration of the work of Picasso, for example, Year 8 pupils were able to draw portraits of each other and then re-worked the image in the cubist style. One lower achieving pupil worked with care and interest. He combined colours well to produce a successful outcome. A higher achieving

pupil interpreted the same theme with understanding and individuality. Pupils understood the rationale behind the exercise. Throughout the key stage pupils gain experience and confidence in using a variety of artistic media including pencil, pastels, textured materials and ceramics. The recent introduction of ceramics to the curriculum has helped pupils to develop their three-dimensional work. Interesting examples of work using this medium were seen in a Year 9 class in which pupils had extended a topic on ethnic art into a ceramic realisation of their designs for a mask.

139. Attainment for pupils aged sixteen is above average. Pupils build on earlier experiences to produce work with a greater degree of individuality. For example, a Year 10 pupil was using well-developed observational drawing skills to develop a personal response to a natural forms stimulus. Her subject was interpreted and developed through pencil, watercolours, pastels and collage. The range and quality of work produced by most Year 11 pupils are good. Stimulating material is drawn from a variety of sources including the Internet. Limited access to computers restricts pupils' use of ICT to enhance their work during lesson time. Recent visits to the Tate and Tate Modern galleries have increased pupils' enthusiasm for critical studies work. Many pupils are able to give a sensitive evaluation of the works of, for example, Georgia O'Keefe and Picasso.

140. Achievement at both key stages is good. Pupils of all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in understanding and developing the concepts and techniques that form the basis of art and design and are consequently able to apply them with increasing sophistication. Year 9 pupils at the beginning of a project on 'pop-art', for example, were able to extend their earlier work to improve a traced image with added treatment of line and colour. Whilst some lower attaining pupils did not work with care and patience many others were able to add appropriate detail to the work. By the end of Key Stage 4, most pupils are able to work in a more independent way and bring a much greater personal response to a project. Pupils' progress is slightly hindered because sketchbooks are not used regularly to record the development of their artistic progress.

141. Pupils enjoy work in art and design and this contributes to the positive atmosphere seen in lessons. Initially high noise levels when pupils enter the room subside as pupils become engaged with the task and most pupils work with care and concentration. Many pupils have sufficient interest to continue their work during after school sessions.

142. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils receive clear explanations of the work and the lesson's objectives. Positive working relationships contribute to the effective management of the wide range of practical activities seen in lessons. Wherever possible the work is linked to the work of established artists and pupils are provided with appropriate resources and stimulus material. Occasionally some lessons do not start in a positive manner and consequently pupils take time to settle to work. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory but is not well planned.

143. The management of the department is satisfactory. Procedures for monitoring the work of the department are satisfactory. The curriculum has been well planned and offers a broad range of artistic opportunities. The amount of curricular time allocated to art and design is less than average; this, together with a combination of block timetabling with design and technology and a two-week timetable cycle, results in some lack of continuity across Key Stage 3. Schemes of work are matched to National Curriculum requirements and projects usefully promote the social, moral and cultural development of pupils. Procedures for assessment are currently being revised to bring them into line with new National Curriculum requirements. Pupils are not fully aware of what level they are working at and what they have to do to improve. The development plan is not precise enough to form a good basis for moving the department forward. The one computer situated in the art and design area is

unreliable and not sufficient for ICT skills to be used more widely in pupils' work. Health and safety procedures are not yet strong enough to cover the increased use of ceramic materials and processes made possible by the new kiln.

144. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. There has been a marked improvement in GCSE results and the art and design curriculum has been broadened to include ceramic work. The low allocation of curricular time identified in the last report has not been resolved.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

145. Attainment is above average at the end of both key stages.

146. GCSE results for all design and technology subjects were above average in 2000. They were a slight reduction on the figure for 1999 but represent an overall improvement since the last inspection. When the results of each component are considered separately, there is a wide variation in the performance of each subject within design and technology. Food technology and graphic products achieve well above average results and have shown a rising trend since the last inspection. Resistant materials, however, achieved results well below the average and these have declined over the last three years. Inspection evidence is that few of the higher attaining pupils opt to study this course. Girls achieve far better results than boys. Comparative figures show that pupils achieve better in technology than in many of their other GCSE entries.

147. In lessons seen, attainment at the age of fourteen is above average. Well-structured project booklets assist pupils of all abilities to understand the individual stages of designing and making. Pupils quickly become familiar with design processes and produce a range of ideas to solve design problems. Higher attaining pupils express their ideas with good drawings of two and three-dimensional figures and give good reasons for selecting a particular outcome. For example, one pupil in a Year 9 resistant materials group had recorded a range of ideas in a well presented folder, produced independent research into existing devices and used ICT skills to improve presentation, giving her a clear plan of action for the making stage of her machine. In general, however, pupils' research skills are inadequate. Much research relies on cuttings from magazines and information from textbooks. The use of ICT is insufficient in most lessons to extend pupils' learning. Where computers are used, either for gathering information or for improving the presentation of work, it is usually because pupils use them at home.

148. Attainment at the age of 16 is above average. Pupils in food technology and graphic products lessons compile project folders with evidence of good independent research. Pupils in a Year 11 graphic products group, for example, were able to use both computer and hand drawn techniques to present data, analyse existing products and compile questionnaires. One pupil with special needs was able to support a good standard of hand-drawn graphics with competent use of the computer to compile an evaluation of her work. Groups that do not have timetabled access to the computer room have less opportunity to use these skills in their work. Pupils in resistant materials groups undertake ambitious projects and develop good making skills. Project work, however, is not always supported by appropriate research and development work. One higher attaining pupil in a Year 11 resistant materials group was able to show that he could conduct detailed research, analyse the results and apply the information to his mechanical toy project. Others in the group were able to work well in a practical situation but did not produce design folders of any complexity.

149. Achievement is good at both key stages and pupils of all capabilities make good progress. Design projects are carefully structured to encourage pupils to think. For example,

Year 7 pupils in a computer control lesson made good progress in developing a simple program to control a buggy. Pupils with special educational needs in the group achieved a successful outcome. The progress of pupils is aided by thorough procedures for checking and assessment that include a system of setting targets for individual pupils. Progress is greatest when pupils have developed sufficient competence to work on their own to enable them to make a significant personal contribution to a project as, for example, those pupils in a Year 9 food technology lesson who had gathered information from the Internet and CD-ROM to support their work on 'foods of the world'.

150. Attitudes to the subject are good. Pupils enjoy technological work and respond in a positive way to teachers and their peers. They are prepared to discuss their work with each other and with teachers. This leads to a purposeful working atmosphere in most lessons.

151. Teaching and learning are good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teachers have established good relationships with pupils and employ good techniques of individual negotiation to ensure that pupils' interest and progress are maintained. Clearly explained lesson objectives ensure that pupils understand what is expected of them as they begin practical work. Teachers effectively exploit the social context of a design project to promote the social, moral and cultural development of pupils. For example, projects involving food from other countries or developing machines to help African countries each serve to develop a greater awareness of the needs of others. Each project identifies opportunities for pupils to use technical vocabulary but these are rarely implemented in lessons. There are no displays of key words, for example. There is no formal system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning to identify and promote good practice.

152. The leadership and management of the department are good. Schemes of work have been thoroughly revised to match National Curriculum requirements. The common approach to the teaching of designing and making is supported by detailed project booklets. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is generally broad and balanced; pupils get experience of electronics and computer control. There is no opportunity, however, for pupils to continue with these at Key Stage 4. Textiles technology is not taught at either key stage. Computer-aided design and manufacture is not fully integrated into design projects. There is a shortage of suitable resources to supplement the use of the computer-controlled vinyl cutter. Effective use is made of the elderly suite of BBC computers for control technology but there is a lack of suitable hardware and software for a greater range of purposes. Accommodation, whilst in need of redecoration, is adequate for present needs. Colourful and well-presented displays in food technology help to create a stimulating learning atmosphere and support pupils' work with relevant information. Some outdated woodworking machinery needs replacement with equipment that would be used to greater effect for teaching to National Curriculum requirements. The amount of technician time available to the department is insufficient to enable effective deployment in support of teaching.

153. Since the last inspection there has been an improvement in food technology and graphic products examination results and a decline in results for resistant materials. The department has maintained the good standards noted in the last report.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

154. Attainment is in line with national averages at the end of both key stages. Pupils' achievements are good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4.

155. Recent GCSE results at A\*-C grades have varied from below to close to the national average. In 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was below the national average. Very few pupils attain the highest grades. However, a marked improvement in results occurred in 2000. When compared with other GCSE subjects within the school geography results have been below the average but with a trend of improvement in line with the national trend. Recent A\*-G results have also improved and are now better than the national average.

156. Most pupils in class attain levels that are broadly in line with the national average at the end of Key Stage 3 and 4. However, standards are generally higher at Key Stage 3 than 4 where a recent good staffing appointment has had more influence on learning. Progress overall is satisfactory and often good.

157. By the age of fourteen, pupils have a competent grounding in geographical skills. Most can use and interpret maps well but have insufficient practice in plotting, presenting and analysing statistical data graphically. Pupils' knowledge of place is satisfactory but their understanding of spatial patterns is unsatisfactory.

158. By the age of sixteen, pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of physical and human processes such as river processes and management and models of urban land use but they lack a confident understanding of these. The best individual investigatory project work for GCSE is based on local fieldwork and is of generally good quality.

159. Gifted and talented pupils achieve well and are suitably stretched with higher-level work. Low attainers make satisfactory progress but need more manageable materials and tasks to bring the best out of them. Support for pupils with statements of special educational need is good and they make generally good progress.

160. Teaching overall is good. It ranges from satisfactory to very good at Key Stage 3. It is good and sometimes very good at Key Stage 4 where only specialists teach geography. Teachers work conscientiously and with real commitment in support of pupils. Classroom management and control are consistently very good and ensure high levels of discipline that provide a good base for learning. Lessons are generally very well planned and built on a firm foundation of knowledge with stress on the development of understanding and skills. They are well structured and have a clear focus that provides a logical and helpful framework for learning. There is considerable emphasis placed on pupils self knowledge of their learning through an investigatory and enquiry approach to studies; this is good practice. Lessons are often practical and include demonstrations that, together with the effective use of visual aids in the form of video extracts, sketch maps and diagrams, clarify the lesson's aims and have a significant impact on the quality of pupils' learning. This was well exemplified in a Year 8 lesson in which pupils gained a good understanding of the role of energy in the formation of river landforms and, in particular, the significance of the processes of erosion, transportation and deposition. An excellent video extract identified these processes very well and consolidated pupils' learning through a range of carefully constructed sketch maps and diagrams showing where and why these processes occur within the river profile. Samples of

rock showed the effect on the load in the river splendidly.

161. Learning is closely related to the quality of teaching. The good pace of pupil's work and their intellectual effort and interest in the subject are particularly significant in ensuring productive learning. Learning is hindered slightly when there is insufficient consolidation and re-enforcement of the main teaching points visually on the board. The absence of a standing world map in the specialist teaching room prevents pupils gaining a greater understanding of geographical patterns and place. There is little use of local examples and maps in teaching especially at Key Stage 3. Although key words are well integrated into pupils' learning they rarely consolidate these in written work to produce more extended pieces of writing. The current marking policy does not ensure that pupils have a precise understanding of standards of work achieved.

162. Physical geography fieldwork undertaken locally and in Southern England is a recent innovation that greatly enriches pupils' studies and stimulates interest in the subject. However, there is a lack of fieldwork to enhance pupils' understanding of human geography topics at Key Stage 3. The satellite weather station is a very good and is well used as a learning facility. The development of ICT to assist pupils' learning is satisfactory.

163. Pupils' attitudes to their studies are good. They work conscientiously on tasks set and concentrate well in lessons. Behaviour is good and often very good. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good and constructive. When working in groups, pupils relate very well to and support one another. Oral work in the form of individual responses to the teacher's questioning is usually good and whole class discussions are satisfactory.

164. The subject is effectively led and managed. Since the appointment of a new head of department four terms ago the department has made very considerable strides with improved documentation and practice across a range of areas. The department has the desire and capacity to improve pupils' standards in external examinations. Accommodation in the specialist room is satisfactory with very colourful and attractive wall displays providing a productive learning environment. There is limited space for investigatory and resource-based learning. Resources are good overall but there are a few shortfalls such as the need for more local ordnance survey maps, a standing display map in the specialist room, more access to computers and budget for fieldwork.

165. Improvement since the previous inspection is good but the department needs to improve GCSE results further.

## **HISTORY**

166. Attainment is well above average at the end of both key stages. Pupils' achievements are very good throughout the school. Progress is good or very good among pupils of all levels of attainment.

167. Recent GCSE A\*-C grades have been consistently well above the national average with the 2000 results high at 83 per cent. When compared with other GCSE subjects within the school pupils taking history perform extremely well. Recent A\*-G results have also been well above the national average with all pupils passing.

168. By the age of fourteen, pupils have a very good grounding in historical skills. They have a good understanding of the main events of the periods studied and appreciate their significance in the overall context of study. Their knowledge of chronology is satisfactory. Pupils demonstrate an ability to identify the nature of source material very well indeed.

169. By the age of sixteen, pupils have further developed their skills in using historical evidence in analysing the reason for and results of events studied. They are very confident in undertaking historical enquiry. Coursework completed for GCSE displays very good and in-depth critical evaluation of topics studied. Gifted and talented pupils work to exceptionally high standards while average attainers also produce work of high quality. Pupils with statements of special educational needs receive helpful support from learning assistants while low attainers generally are given good support the class teacher so that they generally progress well.

170. Teaching and learning are at least good in both key stages and there is much very good teaching when a specialist teaches the subject. Teachers are very committed, caring and supportive of pupils. Relationships are very productive and classroom management built on this trust is strength. The best teaching has clear and manageable aims shared with pupils so that learning requirements are clearly understood; detailed and imaginative planning which ensures that lessons are built on a firm contextual foundation; dynamic, enthusiastic lively and challenging presentation which develops pupils' interest in the topic taught; and brisk pace with very high expectations. In these lessons, the teacher has a very competent knowledge and detailed understanding of the topic taught, as in a Year 8 lesson on Elizabethan England where portraits were used as historical evidence and evaluated for their reliability. This was introduced by expertly using a range of photographic sources to identify the activity, the type of class involved and whether a town or country pursuit. This was consolidated visually using the overhead projector and led to a discussion of the Armada Portrait with pupils analysing the face, dress, body language, and setting as a historical source. The form of presentation clarified lesson aims and had a significant positive impact on the quality of pupils' learning.

171. Occasionally teachers strive too hard to inform pupils when the pupils are well able to analyse the situation for themselves. In a few lessons there is scope for more group activity to provide a variety of learning approaches. In some low attainment classes pupils did not always quickly comprehend what precisely was to be learnt particularly when tasks could not be completed within the time available.

172. Literacy skills are well developed among low attainers because they receive good support in improving their writing skills.

173. A very good fieldwork programme is suitably integrated as part of the history curriculum and greatly enriches pupils' understanding of the subject. Pupils make satisfactory and occasionally good use ICT skills to extend their work and to improve its presentation.

174. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive and most display a real interest and enjoyment in their work. They work well, are attentive and generally want to please. They display a real pride in their work and the presentation and quality of intellectual effort is very high. Pupils respond very well to teachers' questions and produce oral and written work of a high standard. They enjoy very good relationships with their teachers and in many classes, particularly at Key Stage 4 a real rapport is evident that contributes very noticeably to pupils' progress.

175. Leadership of the department is excellent. Standards have improved markedly since the head of department was appointed two years ago. The subject is becoming increasingly popular as a GCSE option. Documents are of good quality, well prepared and presented with a clear focus. Day to day marking is excellent; teachers' comments are very helpful in guiding pupils' learning and have a noticeable effect on pupils' progress. The formal monitoring and evaluation of the effect of teaching on pupils learning is beginning to prove effective in sharing good practice. Resources are generally good but there are a few shortfalls such as the need for a textbook for each pupil studying at Key Stage 3 and better access to computers. Wall displays provide an attractive learning environment.

176. Very good improvements have occurred since the previous inspection. The appointment of a full-time subject specialist has transformed the department so that the many shortcomings identified previously have been dealt with successfully. Performance at GCSE was below the national average and is now well above; the low achievement of pupils in around 50 per cent of lessons at Key Stage 3 has been replaced by most pupils working at standards above the national average. Analytical skills and understanding, a weakness of the course previously, is now a strength. The lack of attention to curricular development is now rectified with very detailed and thoughtful programmes of study and schemes of work, which are effective in meeting the requirements of curriculum 2000.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

177. Attainment in ICT is below average by the end of Key Stage 3, when pupils are aged fourteen. At the end of KS4, when pupils are sixteen, attainment in GCSE information studies, studied by just over 33 per cent of pupils, is well above the national average. In 2000, pupils' average GCSE grades were higher than their average grades in other subjects. For the remainder of pupils at KS4 standards are below average.

178. Standards in classes in years 7 to 9, where ICT is taught as a distinct subject are below national expectations. Too few pupils can judge the best way to use the technology that is available, or whether to use it at all. Mechanical skills of some of the communications aspects of the programmes of study are satisfactorily developed, but pupils' depth of understanding is limited, as is their experience of other strands of the subject, which are dealt with inadequately. Whilst most pupils appear to be confident when using computers they often lack competence in using them effectively.

179. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' work in the information studies course is good within the broader requirements of the course, but the quality of use of aspects of ICT, such as word processing is below expectations. Many basic requirements of this application were not seen in pupils' work during the inspection.

180. Currently the school is undergoing a major reappraisal of ICT provision, its organisation, curriculum and its management.

181. The use of ICT in other subjects of the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Too few pupils are making sufficient use of the technology available to enhance learning or to achieve higher standards in many subjects. There are, however, areas of good practice. In geography and history, good use is made of the range of hardware and software available to them. In English, pupils often use the computers in the school's ICT rooms for word processing in the main; this is beneficial for the pupils involved particularly in redrafting their work and improving the presentation of it. Independent use of ICT by pupils is encouraged and some pupils do make good use of facilities within the library or the main ICT rooms. In design and technology, aspects of control are taught, but this is done using old technology so that pupils do not progress rapidly. Overall, not all pupils are receiving their entitlement to the full range of ICT

activities.

182. In lessons observed pupils were generally well behaved. However, because of the tightly constrained time-consuming tasks presented, pupils made slow progress; the higher attainers in particular became disinterested in their work. Lower attaining pupils and some of those with special educational needs found the tasks difficult to comprehend unless they received much support from their teacher. Plans are being made to address this problem. Current teaching and learning within the ICT specific lessons, although constrained by the already existing schemes of work, are satisfactory. Pupils are made fully aware of what is required of them at the beginning of lessons and this engages them early and enables many of them to gauge their own progress. They are well supported throughout and the lesson is clearly summarised at the end in an attempt to confirm what has been learned.

183. At the time of the previous inspection there were several weaknesses highlighted, and some of these have been, for the most part, addressed. Progress is, however, unsatisfactory. Whilst the accommodation is now much better than before and the number of computers available in the school is good, deficiencies still remain. Too little use is made of ICT to improve standards across the curriculum, the competence of all staff to use ICT effectively is limited overall and the current Key Stage 3 assessment procedures are still insufficiently rigorous.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

184. In 2000, attainment at the age of fourteen, as measured by teachers' assessments was slightly above the national average in French and German.

185. GCSE results at grades A\*-C in French, in 2000 were well above the national average; pupils' average grades were much higher than in most other subjects. In German, GCSE results at grades A\*-C were above the national average; pupils' average grades were in line with their average grades in other subjects.

186. Pupils' work in lessons and in a representative sample of books and folders showed them to be working at expected levels relative to their prior attainment and age by the end of Key Stage 3 and by the end of Key Stage 4. Pupils of all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, with English as an additional language and those who are gifted or talented make at least satisfactory progress.

187. In lessons in both key stages, the teachers spoke mainly in French or German, ensuring that pupils learned well because they heard and spoke the language for as much of the lesson as was possible. Pupils' achievement by the end of both key stages is good. Interactive whole class teaching checked and developed pupils' understanding through skilled teacher questioning and pupils' own questions. Lively teaching, enjoyable activities and the exploitation of opportunities for humour led to real engagement by the pupils. Planning was very good. Typically, a well-planned sequence of varied learning activities, supported by the skilled use of visual aids, progressively reduced the teacher's input and pupils relied on reference materials to generate independent work and good learning.

188. In French, the quality of teaching observed was good and occasionally very good. In a good Year 11 lesson, careful analysis of a specimen examination question tested and extended pupils' understanding of the required skills and technique, and contributed significantly to the quality of the answers they wrote. In a very good Year 9 lesson, pupils conducted an authentic group task involving the preparation of written diaries, posters and videoed dialogues to be sent to a partner class in a Bordeaux school. Key elements had been prepared as homework and a suitably tight deadline generated focus and a sense of urgency.

Pupils' good organisational and interpersonal skills led to efficient sharing of tasks and an atmosphere of collective responsibility and mutual support, which enhanced their work and learning. Comparison of life in Winchcombe and Bordeaux contributed to their cultural awareness. Acting out exchange visit scenarios generated enjoyment and consolidated learning. The group who word-processed their diary on computers in the languages workroom learned how to type accents on words. In a very good lesson with a high attaining Year 11 group, planned preparation at home and skilful teaching enabled pupils to speculate in French on the comparative facilities in a French city and a city in a developing country. In a lesson graded outstanding, skilful revision and extension of skills using visual aids and language games prepared the lowest attaining class in Year 9 for a difficult writing and listening activity, with minimal use of English by teacher or pupils. Pupils worked hard, enjoyed the lesson, readily contributed well-pronounced short inputs in French, either in response to the teacher or spontaneously, and efficiently produced written descriptions of individuals. Their reading out of these constituted the major part of the final listening activity, following initial examples from the teacher. The class's level of participation, sustained concentration and standard of French were well above what is usually achieved with similar pupils. A well-conceived homework activity reinforced and extended learning through practice of reading and writing skills. Behaviour in most lessons was very good, any potentially unsatisfactory behaviour was quickly and calmly checked.

189. In German, the quality of teaching observed was good and occasionally very good. In a very good Year 10 lesson, logically sequenced speaking, reading and listening activities led to pairs preparing a dialogue involving the organisation of a trip to the cinema. At the end of this, most pupils were able to perform the dialogue from memory with satisfactory pronunciation. In other lessons, planning was equally rigorous, but pupils found the work difficult, and although clear learning and progress occurred, the independent spoken language produced was hesitant unless they relied substantially on reference materials. Homework reinforced and practised the language and learning of classwork activity. One imaginative homework task incorporated a research element with the option of using the Internet. High standards of learning homework were insisted upon and helped pupils to improve, with re-tests in pupils' own time where test results were unsatisfactory. Pupils worked hard in their lessons, always behaving well, on task and striving to succeed.

190. Leadership and management are good. The head of department is a very good role model in terms of classroom practice, as befits his Advanced Skills Teacher status. He works constructively with colleagues to develop their teaching. The departmental development plan contains clear aims and objectives with a strong focus on pupils' achievement.

191. Provision is good as is evidenced by the quality of accommodation, display and availability of textbooks and photocopied resources. A particular strength is the opportunity offered to the most able 60–70 per cent of pupils in Years 8 and 9 to study two foreign languages. Extra-curricular provision including trips and exchanges is also a strength. The department makes very constructive use of the small amount of available foreign language assistant time.

192. Good individual records of assessment are kept for all pupils. The records for pupils in Key Stage 4 allow for the tracking of pupils' progress towards predicted grades. However, implementation of the departmental marking policy is inconsistent and most feedback to pupils is brief. Where formative feedback is good, it relates performance to National Curriculum levels or examination grade criteria, gives indications for future improvement and explains points of language. Procedures for ensuring consistency of teachers' assessment in Key Stage 3 are satisfactory but there is insufficient sharing of criteria with pupils to promote self-assessment and the setting of individual targets for pupils.

193. Satisfactory improvement has occurred since the last inspection. Standards of teaching overall have improved. The number of pupils who will not be entered for GCSE in French or German is being significantly reduced. Procedures for development planning are much more systematic. A suitable policy for the use of ICT is developing.

## **MUSIC**

194. Standards of attainment in music are above national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

195. The teachers' assessments for fourteen-year-old pupils in 2000 indicated standards of attainment above national expectations. Current standards in work seen are also above national expectations for fourteen-year-olds. The pupils perform well on keyboards and percussion instruments; they can hold independent parts in ensembles keeping well in time with each other. About 30 per cent of the pupils also have instrumental lessons with visiting teachers from the Gloucestershire music service. These lessons have a positive effect upon performance standards. The pupils' compositions show a rich variety of styles, they mix acoustic and electronic sounds effectively, explore texture and timbre and show familiarity with various composition techniques. Listening skills are well developed, the pupils can discuss and appraise the music they hear, for example, criticising each other's compositions in a constructive manner.

196. There have been no entries for GCSE music for the past three years. At present there is one GCSE group of seven pupils in Year 11. Overall standards of attainment are close to national expectations with some pupils achieving above and some below national expectations. However the number is too small for valid comparisons to be made with national averages.

197. Taking into account the prior attainment of the pupils on entry the level of achievement in both key stages is good. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and there are no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls.

198. The quality of teaching and learning at both Key Stages 3 and 4 is very good. Nearly 75 per cent of the classroom lessons seen were very good and the remainder were good. Most of the instrumental lessons seen were good and some were very good; no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and instrumental skills, which they use most effectively both for demonstrating and performing with pupils. For example, in a Year 11 lesson the teacher sang the pupils' compositions while two pupils accompanied, one on guitar and one on piano. Lessons are well planned with a good variety of activities. Expectations are high and, combined with open-ended tasks, result in good standards of work. However, worksheets do not always take account of the needs of particular groups of pupils. The work is well graded and pupils are given a lot of individual attention; this is an important factor in the good progress made by pupils with special educational needs. The teaching makes good use of resources, for example Year 11 pupils use ICT to notate their compositions; the study of Javanese music by a Year 7 class involved

the use of video, photographs, paintings and costumes. The management of pupils is very good and this results in a good learning atmosphere in which pupils work independently, or in groups, most effectively and productively. Good progress is evident from year group to year group with performances and compositions showing increased skill and maturity. Assessment is systematic and well linked to National Curriculum levels with pupils made aware of the criteria by which they are assessed.

199. The department is very well led. The head of department has achieved much since her appointment two years ago after a period of staffing problems. Since the last inspection the quality of teaching has improved in both key stages; the GCSE course now takes place in curriculum time; the take-up for instrumental teaching has been significantly increased and is now well above the national average.

200. The accommodation for music is unsatisfactory. The main room provides a very pleasant environment for learning and is well organised but the department lacks adequate storage and spaces for instrumental teaching and group-work. Groups of pupils have to work in the corridor and instrumental teachers have to work in a tiny medical room with hardly enough space for two pupils.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

201. Teachers' assessments in 2000 for pupils aged fourteen years were in line with the national average, and these are confirmed by the work seen in classes.

202. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is average. GCSE results at grades A\* - C in 2000 were in line with the national average; all pupils who entered the examination gained at least grade G. Girls performed better than boys in this examination. Pupils' results in physical education were below those in most of the other subjects they studied.

203. In the work seen, pupils' attainment in physical activities at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are in line with the levels expected of pupils of the same ages nationally. This represents a good level of achievement in all years, given the pupils' prior attainment.

204. By the time they have reached the age of fourteen, most pupils, including those with special educational needs, attain at least satisfactory standards in games; some pupils perform at a high level. Boys and girls of all levels of attainment achieve well, make good progress and gain good standards in basketball. Year 7 pupils show good understanding of defensive play and positioning early in their course. By Year 9, pupils can apply their knowledge, skills and understanding effectively in the game. The performance of high attaining pupils at this stage is well illustrated by the under 13 girls' netball and rounders teams, which won their respective Cheltenham and District Schools' leagues, and the under 14 boys' basketball team, which was runner-up in the Cheltenham and district schools' league. Pupils' attainment in gymnastics is broadly in line with the levels expected nationally. Some pupils have a satisfactory or better grasp of gymnastics skills, but there are too many pupils, particularly boys, who have not yet mastered the basic skills, such as jumping, landing, rolling and balancing sufficiently to perform them with control and appropriate body tension. Consequently, they lack confidence and skill in planning and performing group tasks and make limited progress in lessons. Girls perform at a higher standard than boys. The majority of pupils have a competent understanding of the effects of exercise on the body, and they know how to warm up effectively before strenuous activity. Planning and performing skills develop well in most lessons; pupils' skills of evaluating their own and others' performance are satisfactory. The best work was seen in basketball, where non-active pupils observed, evaluated and commented, effectively, on performance against clear criteria. Pupils develop literacy satisfactorily in most lessons, particularly in relation to key words and

the technical language of the subject. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into the physical education programme, and make progress at the same rate as their peers.

205. By the age of sixteen, improvement in games continues. Pupils demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and understanding of rules and tactics well in basketball and make good progress in developing skills in volleyball. The performance of high attaining pupils in games is well illustrated by the under 15 girls' netball team, which won the Cheltenham and District Schools' 'May Dent' trophy and the under 16 boys' football team, which reached the finals of the Cheltenham and District Schools' league. Pupils' written coursework for GCSE reflects a wide range of attainment; most pupils have a satisfactory or better knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects, which they can apply to their practical work. In badminton, for example, pupils showed skill in analysing and identifying their opponents' strengths and weaknesses in play, and succeeded in implementing tactical strategies to outwit them in the game.

206. Good standards are achieved in extra-curricular sport, and over 75 per cent of all pupils participate regularly in the extensive, well-balanced programme of clubs, inter-house and inter-school competitions. School teams have a good record of success against local schools, particularly as the school is one of the smallest in the area. Individual pupils gain representative honours at district, county and, sometimes, regional and national level. The school currently has eighteen pupils representing Cheltenham and district schools at netball, cross-country running, football and rugby. Twelve pupils represent Gloucestershire at netball, cricket, cross-country running and athletics, and two pupils represent the South West region at cross-country running.

207. The quality of teaching, and the learning that it promotes, is good throughout the school. The teachers' relationships with pupils are very good, creating a co-operative and supportive learning environment. Effective management of pupils is reflected in their good behaviour, high levels of participation and good attitudes to learning. Pupils put physical effort into their work, and respond well to the good-humoured encouragement of the teachers. In most lessons, lively, enthusiastic teaching motivates pupils, sets a good pace and stimulates learning. Pupils benefit from knowledgeable teachers, whose careful planning and clear objectives help them to make good progress. In the majority of lessons, teachers use well-designed tasks that build on pupils' previous knowledge and experience. In games, pupils are given good opportunities to improve newly learned skills through practice. However, high attaining pupils are insufficiently challenged in a few lessons, although very good opportunities are provided for the gifted and talented in the extra-curricular programme.

208. When teaching is most effective, teachers have high expectations of their pupils and set a demanding pace that leads to very good learning. In a GCSE badminton lesson, the teacher used probing questions to extend the depth and breadth of pupils' tactical knowledge and understanding, alongside practical tasks that tested their observation and skill in badminton at a brisk pace. Good learning also took place in a volleyball lesson, where the teacher's planning and intervention ensured that pupils of all levels of attainment achieved well and make very good progress in learning a new skill. The marking of GCSE written coursework is regular and encouraging, but there are few analytical comments aimed at helping pupils to improve their work. Insufficient demands are made on pupils to complete unfinished tasks.

209. The leadership and management of the subject are good. There is a clear view of what constitutes good provision for physical education; innovative curricular planning is a strength of the department. The good range of curricular opportunities is extended by an excellent, well-supported programme of extra-curricular activities, which contributes

significantly to pupils' standards of attainment and progress. The broadening of the curriculum for senior pupils has included the development of strong community links, particularly with primary schools, through the Year 11 pupils' involvement in the 'Junior Sports Leaders' award and the TOPS LINK scheme. Indoor accommodation for the subject is inadequate, and is a major constraint on the curriculum, and on pupils' attainment and progress in indoor games, such as badminton, volleyball and basketball. Although additional funding currently enables senior pupils to use the local sports centre to compensate for these limitations, the school is actively involved in a feasibility study aimed at enhancing the school's accommodation, as a school and community project. As reported in the last inspection, the time allocation in Years 10 and 11 is still insufficient to achieve National Curriculum targets in depth.

210. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection, particularly in the very good implementation of Curriculum 2000. Standards of attainment in the core physical education programme have been maintained, and there is a good level of achievement in games throughout the school. Despite the dip in GCSE results last year, the results represented good achievement, because the number of pupils entering the examination is three times the national average for the subject. The good quality of teaching and learning has been maintained.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

211. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. There have been no candidates entered for public examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 in recent years.

212. When pupils enter the school the standard of their work varies but is broadly in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. At the age of fourteen, the standard of their work is satisfactory being in line with the syllabus' expectations. Most pupils can explain that religion is about faith and belief and that believers meet with others who share their beliefs for worship, prayer and for the celebration of important events in their lives. They can illustrate this in Christianity and at least one other faith, usually Islam. They know the main events in the life of Jesus and how Christians worship and remember these through rituals such as Holy Communion. They know that religions have sacred books and can identify the main features of the Bible and the Qu'ran. As well as knowing about the practices, some can explain the significance for believers of events such as a Christian funeral and pilgrimage for a Muslim. They are not yet developing the skills of questioning and exploring how religious faith and teaching can affect their own lives. Achievement of the majority of pupils is satisfactory and is helped by their consistently good behaviour and positive attitude to learning. Girls and boys make similar progress although girls' written work is, in general better presented. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress mainly because of the small classes, but lower attaining pupils in the same classes are making insufficient progress because the work of the class is not demanding enough for them.

213. By the age of sixteen, the standard of pupils' work is unsatisfactory being below that expected in the agreed syllabus. Despite their positive attitude they make insufficient progress because the time allocated to the subject is inadequate being approximately half that recommended and because pupils only attend one lesson a fortnight. The lack of an examination goal and of regular homework and assessments further affect standards. The standard of work seen in individual lessons is better. Pupils have gained an insight into how religious faith affects a person's lifestyle with especial reference to Buddhism. They have developed this understanding further, through their study of religious belief and moral issues. They can, for instance, appreciate how a person's belief about his/her personal value can influence attitudes to drugs and alcohol. Progress made is unsatisfactory especially by higher attaining pupils because the written tasks set do not challenge them sufficiently to develop their ideas in extended pieces of writing.

214. The quality of teaching and learning in both key stages is satisfactory. The teacher participates in regular professional training to ensure that his subject knowledge meets the demands of the syllabus. The scheme of work complies with the Agreed Syllabus and careful lesson planning ensures that the time available is fully used. Each lesson features a range of different activities with smooth transitions between them. The principal strength is the teacher's ability quickly to obtain and maintain a calm and orderly atmosphere in which pupils feel that they can work purposefully and in which respect is shown for each other's views and beliefs. Explanations are clear and questioning helps pupils explore both factual understanding and appreciation of what they can learn from religion.

215. The teaching is enhanced by visits to local places of worship and by contributions by members of the community who share their faith and beliefs with pupils. Pupils in Key Stage 4 were helped to a genuine appreciation of Buddhism when a parent told them how the family's belief affected their everyday life. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Although pupils can collaborate effectively they are not developing their creative and thinking skills because lessons are focused on the input from the teacher. Especially in Key Stage 4, expectations of pupils are not sufficiently rigorous and they are seldom challenged to produce well thought out extended pieces of written work. Lesson planning fails to recognise the differing needs of pupils within ability sets leading to some under-achievement. There is a lack of attention to the development of basic literacy skills and little use is made of ICT. Assessment is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3 because the regular marking does not inform pupils about how they can improve. At Key Stage 4 there is no marking and assessment of pupils' work resulting in unsatisfactory written work. No annual reports are provided for parents of these pupils.

216. Standards are also affected by the lack of access to ICT equipment in the classroom and by the absence of regular systematic oversight of standards in the subject by the school's management.

217. Improvement since the last report has been unsatisfactory. There has been no improvement in the time allocated to the subject in Key Stage 4 and the less satisfactory features in the teaching are still evident. The satisfactory work in the subject provides a foundation for improvement in standards. The areas that need further attention are raising expectations, improving marking and assessment and the reporting of the progress of older pupils. There is inadequate time for the subject in Key Stage 4. The school does not follow the recommendation of the locally agreed syllabus to provide access for all pupils in Key Stage 4 to a public examination in religious education. There is no systematic oversight of standards in the subject.