

# INSPECTION REPORT

Rainham School for Girls  
Gillingham

LEA area: Medway Towns Council

Unique Reference Number: 118823

Inspection Number: 186188

Headteacher: Mrs P J Gunner

Reporting inspector: Mike Dowden

Dates of inspection: 6 – 9 December 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708159

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Modern (Non-selective)

Type of control: County

Age range of pupils: 11 – 18 years

Gender of pupils: Female

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs J Harris

Date of previous inspection: 13-17 November 1995

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		The curriculum and assessment
		Leadership and management
Anthony Mundy, Lay Inspector		Attendance
		Partnership with parents and the community
		Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
John Plant	Mathematics	Teaching
David Townsend	English	
Peter Hooker	Science	
Paul Shallcross	Design and Technology	
	Information Technology	
Terry Fitchett	Modern Foreign Languages	
Ian Coulson	History	
Marcia Foley	Geography	
Jenny Newman	Physical Education	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
Derek Blease	Music	
Ivor Rushforth	Art	
Sue Airey		Special Educational Needs
		Equal Opportunities.
		Spiritual, moral social and cultural development.
		Welfare and guidance.
Ian Hartland	Religious Education	
Steve Williams		Key Stage 4 + Sixth Form
John Woodroffe		The efficiency of the school

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# REPORT CONTENTS

Paragraph

## MAIN FINDINGS

- What the school does well
- Where the school has weaknesses
- How the school has improved since the last inspection
- Standards in subjects
- Quality of teaching
- Other aspects of the school
- The parents' views of the school

## KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

## INTRODUCTION

- Characteristics of the school
- Key indicators

## **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL** **1 - 77**

### **Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school** **1 - 21**

- Attainment and progress
- Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
- Attendance

### **Quality of education provided** **22 - 61**

- Teaching
- The curriculum and assessment
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- Support, guidance and pupils' welfare
- Partnership with parents and the community

### **The management and efficiency of the school** **62 - 77**

- Leadership and management
- Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
- The efficiency of the school

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

<b>English, mathematics and science</b>	<b>78 - 123</b>
<b>Other subjects or courses</b>	<b>124 - 224</b>

## **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

<b>Summary of inspection evidence</b>	<b>225</b>
<b>Data and indicators</b>	

## MAIN FINDINGS

### What the school does well

- Standards are improving. GCSE results are in line with the national average and are better than similar schools. They have improved at a faster rate than for schools nationally.
- Pupils make good progress. Pupils with special needs make particularly good progress at Key Stage 4.
- Form tutors, year heads and teachers provide pupils with very good support and guidance and so pupils' personal development is very good.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour are very good.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have expert knowledge of their subject. They manage pupils' progress in lessons very well and the homework they set is usually very effective.
- Pupils' use of computers to support their learning is exceptionally good and this helps to explain their good progress and improving attainment.
- Leadership and management in the school are very good. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership, ably supported by a very effective senior management team.

### Where the school has weaknesses

- I. A level results in sociology and Year 12 AS level results in science in 1999 were poor. Pupils' progress in A level science is unsatisfactory. Some pupils in the sixth form follow inappropriate A level and AS level courses which are too difficult for them.
- II. Reports to parents do not provide enough information about pupils' progress and future targets.

The school has many strengths which greatly outweigh its weaknesses. The weaknesses have already been identified by the school and are being addressed. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.

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

The school has made good progress since the last inspection four years ago. Standards are considerably higher now. Overall GCSE results have risen at a faster rate than nationally. Pupils continue to have very positive attitudes to learning and behaviour in the school continues to be generally very good. In the last inspection two thirds of teaching were judged to be good and sometimes very good. A slightly higher proportion of good and very good teaching was found in this inspection. The school now provides very good arrangements for monitoring the progress of each pupil and it has improved its practice considerably since the last inspection. Appropriate curriculum time is now provided for different subjects at Key Stage 4, an improvement from the last inspection. Although the school has taken steps to provide a daily collective act of worship for all its

pupils, something it was not providing in the last inspection, this has not been fully achieved. The school has also extensively developed its teaching of information technology and now does this very well. It has also successfully improved its arrangements for supporting pupils with special needs (SEN). The school is likely to make very good progress towards raising standards further and providing an education of high quality, because staff are committed to these aims and the school has the appropriate strategies for achieving them. The school has set demanding and appropriate targets for GCSE for the coming two years and the strengths identified in this report suggest that these will be achieved.

## STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS

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

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key
Key Stage 3 Tests	D	B	well above average
GCSE Examinations	C	A	above average
A/AS – levels	E		average
			below average
			well below average

The 1999 Key Stage 3 results in English, mathematics and science were slightly below the national average, but were above average compared to similar schools. Results were highest in English where they were above the national average and well above average compared to similar schools. Results in mathematics and science were average when compared to similar schools and below the national average. GCSE examination results were in line with the national average in 1999 and much higher than average compared to similar schools. They have improved at a faster rate than schools nationally. Pupils did best in English, English literature, art, French and drama. They did least well in German and religious education where results were well below average. Results at A and AS level were well below the national average. This was mainly because most pupils started the courses with lower than average levels of attainment for A and AS level. Pupils did well in art, business studies, media studies and performing arts, but results were poor in A level sociology and Year 12 AS level biology. Results in intermediate and advanced level GNVQ subjects were in line with the national average.

## QUALITY OF TEACHING

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	good	Design and Technology; history; physical education	Religious education; music.
Years 10-11	good	English; geography; French	Religious education
Sixth form	good	Art and design; GNVQ Business.	Science
English	good		
Mathematics	good		

Teaching was at least satisfactory in 95 per cent of lessons observed and there were no subjects where teaching was unsatisfactory overall. Teaching was at least good in 70 per cent of lessons. In 26 per cent of lessons teaching was very good. Teaching was unsatisfactory in 5 per cent of lessons. Teachers manage the pupils in their classes very well because they have good relationships with them. Teachers are also very successful at setting appropriate and challenging homework.

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

**OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Behaviour	Very good. Pupils usually behave very well in lessons and around the school. There is a relaxed and orderly atmosphere in the school.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Punctuality to lessons is good.
Ethos*	Very good. The staff are committed to high standards and pupils' attitudes to work are very good. Relationships are very good.
Leadership and management	Very good. The headteacher shows vision and provides very effective leadership. The senior management team and governing body are very effective. Subject departments are well managed.
Curriculum	Very good at Key Stages 3 and 4. A good range of courses is offered in the 6 <sup>th</sup> form, but a small number of pupils follow A and AS level courses which are inappropriate for them.
Pupils with special educational needs	Very good support. Pupils make good progress towards their targets in their individual education plans. Nearly all pupils achieve at least five GCSEs at the end of Year 11.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Very good provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development. Spiritual development is satisfactory.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Experienced and well qualified staff. Good resources for learning, especially the range of up-to-date information technology resources. Overall accommodation is satisfactory.
Value for money	Good. Below average standards on entry. Pupils make good progress as a result of good teaching and a very successful ethos. GCSE results are at the national average.

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

**The parents' views of the school**

<b>What most parents like about the school</b>	<b>What some parents are not happy about</b>
III. Their children do well academically and make good progress. IV. The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on their children and their children like school. V. Their children receive very effective help and guidance as they progress through the school. VI. The school is very approachable. VII. Behaviour in the school is generally good.	VIII. 10 per cent of parents had concerns about parent information.

The inspection findings agreed with the very positive views of most parents, expressed at the meeting for parents before the inspection and in their responses to the questionnaire. The inspectors agreed, however, with the minority of parents who were not happy with the school's reporting arrangements. Reports currently do not provide enough information on progress and targets.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

To raise standards further, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

IX. improve the arrangements for ensuring that pupils in the sixth form follow courses which are appropriate for them. This should ensure that:

(a) pupils are only accepted onto A and AS level courses where they have GCSE grades appropriate for gaining at least a pass grade and are judged to be suitable candidates for the courses;

(b) alternative sixth form science courses are considered and implemented. The school should continue with its plans to implement GNVQ science in the sixth form.

(paragraphs: 17; 37; 54; 117; 119)

X. improve the quality of reports to parents. The amount of specific written information on pupils' achievements and progress, as well as their future targets, should be increased. The good curriculum summaries which appear on each subject report should be used as a basis for individual commentary and target setting.

(paragraphs: 43; 59)

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

\* pupils' spiritual education should be provided for more effectively through:

a the provision of a daily collective act of worship for all pupils;

b increasing opportunities for pupils to reflect on meaning and purpose in their lives in the different subjects they study across the curriculum.

(paragraphs: 44; 45; 46; 216)

\* improve the consistency of the monitoring arrangements carried out in each subject department, so that all subject leaders adopt the best practice to be found in the school;

(paragraphs: 68; 108)

\* address the health and safety issues identified in the report, to the extent that the school is able to carry these out;

(paragraph: 57)

\* improve the range and quality of fiction in the two learning resources centres to ensure that there is a wider range of up-to-date fiction, better displayed, in both areas and books and other resources, including videos, are displayed more attractively.

(paragraph: 72; 92)

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Characteristics of the school**

Rainham School for Girls is an 11 to 18 secondary modern school with 1487 pupils on roll, including 208 pupils in the sixth form. It is situated in Rainham, within the conurbations of the Medway Towns in North Kent. The school has Technology College status. The school is much larger than most secondary schools.

Pupils come from both homes which are wealthier than average and homes which are poorer and overall the socio-economic intake to the school is average. Seven per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals which

is below the national average. Twenty four per cent of pupils overall have been identified as having special needs, which is an above average proportion. Twenty-three pupils have a statement of special needs which is rather lower than average. Although the school is oversubscribed in the demand for places, it competes with local selective schools and so receives few pupils with high levels of attainment on entry. Pupils' attainment on entry is below average.

The school aims to create a community with high expectations of both staff and pupils in all aspects of school life with a recognition that learning is a lifelong process. It aims to develop skills necessary for pupils to make a valuable contribution to society and to encourage talents of every kind in each pupil.

The school is currently giving particular priority to extending its role as a Technology College within the local community, as well as developing approaches to monitoring progress of individual pupils to raise attainment.

These priorities have been set in the context of target setting to continue to raise attainment at GCSE. The school has set the target of 42 per cent of pupils gaining 5 or more grades at A\* to C grade in the year 2000.

**Key indicators**

**Attainment at Key Stage 3<sup>1</sup>**

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	0	255	255

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	185	148	109
	Total	185	148	109
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	73 (84)	58 (58)	43 (54)
	National	63 (64)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	24 (49)	25 (22)	8 (13)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or Above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	179	165	110
	Total	179	165	110
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	70 (69)	65 (33)	43 (55)
	National	64 (61)	62 (64)	55 (61)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	24 (30)	31 (0)	9 (19)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (30)

.....

<sup>1</sup> Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

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

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	0	255	255

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	108	250	252
	Total	108	250	252
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	42 (37)	98 (95)	99 (97)
	National	47.8 (46.3)	88.4 (87.5)	95 (93.4)

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

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

Year	Male	Female	Total
1999	0	79	79

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	0	11.2	11.2 (12.4)	0	1.9	1.9 (2)
National		n/a	(17.8)		n/a	(3.0)

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

	Number	% Success rate
School	71	89
National		n/a

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

3 Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

## Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed

Through absence for the latest complete reporting year:

		%
Authorised Absence	School	8.0
	National comparative data	7.9
Unauthorised Absence	School	0.3
	National comparative data	1.1

- 
- 
- 

## Exclusions

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

	Number
Fixed period	20
Permanent	3

- ## Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	26
Satisfactory or better	95
Less than satisfactory	5

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

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

#### **Attainment and progress**

1. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A\* to C grades in 1999 was broadly in line with the national average and well above average compared to similar schools. The proportion gaining A\* to G grades was well above the national average for all schools.
2. The school's results at GCSE have improved since the last inspection at a faster rate than the national average. In 1994 32 per cent of pupils gained five or more A\* to C grades; in 1999 42 per cent of pupils achieved this. Since the last inspection the school has sustained its record of ensuring that the proportion of pupils gaining at least 5 A\* to G grades is higher than the national average.
3. A different way of measuring GCSE results, known as the average point score, is calculated by allocating points for each grade and averaging them, to give a figure which shows how well pupils have done overall. The average point score for the school shows that results between 1994 and 1999 have improved at a faster rate than the national average. It also shows that the school's point score has matched the national average for the last three years as well as in 1999.
4. The school's average point score from the end of Key Stage 3 national tests in English, mathematics and science in 1999 was slightly below the national average, as it has been over the last three years. However, it has been consistently above average compared to similar schools.
5. Overall, these GCSE and Key Stage 3 test results show that the good levels of attainment identified in the last inspection have been sustained and that there have also been improvements in standards. It confirms the feeling which most parents expressed in response to the pre- inspection questionnaire, namely that their daughters do well academically.
6. The school's GCSE results for 1998 and 1999 show that pupils do well in English, where results were above the national average and well above similar schools. Pupils also do very well in art, drama, English literature and French. In science, pupils reach the national average overall and results are close to the average compared to similar schools. In mathematics results are slightly below average compared to similar schools although standards in the current Year 11 show signs of improvement. There have been improvements in geography and ICT results in 1999 where in both subjects results were close to the national average. In the last two years GCSE results in German and religious education have been well below average, although there are indications of improvements in standards in these subjects in the current Year 11.
7. Results at A level and Year 12 AS level in 1998 and 1999 were well below average, although pupils' results at advanced and intermediate GNVQ were in line with the national average. At A and AS level, pupils did particularly well in art, performing arts and media studies, but their 1999 results in AS level biology and A level sociology were poor. The level of pupils' attainment on entry to some A and AS level courses is too low to secure pass grades at the end of the course. These pupils are following an inappropriate course and they do not make effective progress. On the other hand, pupils studying other A level courses and those following GNVQ courses make generally good progress. GNVQ results at intermediate level are average in leisure and tourism and above average in art and design. In 1999, results in advanced GNVQ courses in leisure and tourism and health and social care were above average.
8. In the end of Key Stage 3 national tests in English, results in 1999 at level 5 or better were above average compared to all schools nationally and well above compared to similar schools. Results in mathematics and science were below the national average and matched the average for similar schools. At the higher

level 6, results were well above average compared to similar schools in English and in line with similar schools in mathematics and science.

9. In English the attainment of 14 year olds in lessons and represented in the work seen, is above the national average. Most pupils listen attentively and speak confidently in clear standard English. They can read aloud with accuracy, fluency and expression. In writing most pupils can write in legible script and present their work well. They are able to spell and punctuate with appropriate accuracy. At Key Stage 4 pupils currently in Year 11 reach standards in English which, overall, are in line with the national average. They maintain good speaking, listening and writing skills and they are able to write at length for a range of different purposes.
10. In mathematics the attainment of 14 year olds in lessons and represented in the work seen, is below the national average. Pupils' basic mathematics skills are sound however. Year 9 pupils can confidently tackle a range of mathematical tasks. Basic number skills are good. Most pupils can rapidly recall mathematical facts and they are able to solve problems using different strategies. At Key Stage 4 pupils build on these skills and by Year 11 the higher attaining pupils can handle higher level GCSE work. Many other pupils reach the average level and can, for example, confidently tackle problems in geometry and trigonometry. Overall however, pupils in Year 11 do not yet reach the national average at levels A\* to C. There have been substantial improvements in the proportion reaching level D in the last few years, but the proportion reaching grade C is still lower than it should be.
11. In science the attainment of 14 year olds in lessons and represented in the work seen, is in line with the national average. By the end of the key stage most pupils know how to make a test fair, can use equipment sensibly and can draw simple conclusions from their results. When appropriate, pupils can use ICT effectively to find information and analyse their results. At Key Stage 4 pupils currently in Year 11 reach standards in science which broadly match schools nationally. Most pupils' investigative and practical skills are particularly good.
12. Across the curriculum standards of speaking, listening, reading writing and numeracy are generally in line with national expectations at both key stages. There have been improvements in these skills, particularly in literacy, since the last inspection. The development of a policy to ensure all teachers help pupils with their literacy skills has, for example, improved pupils' standards of spelling and punctuation. Standards of presentation are generally high. In reading pupils are increasingly competent at finding and using information from textbooks as well as in using ICT to locate information.
13. At present 24 per cent of pupils are on the register of special educational needs (SEN) and of these 22 have statements of SEN. Many of these pupils experience difficulties with literacy skills and the school is adept at addressing these difficulties. Very good records are maintained and appropriate targets set within pupils' Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to raise attainment.
14. In other subjects the attainment of pupils currently reaching the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the national average. Attainment in all other subjects at the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with the national average, although standards are above average in art and below average in German.
15. The progress made by pupils at Key Stage 3 is good. Evidence from Key Stage 2 results from 1999 and other tests carried out by pupils in Year 7, indicate that when pupils enter the school their overall standard is well below average in mathematics and science and slightly below average in English. A similar pattern of below average attainment has been identified in previous years. Despite this low attainment at the start of secondary school, pupils reach the national average in all their subjects except science and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 3 and do better than this in English. Pupils with SEN make good progress in Key Stage 3 through a detailed programme of support, good teaching and individual help.
16. Progress made by pupils at Key Stage 4 is also good. One way of measuring progress is to compare the average point score of pupils when they took their Key Stage 3 tests and compare this with their GCSE results two years later. Using this measure, pupils' 1999 GCSE results show that they made progress

which was, overall, faster than schools with similar Key Stage 3 point scores. Progress of pupils with SEN is very good at Key Stage 4 building on the good start made at Key Stage 3

17. Progress made by pupils in the sixth form is satisfactory, overall. In advanced and intermediate GNVQs and a number of A level courses, for example performing arts, art and design and media studies, progress is good. However, the progress of pupils following the science A level course is unsatisfactory because the course is too difficult for most pupils who are following it.

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

18. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They respond very well in lessons and are confident in offering suggestions, ideas and opinions. Pupils come to lessons prepared to learn, have the skills to work independently and with few exceptions work hard and stay on task. They collaborate with enthusiasm and listen to each other's ideas in whole class and group discussions. Pupils take a pride in their work and are very well motivated learners. Pupils with SEN show interest and sustain concentration. Their attitude to learning is very good and they are seen to persevere and make learning gains. In modern foreign languages pupils are always prepared to work hard and show sustained commitment. In English lessons pupils take and accept responsibility for their own learning. GNVQ students develop good independent learning skills. The level of maturity and the ability to communicate with adults is impressive. Behaviour is very good in the majority of lessons.

19. Behaviour around the school is very good and the busy environment is well managed resulting in an ordered community. Pupils are relaxed and friendly and courteous to each other, to teachers and visitors. They are well mannered, opening doors and offering to help. They respond well to established routines and procedures. Movement between lessons, to and from assemblies and during lunch break and after school is quiet, purposeful and orderly. When incidents of behaviour that are not acceptable occur they are dealt with quickly, calmly and effectively. There is an effective whole school approach to discipline and pupils understand what is expected. The school is well cared for by pupils with no evidence of graffiti and little evidence of litter.

20. The quality of relationships in and around the school is very good. Pupils are supportive of each other and respect each other's views. Pupils co-operate well and contribute many ideas and opinions through discussion in tutor time and in the school council. Most pupils are articulate, confident and mature members of their community and they benefit from the many opportunities to undertake responsibility in school.

#### 20. **Attendance**

21. Attendance is satisfactory and has been maintained since the previous inspection. It is slightly better than the national average for similar schools. Although the level of unauthorised absence is low, a number of families acquiesce in providing sickness notes for their children, instead of ensuring regular attendance. Most pupils arrive punctually each morning and latecomers are required to stay after school to make up lost time. Registration periods are efficient. Lessons begin promptly during the day. Subject teachers are consistent in calling registers at the start of lessons. Attendance of pupils with SEN is good, supported by the vigilance of learning support assistants and the special needs co-ordinator (SENCO). The overall satisfactory attendance pattern, together with the good attendance of pupils with special needs, makes a positive impact on progress and attainment in the school. For example, each year virtually every pupil gains at least five GCSE qualifications, which is above the national average.

#### 21. **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

21. **Teaching**

22. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. It is at least satisfactory in 95 per cent of lessons. Teaching is good in 44 per cent of lessons and very good in 26 per cent. At both Key Stages 3 and 4, the teaching of music and religious education is satisfactory. In all other subjects, it is good at both key stages. At Key Stage 3 teaching is particularly effective in design and technology, history and physical education. At Key Stage 4 there are particular strengths in the teaching of English, geography and French. In the sixth form, teaching is very good in art and design and GNVQ business.
23. The standard of teaching is at least as high as it was at the time of the last OFSTED inspection. Issues raised by the last inspection, such as improving the teaching of basic skills, have been effectively addressed. The whole-school focus on literacy and numeracy has had a marked impact on raising standards across the curriculum. The development of literacy skills is a strength in many subjects. For example, teaching in history builds on the pupils' good skills in speaking and listening. Over recent years, many new initiatives have been adopted that have improved the quality of teaching and learning. For example in mathematics, the move from an individualised system of teaching to a whole class approach has significantly helped to raise standards.
24. Teachers have very good subject expertise, including a good knowledge of the National Curriculum subjects which they are teaching with their associated assessment requirements. In the most effective lessons teachers draw very well on their subject knowledge to question pupils closely and make connections between different aspects of the subject. A strength of many lessons is the effective use of questioning that tests the depth and extent of pupils' understanding. For example in a Year 12 English lesson, pupils understanding of staging the production of King Lear was extended by the teachers' skilful and probing questions. In mathematics pupils' speed in tackling mental arithmetic is often improved by the fast pace of the teachers' questions.
25. Lessons are planned well by teachers. In many lessons teachers identified precisely what pupils were to learn during the particular lesson and shared these objectives with the class. In the best planning, teachers identified precisely what pupils of high, average and low attainment should learn and adapted the lesson activities and resources accordingly. They also planned the strategies they would use to meet the targets pupils had on their individual education plans. Sometimes lesson planning was less successful, usually because teachers had set broad aims rather than thinking through precisely what the pupils were to learn. As a result, in a small proportion of mathematics, religious education and English lessons, teaching did not effectively guide pupils to new knowledge and skills.
26. Teachers generally use time in the lessons well. Almost all lessons begin promptly and pupils are kept working steadily throughout. A feature of the most successful lessons was that teachers varied the lesson by using a range of methods and resources and set time limits for the work. This was a characteristic of good teaching in English, history, geography and French. In mathematics good pace to the lesson was often achieved by a strong emphasis on direct teaching to the whole class. In the best lessons, teachers used a range of strategies to challenge their pupils' understanding of the mathematics. For example they asked the class lots of questions requiring quick answers to increase speed in mathematical thinking. Such lessons were enjoyable and exciting with strong pupil participation. In the small proportion of unsatisfactory lessons however, the pace of the lesson flagged because the teacher allowed the activity to go on too long and where aims were unclear, pupils lost interest and concentration.

27. Teachers manage and motivate their pupils very well. Most teachers generate a very supportive atmosphere in their classes where pupils feel encouraged to learn. A feature of the best lessons in all subjects is the very good working relationships between teachers and pupils. For example, the positive working relationship between teachers and pupils is a feature of successful science lessons. Such lessons often get off to a brisk and challenging start. Well judged planning often provides lesson structures that capture and hold the pupils' interest. Good presentations and demonstrations are often followed by targeted questioning that tests and extends the pupils' understanding. Teachers also support pupils with SEN well and have been supported in this by the SENCO. Work is well planned to match the needs of pupils and consideration has been given to pupils' individual learning styles. Pupils at stages 2 and 3 on the special needs register are well supported by good teaching in smaller groups and by a team of learning support assistants (LSAs).
27. Another strength in teaching which has a very positive effect on pupils' motivation, is the varied and imaginative use of ICT. In geography and history for example, pupils are expected to use up-to date sources from the computer in order to carry out enquiries set for them. In English pupils regularly use word processing, CD ROMS, the Internet and video conferencing to support their learning. The effective motivation of pupils through the use of ICT is one important factor which helps to account for the management of pupils in lessons being a very good feature of teaching.
28. There is much good practice in the marking of pupils' work. Most teachers write informative comments giving pupils clear guidance as to what they have done well and how they can improve. In the best marking, for example in geography, history and English, pupils have a very clear understanding of what is required to achieve good marks. Most subjects have developed a good emphasis on target setting often fully involving the pupil. Practice is not wholly consistent however, and in some subjects, for example mathematics, good approaches to target setting through marking are not adopted in all classes.
29. Homework is used very effectively to support the teaching and to consolidate and extend the learning. It is a strength in teaching. The emphasis upon setting homework which is well matched to the needs of pupils and challenging, as well as the emphasis upon ensuring that all pupils complete it, is one of the reasons for the good progress of pupils in the school.

30. **The curriculum and assessment**

30. At both Key Stages 3 and 4 the school provides a very good curriculum for pupils. In the sixth form most pupils follow a curriculum which is well suited to their needs; a small minority, however, follow inappropriate A level courses. The school has successfully addressed the minor weaknesses in the Key Stage 4 curriculum, identified in the last inspection report.
31. At Key Stage 3 pupils are taught all the statutory subjects of the National Curriculum and follow the Agreed Syllabus for religious education. Particular strengths include the teaching of both drama and dance in each year. Drama has been one factor which has helped to develop pupils' confidence and supported their personal development. Pupils also follow a well organised programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE).
32. Information and communications technology (ICT) is successfully taught as a separate subject to each year group. Pupils are also successfully using ICT in virtually all their subjects and this is a major strength in their curriculum. Good policies have been developed to ensure that pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills are supported in all their subjects and the school has been awarded the Basic Skills Agency quality mark. Discussion with pupils confirmed that through the use of visiting speakers and various activities during "Woman Achievers' Week", their aspirations for the future had been raised and broadened.
33. At Key Stage 4, the curriculum very successfully allows pupils to build on their earlier studies and prepare for a suitable range of GCSE examinations. All pupils follow the requirements of studying English,

mathematics, double science, a modern foreign language and technology, as well as physical education and religious education. Pupils are also required to study other subjects, for example they have to choose from GCSE religious education, history or geography and this helps to ensure that they experience a broad education. They also have a good range of other choices: for example all pupils have the chance to study different aspects of design and technology as well as child development, dance and drama. There is currently no music in Year 10 because not enough pupils wished to study it and this is a weakness in overall curriculum provision.

34. A major curriculum strength in Key Stage 4 continues to be the opportunities pupils have to use different aspects of ICT, including the internet and video conferencing, in all parts of the curriculum. The school's work in obtaining Technology College status has contributed to this very good provision of ICT. Pupils and their parents have all benefited from this emphasis. Research through the use of the computer is a distinct strength in the school's use of ICT in many subjects of the curriculum, because this kind of learning is accelerating pupils' progress and improving their attainment. Other strengths of the Key Stage 4 curriculum include the mini- enterprise week and a good careers programme which both support pupils in preparation for the world of work. Sex education and health education are effectively provided within the PSHE programme.
35. All subjects taught at Key Stages 3 and 4 now have adequate time allowances. The limitations in curriculum time in physical education and science at Key Stage 4, which were identified in the last report, have been addressed to ensure progress in these subjects is not now impaired.
36. The sixth form curriculum offers a wide range of courses, including GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses as well as a range of A level courses. There are good links with the boys' sixth form to expand the range of courses on offer. Pupils successfully follow the good range of GNVQ courses and attainment overall is in line with the national average. Many pupils also benefit from A level courses, particularly in art, media studies and performing arts. However, some pupils follow A level courses which are not appropriate to their needs, for example in biology. They do not make good progress because they find the work too difficult and this helps to account for the poor A and AS level results in 1999 in some subjects.
37. The school provides a very good curriculum for pupils with special needs. Pupils with SEN receive their full entitlement to the National Curriculum. If they are withdrawn for a programme of basic skills, care is taken to ensure that pupils are given extra support on return to lessons in order to fully understand the work. The learning support department works closely with other departments to ensure that appropriate work is provided for pupils with SEN. No pupils are disapplied from the National Curriculum. Pupils with statements have these reviewed annually. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are reviewed regularly by the SENCO and heads of year and in the case of some pupils, new targets are set. IEPs show a good match between needs and targets. Effective liaison within the school and with external agencies ensures that the support to meet these targets is a priority. Pupils work confidently and make good progress as a direct result of this attention. In addition pupils set their own targets and, with support from form tutors and learning support assistants (LSAs), suggest strategies to meet their targets. The school also provides effective counselling opportunities for those pupils who are experiencing difficulties at particular times in their lives.
38. Curriculum planning by subject departments is very good. This helps to account for the good progress that pupils make in their studies throughout the school. Arrangements to ensure that pupils begin their studies in Year 7 in a way that builds on what they studied in primary school are good. The "Garden Project", for example, begun in primary school and completed in Year 7, helps to support good progress in mathematics ICT and English. The two days spent in the school by pupils in the term before they start Year 7 also help to support successful transfer to the new school. Overall the schemes of work and other arrangements to ensure good progression throughout both key stages of the curriculum are very good.
39. All pupils have full access to the curriculum. The organisation of the year groups into three bands containing pupils with a wide range attainment and setting in some subjects, including mathematics, science and English within these bands, caters for pupils' learning needs very well. These arrangements help to account for the good progress of pupils with special needs.

40. Pupils benefit from a very good range of extra-curricular activities, including a wide range of sport, drama and musical activities. The school's netball record is outstanding. There is a wide variety of lunch-time clubs and after-school clubs that support and broaden pupils' learning. The curriculum is also enriched by a good range of educational visits, including visits to France. All pupils with SEN have equal access to these extra-curricular activities.
41. The quality of assessment in the school is good. The assessment and marking policy sets out clear expectations and these are followed in departments. Marking is generally of a good standard. It is regular and thorough. In English and geography for example, there is particularly good marking which indicates how pupils can improve their work. In nearly all subjects there are accurate portfolios of levelled work, which ensure that teachers apply consistent standards in marking.
42. Arrangements for collecting information on pupils' attainment and using it in monitoring and planning are good. Information about pupils' Key Stage 2 results, as well as other tests carried out by the school, are used to monitor progress at Key Stage 3. Senior managers and subject leaders have good arrangements for analysing examination and test data in order to evaluate the school's effectiveness and set future targets. Attainment and effort grades are used very well by teachers and pupils to review progress and set targets. Records are maintained efficiently in all subjects, but the quality of reports to parents are unsatisfactory. They currently do not provide sufficient information to parents about progress and targets. The school has identified this weakness and is taking steps to improve provision.
43. **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**
43. Overall, the spiritual development of the pupils is satisfactory. The quality of collective worship in school assemblies is good. Collective worship is broadly Christian in its approach and covers a range of religious, moral and social issues that enable pupils to think about their place and value in society. For example in a school assembly pupils were encouraged to think about how they could help others within the school community and within the wider community. School assemblies also provide pupils with opportunities for thought and reflection and are used to celebrate pupils' achievements and promote a spirit of unity. Pupils benefit from a range of speakers and they respond well and are extremely good listeners. The school has a good programme of assembly themes and all pupils benefit from being involved.
44. The school has worked on a programme of "Thought for the Day " to be used on days when pupils are not in school assemblies. When elements from the programme are conducted well, they provide pupils with the opportunity for discussion and some time to reflect. However, this good practice is not happening consistently and so for many pupils the statutory requirements for daily collective worship are not being fully met.
45. Spirituality is promoted within the curriculum with an emphasis on developing self-esteem and valuing the work of others. In religious education pupils study different faiths and reflect on different life styles. Through personal, social and careers education and subjects such as English and design and technology, pupils develop increasing self-knowledge and awareness. In history pupils consider the morality of child labour in nineteenth century Britain and have the opportunity to discuss their attitudes towards this. In other subjects however, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to reflect on the spiritual dimension of their work.
46. The moral development of students is very good. Pupils are polite and well behaved in lessons and around school. They know right from wrong and demonstrate courtesy and consideration to others based on clear codes of behaviour. Adults in school are good role models for pupils. They treat pupils with fairness and honesty. In response, pupils value the good relationships and achieve the good standard of behaviour that is expected of them. Pupils are allowed access to many areas of the school during break and lunchtime and respond well to the trust shown to them by behaving responsibly.

47. Pupils are encouraged to address moral issues within the curriculum. In English and geography for example, pupils tackle issues about human nature with sensitivity and maturity. For example in an English lesson pupils were considering moral issues in the story of Hamlet, in physical education they were encouraged to value fair play and sportsmanship, in religion they tackled racism and prejudice. The effective teaching of personal, social and careers education also contributes positively to pupils' moral and social development. Pupils also take part in supporting various charities and are helped to understand the needs of individuals and groups within the local community and beyond. The school is having a positive impact on pupils' lives and they are constantly reminded of their moral responsibilities.
48. Pupils' social development is very good. In lessons there are many opportunities for paired and group work and pupils are co-operative, willing to share and keen to help each other. Residential experiences, field study trips and many extra-curricular activities such as drama productions and sporting events also provide opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills. They are encouraged to support each other within the school through peer mentoring and peer mediation systems and there are many opportunities to take responsibility such as library monitors, career monitors, form captains and sports captains. Older students in the sixth form are good role models and help manage formal events such as the school council and presentation evenings. They also work with Year 7 pupils to mentor and support them. Pupils with SEN are fully involved in school life and contribute to the whole community. The school works hard to encourage pupils to adopt a sense of responsibility towards their community and to fulfil their role as good citizens in society.
49. The cultural development of pupils is also very good. There are many opportunities for students to study their own culture in religious education, English, drama, geography, social studies, dance, art and history. Other cultures are recognised through units of work in art and textiles. For example, in one class pupils had worked on textiles based on artistic images from other cultures. Similarly in food technology pupils research food from other cultures. In French, pupils experience cultural exchanges with France and link to other regions, for example Siberia, through E mail.
50. Since the last inspection the school has enhanced the opportunities for personal development. Staff and governors see technology status as an opportunity for broadening all aspects of school life. Further work is required in terms of raising the profile of spiritual development in the planning and teaching of the curriculum and through collective worship.

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

51. The school provides very good support, advice and guidance for all its pupils. A very positive feature of the school is the commitment by all staff to pupils' personal development and welfare. Tutoring procedures work successfully and pupils are well known and valued within their year and tutor groups. Relationships between the staff and pupils are friendly and positive.
52. The appropriate policies and guidance documents are effective in covering the range of issues that are crucial in supporting the personal developments of pupils. Tutors, heads of year and heads of school work hard to maintain this high standard. Communication between staff about pupils' welfare and work is very good, as are procedures for monitoring pupils' progress and educational development. The profiles give valuable information for tutors and heads of year and provide opportunity to set targets for improvement. The mentoring system by older pupils is also very supportive as are the homework clubs, aimed at providing extra support for pupils.
53. The PSHE programme provides pupils with a balanced programme of activities to support their development. Lessons include discussions with pupils about keeping safe and making effective choices; discussions with pupils indicate that they value the opportunity to discuss and learn about these important issues. Careers education is managed very effectively and is valued by pupils. Effective guidance is also provided for pupils at key points in their school career such as option time in Year 9. In the light of evidence that some pupils find it hard to cope with some A level courses, the school has reviewed its

procedures for guidance for pupils for post-16 education to ensure that pupils choose appropriate courses. Pupils with special educational needs are, where necessary, given extra support and time from the school and careers service. The headteacher's aim of ensuring that when pupils leave the school, they take with them self-confidence, dignity and a sense of responsibility is well met.

54. The school has effective measures for promoting good behaviour and the prevention of bullying. There are appropriate systems for rewarding effort and achievement and pupils value the merits, certificates and awards that they receive for good behaviour and attendance. Pupils respond well to behavioural expectations both within lessons and around school. The procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour are very good.

55. Procedures for monitoring and encouraging attendance are also good and the school is ever vigilant where there is non-attendance. The SENCO and LSAs are particularly involved with pupils with SEN and ensure that they and their parents receive appropriate support and guidance at key times. All staff are aware of the detailed and appropriate child protection policy used by the school and there are clear lines of communication between the various agencies that deal with child protection issues. The school has a good health and safety policy and reviews are carried out regularly and effectively.

56. The last inspection report recommended improvements to the fire alarm system and the system for turning off the gas supply in case of emergency. These issues have until recently been the responsibility of the LEA and no action has been taken. They have now been discussed by the headteacher and governing body to try to address the problems and short-term solutions have been put in place.

57. **Partnership with parents and the community**

57. Partnership with parents and the community is good overall and has maintained the standard noted during the previous inspection. The school is greatly valued and respected by parents and the local community. There were no concerns raised by the majority of parents at their pre-inspection meeting, in discussions with them or in response to questionnaires. However, a minority of parents had concerns about insufficient information in school reports.

58. The inspection found that the overall quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory. The school handbook is attractively designed and conforms with legal requirements. The 1999 governors' annual report to parents conforms with legal requirements and contains much useful additional information. Termly bulletins for parents are very friendly in tone, informative and well designed. Parents confirm good relationships with teachers and other members of staff. They are confident of sympathetic responses if difficulties arise. Teachers' annual written reports to parents are, however, unsatisfactory as they do not provide enough information for parents, although parents of pupils with SEN who are involved in Annual Reviews are kept well informed about progress.

59. Parents have very good involvement in their daughters' learning. Families have opportunities to join after-school classes for information and communications technology. In evening meetings, parents have discussed the national strategies for numeracy and literacy. Suitable homework is set in all year groups and parents' comments can be noted in the very effective homework diaries provided for all pupils. Pupils with special needs and their parents benefit from the good working links established with many external support services, including the Sensory Impaired Service, the Educational Psychology Service and Medway Language Achievement Service.

60. The school has very good links with the local and wider community, including primary schools and higher education institutions. Electronic and conventional links are established with schools in Europe, Japan, Canada and Russia. The school computer suites, floodlit netball courts and assembly hall are used intensively by the community. As a Technology College the school is expected to share its resources and expertise with other schools. As a consequence, primary teachers benefit from professional development opportunities in ICT. Student teachers also benefit from very effective mentoring in all subject departments.

61.

61. **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

61. **Leadership and management**

61. The overall leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. She has a very clear vision for the school which has been realised in a number of ways since the last inspection, notably through the development of Technology College status for the school. Together with the senior management team and governing body, both of which have undergone substantial changes in membership recently, she has maintained and further developed the very good ethos in the school. As a consequence pupils of all levels of attainment respond to the high expectations of their teachers by working very hard and generally behaving very well.
62. The senior management team is a strong and effective team. Roles and accountabilities are clear and senior staff are given very considerable responsibility to manage different aspects of the school. The three heads of school successfully manage the lower, middle and upper school while the new deputies are very effectively developing whole school responsibilities. Together with the headteacher, the ICT co-ordinator and the resources manager, these senior staff provide overall direction and common purpose to the school through weekly senior management team meetings.
63. The school aims to create a community with high expectations of both staff and pupils in all aspects of school life with a strong emphasis on providing each girl with the necessary skills and qualifications and a recognition that learning is a lifelong process. Staff and governors are clearly committed to these aims which are specific and appropriate and enable pupils and staff to work with a strong sense of common purpose.
64. The school has made good progress in its developments since the last inspection and it has addressed the key issues for action set out in the inspection report. Improvements in the curriculum and monitoring of pupils' progress have been two successful outcomes. The school has also taken steps to ensure that there is a daily collective act of worship, but this has not been fully achieved. There have also been major improvements in the use of ICT in the school, the better provision of teaching key skills across the curriculum and substantial improvements in SEN provision. Standards at GCSE have risen. The school is very well placed to develop successfully in the future.
65. The governing body is well informed and hardworking. It successfully carries out its role as critical friend to the school. A new chair of governors and a number of new governors have effectively taken over the role of involving themselves in the various committees which review progress in the school. Very detailed termly reports are provided for governors by all subject leaders and heads of school. Regular reports on the progress of action since the last inspection have been provided in line with statutory requirements. Examination data and other information on pupil progress are also scrutinised.
66. Procedures for supporting curriculum development are good. For example the development of literacy and numeracy policies, as well as the development of ICT across the curriculum, have stemmed from good whole school curriculum development strategies. Similarly the progress of pupils with special needs has improved substantially through more accurate target setting for each pupil and more specific planning for special needs pupils at Key Stage 3 and in different subject areas.
67. There are generally good approaches to monitoring the effectiveness of teaching and learning in the different subjects of the curriculum. The headteacher has high expectations of subject leaders who are required to monitor the quality of planning and teaching of those in their teams systematically. In the majority of departments these responsibilities are executed well, although current procedures are not entirely consistent between departments. At best, for example in English, modern languages and geography, teachers' plans, records and teaching are scrutinised very regularly, together with the quality of

pupils' work.

68. The school has a wide-ranging development plan and the overall quality of its effectiveness is good. Its strengths include its emphasis on key whole school issues including the development of ICT, improvements in monitoring pupils' progress and improvements in the support for pupils' basic skills. There are clear targets and accountabilities for these priorities.
69. The school's management of the education of pupils with special needs is very good. The policy and other documentation are detailed, development plan targets are implemented and staff employed within the learning support department are given clear direction. The governor for SEN is actively involved with the department and is an effective critical friend.

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

70. Teachers are experienced and very well qualified subject specialists. Technical support staff in departments are skilled and versatile. Staff responsible for administration and for the maintenance of premises and grounds contribute significantly to the smooth running of the school. Very effective induction and mentoring is provided for newly qualified and newly appointed teachers. The programme for staff development is also very good. Numerous training opportunities are available each year for teachers and ancillary staff and a substantial number of staff are involved in long-term professional development, including further degrees. Teacher appraisal is carried out well.
71. The provision of learning resources is generally good, with particular strengths in the widespread and effective use of up-to-date information and communications technology. The learning resources centres in upper and lower schools have limited stocks, but departmental book stocks are good. Many good quality CD ROMs are available in different parts of the school. Pupils have good access to computers in classrooms, in the computer suite and the learning resource centres.
72. The accommodation, in eight blocks, is satisfactory overall and is very good in some departments, for example modern languages and mathematics. Some mobile classrooms on the site are in poor condition. Where lessons are transferred from decayed mobiles to shared accommodation elsewhere, the quality of education is sometimes reduced because lack of space limits the activities which can be carried out. Performance opportunities in music are at times limited by insufficient space. The buildings are adequately decorated and the quality of display in the school is good. The staff room is far too small for the number of staff in the school. Externally, the sports fields and communal areas are well maintained. The school site and buildings are free of vandalism, graffiti and litter.

73. **The efficiency of the school**

73. The school's resources for learning and its accommodation are very well used. The key priorities in the school development plan are effectively supported by the allocation of funding. The amount spent on staffing, accommodation and resources is appropriate and just in the upper quartile for similar schools. The income per pupil is also within this range. The amount spent on books is at a satisfactory level and provision for computers is very good. Management of the large site is very good.
74. The basic budget is supplemented by money from the Standards Fund to support staff development and training and the school has generated a high level of additional income from lettings and associated activities. Money received as a result of the school being awarded Technology College status has been used well. Prudent financial planning over the last three years has enabled the school to build a significant surplus to meet its increased responsibilities relating to the introduction of Fair Funding. The school continues to allocate finances to subject departments appropriately and the level of resources to support learning is good.

75. Financial administration and monitoring are very good. The most recent external audit report indicates satisfactory control and congratulates the school on its management of finances. The new finance committee of the governing body is involved appropriately in budget setting, monitoring and financial control. Day to day financial management is very good.
76. Overall, financial planning and administration are very good, teaching is good and the school makes good use of its resources, accommodation and staff. Support for pupils and concern about their welfare is very good. Non-teaching staff make a valuable contribution to the school and give good support. Attainment is good for many pupils and almost all pupils make good progress. The school gives good value for money.

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

77. **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

77. **English**

77. By the end of Key Stage 3 results in the standard assessment tests in 1999 were above average for all schools at level 5 or better and equal to the national average for pupils reaching the higher levels. Seventy three per cent achieved level 5 or above and 24 per cent reached level 6. Overall, the high standards of attainment in English identified in the last inspection have been sustained.
78. A\* to C results in English Language in 1998 were above the national average for all schools and well above when compared to similar schools. Results in 1999 were slightly above those for 1998. Results in English Literature and drama were above average levels for all schools in 1998. Similarly, results in 1999 are above national averages when compared to all schools. All results are well above those for similar schools.
79. At A\* to G in English Language, results are above the national average. Results in English Literature and drama at A\* to G are well above the national average. A level results in English and media studies are below the national average.
80. Pupils currently in Year 9 reach standards which are above the national average. They listen attentively, speak confidently in clear standard English, enthusiastically express opinions and ask questions. They can read aloud with accuracy, fluency and expression. Most read with confidence and enjoyment and succeed in extracting more complex meanings from text. In writing, pupils are able to sustain a story line and use imaginative language to maintain the reader's interest. Pupils write in neat, legible script and present their work very well. Pupils are able to spell and punctuate with appropriate accuracy. Some of the pupils' written work is exceptional in terms of organisation, style and the sensitivity of expression.
81. All pupils currently in Year 11 are reaching at least grade G at GCSE in their current work. The proportion reaching A\* to C grades in their current work is above average compared to all schools. Pupils in Year 11 actively listen and speak confidently. They are able to listen to others and respond with ideas and opinions of their own. They answer teachers' questions and are successful in framing their own questions to ask teachers or other pupils. In reading, pupils are able to respond to literature through speaking and writing and are able to extract subtle meanings from text. They can also take notes successfully, plan their assignments and present a range of writing of reasonable length in which they develop their ideas logically. Pupils are enthusiastic in improving their work in terms of structure, paragraphing and spelling. Lower attaining pupils can read with confidence and write accurately for different purposes.
82. The progress of pupils at Key Stage 3 is very good. They begin the key stage at levels which are below average and at the end of the key stage reach levels which are above the national average. Teacher expectations are high. Pupils are motivated, enthusiastic and keen to learn. They are made aware of the learning objectives at the beginning of the lesson, are given a degree of independence in their learning and they are made aware of the progress they have made at the end of lesson.
83. The progress of pupils at Key Stage 4 is also very good. They continue the progress made at Key Stage 3. By the end of the key stage the proportion of pupils reaching A\* to C and A\* to G is above the national average. Compared to schools with a similar average Key Stage 3 point score in 1997, pupils' English results at A\* to C in 1999 were well above average. The progress of A level students currently in Year 13 is good. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress.
84. Support for pupils with special educational needs at both key stages is good. The individual education

plans are effective. Pupils contribute to the process and targets are set for future improvement. Staff in the English and special needs departments support pupils extremely well during English lessons. The more able pupils are also well supported in lessons and through small group activities, such as an S level group which meets regularly.

85. The overall quality of teaching is good at both key stages and post-16. Teaching is at least satisfactory in 88 per cent of lessons and in 74 per cent of the total, it was good and sometimes very good. Teaching is particularly effective at Key Stage 4. Teaching was unsatisfactory however, in 12 per cent of lessons. In most lessons, planning is thorough, learning objectives are specific and shared with pupils, there is a brisk business-like pace and a range of sharply focused activities. Pupils are constantly made aware of the exact purpose of each activity, there is a significant degree of challenge and pupils work hard. Pupils make good progress and teachers support pupils with study, drafting and editing skills, share examples of very successful assignments with the class and assist them with the structuring of work through, for example, the use of writing frames. Immediate verbal feedback is provided and pupils make very good progress. These lessons are exciting experiences. In the lessons which were less than satisfactory, weaknesses included learning objectives which were not sufficiently specific, pace which was too slow and an insufficient range of activities.
86. The use of information technology is excellent. Pupils regularly use word processing, CD ROMs, the Internet, video conferencing and other information technology to enhance their work. Information technology makes a valuable contribution to attainment. Similarly, media education contributes positively to work in English.
87. Drama is particularly well taught at both key stages. Pupils have clear guidelines and structures. They are encouraged to develop self-discipline and the ability to work independently. The teaching of drama makes a significant contribution to the teaching of English and to the improvement of self-esteem and communication skills.
88. Pupil response to lessons at both key stages and post-16 is very good. As well as being very well behaved and motivated, pupils have a mature approach to schoolwork. They develop good relationships with each other and with their teachers. They are able to explain to visitors precisely and with enthusiasm, what they are required to do in lessons. Pupils are given a degree of responsibility for their own learning and thrive on the challenge provided. In one lesson pupils, working in groups, took responsibility for dramatising different sections of a scene from a play by Shakespeare they had been studying. The interpretation led to an extremely sophisticated understanding of the text.
89. Assessment procedures are very good. Pupils' work is conscientiously, accurately and usually consistently marked. Records of pupil achievement, including those from Key Stage 2, are carefully maintained. Pupils are provided with clear information on how their work can be improved in the future. They are also thoughtfully and consistently involved in the assessment process. Homework makes an effective contribution to supporting pupils' learning. There is a need to further develop a consistent written approach to the day-to-day assessment of pupils' work.
90. The subject is very well managed. The head of department provides strong and imaginative leadership of the team and this helps to explain the high standards achieved in the subject. Teachers work hard to keep up to date in their subject and to seek innovative approaches to the teaching of English. For example, the school has developed a successful approach to improving pupils' standards of literacy. A number of strategies, for example the display of key words in classrooms, have been developed and standards of literacy have improved significantly across the school.
91. The subject is well resourced. Accommodation in English and drama is good as are book and non-book resources, including resources in information technology. But although there are good fiction, non-fiction and multi-media resources within classrooms, the quality and range of fiction in the learning resource areas are barely satisfactory.

92. The curriculum in English stresses the need to develop links with other curriculum and cross-curricular areas. The development of units of study which emphasise citizenship and social, moral, cultural and spiritual education are particularly impressive. The curriculum is significantly enhanced by the extra-curricular activities offered by members of the team. Theatre visits, drama clubs, book clubs, visits by outside experts, links with schools in other parts of the world, participation in national and international competitions and innovative liaison with primary schools involving older students, offer a range of imaginative experiences and opportunities for the development of speaking, listening reading and writing skills.

93. **Mathematics**

93. At Key Stage 3, attainment in mathematics is below average compared with all schools nationally. In the 1999 Key Stage 3 national tests, 58 per cent of pupils achieved level 5 or higher, compared with 62 per cent nationally. The proportion of pupils who reached level 6 was 25 per cent compared to 38 per cent nationally. These 1999 figures are very similar to those achieved in 1998, although there has been a small increase in the number of pupils reaching levels 7 and 8. Overall, attainment at Key Stage 3 is in line with similar schools.

94. Overall, attainment at Key Stage 4 is below average when compared with all schools nationally. In 1999, the proportion of pupils that achieved grades A\* to C in GCSE mathematics was 31 per cent, compared with 46 per cent nationally. In recent years, virtually all pupils have gained grades A\* to G. This is a considerable achievement. Over the last two years, there has been a dramatic shift in attainment towards the higher grades A\* to D. In 1997, only 38 per cent of pupils gained grades A\* to D. In 1998, the figure rose to 65 per cent and by 1999, it reached 72 per cent. This represents a significant success for the department. Overall, attainment at Key Stage 4 is above average when compared to similar schools. However, there is a large group of more than 100 pupils who, in 1999, gained grade D which is a concern. Increasing the proportion of pupils that achieve at least a grade C has been recognised as a high priority in the department's action planning.

95. In the present Year 11, the most able mathematicians are able to handle higher level GCSE work. For example, they can manipulate algebraic expressions and can construct and interpret graphs and diagrams. Intermediate level pupils are able to tackle problems such as those involving geometry and trigonometry. Predicted grades for these pupils indicate that the school's target for 2000 of 34 per cent A\* to C grades is achievable, particularly as the pupils practice and often extend their knowledge and skills in regular warm-up sessions. In the sixth form, the attainment of a small group of students who are following a GCSE modular course is in line with their expectations of gaining at least a grade C.

96. Attainment in the present Year 9 is similar to the previous year, although the school's target for 2000 of 62 per cent reaching level 5 or above seems to be achievable. Year 9 pupils confidently tackle a wide range of mathematical tasks. Basic number skills are good. Pupils practice these skills regularly in lessons and in tutorial time. Most pupils can rapidly recall mathematical facts and they are able to solve problems using different strategies. Oral work is good. Pupils will confidently explain their methods to the class and are happy to go to the board to demonstrate their skills.

97. Levels of attainment in mathematics are generally consistent across the different aspects of the subject. Pupils demonstrate good levels of investigational and problem solving skills. They can successfully use and apply their knowledge within mathematics and across the curriculum.

98. The overall progress of pupils, including those with special educational needs (SEN), is satisfactory at Key Stage 4. However, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A\* to C needs to rise in order to compare favourably with other subjects in the school. Compared to schools with a similar average Key Stage 3 point score in 1997, pupils' mathematics' results at A\* to C in 1999 were slightly below average.

99. The progress of pupils is good at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. The mathematical attainment of the pupils on entry to the school is well below the national average. Assessment of pupils on entry is used to

establish an appropriate programme of study for each set. Pupils are set by their levels of attainment. Staffing is generous so that there are not more than 24 pupils in most classes and 15 or fewer in the lowest attaining sets. The setting and staffing policies contribute very positively to the pupils' progress. Good progress in lessons is closely linked to effective teaching. In recent years, the mathematics department has placed an increasingly strong emphasis on teaching basic numeracy skills and on the use of interactive whole class teaching. This has created a motivating learning environment within the department. Teachers work hard to engage and challenge their pupils. The pupils come to mathematics lessons keen to learn and participate. Where progress is greatest, there is a strong sense of purpose and enjoyment.

100. In recent years the department has been involved in a number of important initiatives that have helped pupils make better progress. Such initiatives have contributed to the award of the Basic Skills Agency's Quality Mark and, more recently, to the school's participation in the national Key Stage 3 Numeracy Project. The focus of these initiatives has been on supporting pupils' learning through such things as improving classroom assessment, peer support and more flexible homework patterns. This innovative approach has contributed significantly to promoting good progress, particularly at Key Stage 3.
101. The pupils behave very well. They work hard in the subject and are well motivated. They are usually interested in the subject and can maintain their concentration throughout the lessons. Particularly impressive, is their willingness to contribute their ideas and opinions in oral work. They are happy to demonstrate their skills to others and some are even brave enough to try to provide explanations of concepts to the rest of the class. Pupils' work is usually neat and tidy, in accordance with the departmental guidelines. However, there is some inconsistency in the standards of written work that hinders the progress of some pupils.
102. Overall, teaching is good. It is satisfactory or better in 88 per cent of lessons. Teaching is satisfactory in 27 per cent of lessons; good in 28 per cent; and very good or excellent in 33 per cent. Teaching is more effective at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4. Teachers work hard throughout the school. They are very well motivated and morale is high. They work well as a team and are very well led by the head of department. The strongest teaching is linked to good subject knowledge that enables teachers to help pupils grasp concepts rather than simply follow mechanical processes. More of this strong teaching is to be found at Key Stage 3 where progress is good compared to Key Stage 4 where it is satisfactory. High expectations, where weaker pupils are asked demanding questions and strong emphasis on mental mathematics, are two characteristics of effective Key Stage 3 teaching. But there is also some very good teaching at Key Stage 4. For example, in a very good algebra lesson, Year 10 pupils were encouraged to discover for themselves the relationship between the linear equations and the corresponding shapes of the straight-line graphs. In this lesson, pupils were rewarded with some very powerful learning experiences.
103. Generally, lesson planning is good and is well supported by detailed schemes of work and policies. Sometimes the mathematical learning objective is not clearly shared with the pupils. Lessons are well structured, usually beginning with a warm-up activity that settles the class. Planned plenary sessions are sometimes lost as time runs out at the end of lessons. The regular setting, doing and marking of homework contributes significantly to the good progress of pupils. The freedom to set homework as a natural extension to any lesson is often a powerful teaching tool to maintain continuity between lessons. There is however, some inconsistency in the checking, marking and recording of homework.
104. Teachers organise their classes and manage their pupils well. Learning support assistants provide good support to pupils with SEN. In the best lesson teachers use a range of teaching strategies. For example, in an excellent lesson, the teacher was able to engage her pupils in a wide range of inter-active tasks that developed their mathematical understanding and generated great fun.
105. There is a small proportion of weak teaching that is characterised by teachers placing an undue emphasis on mechanical processes rather than on mathematical understanding. Sometimes, teachers fail to address the question of why a rule works. This can lead to confusion and loss of confidence amongst the pupils. On other occasions, opportunities are missed to encourage pupils to check or to correct answers.
106. The mathematics curriculum is well planned and organised. There are excellent schemes of work and

support materials aimed at ensuring consistency across a large department. Extensive portfolios of pupils' work are used to inform planning and assessment. The additional teaching sets ensure smaller class sizes and narrower ranges of attainment in each class. Teachers use the greater flexibility to give more attention to individual pupils and develop alternative teaching strategies. Projects, educational visits and involvement in mathematical activities beyond the school, considerably enrich the curriculum. There is a strong element of information and communications technology (ICT) integrated into the schemes of work that enhances the teaching of the subject. For example, in a very good lesson, Year 8 pupils successfully completed a project on shape and space using ICT. Assessment procedures are being developed and the department has recognised the need to review and evaluate such new initiatives.

107. There is clear direction and purpose within the department. There is delegation of responsibility and a sensible management structure that enables the large department to work effectively as a team. The head of department has driven the department forward since the last OFSTED inspection and has taken major decisions that have fundamentally improved the way the subject is taught. He has been well supported by staff within the department. Systems for monitoring attainment and progress are in place. However, there are aspects of monitoring teaching and learning that still need to be developed. Some departmental policies are not consistently followed. Overall, there is an impressive record of innovation and a commitment to raising standards. The leadership and management of the department are good.

108. There have been significant improvements in mathematics since the last inspection. Attainment at GCSE and at Key Stage 3 has improved and there is much greater variety in the teaching approaches used, with more emphasis on the teacher's role and less dependence on textbooks. Although there has been a very substantial increase in the number of pupils reaching a grade D since the last inspection, the department recognises that more pupils should now be targeted to gain grade C.

109.

#### 109. **Science**

109. In the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, the percentage of pupils reaching level 5 or above was 43 per cent which was below average when compared to all schools nationally (55 per cent). The results are in line with those of similar schools (44 per cent). The percentage reaching level 6 or above (8 per cent) was well below the national average for all schools (24 per cent), but in line with those from similar schools.

110. Since the last inspection the percentage of pupils gaining an A\* to C grade at GCSE in science has declined from 54 per cent to 37 per cent. However, in the last two years this decline has been halted and there has been a pattern of improvement during this time. Results at A\* to C grades are still be low the national average however, although there are further improvements in the current Year 11. 1999 A\* to C results were above average compared to similar schools and the proportion of pupils gaining at least a G grade at GCSE was almost 100 per cent.

111. In 1999 results at 'A' and 'AS' level biology were unsatisfactory with few pupils gaining a pass grade.

112. From lesson observations, pupils' GCSE module test results and a scrutiny of Year 11 work, pupils' attainment broadly matches those of schools nationally. Overall attainment of current pupils is above average when compared to similar schools. By the end of the key stage most pupils' investigative and practical skills are good. The school's programme of revision lessons and after-school homework clubs give pupils the opportunity to improve their GCSE grades.

113. By the end of Key Stage 4 more able pupils can complete a full science investigation with little assistance, whilst others need some support. To help, pupils are given clear guidance on what is expected of them and how marks are awarded. Their knowledge of the other attainment targets, Life and Living Processes, Materials and their properties and Physical Processes, is satisfactory.

114. Overall, pupils currently in Year 9 are reaching the national average. From classroom observation and other evidence, many current Year 9 pupils in middle and upper sets are attaining levels of understanding close to the national expectation (level 5) in all four attainment targets. By the end of the key stage most pupils know how to make a test fair, can use equipment sensibly and can draw simple conclusions from their results. When appropriate, they can use ICT effectively to analyse their results. They can also use ICT to find out information about the topic which they are studying.
115. Overall pupils' progress at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. In many individual lessons it is good. Pupils make most progress in those well structured lessons in which the teacher makes it very clear what is expected and what has to be learnt. In these classes pupils' notes and assessments show good progression through the scheme of work. Pupils with SEN also make at least satisfactory and often good progress, being well supported by the staff. Pupils' practical skills are being developed progressively, although the number of opportunities for some classes to carry out full investigations as part of normal lessons, is limited.
116. The progress of pupils at Key Stage 4 is good, including those with SEN. Pupils follow a modular course for GCSE and their written work confirms that the topics are being studied to the correct depth. Progress is monitored by regular module tests and central records are kept of pupils' progress. Currently pupils' coursework is not monitored in the same detailed way and as it accounts for 25 per cent of the final GCSE grade, a similar system could improve pupils' attainment. Progress is unsatisfactory at A level in science. At this level many students struggle to make sufficient progress because the course is not appropriate to their needs.
117. Pupils' attitude to lessons is always at least satisfactory and often good. In most lessons pupils are attentive, settle to work quickly and show good levels of concentration. If, however, tasks are unclear or insufficiently explained, then in a minority of cases pupils can be distracted from their work. The majority have a positive attitude, which means that lessons are carried out in a quiet and appropriate atmosphere, which contributes to the level of attainment achieved. Pupils work well in groups, both when working at a computer and during practical work, when they get on well together and share out the tasks. Most take pride and care in their written work which forms a useful source of information for future revision. The majority of pupils seem to enjoy their science lessons and show interest in the topic which they are studying.
118. The quality of teaching is rarely less than satisfactory and in half of lessons it is good and occasionally very good. About one in five lessons are very good. There is some weak teaching in Key Stage 3 though most is good or very good. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is, overall, good. It is never less than satisfactory. A level teaching is always very conscientious, but it is ineffective because most pupils are following a course which is too difficult for them and consequently they are making unsatisfactory progress.
119. In the better lessons teaching results in most pupils making good progress and attaining good results. However, pupils' progress over time is often less secure, as many find it difficult to recall facts from previous lessons. Very good use is made of display material, much of it produced by pupils, to reinforce learning and to practice vocabulary. Teachers know their pupils well and plan their lessons in line with the detailed science schemes of work. Plans take account of the range of ability within their classes and pupils' understanding is checked regularly. Lessons start promptly and move at a purposeful pace. Teachers use questions well, particularly at the start and end of lessons to find out what pupils know and can remember. They use their knowledge of the subject to challenge pupils' thinking. Appropriate homework is set and pupils' work is marked, though there is some inconsistency in the quality of marking and its regularity.
120. The very few unsatisfactory lessons are typified by a slow start, a lack of pace and generalisations rather than specific information being given about the topic. In these lessons pupils are unsure about exactly what is expected of them.
121. All aspects of the National Curriculum programmes of study at Key Stage 3 and the GCSE syllabuses

at Key Stage 4 are covered, including the use of ICT, which is particularly effective at enhancing pupils' learning and enjoyment of the subject. Regular assessment of pupils' progress plays a positive role in raising standards and the centralised system of record keeping allows pupils to be set targets and for these to be monitored. The various assessment requirements of the National Curriculum and GCSE boards are fully met.

122. The head of the department gives clear and strong leadership. Subject documentation is comprehensive and day-to-day management is good. Accommodation is good and laboratories are served well by hard working technicians. Learning resources are adequate. Since the last inspection the provision of basic equipment and textbooks has improved, as has the use of the library. ICT now makes a positive contribution to the curriculum.

## 123. OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

### 123. Art

123. At the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils achieve the national expectation for art and many exceed this standard. In Year 9, higher attaining pupils make very good progress and produce a high standard of observational drawing in a still life project linked to Cubism. These studies are extended imaginatively into large skilful paintings inspired by their knowledge of artists' methods and techniques. Pupils plan their work well and experiment with a variety of ideas for their final compositions, developing collaborative skills by working in groups to construct challenging still life arrangements, using objects portrayed by the artist Braque.

124. In 1998 attainment at GCSE grades A\* to C was in line with the national average for all schools and above average for similar schools. Attainment at grades A\* to G was above the national average for all schools. In 1999 attainment was significantly better than the previous year, with 87 per cent of pupils achieving GCSE grades A\* to C and a third of pupils awarded A\* and A grades, which was particularly successful. At the last inspection attainment in art at grades A\* to C was good for similar schools. Good progress has been made over the last three years and since the last inspection in improving examination results which, with the exception of 1998, have exceeded the national average.

125. Attainment at GCE A level grades A to E in 1998 was above the national average for all schools. In 1999, A level results have significantly improved, with all students achieving a pass and 70 per cent the highest grades. Attainment at GNVQ intermediate art and design in 1998 was above the national average for all schools with all students achieving a pass. The ratio of students achieving merit and distinction awards compared favourably to the national average for all schools. In 1999, GNVQ results were lower than in the previous year with a pass rate of 75 per cent, but they were still above the national average.

126. Attainment in the current Year 11 is above average for all schools and in line with the previous year. Throughout Key Stage 4 most pupils make very good progress in their practical art skills and knowledge and understanding of the subject. In Year 11 pupils make very good progress and many achieve high standards in observational drawing and painting in still life, portraiture and landscape. They carry out extensive research using a variety of sources, including ICT and produce high quality preparatory studies. They use their knowledge of other artists' methods and styles well in developing their own ideas.

127. Pupils in Year 10 make very good progress and achieve a high standard of work. They produce a variety of lively, well observed drawings, studies and paintings of flowers inspired by the study of the artist Georgia O'Keefe, using colour, shape and pattern very effectively. Throughout the key stage, pupils use sketchbooks soundly to record from observation and examples of artists' work, but, as in the last inspection, still rather formally. The department is working hard to encourage a more experimental approach to this aspect of the subject.

128. Sixth Form students make good progress and achieve high standards in drawing and painting. The attainment of current Year 13 students is above average and comparable to the previous year. A level art students quickly improve their drawing and painting skills, becoming increasingly individual in responding expressively to common themes, such as landscape and the figure. The standard of observational drawing is often very high, exploiting scale and a range of media effectively. Personal studies in art and design history are impressive, integrating both thoughtful written content, skilful visual studies and imaginative presentation. Good progress has been made in improving standards since the last inspection.

129. GNVQ intermediate students make good progress in art, achieving a reasonable standard of work despite little experience of the subject at Key Stage 4. They produce good quantities of research and develop a variety of creative ideas, especially in design units. The standard of work achieved in a three dimensional fantasy hat project and in graphic design is good, but the quality of work in printmaking is low due to poor quality resources. Key skills are integrated well into practical assignments and the

students plan and evaluate their work appropriately. ICT skills are developing well and most students can use a variety of software successfully to create desktop publications and brochures.

130. At Key Stage 3 pupils make good progress in art over time, although in some lessons it is less brisk. On entry to the school pupils have had a very mixed experiences in art and many are below average in attainment. In Year 7 pupils quickly improve the standard of their drawing, painting and colour knowledge. They are introduced to sketchbooks and use these well for a variety of purposes, planning, researching ideas, drawing and collecting stimulus materials. In portraiture they learn about the work of artists using this genre and produce very good paintings exploring mood and feelings. They develop ICT skills by taking their own pictures with a digital camera and distorting these images on the computer. Many pupils use these images effectively within an ICT project on 'Myself' elsewhere in the school. In Year 8, pupils make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of pattern, collage and in observational drawing. They learn about the work of Kandinsky and produce exciting, vibrant paintings in response to music of his period.
131. In both Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils make good progress in literacy within art by the production of written research, the annotation of preparatory studies and in the use of a specialist art vocabulary. Fewer opportunities are available for younger pupils to engage in discussion and offer opinions about art and design. The department has a good policy for the teaching of literacy and numeracy, which is built into the comprehensively documented schemes of work.
132. Pupils respond well in most lessons. Behaviour is very good and lessons are busy and purposeful, with pupils well motivated. Enjoyment of art is high and attendance at art clubs in the lower school is good. Homework is generally completed conscientiously and older pupils produce a good volume of work. Relationships are positive, pupils exercise responsibility well and collaborate effectively in groups. Increasingly as pupils move throughout the school, they are more independent learners.
133. Since the last inspection the department has maintained the good quality of its teaching. In a third of lessons observed, teaching was very good and in only one lesson was it unsatisfactory. Teaching is particularly effective in the sixth form. Lessons are well planned and organised in line with the schemes of work, which are now better matched to meet the needs of different groups. The predominantly well qualified and knowledgeable teachers have high expectations for the behaviour and work produced by their pupils and firm, but fair control. Time is used well in most lessons and pupils benefit from effective pace and an appropriate range of teaching methods, which ensure they make good progress in improving their skills, knowledge and understanding of art and design.
134. Where teaching is very good, pupils are given clear, explicit expectations for the learning of practical skills by the skilful use of visual resources, supported by high subject knowledge and the practical demonstration of skills. Other strengths in the teaching include effective discussion and reflection about the work of other artists and their own progress, as well as effective questioning. These qualities are particularly evident in sixth form teaching. In the sole unsatisfactory lesson, pupils made slow progress as a result of the teacher's insecure subject knowledge and a lack of clarity in the instructions given to the class. The high quality of relationships between staff and pupils underpins a very positive ethos for learning and there is much mutual respect.
135. Assessment procedures in art are generally sound, but are not sufficiently well matched to National Curriculum requirements in Key Stage 3, particularly in respect of the statutory end of key stage assessments and in reporting to parents. Departmental monitoring of pupils' progress is good and arrangements for ensuring consistency of assessment judgements are now being more effectively established. Marking is regular and in the best lessons it provides pupils with detailed, positive and developmental comments to help them improve their work. Feedback on progress made in lessons is however, inconsistent.
136. In the last inspection, the schemes of work were judged to be too prescriptive and lacking in

opportunities for pupils to make individual responses to the work set. Opportunities for pupils to use ICT creatively and for three-dimensional work were inadequate. Since then the department has made good progress in addressing these issues and the schemes of work are much improved. Access to three-dimensional work remains barely adequate however. The visual ethos of most of the art rooms and public areas through the use of vibrant displays of pupils' work and stimulus materials, provide a rich environment for learning. Extra-curricular opportunities in art are good, with regular art clubs and a regular programme of gallery and museum visits, which enrich cultural development.

137. This is a good art and design department which is well led and in which the staff work well as a mutually supportive team. The head of department is appropriately involved in monitoring standards by observing teaching and learning, analysing examination results and reviewing marking.

138. **Design and Technology**

138. Attainment is at the national average at the end of Key Stage 3 and this indicates good progress. By the end of the key stage pupils' skills and knowledge of designing and making enable them to design with some independence. From Year 7 pupils become confident with the use and application of the design process and apply this across a range of material areas. Pupils gain understanding through well-structured practical tasks, which ensure the application of theoretical knowledge to designing and making with hand and machine tools. Computer aided design software is used to complement good hand produced graphical skills. In all years food products are finished to a high standard. Achievement in wood and plastics work is also good and all pupils regularly take home small articles, often with moving parts such as cams or electronic circuits. Structured schemes of work are followed in all year groups; these ensure consistency of standards across teachers and year groups.

139. Attainment overall at GCSE A\* to C in both 1998 and 1999 was below the national average, but better than similar schools. Compared to all schools, A\* to G results were high with all pupils achieving at least a pass. Results in child development and graphics were particularly good, being in line with national standards and much better than similar schools. Results in all subjects within design and technology have improved since the last inspection. Steps have been taken to improve attainment since last year. These include closer analysis of examination assessment and a review of how work was marked. The department should continue to aim to raise D grades to C as 10 per cent of pupils are very close to achieving this.

140. Evidence from classroom observation and scrutiny of work indicate overall improvement in attainment in the current Year 11. Overall, this year group is reaching the national average in the subject. Some of the best design and technology work combines materials and components to make new designs such as new food products, storage holders and educational toys. Pupils construct garments accurately. They produce good quality food products, which are of a high saleable quality. By the end of the key stage pupils can analyse a task and develop a solution, considering a range of interesting possibilities. New elements such as computer control and electronics have been introduced since the previous inspection and pupils' achievements are good in these areas. Computer controlled and automated machine processes are used to enhance attainment, with teachers introducing batch production techniques and associated design decision-making, based on commercial methods.

141. In Key Stage 3, some pupils make very good progress, but the vast majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. Throughout Key Stage 3, pupils complete very good design sheets and folders, with good pace, which prepare them well for later GCSE courses. Practical projects are completed with good pace and homework is used well to support progress. Pupils make good progress using hand and machine tools to manipulate materials and are quick to learn how to use tools like cookers and soldering irons safely.

142. In Key Stage 4, pupils opt for specialist GCSE courses within design and technology. Progress is always good and some is very good. Pupil progresses well in all design and technology subjects, although

the rotational timetable can make some experiences disjointed. This has improved this year since the rotation has been lengthened. In child development pupils make good progress and their attitudes are very positive. There is a good balance between practical and theory work in child development, which the pupils enjoy. Homework makes a good contribution to progress in GCSE design folder development.

143. In both key stages pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good and in many lessons very good. Pupils are thoroughly involved in all practical and theory activities and enjoy them. They show a keen interest in practical problem solving activities and enjoy the mixture of challenges set. Pupils are eager to complete practical tasks, yet work safely and efficiently. Pupils concentrate well when they are listening to their teacher or working on their own. Tools, equipment and accommodation are respected and cared for. Club activities are well attended and results of competitions and business links are impressive.
144. The overall quality of teaching is good and it is very good in some lessons. Teaching quality is particularly effective at Key Stage 3. Lessons always have a well-planned structure based on an efficiently organised scheme. This contributes to achievement and pupil motivation. Teachers' expectations are high, though more work is needed in interpreting and applying the assessment criteria and raising standards in some areas at GCSE. Relationships are excellent, providing a very secure and efficient environment for learning. Teachers' control of pupils is also excellent, keeping pupils on task and motivating them to want to learn and enjoy the subject. The variety of interesting design tasks as well as teachers' enthusiasm and encouragement of learning, are two aspects which characterise the very effective Key Stage 3 teaching. The teaching of design is excellent, starting in Year 7 and developing well through the key stages.
145. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and the team of teachers has anticipated some recent changes in the National Curriculum. Pupils have equality of access to a broad and balanced and modern curriculum, which caters for equal opportunities, extending girls' career aspirations and possibilities. Pupils are introduced to exercises which cover the full range of the statutory programmes of study. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well, through being taught different or modified tasks to suit their abilities. Assessment and marking of work are very good with teachers setting targets for improvement. A new computerised assessment system has been developed and this is aiding analysis. Records of work assessed are matched to the National Curriculum and are good.
146. Pupils consider design problems with associated moral and cultural issues and this contributes well to their personal development. In food technology pupils consider foods from around the world and their impact on diets. Work with business and industry is growing and makes a positive contribution to achievement and standards. Competitions such as bridge building and robot construction, as well as charity work such as Childline, all contribute to good social and cultural development as well as raising pupils' self esteem.
147. There is very good leadership of design and technology and the department has developed significantly since the last inspection. The department has clear aims and objectives and the ethos in which the subject is taught reflects the school aims.
148. There is a good match of number and qualifications of teachers to the demands of the curriculum. The part-time technician makes a very good contribution to the faculty. The accommodation is good and learning resources are well cared for by the staff, technician and pupils. However, some child care lessons are carried out in inappropriate rooms, which sometimes hinders pace and concentration. The department makes good use of the school network of computers. Textbook resources are good. Space for the storage of work and resources is limited and this restricts the pace and depth of some development.
149. Funding has increased due to government Technology School funding. It has been spent wisely on new and improved equipment and consequently there is better learning than at the time of the last inspection. Good progress has been made in addressing issues raised in the previous inspection.

## Geography

150. At the end of Key Stage 3 attainment in geography reaches the national expectation. Pupils in Year 9 can, for example, demonstrate in writing and oral work that they can raise good geographical questions about the reasons why flooding occurs and relate them to a range of locations around the world using atlases. The most able pupils can explain their answers very well, linking a range of factors. Pupils can carry out guided fieldwork enquiries well and some are beginning to be able to structure their work themselves, as is required to reach higher National Curriculum levels.
151. Attainment at A\* to C in 1998 (35 per cent) was well below the national average, although comparable to that in similar schools. The pattern of declining results in 1997 and 1998 was halted in 1999 and results are now improving. 1999 A\* to C results (49 per cent) were closer to the national average and better than those in similar schools. The number of pupils attaining the highest grades has been too low until 1999 when results showed a marked improvement, although there were no A\* grades. However the most able pupils in the current Year 11 demonstrate the potential to achieve A\* grades. This is indicated by mock exam grades and the quality of analysis and the range and depth of detail in their case studies, where high standards are evident. The department has reversed the falling trend in results by careful analysis of the weaknesses and consequent action. Geography GCSE remains the most popular option subject at the school.
152. In 1998 and 1999 A level A to E grade results were comparable to those in similar schools although below these for all schools. Results from the small number of girls taking A level fluctuate. Overall it is below average. There have been insufficient pupils attaining the highest grades recently although from scrutiny of their work the current Year 13 group is likely to be an improvement on previous results with a shift to higher grades.
153. Pupils of all levels of attainment and key stages generally make good progress. Year 7 pupils begin from a low base. Practical activities and adapted work successfully help develop their understanding, skills and interest for the subject. Pupils in Year 9 demonstrate good progress in their fieldwork, recording and analysis skills. They use computers well to show information about river processes and settlement patterns, through investigation of the River Darent and an adjacent village. Some of these individual studies are outstanding. Many would demonstrate higher National Curriculum attainment if they were given more opportunity to plan their own enquiries. Such strategies have begun to be implemented, but need to spread across the whole department.
154. Pupils at Key Stage 4 make good progress, particularly those in the higher attaining groups. The quantity and quality of written work and data analysis in their books often demonstrate good attainment and progress. Carefully planned use of computers, using recent information about hurricanes for example, speeds progress.
155. In lessons pupils are diligent, well-trained individual workers who can co-operate well together when required. They expect to learn and work hard in lessons. They present their work with pride and many reach high standards in their literacy skills, writing about geographical patterns and processes at length. They are enthusiastic about using computers to present their work and take opportunities to do this in school, outside lessons and at home.
156. Teaching across all key stages is good. Three quarters of teaching is good and sometimes very good. Teaching is particularly effective at Key Stage 4 accounting for the good progress of pupils in Years 10 and 11. Highly effective use of ICT, particularly where pupils are carrying out research using up to the minute information off the internet, is one reason for this successful teaching. Teachers demand and achieve very high standards of behaviour, work procedures and presentation from pupils. They are good role models and put considerable effective effort into lesson planning and resource development, often matching resources to pupils' needs. The marking of homework, projects and classwork is a strength of the department, because written comments are provided which help pupils know where to improve.

157. In the best lessons, teachers always remember to share with the pupils what they want them to learn, often as a key geographical question, as well as checking back briefly over what was learned in the previous lesson. They similarly remember to summarise what the pupils have learned at the end of the lesson, often questioning the pupils to achieve this. They use pupils to demonstrate and make the lesson more interactive during direct teaching sessions, or use practical and computer work to fire the interest of pupils. Important geographical vocabulary is highlighted on the whiteboard or in written resources. Pupils are given opportunities to work together, for example, by testing and identifying rock types, choosing the most geographically effective way to graph data using the computer, or deciding on key points after viewing a video.
158. When judged across all lessons, the number of planned opportunities for pupils to work in paired or group situations does not happen long enough or often enough for pupils to develop their geographical initiative and thinking skills to their full potential. This has an impact on enquiry and post-16 standards, which could be higher if pupils were given more responsibility in these situations.
159. In some lessons which are overall, satisfactory, there are sometimes weaknesses. For example in some GCSE and A level lessons there is insufficient attention given to the systematic development of demanding reading, writing and recording tasks. In some Key Stage 3 and GCSE lessons some work is too easy: whilst careful thought has been given to matching work to pupils' needs, the easiest work does not challenge the pupils enough unless they have significant special educational needs.
160. The curriculum is well planned to interest and motivate pupils. Fieldwork, model making to explain geographical ideas and the use of computers to support the subject, continue to be major strengths, as at the time of the last inspection. Significant and very good developments in the use of computers are helping raise pupils' attainment and enhance their progress, providing more opportunities for geographical investigations and for collaborative work. The department is building a twenty-first century geography curriculum with innovative projects in Key Stage 3 such as Wicken Fen, the hurricane-tracking simulation project and communicating with Japanese students by Email. The challenge remains to provide all classes with similar opportunities.
161. Assessment strategies are accurate and effective in the department. Target setting, both from test data and targets identified with pupils, is helping track individual pupils' progress more effectively. Staff have a good knowledge of pupils' special educational needs targets and will often make these specific for geography lessons. The department has recognised the need to update Key Stage 3 enquiry strategies to raise attainment for the most able as well as the need to amend the current methods of assessing its units of work.
162. The department continues to be very well led, as is clear from the way that issues from the last inspection have been followed up. The sharing of work with the staff team and monitoring and evaluation of both pupils and staff have enabled many developments to be put into place to improve pupils' learning. Display continues to be outstanding in promoting the image and standards of geography. Despite the interim difficulties with GCSE results, progress since the last inspection has been good.

## **History**

163. By the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils in Year 9 reach the national expectation. The majority of pupils are able to use different types of historical sources effectively. Recent work within the department in the techniques of extended writing have improved the ability of pupils to construct accounts. Because there has been an emphasis throughout the key stage on the understanding and acquisition of knowledge, pupils have developed a good critical awareness of events and the actions of people in the past. The focus on literacy skills since the last inspection has helped raise standards.
164. In 1999 GCSE results at A\* to C were below average. Only 39 per cent of pupils gained a grade A\* to C compared to 53 per cent of

pupils gaining these grades in 1998 which was above average. However, the high proportion of pupils gaining A\* to G grades has been sustained over the years. Fluctuations at A\* to C have been partly because the varying levels of pupils' attainment as they began the course. Overall however, there has not been a clear pattern of improvement in GCSE results at A\* to C since the last inspection and this has been a weakness. There are however, clear signs of improvement in the work of the current Year 11 pupils.

165. The 1998 A level results were well below the national average.
166. The standard of work in the current Year 11 is now broadly in line with the national average. The proportion on track to attaining A\* to C grades is nearer the average than in 1999 and this is an improvement. The work in this key stage is varied and challenging. The groups work enthusiastically and use an increasing variety of sources in their research. For example, considerable use is made of ICT and the internet. The development of pupils' written work is supported by a series of teaching strategies designed to improve literacy and extended writing.
167. Progress in Key Stage 3 is good. Attainment when pupils begin their studies in Year 7 is below the national expectation for many pupils. During the course of the key stage pupils follow programmes of study that are challenging and result in good progress being made by the end of Year 9. For example one class was able to discuss nineteenth century transport issues systematically with a sound knowledge base, using their critical understanding.
168. Overall progress in Key Stage 4 is good. The work is challenging and covers a variety of approaches to the study of the subject. Pupils are introduced systematically to the more sophisticated aspects and skills that are required for success at GCSE. Progress of pupils in the sixth form is satisfactory.
169. At Key Stage 4 the subject is popular and there are good take-up rates for the GCSE courses. At all levels pupils are able to sustain concentration in their work and display a genuine interest in the subject. The ability of the pupils to study on their own allows for more ambitious teaching and adds an extra dimension to pupils' learning. For example several groups have been observed using the computer suite. In these lessons pupils settle quickly to their work, they understand the importance of following codes of practice and they also help each other. This atmosphere is created and maintained by good teaching and the willingness of all members of the department to keep up to date with new technology, new teaching strategies and current historical research. Relationships in each key stage are very good and pupils work well collaboratively. Pupils regularly discuss issues in small groups and in pairs, but they are less successful at initiating questions and areas of discussion themselves.
170. The overall quality of teaching is good and teaching in some lessons is very good. Teaching is particularly good at Key Stage 3. This represents a continuation of the high standards observed in the last inspection. Pupils acquire a balance of knowledge, skills and understanding that is carefully planned through the schemes of work. Considerable emphasis is placed on providing pupils with challenging tasks that have clearly defined targets and outcomes. Lessons cater for pupils of different capabilities by capturing the imagination and by providing appropriate resource and activities. For example in Year 7 story telling was used to explain the events of the siege of Rochester Castle. In Year 11 video clips were shown to reinforce important factors that had been studied in detail during the lesson. Computer technology is used very effectively to motivate pupils and develop their history and ICT skills. During these lessons expectations are high and good class management and feedback help pupils' progress. Homework is used to extend work in class and encouragement is given to use the learning resources centres and the open access computer areas.
171. The requirements of the National Curriculum are met in full. Pupils of different abilities and strengths are catered for through a wide range of teaching strategies and resources. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. For example, in one lesson with a Year 7 group, ICT was used to provide pictorial sources and structured task sheets. Sensitive issues are dealt with carefully by the department. Pupils are taught about important values and attitudes and are encouraged to form their own informed judgements. For example,

in Year 9 pupils debated the complex issues of child labour in the nineteenth century. The department has a well established programme of fieldwork. Each year group has the opportunity to participate in interesting and investigative site work. For example in Years 7 and 8, joint study visits are made with the mathematics department.

172. Assessment in the department is good. There are regular assignments that are marked and moderated. The pupils understand the purpose of the assignments and what is required to achieve good marks. The mark schemes are clear and open so that pupils understand the progress they have made and what targets need to be set for the next piece of work. Pupils at all levels are able to talk about their own strengths and weaknesses.
173. The staff in the department are well qualified and enthusiastic historians. Opportunities are made available for teachers to update their skills and there is a staff development policy that caters for individuals' training needs. Responsibilities and teaching loads are distributed appropriately. There is a wide range of effective resources which support teaching and learning. Good use is made of a variety of text books. Since the last inspection the bank of activity sheets has been expanded and offers resources for pupils of all levels of attainment. Pupils are encouraged to use the library and the open access ICT areas.
174. The resources within the department are well managed. Good use is made of supplementary resources and there is an extensive library of video material and activity sheets. The departmental budget is well managed and appropriate bids are made for resources when they are required. The computer technology in the classrooms and the network suites is very well used by the department. Since the last inspection considerable developments have taken place and all history teachers are now able to use the most up-to-date applications and teaching techniques. The use of ICT to support history teaching is very good.
175. The management of the department is very good. Staff and resources are deployed efficiently. The schemes of work are carefully written and are kept up-to-date. The head of department gives a clear direction to the team. The aims and objectives of the department are clear and based on a sound evaluation of the needs of the pupils. Planning and pupils' books are monitored regularly. There is a programme of regular lesson observation which has resulted in continuing discussion about teaching strategies and standards. Statistical analysis is used to track and anticipate pupil performance. This is used very effectively to assess and review the schemes of work. The management of the department continues to be effective and has effectively built on the strengths recognised in the last inspection.

### **Information and Communications Technology**

176. Pupils in Year 9 are reaching the national expectations in their levels of attainment. This indicates good progress over the key stage. Throughout the key stage pupils are taught modules of work which progressively get more difficult, recapping and extending areas of experience. Pupils undertake a project in primary schools, which they finish in secondary school and this helps them make a good start to their studies. Links with primary schools are strengthening and are starting to contribute to achievement. By the end of Year 7 pupils have made good progress. They are confident users of major software packages and can apply learning to support and extend work in other subjects.
177. At GCSE all pupils are entered for an examination which is a strength. The 1998 GCSE results, when compared with all schools, were below average at A\* to C grades, but above at A\* to G. In 1999 results were much improved and matched the average for all schools at A\* to C grade. Compared to similar schools, 1999 results were high. Attainment at both key stages has improved since the previous inspection.
178. In Year 11, pupils' overall attainment in lessons and in coursework reaches the national average and reflects good progress over the key stage. Pupils are confident in the use and application of modern software applications such as spreadsheets, control technology, desk top publishing, multi-media, databases and word processing. Pupils model solutions to realistic problems using the computers. Research through

the use of the computer is a distinct strength in the school's use of information technology in many subjects of the curriculum. Pupils use control software confidently. They can use databases and spreadsheets together effectively. In design and technology, pupils successfully design parts of their coursework with computer aided design and manufacturing software. Good presentation techniques were in evidence in all year groups.

179. Pupils with special educational needs, in both key stages and post-16 courses, make good progress in information technology. The use of computers contributes to the development of literacy skills. Pupils' presentation skills are enhanced through the use of an appropriate range of software packages including multi-media authoring.
180. Pupils in both key stages enjoy a broad and balanced experience of the statutory programmes of study. All classes, in all years, have regular teaching and use of computers as a separate subject and within many other subjects; this contributes to good gains in attainment. The use of ICT to improve attainment is a strength of the school. Pupils use industry standard software programmes such as word processing, databases, spreadsheets, multi media authoring and desktop publishing, and standards achieved are often very good, as is evident in the many displays of work from a variety of subjects and year groups. Pupils on work experience are valued by the firms they visit because of their advanced skills. Attainment is improving with each successive year group, due to increased and more efficient access to computers and software and its efficient co-ordination.
181. Pupils behave very well and attitudes to the subject are very good. Relationships between the teachers and pupils are very positive. In lessons, pupils are always well disciplined; they listen carefully to instructions and settle down quickly to work. Pupils use computers enthusiastically and regularly in the curriculum, before and after school and at lunch-times. Their positive attitudes are illustrated by pupils' independent use of computers in all computer rooms.
182. In Key Stage 4 courses the overall quality of teaching is good. It is very good and occasionally excellent in two fifths of lessons and is never less than satisfactory. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are very good in both key stages. New areas of experience are tackled effectively, such as control technology. Teachers' expectations are usually high. Work is usually very thoroughly planned and monitored for pace and progress. A good variety of teaching methods is employed. Teaching builds pupils' confidence quickly. Assessment of pupils' attainment is very well organised and is accurate. There are, for example, extensive portfolios of assessed ICT work in modern foreign languages, history and geography, which help to set and maintain standards. GCSE work is assessed regularly and feedback is given to help pupils tune their work against detailed assessment criteria.
183. The requirements of the National Curriculum are met in full. The use of computers in different subjects has grown and this contributes to improved attainment in this subject and many others. All pupils, including those with special needs, have equal access to ICT. The use of the internet and other large databases give pupils valuable access to recent and relevant research information including that related to multi-cultural themes. Communication links with local schools and schools across the world is achieved via video conferencing and electronic mail. During the inspection week, pupils communicated with a French school and a poet in the North of England. There are currently 12 successful information technology linked projects. Such experiences enrich pupils' personal, social and cultural education and extend their knowledge of the world of work.
184. The leadership of information technology is very good. It is undertaken by two managers in information technology and further contributions from other subjects. The qualifications of staff are good for the curriculum they offer. Where new initiatives are introduced, staff training is chosen carefully to support development and this is good. Two full-time support staff work very hard to ensure that computers are used efficiently. Their support for teaching and their impact on learning is effective. Overall very good progress has been made in the development of ICT since the last inspection.

185. The quality of computer and other learning resources is very good. The number of computers to pupils is about the national average at 1:7. Computers and network systems are of very high quality and very well maintained. A multi-media network system ensures fast and secure access to computers across the curriculum. There are innovative resources such as computer assisted white boards and wall projectors which are enhancing teaching. Accommodation and furniture are good, with computers shared between most classrooms and subjects.

### **Modern Foreign Languages**

186. By the end of Key Stage 3 the majority of pupils are working at or close to national expectations. Able pupils already speak with confidence and fluency and have a sound grasp of grammatical structures. Many pupils at this key stage have little difficulty in understanding recorded information or basic classroom instructions in the foreign language

187. Since the previous inspection GCSE results in French have shown a continuing and substantial improvement, but this is not the case in German where results have shown only a limited improvement. Recent GCSE results at grades A\* to C in French have been very high compared with those of similar schools and are also significantly above the national average. Recent GCSE results in German at grades A\* to C have improved slightly over previous years, but still remain below the average for similar schools and well below the average for all pupils nationally. In the last two years 100 per cent of pupils achieved grades A\* to G in both French and German. Recent results in the NVQ language units of post-16 students also show a 100 per cent success rate in both French and German.

188. At Key Stage 4, pupils are responding well to the requirements of the GCSE or Certificate of Achievement syllabuses. In French the majority of pupils are achieving in line with national average expectations and a significant number of pupils in the upper sets are attaining above this. In German high attainment is less marked and although many pupils are achieving in line with average expectation, a substantial proportion remain below this. Pupils in upper sets in both languages have a firm knowledge of appropriate vocabulary, can use tense constructions with ease and write and speak accurately. In many cases however, pupils do not readily initiate the foreign language and are too reliant upon prompts. Attainment levels of NVQ students are good and at least in line with national expectations.

189. Progress of pupils at all key stages is good and in many cases, particularly in French, it is very good. In the best lessons pupils link previously learned material to create more complex language and are able to apply their knowledge of constructions and vocabulary to produce their own language or to deduce meaning from written or spoken texts. In many lessons pupils learn from their mistakes and manage to improve the accuracy of their language. Less able pupils also make very good progress. For example, a lower ability set of Year 10 pupils worked through a carefully structured programme with clearly graduated objectives which helped them to progress and to recognise the improvements that they had made. The application of technology through computer assisted activities and video-conferencing is having a marked effect upon improvement in pupils' spoken and written skills and upon their levels of confidence.

190. The quality of teaching is good at all key stages. All teaching is satisfactory or better and in 85 per cent of lessons it was good and occasionally very good. Teaching is particularly effective at Key Stage 4, which helps to account for the good progress and above average attainment of pupils at this key stage. In all years, lessons invariably begin crisply and teachers clearly explain the objectives of the lesson. Relationships with pupils are uniformly constructive and caring and teachers' confident classroom management ensures that pupils are always attentive and very well behaved. Teachers expect and receive a positive response from their pupils and there is frequent evidence that pupils enjoy their lessons. Teachers use the foreign language consistently for classroom instruction and use a variety of techniques to check that pupils understand. The pace of lessons is invariably brisk and in the best lessons teachers set challenging tasks to which pupils respond enthusiastically. The increasing use of information technology is adding to the range of teaching and learning styles and is well planned into the lessons, particularly at Key Stage 4. This is having not only a beneficial effect upon pupils' motivation and interest, but is also building upon

and extending their computer skills. In the minority of lessons where teaching is only satisfactory, tasks are not sufficiently rigorous in encouraging pupils to use the foreign language and pace is less brisk. Since the last inspection there has been an overall improvement in the quality of teaching.

191. The modern languages curriculum meets all statutory requirements and the additional opportunities for post-16 study offer a good breadth of provision. Pupils' work is regularly marked and teachers' comments are helpful and directive. Procedures for recording pupils' assessment and the setting of targets for their future attainment are clearly documented and very comprehensive. The department is very well managed and has taken considerable steps to embrace the new technologies to the benefit of pupils and their teachers. Classrooms are well resourced and enhanced by high quality display.

## Music

192. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils are able to work effectively in group and paired composing activities; they have a sound working understanding of the elements of music and compose well balanced and, at times, imaginative Calypsos; they demonstrate a good grasp of instrumental ensemble skills, basic harmony and specialist vocabulary. They are also able to sing with confidence and they show generally sound keyboard skills in performances of compositions. Pupils are able to appraise their work critically and learn from the comments of others.

193. At the end of Key Stage 4 the small number of pupils who study music reach levels of attainment which are broadly in line with the national expectation. But because the numbers taking GCSE music in the last few years have been so small, it is not possible to comment on results. Currently a small group of Year 11 pupils are pursuing the course, but in Year 10 no course is running due to the low take-up response by pupils. Staff recognise the need to raise the profile of music in Year 9 and at Key Stage 4. The small number of pupils who study music in Year 11 demonstrate imaginative improvisation skills at the keyboard and perform with confidence; the most able demonstrate good keyboard and sound notation skills; most pupils show a good understanding of the use of ICT in compositions and apply their technical skills effectively. Standards of attainment remain broadly similar to those reported during the last inspection.

194. When pupils join the school in Year 7, attainment in music is very varied, ranging from significantly below to broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils, including those with special needs, generally make satisfactory progress through the key stage. This includes progress in the development of well structured Calypso compositions where pupils learn to apply appropriate technical skills and knowledge effectively; satisfactory progress in refining ensemble performances and mastering basic West African drumming techniques; and satisfactory progress over time in knowledge and application of specialist vocabulary, ensemble skills and basic harmony.

195. At Key Stage 4 most pupils make good progress with the exception of the most able, who achieve only satisfactory progress. Pupils make good progress over time in analytical skills, aural awareness and historical, stylistic and harmonic awareness; they also make swift progress in instrumental skills and use this to good effect in compositions and group improvisations. The overall rate of pupil progress remains broadly similar to that identified at the last inspection in all areas, with the exception of Year 9, where some deterioration in the pace of progress is evident. Curriculum content and teaching approaches at Key Stage 3 are satisfactory. But they do not engage and motivate pupils sufficiently, particularly those in Year 9, and they are insufficiently challenging for more able musicians.

196. In Years 7 and 8, attitudes to learning are consistently good. In these year groups pupils are well motivated, respond positively to practical work and are generally eager to answer questions and contribute to debate. Pupils are very courteous, behave well and show respect for property. Working relationships are good, enabling effective group composing and performing. Pupils are mostly enthusiastic and generally keen to take responsibility and demonstrate initiative. Pupils listen well, show interest in the compositions

and performances of others and apply knowledge effectively in appraisal. However, in Year 9 there is a noticeable decline in pupil enthusiasm and attitudes to learning are only satisfactory. This is reflected in the lack of take up in music at Key Stage 4. In Year 11 however, attitudes to learning are consistently good.

197. The quality of teaching at both key stages is satisfactory. Teachers have good specialist knowledge and skills and provide an encouraging learning environment for pupils. Lessons are carefully planned and prepared to include a good range of tasks and activities. Lesson planning has improved since the last inspection, with comprehensive, clear statements of intended learning outcomes. At times, the lack of group rooms restricts teaching approaches, but efforts are made to minimise the impact of this deficiency. Lesson organisation, pupil management and working relationships are consistently good in Years 7 and 8 and satisfactory in Year 9.
198. High expectations of behaviour contribute to pupil progress, achievement and enjoyment. Lessons start with a worthwhile review of previous learning, followed by a sharing of current objectives. However, tasks set do not fully challenge more able pupils. Assessment of pupils' work has improved since the last inspection, but the information gained is not used sufficiently to inform the planning of future learning. Statutory requirements for music at Key Stage 3 are being met and improvements in music ICT provision have been achieved since the last inspection. A range of vocal and instrumental extra-curricular activities and instrumental lessons are available and opportunities exist for pupils to be involved in public performances across the entire age range. Resources have improved since the last inspection and are generally satisfactory. Significant progress has been achieved since the last inspection in terms of music technology, but overall, there has been limited progress towards improvement in attainment and teaching.

### **Physical Education**

199. The evidence of the lessons observed in physical education indicates that pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with what is expected nationally. Pupils in Year 9 are good at preparing themselves for activity and have a good knowledge of positional play and the principles of attack and defence in hockey. In badminton they show good knowledge of the principles of maintaining a rally and understand the use of depth during a serve. When given the opportunity by the teacher, pupils can review and analyse their own work and that of their group. Non-performers are able and willing to act as critical observers and identify strengths and weaknesses in performance. When attainment is below average pupils are not able to perform with precision nor do they refine their skills.
200. Results in GCSE physical education in 1998 were well below average compared with all schools. They were also below average compared with similar schools. Twenty three per cent of pupils who entered achieved grades A\* to C compared with 41 per cent nationally. The 1999 results, however, were much better, with 42 per cent of pupils gaining A\* to C grades. Despite the poor results in 1998, there has been an upward trend of improvement in GCSE exam results for physical education over the last three years. Pupils are now performing comparably to the last inspection, when their attainment was in line with the national average. Results in the 1998 GCSE dance examination were below average compared with all schools and about average compared with similar schools. Thirty three point three per cent of pupils who entered achieved grades A\* to C compared with 46.7 per cent nationally. In dance GCSE results, there has been an upward trend during the last three years, reflected in the 1999 results which showed a slight improvement over the previous year.
201. The evidence of the lessons observed indicates that pupils' attainment in dance by the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with what is expected nationally. Pupils at the end of this key stage are accurate, have good understanding of genre; and show good control and balance in dance. All pupils work safely and organise themselves well and show increasing precision, control and fluency in trampoline lessons. But standards drop to below average in lessons when pupils have little or no opportunity to judge how good a performance is and decide how to improve it.

202. Most pupils in Key Stage 3 are making good progress in physical education. Progress during lessons is mainly good at Key Stage 4 in physical education and is very good during GCSE dance lessons. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. They are very well supported in practical lessons and gain confidence and progress accordingly. The progress of the higher attaining pupils is not as good however. These pupils are rarely given a high enough challenge. Most progress is made in both key stages in pupils' ability to plan, choreograph, organise and perform. Least progress is made overall in pupils' ability to review and analyse their own performance or that of others, to suggest improvements.
203. Pupils have good attitudes and behaviour in lessons. The response of pupils to learning, teachers and their peers is very good. Pupils are willing to share ideas, offer opinions and respond to questions. They always work collaboratively together and listen to and value each other's views. They are interested, enthusiastic and involved in learning, persevering even when the task is difficult. Some pupils are willing to experiment and take the initiative. On a few occasions pupils are too passive when given a task which does not involve them in solving problems.
204. Physical education teaching is mainly good and often very good at Key Stage 3. In 73 per cent of the lessons, teaching is good and sometimes very good and it is never less than satisfactory. When teaching is very good teachers start the lesson briskly, recalling and evaluating work in previous lessons and explaining clearly what they expect pupils to learn during the lesson. The clear focus is maintained throughout these very good lessons. All teachers have very good knowledge of their subject, know their pupils well and set challenging activities. They organise pupils, time and equipment well. Very good lessons are well planned as part of a progressive programme and teachers allow pupils to experiment, refine and adapt their work. Teachers use a mixture of methods such as concise explanation and directed questioning to ascertain pupils' understanding. They also use good structured demonstration and discussion. Features of less successful lessons include little opportunity for pupils to evaluate work. Not all teachers differentiate their material to challenge the higher attaining pupils and there is not a consistent use of non-performers.
205. The curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 is good and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. There has been good progress since the last inspection. Planning is good with comprehensive schemes of work showing progression in opportunities for pupils to plan and perform. However, opportunities for pupils to evaluate their work are rarely explicitly shown, neither are tasks which will challenge higher attaining pupils. There is currently little opportunity for pupils to develop physical education in the sixth form, except as mentors in Key Stage 3 lessons and in A level performing arts.
206. Activities in lunchtime and after-school clubs, such as those seen in dance, trampoline and netball, provide pupils with a good range of opportunities to develop their skills and interests further. There is a good balance of competitive and non-competitive opportunities and good links with community sport and dance partners. Individual pupils and teams are successful at local and county level.
207. Recording and reporting procedures are unsatisfactory in physical education. The criteria used do not related to end of key stage descriptions and they are not specific in describing what each pupil knows, understands and can do in different areas of activity. There is no clear indication of how current progress and attainment grades inform Year 9 end of key stage assessment. There are however, good target setting procedures used with pupils in GCSE physical education and in GCSE dance. These are systematic and challenging, but also realistic. They are closely related to individual achievement and are making a marked difference to grades. The use of assessment to inform curriculum planning is good and this is illustrated in review procedures, development of schemes of work and in lessons.
208. Management of the subject and the department is good. There is a positive ethos for achievement and learning. Teachers are experienced and are able to share professional dialogue, have a shared philosophy and are a committed and hard-working team. Development planning reflects the school and the department focus for improvement. However, it is not thoroughly costed and staff development does not always reflect the needs of the physical education curriculum. There is evidence that some teaching and learning time is lost when gymnastic, trampoline and badminton equipment is moved.

209. The timetabling of facilities is very efficiently managed and the number and quality of resources are very good. The quality of accommodation is varied. Much progress has been made since the last inspection in this area. The new community netball facility is excellent and the shower area is much improved. Some indoor areas are becoming shabby however and floors are worn, particularly in the sports hall. The assembly hall and studio are adequate for teaching dance; other areas are not, however. All resources and accommodation areas are well looked after by the staff and pupils.

## **Religious Education**

210. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards of attainment are in line with national expectations for most pupils although one third achieve less than this standard. Pupils understand aspects of a number of religions such as the life and teaching of Jesus, the five Pillars of Islam and worship in the Hindu home. They know about some features shared by religions such as places of worship, signs, symbols and festivals, as well as some of the distinctive features of particular traditions, such as the importance of the person of Jesus in Christianity, the place of pilgrimage in Islam and the idea of karma in Hinduism. Pupils have limited opportunities to reflect on ways in which religious insights might influence their own lives.

211. At the end of Key Stage 4 standards of attainment are in line with national expectations for most pupils taking compulsory religious education. Pupils know about the factors involved in moral issues such as abortion, marriage and euthanasia and about responses, especially Christian responses, to them. They understand the reasons why some believe in God and are able to reflect on the implications of beliefs on people's lives. Some are able to ask thoughtful questions such as "Why cannot people in heaven visit us?" Students in Year 11 currently undertaking the full GCSE course are reaching levels of attainment which are below average compared to all schools, but are in line with similar schools. This is a marked improvement on recent years, including 1999, when GCSE results have been well below the national average for grades A\* to C and below the national average for similar schools. There is insufficient evidence to judge attainment and progress in the sixth form although annual conferences have achieved much of value.

212. At Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils, especially SEN pupils, make satisfactory progress. Some make good progress. Gains are made especially in a knowledge and understanding of Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. Some pupils make slow progress when work set lacks challenge. Pupils make good progress in speaking and listening and satisfactory progress in reading and writing and in developing their knowledge and skills using ICT. Pupils develop their ability to reflect on religious practices such as the aim and value of fasting in Islam. At Key Stage 4 most pupils taking the compulsory religious education course make satisfactory progress in understanding religious and moral and issues and in responding to them. Students undertaking the full GCSE are making satisfactory progress, but some struggle to recall information previously learnt. Pupils' moral development is promoted well.

213. Pupils generally respond well in all lessons. Many display a positive attitude towards religious education, showing an interest in the issues addressed and enjoyment of lessons. Most are willing to listen, to respond to questions and offer their own views. There are some good responses, especially when pupils have opportunities to think about the implications of religious beliefs on everyday life. For example in a lesson on Christianity, pupils were able to reflect on situations such as soldiers killing in wartime and to consider if it would be possible to forgive such actions. The vast majority are able to sustain concentration, including SEN pupils. Pupils work well together and show respect for each other's views. Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils are good and often very good.

214. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. It is good in 40 per cent of lessons. It is unsatisfactory in less than 10 per cent of lessons. Good teaching is seen in the effective management of discussions, a brisk pace which sustains pupils' interest and motivation and when teachers attend effectively to the learning needs of individual pupils. It is seen in lessons which have a clear direction with a focus on key religious ideas and when work is consistently challenging. Some weaker elements observed were when teachers failed to write key ideas on the board to help to support learning, when lessons did not build

directly on previous work and when lessons ended without a clear summary. At times work set was too easy and more appropriate for earlier key stages, with too much drawing or colouring pictures.

215. The religious education policy is very comprehensive, but work on standards is underdeveloped. New schemes of work based on the local Agreed Syllabus offer good guidance to teachers. Statutory requirements are met at Key Stages 3 and 4, but insufficient time is devoted to the subject in the sixth form to deliver satisfactorily all the requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus.

216. The assessment of pupils' work is mostly good. Pupils' work is marked regularly although it is not always clear to pupils what they need to do to improve. The subject is well managed. Staff work very hard and are committed to the subject and its continued development, with regular meetings and procedures for monitoring the department's work. Departmental planning sets goals for the future, but some have yet to be achieved, including an improvement in GCSE results. Resources have improved and many resources have been produced in the school. More books are needed for pupils in examination classes. Several staff currently teach religious education, two of whom are subject specialists. Non-specialists are well supported.

217. There have been some improvements since the last inspection in the increased use of information and communications technology and in reviewing the department's work, but there has been little improvement in other areas such as consistently meeting the needs of all abilities. Neither have there been improvements in GCSE examination results, although there are signs of improvement in attainment in the work of the current Year 11 GCSE group.

218.

#### 218. **Vocational Education**

218. GNVQ results at intermediate level are average in leisure and tourism and above average in art and design and business. Attainment of intermediate GNVQ health and social care students is below average. At advanced level, GNVQ business students achieve broadly in line with the national average. Results in the advanced GNVQ qualification in leisure and tourism and health and social care in 1999 were above average. Students make good progress in GNVQs at both intermediate and advanced level. The progress of students working towards the additional NVQ modern foreign languages units is very good. Progress in key skills is very good.

219. Students' attitudes towards their work are very positive. They show a genuine interest and are keen to learn. They have well-developed social skills, they co-operate well with one another and, when working individually, can show concentration for long periods. Students acknowledge the relevance and importance of key skills and work well to improve their standards in these skills. Students relate very well to each other and to their teachers. They are very willing to seek help and advice when required and can often make lively contributions in class.

220. The quality of teaching is good. In the lessons observed, the quality of teaching was always at least satisfactory and in two thirds of the lessons it was good and sometimes very good. Teachers are very well qualified to teach the different courses. Assessment activities are often carefully chosen and teachers judge pupils' attainment accurately. Teachers use information technology particularly well to help pupils learn. They are also skilled in providing support and guidance to pupils individually. Care is taken to ensure that students receive clear and helpful information on their progress and future targets.

221. The GNVQ curriculum is well planned. Students have the opportunity to enhance their programme with a carefully selected range of additional courses, including word processing, GCSE sociology and additional NVQ units in a modern foreign language. Assessment practice is very good. Standardisation procedures have shown a clear improvement since the previous inspection.

222. Co-ordination of GNVQ is very good. The GNVQ co-ordinator ensures that there is a consistency of approach to planning and assessment across all GNVQ vocational areas and GNVQ team leaders are

effective in ensuring that students are well taught in clearly defined teams. There is very good collaboration with the neighbouring boys' school, which ensures that the curriculum meets the needs of the students. Procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching are not well developed however. Learning resources are generally good and the provision of information technology to support students in their research and learning is a particular strength.

223. **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

223. **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

<b>KEY STAGE</b>	<b>Key Stage 3</b>	<b>Key Stage 4</b>	<b>Sixth form</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
lessons seen	106	86	39	231
hours	83h 35m	69h 25m	31h 15m	184h 15m

225. The inspection team consisted of 16 inspectors. During the week, 231 lessons, 21 registrations, four assemblies and some extra-curricular activities were inspected. All full time teachers were seen teaching, many several times. Planned discussions were held with 34 members of staff and five non-teaching staff. The chairman of governors and other members of the governing body were consulted. Inspectors studied the written work of pupils in all year groups and discussed their progress with them. All available written work of a representative sample of pupils from each year group was inspected and planned discussions held with groups from Years 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13. Extensive documentation provided by the school was analysed before and during the inspection. The registered inspector held a meeting attended by seven parents before the inspection and considered 529 responses from parents to a questionnaire about the school.

223.

**DATA AND INDICATORS**

223. **Pupil data**

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y13	1487	23	366	110

223. **Teachers and classes**

223. **Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y13)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	89.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	16.54

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

Total number of education support staff:	19
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	479

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	75.3
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	24
	KS4	20

223. **Financial data**

Financial year:

1999
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£
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Total Income	3,669,549.00
Total Expenditure	3,607,020.00
Expenditure per pupil	2,385.60
Balance brought forward from previous year	89,052.00
Balance carried forward to next year	151,581.00

223. **PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out:	1487
Number of questionnaires returned:	529

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	13.0	66.0	16.4	4.6	0.0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	27.5	62.1	6.5	3.3	0.6
The school handles complaints from parents well	12.4	48.0	33.8	4.4	1.3
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	14.5	67.7	12.4	4.6	0.8
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	19.7	53.7	16.4	9.0	1.1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	28.5	61.8	7.6	1.7	0.4
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	23.5	57.7	14.3	4.4	0.0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	18.7	64.8	8.2	7.5	0.8
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	16.6	65.4	13.8	3.4	0.8
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	18.5	57.7	17.2	4.2	1.0
My child(ren) like(s) school	27.9	53.3	11.7	4.2	2.9