

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **OKEHAMPTON COLLEGE**

Okehampton

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113540

Headteacher: Mr Phillip Herriman

Reporting inspector: Anthony Shield  
3569

Dates of inspection: 7 – 11 February 2000

Inspection number: 186221

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Mill Road Okehampton Devon
Postcode:	EX20 1PW
Telephone number:	01837 52001
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M.J. Domaille
Date of previous inspection:	November 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Anthony Shield	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p>
Gill Osborne	Lay Inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
Michael Owen	Team Inspector	English	
Paul Metcalf	Team Inspector	Mathematics	
Alan Webb	Team Inspector	Science	
Lorraine Small	Team inspector	Design Technology Information technology	
Barbara Barnes	Team Inspector	History Special Educational Needs	Staffing
Muriel Harrison	Team Inspector	Geography	
Anne Looney	Team Inspector	Modern Foreign Languages	
Tim Wright	Team Inspector	Art	
Margaret Dickinson	Team Inspector	Music	
Judy Evans	Team Inspector	Physical Education Equal Opportunities	
Alan Skelton	Team Inspector	Religious Education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Chris Vidlar	Team Inspector	Vocational Subjects	

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London WC2B 6SE

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>12</b>
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>31</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Okehampton College is a large comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11 – 18. There are 1219 pupils on roll, of whom 165 are in the sixth form. The college serves a very wide area of west Devon, and as a community college also offers a range of day and evening courses for adults and young people. It is the only 11-18 LEA college in the area. Pupils are from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, although the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (7.5%) is below the national average. The percentage of pupils from ethnic minorities is very low. On entry, pupils' attainment reflects a comprehensive intake, and pupils of all ability are represented in all years. Two hundred and three pupils are on the register of special educational needs, of whom an above average number (forty) have statements.

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

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. In many respects the college does well. Standards in English and mathematics are good and in most other subjects are at least sound. Overall, most pupils achieve as well as might be expected, although pockets of underachievement do exist, particularly amongst boys. Teaching is satisfactory overall, and good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Experienced, thoughtful and committed leadership offers the college stability and a clear sense of purpose. However, management systems are not secure enough to ensure the rigorous monitoring of standards at all levels. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

#### **What the college does well**

- Provides an ethos in which teachers show commitment and hard work
- Encourages pupils to have positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour.
- Enables the quality of relationships between staff and pupils to be good
- Shows commitment to the care and welfare of its pupils
- Makes very effective links with the community and contributory primary schools
- Offers a good range of extra-curricular activities, including outdoor and adventurous pursuits
- Provides an excellent peer education system which offers sixth formers insights into teaching younger pupils

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

- The management structure and procedures for monitoring and evaluating standards
- The use of performance data in subjects to create individual learning goals
- The achievement of boys
- The deployment of staff and timetabling of the curriculum
- Communication with parents
- The quality of individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs
- The inconsistent quality of teaching in modern foreign languages and religious education

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

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

The college was last inspected in November 1995. Improvements since then have been satisfactory. Standards in GCSE results have improved since the last inspection, although these have not exceeded the improving national trend. The quality of teaching shows some improvements since the previous inspection. The college management responded positively to the key issues raised in the previous report, although progress has been mixed. The curriculum is reasonably broad and balanced, but is again unsatisfactory in some details as a consequence of financial constraints. The structure and roles of the college management have been clarified, but more needs to be done to ensure management systems work effectively. Good progress has been made in improving the procedures for monitoring and supporting individual pupil's academic and personal progress. There has been some improvement in the college's evaluation practice. The statutory requirements regarding collective worship and religious education in the sixth form are still not met.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
Key Stage 3 tests	C	B	C	D
GCSE examinations	C	C	B	C
A-levels/AS-levels	E	D	C	

<i>Key</i>	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

In 1999, the college's Key Stage 3 test results overall were broadly in line with the national average, although results in English were above average. In comparison with schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, results overall were below average; English results were above average, while results in both mathematics and science were well below average. Boys do less well than girls. The improving trend in the college's average points score for all core subjects has been broadly in line with the national trend, although results in each subject have fluctuated; results in 1998 were particularly good.

In 1999, the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE (50.5 per cent) was above the national average of 46.3 per cent. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A\*-G grades (91.9 per cent) was close to the national average. In relation to the average points score, results were above the national average, but broadly in line with the average for similar schools. As at the end of Year 9, girls do better than boys. Results have fluctuated but since the previous inspection, have improved at the same rate as the national trend.

The percentage of pupils gaining an A\*-C grade in English was in line with the national average and with the average for similar schools. The percentage of pupils gaining an A\*-C grade in mathematics was above both the national average and the average for similar schools. Other subjects in which pupils did well include science, information technology and design technology. Pupils did relatively poorly in art.

The college's GCSE targets for the percentage of pupils achieving five or more A\*-C grades in 1999 were met, and it is on course to meet the targets set for 2000.

In 1999, the average points score of pupils entered for two or more A-levels was 16.8, close to the national average. As in other years, girls did better than boys. A-level results have been improving steadily over the last three years. One hundred per cent of candidates entered, passed GNVQ at either intermediate or advanced levels, compared to 73 per cent nationally.

In work seen during the inspection, standards in English, design technology, information technology and history were all above national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3. In all other subjects, standards were in line with expectations. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards in work seen were above expectations in mathematics, design technology, information technology, music and business studies, while in all other subjects standards were in line with expectations. In the sixth form, standards in work seen were above average in all A-level subjects and in information technology and art, they were well above.

Most pupils of all abilities are making satisfactory progress across all subjects, although some boys underachieve in English, design technology, information technology, physical education and art during Key Stage 4, and in mathematics, design technology, information technology, and geography during Key Stage 3. In science, boys do better than the girls. During the sixth form most pupils are making good progress. In

general, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, although pupils with significant weaknesses in literacy do not progress satisfactorily as they do not receive focused support.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and school in general.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils are courteous and friendly, and the behaviour of most pupils shows an awareness and understanding of others
Personal development and relationships	Good relationships characterise the college. Pupils develop increasing maturity as they move through the college.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Despite falling since the previous inspection, overall levels are in line with the national average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	satisfactory	good	good

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

Teaching was judged to be at least satisfactory in just over ninety per cent of lessons observed during the inspection. In just under fourteen per cent it was very good. Teaching improves as pupils move through the school. There is less very good teaching in Years 7 – 9, than in Years 10 and 11, while in the sixth form, the proportion of very good teaching rises to nearly forty per cent. In addition the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is higher during Key Stage 3. Overall, nearly ten per cent of lessons were judged to be unsatisfactory. However, nearly half of the unsatisfactory teaching observed, nine out of nineteen lessons, was in just two subjects – modern foreign languages and religious education. No poor teaching was observed.

The quality of teaching in English is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. In both mathematics and science teaching is good in Key Stages 3 and 4, and very good in the sixth form. Teaching is particularly effective in drama, design technology, information technology, history, art, physical education and business studies, but there are weaknesses in modern foreign languages and religious education.

Strengths of the teaching include good subject knowledge; a strong commitment and dedication of the teachers; effective planning designed to engage and challenge all the pupils; the skilled use of questions; very good relationships between staff and pupils; and good classroom management. Weaknesses include an over reliance on the teacher to solve problems; insufficient use of information technology; the pace of learning set by the pupils themselves and not the teachers; underdeveloped use of targets to set learning goals; and an uneven quality of marking.

The teaching of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory, although not all subjects consistently correct errors in the use of language. The support given by learning support assistants to pupils with specific language difficulties is not always effective.

In general, pupils' learning closely matches the effectiveness of the teaching. The only exception is in some classes in Years 10 and 11, where some boys bring unsatisfactory attitudes to the lesson and their learning is not always satisfactory. Pupils' good attitudes to learning ensure that for the most part, they try hard and work

productively at a good pace. These good attitudes are more marked during Key Stage 3 and particularly in the sixth form, but not exclusively so. In around one in eight lessons observed during the inspection in Key Stage 4, the quality of learning was unsatisfactory. The learning was unsatisfactory in less than one in twenty lessons in Key Stage 3, and there was no unsatisfactory learning in the sixth form.

#### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum has good breadth, but some imbalances, particularly in Key Stage 3. It fully meets statutory requirements, except in the sixth form due to the lack of religious education. There is good provision for extra curricular activities. Links with the community and partner institutions are very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory overall. The provision of smaller classes in some subjects and the support for statemented pupils by learning support assistants is good, but the quality of individual education plans is less satisfactory.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good provision overall, although the college's provision for spiritual development is only satisfactory. However opportunities for social, moral and cultural development are all good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare are effective. The college provides a caring and supportive environment in which pupils feel valued.

Overwhelmingly, parents are supportive of the work of the college and satisfied with the progress of their children and the quality of provision made. In particular, parents value the care and commitment of teachers and the good relationships they share with pupils. They say that their children are happy in school and enjoy coming. The only issues in which a significant minority of parents express concern, are with regard to homework, the quality of information the college provides about progress, and that some feel the college does not work closely enough with them.

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

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. Experienced, thoughtful and committed leadership offers the college stability and a clear sense of purpose.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governing body is committed and hardworking.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The college has a clear sense of its strengths and weaknesses.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Educational priorities and developments are well supported through the college's financial planning.

There are insufficient teachers to teach the curriculum effectively. Teachers work very hard, but the use of non-specialists across some subjects is sometimes, though not always, having an adverse effect on standards. Staff shortage has also led to large classes in Key Stage 3. Accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory,

although there are insufficient computers in some areas.

The college is quietly confident in its purpose, the consequence of the Principal's leadership, which places good relationships and a strong sense of community at the heart of the college's work. However, management systems are not secure enough to ensure the rigorous monitoring of standards at all levels.

Members of the governing body are experienced and bring a good range of expertise to the college's governance. Chairs of committees are well informed and very competent. All governors share the vision of the college's purpose and direction. Good relationships with staff ensure there is a strong sense of working together.

Although the college is aware of its strengths and weaknesses, management at all levels is less confident in knowing how to put weaknesses right, and in how to move forward with drive and energy to ensure standards are raised and the potential of all pupils is fulfilled.

Financial planning and control are good. The budget is very tight. Income per pupil is below average, and the college works hard to ensure a balanced budget. It has been successful in making bids for additional funds. The college adopts rigorous procedures for ensuring the cost effectiveness of its financial decisions, and that best value principles apply.

#### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The good relationship between teachers and pupils</li><li>• The care and commitment of the teachers</li><li>• That their children are happy at the college and enjoy coming</li><li>• That the pupils are encouraged to do their best</li><li>• The high quality of drama, music and sport</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Better communication with parents</li><li>• A reduction in class sizes</li><li>• Better sports facilities</li><li>• Wider provision for foreign languages</li></ul>

Inspectors agree with parents' views, both positive and negative. However, the range of language provision is not unusual for a school of this size. The college has plans to improve the facilities for sport, and is working on reducing class sizes and communication.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. On entry, pupils' attainment reflects a fully comprehensive intake and pupils of all abilities are represented in each year. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs is above average.
2. In 1999, the college's Key Stage 3 test results overall were broadly in line with the national average, although results in English were above average. In comparison with schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, results overall were below average; English results were above average, while results in both mathematics and science were well below average. Boys do less well than girls. The improving trend in the college's average points score for all core subjects has been broadly in line with the national trend, although results in each subject have fluctuated; results in 1998 were particularly good.
3. In 1999, the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE (50.5 per cent) was above the national average of 46.3 per cent. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A\*-G grades (91.9 per cent) was close to the national average. In relation to the average points score, results were above the national average, but broadly in line with the average for similar schools. As at the end of Year 9, girls do better than boys. Results have fluctuated but since the previous inspection, have improved at the same rate as the national trend.
4. The percentage of pupils gaining an A\*-C grade in English in 1999 was in line with the national average and the average for similar schools. The percentage of pupils gaining an A\*-C grade in mathematics was above both the national average and the average for similar schools. Other subjects in which pupils did well include science, information technology and design technology. Pupils did relatively poorly in art.
5. The college's GCSE targets for the percentage of pupils achieving five or more A\*-C grades in 1999 were met, and it is on course to meet the targets set for 2000.
6. In 1999, the average points score of pupils entered for two or more A-levels was 16.8, close to the national average. As in other years, girls did better than boys. A-level results have been improving steadily over the last three years. One hundred per cent of candidates entered, passed GNVQ at either intermediate or advanced levels, compared to 73 per cent nationally.
7. In work seen during the inspection, standards in English, design technology, information technology and history were all above national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3. In all other subjects, standards were in line with expectations. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards in work seen were above expectations in mathematics, design technology, information technology, music and business studies, while in all other subjects standards were in line with expectations. In the sixth form, standards in work seen were above average in all A-level subjects and in information technology and art, they were well above.
8. Most pupils of all abilities achieve satisfactorily across all subjects, although some boys underachieve in English, design technology, information technology, physical education and art during Key Stage 4, and in mathematics, design technology, information technology, and geography during Key Stage 3. In science, boys do better than the girls. During the sixth form most pupils are making good progress. In general, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, although pupils with significant weaknesses in literacy do not progress satisfactorily as they do not receive focused support.
9. In work seen during the inspection in English, attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above the level expected of pupils of the same age nationally. At the end of Key Stage 4 standards are in line with the national expectation for sixteen-year-olds and in the sixth form they are above. Pupils' skills in reading and writing support their work in other subjects. At both key stages the majority cope well with the reading required, though middle to lower attaining pupils struggle with some texts. Teachers in a number of subjects, for example science and information technology, display vocabulary in the classroom and this

helps pupils to understand subject-specific words. Higher attaining pupils at all levels, including the sixth form, develop the ability to retrieve information from a variety of sources, including the Internet. They recognise the characteristics of different types of writing, such as the persuasive language of advertising.

10. By undertaking a literacy audit the college has recognised that there are deficiencies in pupils' writing skills. These are being addressed by requiring all departments to give more attention to writing, and spelling in particular. During a Year 7 literacy week teachers concentrated on developing pupils' writing skills, such as drafting and redrafting. Weaknesses in writing are particularly evident among lower attaining pupils. However, the majority of pupils write well and understand the need to adapt writing to purpose and audience; for example, in an information technology lesson, pupils enjoyed re-writing the nursery rhyme Jack and Jill, imagining how different language would be used if the story was being relayed to different members of society. In Key Stage 4 pupils develop good note-taking skills in mathematics and music. Year 11 science pupils showed particular strengths in note-taking as a result of being taught this skill. In religious education pupils learn to use the language of other faiths such as Buddhism. Higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form write with fluency. They often make good use of information technology to enhance the quality of their work in both A-level and GNVQ courses, where some impressive extended writing is evident. In general, presentation is good. Very good liaison with primary schools is resulting in teachers learning to use some of the techniques taking place in the literacy hour. These are yet to be embedded in the practice of all departments.
11. In mathematics, standards improve as pupils move through the school. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is in line with national expectations, while at the end of Key Stage 4, it is above expectations and in the sixth form well above. Pupil's numeracy skills are good. In science lessons, at Key Stage 3, pupils can confidently substitute in formulae and draw graphs from experimental data and, in graphics, they make use of geometric shapes, scale diagrams and nets in designing learning games for young children. At Key Stage 4, pupils construct trend lines and population pyramids in geography and, in science, they calculate the volumes of regular solids and draw straight line graphs and curves, for example when illustrating Hooke's Law. In the sixth form, pupils use flow charts, beach profiles and Spearman's Rank correlation in geography, calculate gravitational field strength and use differential equations in science and provide graphical representations in economics and business studies. To date, there is no whole school numeracy policy and the absence of this inhibits the further development of numeracy across the curriculum. However, the college is involved in a pilot numeracy scheme within the local authority.
12. In science, attainment is in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages, and is above expected levels in the sixth form, although standards vary considerably as pupils move up the school. Overall, pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding across all scientific disciplines, and have reasonable experimental skills.
13. Standards in art meet expectations at the end of both key stages, and in the sixth form standards are well above expectation. Pupils work confidently in a range of two and three-dimensional media. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the work of other artists is limited in Year 9, but develops impressively through the school.
14. In design technology, attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the level that is expected of fourteen-year-olds. Pupils gain a wide range of basic skills in designing and making products of good quality in food, resistant materials, graphics and electronics. Many analyse existing products thoughtfully and draw appropriate conclusions. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are above expectations, and progress is good through Years 10 and 11. In the sixth form standards are above expectations, and courses in the sixth form enable pupils to develop good research skills.
15. In geography, attainment at the end of both key stages meets national expectations and in the sixth form is above expected levels. Pupils have a sound geographical knowledge and are increasingly able to use their skills and understanding to analyse and explain geographical features. In the sixth form, A-level pupils produce good extended writing which shows creative thinking and thoughtful judgements. They use graphical and analytical skills to explain their work clearly.
16. Standards in history are above expectations at the end of Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, but are just in line with expectations at the end of Key Stage 4. Pupils have a good range and depth of historical

knowledge and can express themselves well orally. Some more able pupils have impressive analytical skills. In the sixth form, pupils write detailed essays with good attention to evidence and include references, which indicate appropriate wide reading.

17. In information technology (IT), standards are in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a good range of basic skills and use a range of software packages, including desktop publishing, spreadsheets, aspects of control program, as well as word processing. These skills and applications are further developed through Key Stage 4, although opportunities to use IT in all subjects as required, are not always taken. In the sixth form, pupils' skills are secure and they use applications well and develop a sound understanding of the commercial and industrial applications of IT.
18. In French and German, attainment at all levels is in line with national expectations. In both languages, oral work is generally satisfactory, although many pupils are not confident in speaking at length. More able pupils in Key Stage 4 write accurately but find more difficulty in writing freely and at length.
19. In music, standards are just in line with expectations at the end of Key Stage 3, but above expectations at the end of Key Stage 4. Most pupils in Year 9 have reasonable performance and compositional skills, although some pupils underachieve. At Key Stage 4, many pupils play instruments to a good standard, and instrumental and musical skills are put to good effect in their compositions. In the sixth form, pupils have a good knowledge of musical styles and periods and their written work shows good analysis of set pieces. The quality of some of the extra-curricular groups is high.
20. In physical education (PE), standards are in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages. By the end of Year 9 pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of the rules and positional play in a range of games, and perform basic skills with increasing confidence and control. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils increase their knowledge and understanding and plan and evaluate their own physical fitness programme improving their stamina, strength and mobility.
21. In religious education, pupils' knowledge and understanding are in line with expected levels of the agreed syllabus at the end of both key stages. Pupils understand some of the ways in which belief affects the lives of believers and have a sound knowledge of different faiths.
22. Pupils completing most GNVQ courses achieve high standards. In 1999 distinctions were gained in advanced business, advanced health and social care, art and design and leisure and tourism. Four merits were achieved by pupils taking intermediate courses. Pupils reaching the end of their courses show highly developed skills of independent learning. They are able to set and meet their own deadlines and plan and carry out complex assignments designed to meet assessment requirements. These results are broadly in line with national expectations.
23. Business Studies is a popular option at GCSE and regularly attracts one third of each year group. Examination results are excellent and are consistently above national expectations for comparable schools. In 1999, 66.9 per cent achieved grades at A - C with nearly one in five pupils achieving A and A\*. The proportion achieving top grades has improved over the last three years. The pupils' work and class contributions show a secure understanding of key business concepts, and course work demonstrates the ability to apply and use these concepts in real world applications and shows an increasingly sophisticated use of information technology skills. A well designed simulation used in Year 10 provided excellent opportunities to consolidate learning about costs, pricing, and profits.
24. Recent examination results for A-level economics have been very good and above those for comparable schools in other parts of the country. In 1999 there was a 100 per cent pass rate and 42 per cent of candidates gained A and B grades.
25. Psychology has been added to the curriculum since the last inspection and standards achieved by pupils are good and above those reached in comparable schools. In 1999 95 per cent of pupils passed A level with 40 per cent gaining A and B grades. The proportion of pupils gaining top grades has improved over the past three years.
26. Pupils, with special educational needs, including those with a formal statement, make satisfactory progress

overall. Although the college did not meet its own target of 95 per cent of pupils achieving 5 passes or more at GCSE in 1999, the outcome is in line with national averages and the proportion of pupils achieving one or more GCSE is above. Progress is good in PE, design technology and IT, satisfactory in the majority of subjects and unsatisfactory in French. An example of steady progress was seen in GNVQ travel and tourism, where one pupil with special educational needs has improved his grades from E to a series of grade Ds, and is now approaching a grade C. Progress in literacy for one pupil with specific learning difficulties in Year 8 has transformed this pupil's self-confidence; moreover, he enjoys books now, and speaks of his project on Stevenson's "Kidnapped" with enthusiasm.

27. The college has created smaller sets in English, science and humanities subjects for pupils with special educational needs, taught by learning support teachers. Pupils make satisfactory progress in these classes, but the achievements of those pupils with significant reading difficulties are unsatisfactory. Because support teachers are fully deployed teaching the whole class, they cannot provide the specialist tuition and support that these pupils need. The college has identified a considerable number of such pupils, through its efficient screening procedures. Weekly paired reading even with dedicated Year 12 volunteers or reading at home or with a supportive learning support assistant is not enough for these pupils who need a regular, structured programme which includes phonics and multi-sensory methods.

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

28. Pupils enjoy coming to school, and for many of them it is the focus of their social lives. Their attitudes to learning are good and most are enthusiastic about school, although a small number of boys, particularly in Years 10 and 11, show less interest. Pupils with special educational needs are happy and feel secure at the college. One has written in a poem about how depressed he gets when it is not a school day. Heart-tugging statements, such as "I am happy here" were seen in pupils' writing. Several pupils with special educational needs spoke of how small classes with fewer teachers in a big college helps them to feel safe and protected. Pupils enjoy their work in these classes, co-operate with each other and participate fully in lessons. All pupils appreciate the opportunities offered through the very good range of extra curricular activities, and many participate enthusiastically.
29. Good behaviour demonstrated by pupils in and around the school at the time of the last inspection has been maintained. Good class management produces very good behaviour. There is little evidence of vandalism, but the lack of locker space means that valuable possessions are at risk. Whilst exclusions show an increase over the preceding year, the figure reflects earlier years.
30. Relationships between pupils are friendly, and with teachers constructive, leading to a co-operative approach in the classroom. However, whilst some pupils are willing to answer questions others look on passively. Pupils develop a confidence and maturity as they move through the school, characterised by a sense of responsibility, a concern for others exemplified by the sensitive way in which younger pupils are treated, and a thoughtful and articulate manner when talking to adults. Attitudes towards pupils with special educational needs are positive and constructive across the curriculum. There is massive encouragement from staff and much co-operation from other pupils, the latter particularly evident in PE, where peer support contributes not only to the good progress but to the personal development of all concerned.
31. Very occasionally a pupil feels bullied or intimidated, but in most cases, pupils feel it is dealt with effectively and feel well supported. There is little evidence of racism. The pupils' respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others is at its best in music, drama and in English where, for example, in a Year 9 lesson observed, pupils considered the dilemma facing a photographer in the field of battle. Pupils are willing to take responsibility when given the opportunity, and older pupils have responded eagerly, and show considerable personal commitment, to the peer education group.
32. Although attendance fell just below 90% for the reporting year, this academic year has shown a return to a satisfactory figure of just over 91%, and in line with the national average. This does, however, show a decline since the last inspection when attendance was good. Punctuality is satisfactory.

### **How well are pupils taught?**

33. The quality of teaching shows some improvements since the previous inspection. Overall, teaching is satisfactory, but good in many subjects at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Teaching was judged to be at least satisfactory in around ninety per cent of lessons observed during the inspection. In nearly forty-three per cent, teaching was good and in just under fourteen per cent it was very good.
34. Teaching improves as pupils move through the school. There is less very good teaching in Years 7 to 9, than in Years 10 and 11. In the sixth form the proportion of very good teaching rises to nearly forty per cent. In addition, the proportion of unsatisfactory is higher during Key Stage 3. However, nearly half of the unsatisfactory teaching observed, nine out of nineteen lessons, was in just two subjects – modern foreign languages and religious education. No poor teaching was observed.
35. There were some very good lessons observed in most subjects, except modern foreign languages, PE and RE. A high proportion of very good teaching was observed in mathematics (twenty-eight per cent), science (thirty per cent) and design technology (forty per cent). Overall at Key Stage 3, the quality of teaching is good in mathematics, science, design technology, information technology, history and physical education; it is satisfactory in English, geography, art, music and modern foreign languages, and unsatisfactory in RE. During Key Stage 4, teaching is good in all subjects except history, geography, modern foreign languages and RE where it is satisfactory. In the sixth form, teaching is very good in mathematics, science, and IT; it is good in English, design technology, history, geography, art, music and PE; it is satisfactory in modern foreign languages.
36. Strengths of the teaching include good subject knowledge and understanding, which enable high expectations and, particularly in the sixth form, a confident and secure approach to teaching the subject. Teachers are committed and hardworking, particularly where split classes and large numbers make teaching more difficult. Planning is usually good, and clear learning objectives are established and shared with the pupils. Activities are designed to secure the interest of all pupils and challenge them at their own level of ability. However, where lessons have shortcomings, it is often the lack of suitably differentiated materials for the spread of ability in the class. Relationships between pupils and teachers are invariably good, enabling a strong basis for learning and for risks to be taken with confidence. Most teachers have good strategies for managing pupils in the class.
37. In some subjects, particularly mathematics and GNVQ courses, an emphasis is placed on pupils taking responsibility for their own learning, with consequent gains in the pace of learning and the depth of understanding. In other subjects, notably in history, modern foreign languages and RE, teachers sometimes talk for too long, and sometimes try to fit too much into the lesson. This over-reliance on the teacher denies the pupils the opportunities to learn for themselves, to practise skills and to solve problems independently. Related to this issue is the insufficient use made of information technology in many subjects, particularly during Key Stage 4, both as a research tool for learning, but also to meet fully the subject requirements for IT.
38. Skilled use of questions often enables pupils to search for answers rather than being given them. Some particularly effective questioning of this sort is used in history and English, promoting a deeper understanding of the issues, a more analytical approach and a greater degree of independence for pupils. Learning in these lessons is much more secure and deep rooted.
39. The quality of marking is uneven. In history, it is a strength. Teachers carefully acknowledge good points, while commenting positively on errors, including those of spelling, punctuation or grammar. Most importantly, comments are made which give each pupil a clear indication how the work might be improved. In general and in other subjects, this kind of target setting is underdeveloped. Although pupils, particularly those in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, are aware of their predicted grades, they do not always know how these might be achieved within each subject. The use of target setting by tutors has not been related to the setting of specific learning goals in each subject. More use could be made of statistical information by subject teachers to give an overview of progress to inform targeting. However, sometimes marking is left undone for too long and then it is only a cursory tick or cross. Even within the same subject, as in modern foreign languages, some teachers do not adopt a consistent approach to the faculty marking scheme. Corrections, when required, are sometimes not followed up, thereby failing to ensure that inaccurate work or misunderstandings are put right.

40. Other common shortcomings in the teaching occur where the pace of learning is too slow. In the most effective lessons, the teacher often sets limits to the time available for different activities, thereby controlling the pace of learning through breaking down the lesson into a series of small steps. In less effective lessons, the pace is controlled by the pupils themselves who determine when tasks should be completed.
41. Homework is usually set regularly, although more needs to be done to ensure a consistent use of the homework diary by pupils, and that parents understand the purposes and frequency of homework.
42. Teachers' skills in teaching pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory overall. Learning support teachers provide a great deal of encouragement, care and support for these pupils, and this is effective in promoting pupils' productivity, participation and self-assurance. The support provided by support assistants in subject lessons is nearly always of high quality, as in maths and in French. Most teachers across subjects know the strengths and weaknesses of individual pupils well, but some, including some learning support teachers, are not clear about the different stages of the Code of Practice or how to use an individual education plan (IEP).
43. Targets on IEPs for pupils with special educational needs are long term and general, such as "to improve reading skills to enable the pupil to access the curriculum" instead of being specific and measurable. Consequently, it is not possible to ascertain the extent to which individual pupils have reached the targets set for them. Similarly what is referred to as "subject specific targets" for pupils, are general reminders about presentation or equipment, useful in themselves, but not examples of translating the overall targets in IEPs to the requirements of different subjects.
44. The teaching of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory overall. However, learning support teachers cannot and do not meet the needs of pupils with significant literacy difficulties, as they are required to teach within the English scheme of work. They cannot support those pupils with particular literacy needs and teach English effectively in the same time. Consequently, there was little evidence of specialist SEN expertise observed during the inspection. Over the college as a whole, there is good attention to matching work to pupils' needs in schemes of work in some subject areas, such as in humanities. However, there was very little evidence during the inspection, of adapting work to meet the needs of individual pupils within lessons, even within smaller classes. Pupils do not check their work as they write as a matter of habit, and many reinforce mistakes by repeating them. In their understandable desire to help pupils with difficulties and to promote greater self-esteem, there is a tendency for learning support staff to praise effort and achievement as if these are the same thing.
45. Pupils of all abilities make at least satisfactory progress in lessons. In general, pupils' learning closely matches the effectiveness of the teaching. The only exception is in some classes in Years 10 and 11, where some boys bring unsatisfactory attitudes to the lesson, and despite the best endeavours of the teachers, their learning is not always satisfactory. This was an issue at the time of the last inspection, and the college has been unable to successfully address this problem. Pupils' good attitudes to learning ensure that for the most part, they try hard and work productively at a good pace. These good attitudes are more marked during Key Stage 3 and particularly in the sixth form, but not exclusively so. In the sixth form, pupils work with very good purpose and independence, concentrating for long periods. In around one in eight lessons observed during the inspection in Key Stage 4, the quality of learning was unsatisfactory. The learning was unsatisfactory in less than one in twenty lessons in Key Stage 3, and there was no unsatisfactory learning in the sixth form.

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

46. The curriculum provided by the college is satisfactory with notable strengths coupled with some areas that need improvement. The length of the teaching week at just over twenty-six hours is in excess of recommended guidelines.
47. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory, providing all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, together with drama. Information technology skills are taught through discrete periods, but its use in other subjects is not well developed. German is provided as a second modern foreign

language in Year 9 for pupils who have shown higher attainment in French. Pupils with special educational needs are taught for a portion of the week in withdrawal classes where they benefit from small groups and individual support. Many classes are large. There is a lack of balance, with a higher than average provision for English which leads to art, music, physical education, geography and history having somewhat less provision than average. The timetable includes an unacceptable number of instances where classes are taught a subject by more than one teacher and examples of inappropriate scheduling leading to two separate lessons of a subject in one day. Because the groupings in English and modern foreign languages are different, the withdrawal from English lessons of some pupils for German affects the continuity of English teaching. The college is piloting single sex groups in some subjects with the aim of reducing the disparity in the attainment of boys and girls.

48. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. It has considerable breadth. In addition to the National Curriculum and religious education there are opportunities for pupils to follow GCSE courses in double award science, media studies, a second foreign language, business studies, child development, travel and tourism, drama and physical education. There are also non GCSE courses in community studies and personal, social and health education. For those pupils not entered for GCSE examinations, a number of subjects offer alternative certification. Information technology skills are developed through discrete courses and some subjects. Its coverage and use is variable. Whereas Year 10 pupils are able to follow a full GCSE course in it, those in Year 11 are limited to a short GCSE course linked to a similar qualification in business studies. Where additional support is provided for pupils with special educational needs, it occurs in normal classes. There are issues of balance which the school needs to consider. Because the option pattern is constructed on the basis of pupil choice, it is possible for pupils to choose not to follow the double award science course. This results in a significant number of girls choosing to follow only the single science option, thus potentially limiting their choice of courses in further and higher education and in their career. The college is currently developing a pilot work based course for those pupils who would benefit. The arrangements for this are not fully in place and do not yet guarantee that all pupils will fully cover the core curriculum. There is a lack of rigour in the vocational provision for a group of pupils who followed a basic course in French in Year 10 and are not continuing their study in Year 11.
49. The sixth form provision is good. There are nineteen A and AS level courses and five GNVQ courses leading to advanced and intermediate qualifications. This rich provision is especially important in a location where other opportunities for further education entail long journeys. Pupils have some opportunity to engage in physical education but there has been no religious education provided this year. There is also an absence of regular provision for personal, social and health education and a lack of opportunities for pupils to broaden and enrich their studies. There are occasional target days arranged which focus on specific moral and social issues. There are a large number of relatively small teaching groups and, in contrast, large groups in mathematics, further mathematics and psychology. A notable provision is the opportunity for a small group of pupils to receive training in social education and then to assist in leading peer education sessions as part of the programme of personal and social education in Key Stages 3 and 4.
50. The curriculum fully meets statutory requirements in Key Stages 3 and 4 but not yet fully in the sixth form, due to the lack of religious education.
51. The college makes good provision for extra curricular activities. Study support is provided through a regular homework zone at lunch time and after school with transport provided where necessary. Some subjects organise residential study weekends for sixth form pupils and out of school support is provided on a wider scale nearer to the time of public examinations. There is an impressive programme of physical education activities and opportunities for pupils to experience outdoor pursuits through specific challenges and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. The college has links and exchanges with France and Germany and organises visits to Europe and further afield. There are regular visits to theatres, concerts and art galleries and good use is made of the purpose built theatre on the campus. A school-based team of youth workers funded by local churches organises extra curricular clubs.
52. Work related education is satisfactory with most pupils participating in two weeks work experience in Year 10 and further opportunities for A-level pupils in Year 12 and as part of GNVQ courses. Careers guidance, backed up by a well stocked careers library, forms part of the personal and social education programme, but it has to compete for limited time with other topics that have to be covered. More extended work experience is now forming part of the pilot work based course in Year 11.

53. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall, although there are some weaknesses. The main provision is in the form of smaller classes in several subjects taught by learning support staff and of support from learning support assistants in various subject lessons for pupils with a Statement. This enables those pupils concerned to make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in these subjects. In addition, lower attaining pupils at Key Stage 4, which includes some pupils with special educational needs, have a good range of alternative accreditation such as certificates of achievement, with more choice now than at the last inspection. One of the joint special educational needs co-ordinators is responsible for the college's very good liaison with feeder primary schools. Her knowledge of individual incoming pupils, together with a test of reading comprehension of all pupils in Year 7, and again in Year 8, ensures that pupils who have special educational needs are identified early on. In the same way, the other co-ordinator, in her dual role as examinations officer, ensures that appropriate arrangements are made in examinations to enable pupils with specific difficulties to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do. There is additional provision by way of support for homework and for paired reading. For one pupil in particular, the shared reading is particularly apposite, as it provides an opportunity to develop language skills, a key area for this pupil, through informal conversation with a caring and supportive sixth form pupil. There is a policy for more able pupils, and enrichment provision at Kilve Court. In addition, feedback from an inservice course attended by the head of humanities on provision for more able pupils, has increased teachers' awareness of needs and provision.
54. A weakness in provision is that that, while learning support teachers are fully deployed in supplementing subject teaching, they cannot at the same time provide regular specialist tuition in literacy skills for pupils who need this support. This would include a variety of multi-sensory teaching methods and resources, including the use of IT. Some pupils with Statements use word processing, but the college acknowledges that the provision and use of IT for these pupils is under developed. Subject teachers are provided with cognitive ability test scores, but there is no objective data on IEPs to enable subject teachers to cater for individual pupil's needs when planning their lessons. This, combined with the too general and long-standing targets on individual educational plans, explains why these are not, as yet, being used effectively across the college.
55. The college has very good links with the community. Through its status as a community college the college is the major educational resource for a wide spread rural community. The governors take responsibility for youth and adult provision in the area, and this is organised from a base in the college. As well as providing an excellent service to members of the community, the arrangement enriches the college's curriculum. Members of a team of church funded youth workers are based in the college and contribute to provision by helping in lessons, leading assemblies and organising extra curricular activities. Sixth form pupils can take A-level courses in dance, drama, sports science and business studies. There are opportunities for others to participate in music and drama activities and the links with local sports and arts associations form a valuable bridge for pupils from school to adult life. Community staff make a valuable contribution to the college's programme of personal, social and health education. The music department is involved in many local performances and there has recently been a production of "Grease" in the college theatre.
56. The college has very good links with its contributory primary schools which ensure that when pupils transfer from much smaller schools they find the transition enjoyable and curricular information is effectively transferred. There are links with local colleges of further education, universities and with regional institutions of teacher training.
57. Key issues identified at the time of the last inspection have only partially been addressed. Issues of time allocation, balance and timetabling still exist with split staffing of classes a feature of a number of subjects. Religious education provision in the sixth form does not meet statutory requirements and there is inadequate enrichment and personal, social and health education for sixth form pupils. There remains a shortage of access to information technology.
58. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory overall, despite some weaknesses. There is a lack of overall planning and coherence to this dimension of pupils' development. Assemblies provide infrequent opportunities for reflection on values or spiritual aspects of life, and tutor periods rarely offer time for reflection. There is no daily collective act of worship but expertise from local clergy and a visiting

church group provide effective spiritual input from time to time. The religious education curriculum offers some appropriate opportunities. For example, in one Year 11 religious education lesson observed, a question and answer session raised the question of the remarriage of divorced people in church and this led to a thoughtful discussion of Christian beliefs on forgiveness. There are also occasions in other lessons when spiritual aspects are raised, for example, the beliefs of Plains Indians in history. In a Year 8 science lesson pupils saw pictures of earth from space which evoked an appreciation of scale and time. The college has a well-designed peace garden providing a quiet space for reflection. The visiting church group run extra-curricular clubs for pupils.

59. Provision for moral education is good. The well-designed PSHE course promotes opportunities for the discussion of moral issues. The college code of behaviour, which includes anti-bullying policies, provides a good framework for moral attitudes and teachers' expectations encourage good, positive behaviour. Some charity work is directly involved with moral issues such as Amnesty International. In lessons, moral values are highlighted by studies of wealth and poverty in geography, history and religious education. In English, work on prejudice includes consideration of the work of several black writers.
60. Provision for social education is good. Positive relationships are encouraged in the classroom and through a range of other activities. These include study clubs, fieldwork visits, Ten Tors expeditions, Duke of Edinburgh activities, fund raising for charities and a very wide range of sporting activities in which good competition and fair play are encouraged. Social interaction is positively encouraged, providing good opportunities for pupils' personal development. The peer education group teaches sixth formers how to work in a supportive and understanding way with younger pupils. The community links provide further opportunities for pupils and some community activities such as dance, provide pupils with enhanced opportunities for working alongside adults.
61. Cultural provision is good, although pupils have fewer well-planned opportunities to extend their knowledge and understanding of cultures other than western. The college's arts provision is strong. Music, drama, dance and art provide very good opportunities for pupils to get involved and to appreciate the different arts disciplines. Museum, theatre and concert visits are arranged. Pupils themselves promote regular music and drama productions which offer excellent opportunities for both cultural and social development. The recent college production of "Grease" was still being talked about with excitement and affection during the inspection week. Many pupils participate in the Devon Dance and Theatre group. In mathematics, pupils are made aware of the contribution of other cultures to the subject through the study of Rangoli patterns. Sixth formers in the English department visit Bradford to study in more depth cultural differences and the use of language. The music curriculum includes a limited amount of multicultural music and there are positive studies of the differences and similarities between cultures in geography.

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

62. The procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare are good. As at the time of the previous inspection, the college provides a caring and supportive environment in which pupils feel valued. The contribution which the peer educators make to health education and the welfare of younger pupils is excellent. Pupils are known well by staff, particularly their tutor, and this makes them feel secure. There are satisfactory arrangements overall to ensure a safe environment but some health and safety issues exist, including electrical hazards in music, fire exits in the boys' changing rooms, lunches eaten in laboratories, and registration arrangements in the sixth form. There are satisfactory arrangements for child protection which conform to LEA requirements but training is insufficiently up to date for key staff.
63. Satisfactory promotion of attendance is supported by an attendance panel and the school's liaison officer, which address the more intractable problems, but holidays taken in term time are sometimes used inappropriately and not reserved for exceptional circumstances. There are good procedures to promote behaviour, and pupils feel that good behaviour is recognised and that sanctions are fair. The school acts quickly to deal with oppressive behaviour when aware of it, but some pupils, particularly younger ones, feel intimidated occasionally by some older pupils.
64. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development through the work of tutors and the personal, social and health programme (PSHE), make a good contribution to their maturing attitudes and self responsibility.

65. The college procedures for measuring attainment and assessing the pupils' academic achievements are satisfactory. Examination and test results are analysed thoroughly at a whole school level and used to inform and guide practice. Cognitive assessment tests are taken in Years 7 and 9 to provide the college with baseline data from which to measure the progress of individual pupils and of different groups and cohorts. Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test scores are not used consistently to provide evidence of attainment on entry. Detailed analysis of GCSE results against predicted grades enables the school to identify any groups of pupils or subjects underachieving. Tutors are provided with information to support their pupils and encourage them to achieve their potential, particularly in the approach to GCSE examinations.
66. The extent to which individual faculties and subject teachers are using this data to inform their planning is less consistent and satisfactory. There are few examples of subjects setting precise learning targets and goals for individual pupils which will give pupils the means to achieve their overall target grade or level. Pupils themselves, while knowing the grade they are aiming for, are not always sure exactly how it will be achieved in each subject. Marking is not consistently used effectively to explain to individual pupils what needs to be done to improve or reach the higher level. There is a need for a more acute awareness and understanding of performance data by subject teachers. Some will need considerably more training and support to use the data effectively.
67. There is a good high level of care and support for pupils with special educational needs. Support in lessons from learning support assistants is valued by pupils and teachers alike, appropriately so. The files of pupils with a statement of special educational needs are well organised and there is an efficient and effective system for monitoring their day-to-day progress. Annual reviews are properly conducted, although progress is not measured in objective terms. Subject teachers are not systematically involved in the process of assessment, monitoring and review. Provision with external agencies is well co-ordinated. The deputy principal monitors the support for identified gifted and talented pupils. The provision of a learning support assistant to help pupils with homework each day is a useful and unusual extension to provision normally found; and pupils are made welcome in the learning support area during breaks.

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

68. Overwhelmingly, parents are supportive of the work of the college and satisfied with the progress of their children and the quality of provision made. In particular, parents value the care and commitment of teachers and the good relationships they share with pupils. They say that their children are happy in school and enjoy coming. The only issues about which a significant minority of parents express concern, are with regard to homework, the quality of information the college provides about progress, and that the college does not work closely enough with them.
69. Opportunities for parents and teachers to talk informally together about pupils are dependent on the initiative of parents, unless pupils are a cause for concern, or awarded a merit certificate, when the college makes contact. The quality of information provided for parents, particularly about pupils' progress is only satisfactory. Parents receive little information about progress except that which is in the annual report. The quality of reports is uneven, an issue reported on at the time of the last inspection. While some subject reports are detailed and helpful, others are bland and too general, with little precision about what the pupil knows, understands and can do, or needs to do to improve. There are formal meetings to follow up reports but some parents find these of limited value because of the absence of subject teachers. The college is aware of the issue and is seeking to find ways to address parents' concerns.
70. The contribution that parents can make is limited by the information made available to them. Some parents are unhappy about the inconsistent provision of homework, and the principal has identified this as an issue for improvement. The homework timetable is not always strictly adhered to and the homework diary not fully established as an effective communication with parents. However, homework where set, is often of a good quality and builds on learning from the lesson. While the college's homework policy is clearly explained to parents in each pupil's homework diary, some parents are still unsure of the purpose, frequency and setting of homework, which would enable them to contribute positively to their child's learning.

71. There are many good features about the way the college works together with the parents of pupils with special educational needs. Well planned transfer arrangements from primary schools provide opportunities for these parents to meet learning support staff and discuss and reduce any anxieties, while the combination of role of primary liaison with special educational needs co-ordinator role promotes smooth transition. Another good feature is a local area parent support scheme for parents of pupils moving to formal assessment; and scrutiny of annual reviews shows that parents nearly always attend reviews in person. The learning support department has produced a helpful parents' guide, which includes reassuring reports from pupils with special educational needs themselves, a parent and the special needs governor. However, in some cases, parents are not being given sufficient information on their child's progress. The reason given by the college for there being no objective data on individual educational plans is that it may demoralise parents as the IEP is sent home. However, parents have a right to know in full what progress their child is or is not making, and the full extent and nature of their child's achievements.

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

72. Experienced, thoughtful and committed leadership offers the college stability and a clear sense of purpose, and overall the quality of leadership and management of the principal and other key staff is satisfactory. The college is quietly confident in its purpose, the consequence of the Principal's leadership, which places good relationships and a strong sense of community at the heart of the college's work. Since the last inspection, improvement in the quality of leadership and management has been satisfactory.
73. The college has a clear sense of its strengths and weaknesses. It is less confident in knowing how to put weaknesses right, and in how to move forward with drive and energy to ensure standards are raised and the potential of all pupils is fulfilled. However, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, although pockets of underachievement remain.
74. At other levels of management, the deputy principal and senior teacher (pastoral) give sound support to the principal. Together with the senior administrative officer, they form the college management team (CMT). This team works well together and is providing the college with a clear sense of direction. The policy committee which includes all heads of faculty and the CMT is providing a good sounding board for ideas and helping to give more direction and coherence to the college's plans.
75. Progress since the last inspection in clarifying the roles of the college management has been satisfactory, but more needs to be done to ensure management systems work effectively. The deputy principal and senior teacher's role in line managing the heads of faculty and heads of year is not rigorously promoted. Monitoring and evaluation of the college's work is insufficiently focused to ensure improvement against the college's targets, and in general, the management structure and systems are not robust enough to ensure that teachers at all levels are held accountable for their performance. The ability of heads of faculty and heads of year to co-ordinate, monitor and influence the curriculum remains patchy, although there are good examples of effective leadership and management within both faculty and year teams. In two important areas, English and mathematics, strong and effective leadership is providing the faculties with a strong sense of purpose within a climate of commitment and teamwork. However, this good practice is not consistent.
76. There has been some improvement since the last inspection in the college's evaluation practice, although even where faculties are well managed, the monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching is not rigorous. There have been some recent attempts to introduce a regular system of classroom monitoring, but the process is not embedded in practice, and when staffing reductions were made, this process was the first thing to go. Faculties are monitoring pupils' work but not systematically. Most heads of faculties are aware of strengths and weaknesses within their areas. However, taking effective action to remedy weaknesses is not always taken.
77. Leadership and management of special educational needs are satisfactory in many respects, but there has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection despite greater choice of certificates of achievements. Full implementation of the Code of Practice, particularly in relation to IEP targets has not been made.
78. The college aim 'the aim is not to just to learn, but to enjoy learning' is well met and reflected in the

emphasis the college places on good relationships, and pastoral care.

79. The college management plan is detailed and comprehensive and presents a full agenda for change. Faculty plans are written within the whole college framework. In general, these are of a sound quality, although some, as in mathematics, are good. Overall priorities are appropriately chosen and focus mainly on raising expectations and achievements. The governing body, through its committees, is responsible for monitoring progress. Reports are regularly presented to governors' committees, enabling them to have a good purchase on developments. Formal review and evaluation of the faculty's work is carried out at annual meetings between heads of faculty and the deputy principal. The budget plan is drawn up in relation to the college management plan, and faculty bids for resources are made on the basis of identified priorities in faculty plans.
80. The governing body is committed and hardworking. Members are experienced and bring a good range of expertise to the college's governance. Chairs of committees are well informed and very competent. All governors share the vision of the college's purpose and direction. Good relationships with staff ensure there is a strong sense of working together. Governors are less confident in challenging the college on professional issues. However, governing body minutes reflect detailed discussions and debates. Statutory requirements are met, apart from the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship and some minor reporting requirements with regard to special educational needs in the governors' annual report to parents.
81. Financial planning and control are good. The most recent audit report indicated a good standard of financial administration and systems. The finance officer, who is a member of the college management team, has a firm grasp of financial issues and how they impact on educational matters. Educational priorities and developments are well supported through the college's financial planning. Governors have a reasonable grasp of spending; budget monitoring reports are clear, presented monthly to the college management team, but less frequently to the finance committee.
82. The budget is very tight. Income per pupil is below average, and the college works hard to ensure a balanced budget. It has been successful in making bids for additional funds; to the New Opportunities Fund for an expansion and development of the homework zone, and for research into boys' achievements. Funds for special educational needs and the National Grid for Learning are appropriately used. The college adopts rigorous procedures for ensuring the cost effectiveness of its financial decisions, and best value principles apply. Staff, including administrative and learning support staff work hard. The accommodation and resources are well used, and there are no major areas of inefficient use of resources, although usage of one IT room is low.
83. There are 35 pupils in the top group of Year 10 science and the middle group is over 30. Large classes are cramped together in two music rooms. This affects the quality of learning for pupils. There is a high number of split teacher classes especially in Key Stage 3. The resulting lack of teacher continuity is aggravated in humanities, where history, geography and religious education are already taught on a modular basis. Some teachers teach many different subjects, so have a huge amount of preparation to do. This can include the inconvenience also, of teaching in a non-specialist area, such as a history lesson in a science lab. Two of the learning support teachers teach five separate subjects each; this is too much. Any one of these factors increases the work-load for the staff concerned; the combination of all of them results in an unacceptable level of pressure on teachers.
84. Provision for the induction of staff new to the school is very good as is that for the training of new teachers. The college is one of six centres chosen for an efficiently run initial teacher training scheme. Each pupil has a subject mentor and a development mentor. The college is the first in the country to run a teacher training course in the performing arts. Provision for professional development is good. The co-ordinator has a clear understanding of his role and a systematic approach. The college received the Investors in People Award in 1998 and has opted for yearly rather than three yearly review so there is continuous monitoring of professional development. All staff receive an individual annual interview, which leads to targets and in-service training as required. There are useful forms provided in advance for this interview and also for course evaluation. All middle managers have received training in management of people, and there is an ongoing twilight course in computer skills for teachers. However, there is as yet no systematic monitoring of the effects of in-service provision; this remains an ongoing issue from the last

inspection.

85. The accommodation, whilst satisfactory overall, is cramped in some classrooms and corridors, and this can have a negative impact on standards in classes of over thirty pupils, and on the movement of pupils between lessons. Whilst displays in many areas of the school, for example in the English faculty, are good, this is not consistently the case.
86. Overall resources are satisfactory, despite some cutbacks on spending in recent years. However, this has meant that books and resources in some areas need replacing as they become over used, and that areas of expansion have had to be curtailed. Several subjects have insufficient access to computers, and the ratio of computers to pupils remains too high, despite recent spending in this area.
87. The library is an attractive and reasonably well-stocked area. Its position at one end of the college means that access is not always easy or encouraged. Its use as a multi-media resource is as yet limited, although the college has good plans for its development.

### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

In order to secure improvements in the college's overall standards and quality of provision, the governors, principal and senior staff should:

1. Strengthen the management structure and provide more rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluating standards in order to:
  - improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning to match the standards of the best (paragraphs 75,76)
  - monitor and evaluate progress on school improvement more effectively (paragraphs 73,75)
  - prepare more effectively for the introduction of performance management
2. Use assessment and performance data more consistently in subjects to set targets and individual learning targets in order to:
  - ensure that both teachers and pupils are aware of their achievements and precisely how they might improve to reach higher levels (paragraph 66)
3. Continue to address the underachievement of boys, including training, action planning and developing classroom teaching to analyse which strategies work best. (paragraphs 2,3,6,8,45,47)
4. Deploy staff more effectively within a timetable which meets the learning needs of different subjects in order to:
  - avoid teachers' overload and split classes (paragraph 57)
  - ensure appropriate continuity of learning in subjects (paragraph 47)
5. Improve its communications with parents by:
  - ensuring more consistent use of homework diaries, and that parents understand what is being taught and how homework can contribute to learning (paragraphs 68,70)
  - improve the quality of both oral and written reports on pupils' progress so that parents and pupils understand what has been achieved and what could be improved (paragraphs 68,69)
6. improve the quality and use of individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs by:

- setting learning targets that are clear and measurable (paragraphs 43,77)
  - ensuring all teachers are aware of the targets and how they might contribute to their completion (paragraph 67)
7. Improve the quality and consistency of teaching in modern foreign languages and religious education to ensure pupils make good progress throughout. (paragraphs 34,171,190)

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

- Improve the access and use of information technology within all subjects in Key Stage 4 (paragraphs 48,57,183)
- Ensure that statutory requirements in relation to collective worship, reporting to parents on progress in information technology at the end of Key Stage 4 and reporting to parents in the governors' annual report to parents are met. (paragraphs 80,185)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed

195

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

62

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0.0	13.8	43.1	33.3	9.7	0.0	0.0

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

### *Information about the school's pupils*

#### **Pupils on the school's roll**

	Y7- Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1054	165
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	92	

#### **Special educational needs**

	Y7- Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	40	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	203	1

#### **English as an additional language**

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

#### **Pupil mobility in the last school year**

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	61
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	40

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	89.8
National comparative data	91.0

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	113	98	211

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	76(65)	76(61)	68(65)
	Girls	87(81)	64(62)	50(52)
	Total	163(146)	140(123)	118(117)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	78(73)	67(61)	56(58)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	31(40)	32(34)	14(27)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	67(55)	79(57)	76(63)
	Girls	81(70)	77(69)	63(67)
	Total	148(125)	156(126)	139(130)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70(62)	74(63)	67(65)
	National	64 (61)	64 (64)	60 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	31(25)	36(24)	18(29)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (30)

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

**Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4**

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	84	102	186

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	32(33)	75(88)	81(95)
	Girls	62(40)	96(74)	98(79)
	Total	94(73)	171(162)	179(174)
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	51(42)	92(93)	96(100)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	90.7 (89.8)	95.7 (85.2)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	40
	National	37.8

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

**Attainment at the end of the sixth form**

Number of pupils aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	33	40	73

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	15.4(12.3)	18(16.1)	16.8(14.1)	3(4.0)	3.8(3.5)	3.4(3.7)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	100
	National	73

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	2
Indian	1
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	1212
Any other minority ethnic group	0

### *Teachers and classes*

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	64.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19:1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

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

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	81.5
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	29.3
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### *Exclusions in the last school year*

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	33	3
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### *Financial information*

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	2661715
Total expenditure	2761066
Expenditure per pupil	2362
Balance brought forward from previous year	130761
Balance carried forward to next year	31410

Key Stage 4	27.5
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*Results of the survey of parents and carers*

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	1219
Number of questionnaires returned	405

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35	52	9	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	31	59	5	1	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	19	60	8	2	11
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	59	16	6	4
The teaching is good.	22	61	5	2	11
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	19	41	28	8	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	38	52	6	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	42	50	4	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	16	46	24	7	8
The school is well led and managed.	22	56	7	3	12
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	27	55	9	1	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	53	6	2	7

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

**ENGLISH**

88. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests, at the end of Key Stage 3 at the age of 14, the proportion of pupils attaining Level 5 and above was above the national average. The proportion of pupils attaining Level 6 and above was in line with the national average. The average National Curriculum points score attained by pupils in 1999 was above the national average when compared with all schools and well above average when compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. Over the last three years, results tend to have been above the national average and although boys do less well than girls, the gap in 1999 was smaller than the gap nationally.
89. At the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999 the proportion of pupils attaining A\*-C grades in GCSE English language was in line with the national average and with the results of similar schools. Although girls exceeded the national average for girls, boys' results were below the national average for boys. The results were better than the previous two years and the gap between boys' and girls' attainment has narrowed slightly. The majority of pupils were entered for GCSE English language and 100 per cent achieved a grade, including a number with special needs. The average grade is in line with the national average and with the grades achieved in the other subjects they take. In GCSE English literature, the proportion of both boys and girls achieving A\*-C grades was less than the national average, but was significantly less for boys. A\*-C grades were lower than the previous two years and the gap between girls' and boys' results widened. Grades tend to be below those achieved in other subjects they take. This suggests that pupils, boys in particular, give a lower priority to English literature than to English language.
90. In the sixth form results in A level English literature are above the national average. In 1999, one hundred per cent passed and over half achieved A or B grades. Results in previous years have also been good and grades tend to be above predictions based on prior attainment.
91. In work seen during the inspection attainments at the end of Key Stage 3 are above the level expected of pupils of the same age nationally. At the end of Key Stage 4 they are in line with the national expectation for sixteen year olds and in the sixth form they are above. In Key Stage 3 pupils are good listeners, but there is little evidence of animated discussion taking place. Pupils lack the confidence to put across a point of view to the class in a sustained manner. Reading skills are generally good and higher attaining pupils have a good grasp of genre, such as science fiction or fantasy. They read widely as a result of the department's reading policy. However, reading aloud tends to lack expression. Lower attaining pupils can locate information and recall facts from their reading. Writing overall is good. Pupils know how to draft and improve work and produce good narrative writing. They can write in different styles for different audiences, for example, using persuasive language when writing a travel brochure. Higher attaining pupils use more complex structures and a wider vocabulary. Middle to lower attaining pupils tend to write in a simple and direct style but which, nevertheless, gets the meaning across. Spelling and punctuation are weaker at this level and pupils with special needs struggle with basic skills. Presentation skills are good and are often enhanced by the use of information technology.
92. At the end of Key Stage 4 all pupils continue to be good listeners and higher attaining pupils express their views with greater confidence. However, pupils do not have enough opportunity through discussion with each other to develop and deepen their ideas, their critical sharpness and their vocabulary. This has an adverse effect on attainment. Wider reading is less evident, but analysis of the media and of characters and themes in texts studied in class is good, particularly among higher attaining pupils. For example most pupils in a Year 11 lesson grasped the meaning of a difficult poem, Browning's "My Last Duchess", and higher attaining pupils were able to form a good opinion of the duke. Pupils understand how a poet's choice of diction can convey emotion They can analyse the techniques used in promotional literature, such as that which is used in an insurance company's healthcare plan. Some higher attainers write very well, varying their style and demonstrating a good awareness of language. A good example was a description of an encounter on the moors with a lost soul, in which the natural scenery and the eerie atmosphere were

vividly conveyed. The more impoverished language skills of middle to lower attainers, especially boys, prevent them from achieving higher levels. Attempts to write a modern version of Lady Macbeth's letter to her husband, reflected a rather superficial view of their relationship. The writing lacked sophistication and weaknesses in spelling and punctuation further diminished its quality. However, the range of writing is good and includes interesting assignments such as imaginary diaries about wartime in Okehampton, letters taking issue with the authorities over animal quarantine and a well presented gallery of characters from the play "An Inspector Calls". Information technology is often used to good effect.

93. In the sixth form, A-level English literature pupils make a good contribution to class discussion, for example suggesting ideas about symbolism in the plays of Ibsen. Writing varies from the highly accomplished to that which is fit for its purpose but lacks depth. Good research into Chaucer's life and times was written up with understanding and clarity. Good use of information technology raises rather unpolished work to a more impressive level. A-level English language is in its first year and early indications are that pupils have absorbed information about features of language and can analyse matters such as gender bias and language as an instrument of power. Pupils learn to base their opinions on objective evidence because the teachers challenge any self-opinionated thinking. Pupils are getting hold of the terminology of linguistics and understand the importance of research.
94. Pupils' skills in reading and writing support their work in other subjects. At both key stages the majority cope well with the reading required, though middle to lower attaining pupils struggle with some texts. Teachers in a number of subjects, for example science and information technology, display vocabulary in the classroom and this helps pupils to understand subject-specific words. Higher attaining pupils at all levels, including the sixth form, develop the ability to retrieve information from a variety of sources, including the Internet. They recognise the characteristics of different types of writing, such as the persuasive language of advertising.
95. Weaknesses in writing are particularly evident among lower attaining pupils. These are being addressed through a whole college policy. However, the majority of pupils write well and understand the need to adapt writing to purpose and audience. For example in an information technology lesson, pupils enjoyed re-writing the nursery rhyme Jack and Jill, imagining how different language would be used if the story was being relayed to different members of society. They can draw up technical specifications. At Key Stage 4 pupils develop good note-taking skills in mathematics and music. Year 11 science pupils show particular strengths in note-taking as a result of being taught this skill. In religious education pupils learn to use the language of other faiths such as Buddhism. Higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form write with fluency. They often make good use of information technology to enhance the quality of their work in both A-level and GNVQ courses, where some impressive extended writing is evident. In general, presentation is good – an improvement since the last inspection.
96. Most pupils have a good attitude to English because the teachers give them positive support and work hard to make lessons interesting. As a result, pupils are ready to settle to work and they behave well. Pupils treat each other with respect and work willingly with others. Where teachers control seating arrangements, and particularly when they arrange for boys and girls to sit next to each other, concentration and application are better. There is room for pupils to take more responsibility for their learning and for initiative and independence to be improved.
97. Teaching is satisfactory overall at Key Stage 3, good at Key Stage 4 and good in the sixth form. The majority of teachers have a good knowledge of the subject, which enables them to present work in an interesting manner and to gain the respect of the pupils. A minority of teachers for whom English is not their main subject are less secure in their subject knowledge and this affects the quality of learning in some lessons in Years 7 and 8. The best lessons are well planned, ensuring that work is pitched at a level to engage the interest and challenge pupils of varying levels of attainment. In a very good lesson in Year 10 pupils were studying Wilfred Owen's poem, "Anthem for Doomed Youth". The teacher kept them fully involved throughout by a well-planned mixture of individual, group and whole class work. At each stage there was a brainstorming of ideas, making good use of the whiteboard and ensuring key points were noted down. The teacher ensured that both boys and girls were equally drawn into discussion and by limiting the time for each activity, kept up the pace. In consequence pupils of all levels of attainment deepened their understanding of the poem and their appreciation of how its imagery compared the experience of soldiers in the trenches to various rites of death. The follow-up homework - to write a soldier's diary entry on the

death of his close friend - provided a good opportunity to build on what had been learnt. Some less effective lessons lack such sharpness and pace because they are less well planned and do not take sufficient account of the attainment levels of the pupils. Insufficient opportunity is provided for pupils to engage with each other in the kind of managed discussion that develops thinking and language skills. Boys in particular tend to lose interest when they are not kept actively involved and this may account for the poorer GCSE results of boys. However, even in such situations where learning is reduced to a slow pace or lacks variety, the good relationships teachers have built up ensure that good behaviour is maintained. Teachers make good use of resources. An example was in another Year 10 lesson when video clips were shown of the work of a war photographer. In addition, written reflections linked to war photographs challenged pupils to think about the moral and ethical dilemmas involved in such work. Marking and assessment is of uneven quality. At its best, pupils are left in no doubt about how well they are progressing and what the next steps are that they need to take to improve their attainments.

98. Good and experienced leadership in the English and communications faculty has created a climate of commitment and teamwork. This is in spite of the difficulties caused by having too many teachers who only teach English for part of their timetable and, in consequence, too many split classes. This makes it much harder to ensure that learning is co-ordinated. Appropriate development priorities have been identified and as a result, the scheme of work at Key Stage 3 has been modified to help to provide more coherence and to ensure that more attention is given to grammar and basic literacy. Information technology is not properly planned to deliver the National Curriculum requirements and there is a need to increase the extent to which pupils at all stages take responsibility for their learning, understanding their levels of attainment and being involved in setting challenging but achievable targets. The faculty's own development targets are not broken down with clear time-framed steps and performance indicators linked to standards. With additional priorities now emerging, the plan should be revised and more systematic and rigorous monitoring introduced to ensure that progress is being made. The faculty is to be commended on the very good display in every room, which contributes much to a positive and helpful learning environment.
99. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Standards in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form remain above average, though at Key Stage 4 they are now in line with the national average, largely because of boys' lower attainments. The range of writing and presentation skills have improved. The pace of learning in many lessons remains too pedestrian. The curriculum provision has been extended, with additional media studies and A level English language. The faculty continues to benefit from good leadership, but the large number of teachers who do not teach English for most of their timetable has increased and this has affected the quality of teaching at Key Stage 3. However, the good teaching in Year 9 and well-focused preparation have continued to produce good results in National Curriculum tests.

### **Media Studies**

100. Media studies is provided by the English and communications faculty from Key Stage 4. GCSE results are affected by the prior attainment of those pupils who opt for the subject. In 1999 56% gained A\*-C grades which was in line with the national average but less good than the previous two years. At A-level all nine pupils passed, three of them achieving A or B grades. A-level communications studies is offered as an alternative to A-level media studies and in 1999 10 pupils passed, 5 of them gaining A or B grades. The impact of good teaching is seen in the good practical projects and written assignments that pupils produce. They learn well how to identify and understand the features of a wide range of media. The good provision of video equipment is well used. A-level pupils can identify the features of media representations, such as gender bias, stereotyping and propaganda. Their written work is well presented and reflects good research. Pupils display good attitudes and show commendable initiative and independence in their practical assignments, reflecting the way in which teachers have succeeded in giving them responsibility for meeting their targets.

### **MATHEMATICS**

101. Pupils' results in the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were in line with the national average and results have remained at a similar level over the past three years. In comparison with schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, pupils' performance was well below average.

The percentage of pupils who reached level 5 or above was broadly in line with the average for similar schools although the percentage of pupils who reached level 6 or above was well below the average for similar schools. There is little difference between the performance of girls and boys.

102. The results in the 1999 GCSE mathematics examination were above the national average and above the average for similar schools. The subject performance indicator confirms that there is little difference between the performance of girls and boys at GCSE (in comparison with national norms) although boys performed better at the higher (A\* and A) grades and girls performed better at grade B. During the past three years, pupils' performance in the GCSE mathematics examination remained above the national average and, in 1999, the performance of pupils was above English and below science.
103. The pupils' results in the 1999 A-level examinations were above the national averages in terms of the number of A - E grades and the number of higher A and B grades. The course has a low dropout rate as pupils' commitment is carefully vetted on a one-week taster course that is provided by the department following the GCSE examinations.
104. Pupil's numeracy skills are good. In science, design technology and geography pupils use numerical and graphical skills confidently to support their learning in other disciplines. There is no whole school numeracy policy, but the college is involved in a pilot numeracy scheme within the local authority.
105. On the basis of lessons observed and samples of work seen, attainment at Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with national averages. Pupils' number work is well developed and they can confidently substitute in formulae and solve equations. Pupils can recognise shapes and solids and the most able can calculate bearings and use Pythagoras' Theorem to find the length of a missing side. All pupils are able to undertake statistical investigations and their use and application of number is well practised although not sufficiently developed. Links between topic areas are not sufficiently emphasised and highlighted by the scheme of work in Key Stage 3.
106. On the basis of lessons observed and samples of work seen, attainment at Key Stage 4 is above the national averages and pupils demonstrate a growing confidence in their number work, with and without the use of a calculator. They use algebraic techniques suitably and can find general terms using the method of differences. Pupils can calculate the areas of shapes and volumes of solids including compound areas and volumes. The more able pupils can find the area under a curve and calculate the gradient at a point. Pupils' investigative work is well developed in Key Stage 4 and their progress is further supported by a thorough revision programme and additional lessons offered by teachers in their spare time.
107. On the basis of the lessons observed, attainment in the sixth form is well above the national average with large numbers of pupils taking A-levels in mathematics and further mathematics.
108. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and they are well supported by teachers in the classroom as well as by the learning support assistants when they are available. Teachers demonstrate good informal knowledge of individuals with special educational needs but pupils' individual education plans concentrate, too much, on presentation rather than subject specific goals and learning objectives.
109. The response of pupils in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is good and pupils show interest and enthusiasm for their work in mathematics. Pupils behave well in the majority of lessons but, in a small number of lessons, they are disinterested and have difficulty sustaining concentration for the whole period. The response of pupils in the sixth form is very good and they enjoy positive, supportive and constructive relationships with each other and with their teachers. A number of sixth form pupils provide additional support to younger pupils by acting as teacher assistants in some of the mathematics classes.
110. Teaching in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is good and teachers demonstrate good knowledge of examination requirements and have a good understanding of the topics to be covered and the resources to be used. There is an appropriate balance between exposition and practice although, in some lessons, work is not sufficiently planned to cater for the spread of ability in the class. There is insufficient challenge for the most able at Key Stage 3 but this is not true at Key Stage 4 where pupils, in a top Year 11 class, are challenged with material which extended their GCSE knowledge with A-level material. Homework is set

regularly and monitored rigorously, but there is too much emphasis on finishing off work at Key Stage 4. Teaching in the sixth form is very good as a result of teacher's very good subject knowledge and high expectations.

111. Pupils react well to the responsibilities given to them by the individualised learning schemes operating in Key Stage 3. Their interest and enthusiasm are high and there is an appropriate balance between individualised learning and whole class themes and investigations. Girls and boys perform equally well although boys tend to write less and thus have less to revise from in preparation for their external examinations. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, pupils continue to develop their skills as independent learners and they are aware of their individual strengths and weaknesses. They enjoy a good rapport with their teachers and quickly acquire new knowledge and understanding.
112. The subject curriculum meets statutory requirements and there is a good range of learning opportunities provided through the individualised learning scheme and set topic lessons in Key Stage 3. Pupils confirm that some of the work done in Year 7 and Year 8 had already been covered in the primary school and there is a lack of curriculum continuity between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. Schemes of work are still being developed as a result of the department's involvement in the National Numeracy Project and, to date, there are no suitable schemes of work in the sixth form. Assessment is undertaken at regular intervals and marks recorded against National Curriculum levels. However, assessment practice is not consistent across the whole department. Pupil attainment is not yet sufficiently tracked to confirm progress and identify individual targets that are sufficiently challenging.
113. Pupil's literacy skills are not sufficiently developed in mathematics. The scheme of work operating at Key Stage 3 does not give sufficient emphasis to developing pupils literacy skills and topic work is not sufficiently refined to support the development of literacy skills and technical vocabulary. Pupils' capability in information technology is developed in conjunction with the resources at Key Stage 3 but provision is variable and deserves further consideration. There is little evidence of any work on information technology during Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form although pupils do make good use of word processing in their coursework submissions.
114. The head of faculty provides strong and effective leadership to the department. Development planning is well considered and there is a clear vision and purpose within the area, which is shared by the rest of the mathematics department. Support for the team is not consistent and non specialist teachers, offering part time support for the department, are not sufficiently supported or included. Pupil profiles are monitored to identify underachievers but the use of such data is still underdeveloped and the monitoring of teaching is insufficient to identify strengths and identify areas for improvement.
115. The faculty has made satisfactory progress in addressing the issues raised in the last inspection report and pupils' investigative ability is now well developed especially in Key Stage 4. Standards of attainment are the same as reported in the last inspection although there is now a greater potential for development and improvement. Teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and the teaching in the sixth form is now very good. Teachers have high expectations of pupils although there is still insufficient evidence of differentiation especially in set classes where not enough attention is given to the spread of ability.

## **SCIENCE**

116. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests, at the end of Key Stage 3 at the age of 14, the proportion of pupils attaining Level 5 and above was close to the national average, but the percentage reaching the higher level 6 was below average. The average points score attained by pupils in 1999 was broadly in line with the national average when compared with all schools, but well below average when compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. Over the last three years results have fluctuated and were better in 1998. Boys do better than girls. At the end of Key Stage 4 in GCSE double award examinations, boys continue to outperform girls, especially at the higher grades. The college results in 1999 were well above national average figure with sixty-four per cent of pupils achieving grades A\* - C, and one hundred percent achieving A\* - G. These results are well above the average for similar schools. In the single award examinations, the percentage achieving both grades A\* - C and A\* - G are above national averages, but in this examination, girls performed better than boys particularly in the A\* - C band. At A-level in 1999, all candidates achieved grade A - E passes in chemistry and physics, while three out of five

candidates did so in biology. No valid comparison can be made with national statistics due to the small numbers of candidates.

117. In the work seen at the end of Key Stage 3, standards overall meet national expectations. Pupils in upper and middle sets are usually matching and sometimes exceeding these expectations, especially when tackling a topic which particularly interests them. An example occurred in a Year 9 class who had studied the basic facts about waves and frequency, and were then introduced to the electromagnetic spectrum. By the end of the lesson they had successfully arranged in the correct order of frequency used, the series of devices which had been used to introduce the lesson - a radiant heater, torch, transistor radio, mobile telephone and ultra-violet lamp. This was then extended to include the nature of the detector and other further practical applications of each band of waves. By contrast, a low-attaining group mastered the basics of the reflection of light by building working periscopes from flat mirrors and cardboard and then finding out how they worked rather than the more usual investigation of the laws of reflection.
118. At Key Stage 4, the more complicated content of lessons and the higher demands made of pupils widens the differences between pupils in different sets as well as between pupils in the same set, but, in the main, top and middle sets are working at or above the national expectation, making good progress and consolidating earlier work as well as acquiring new knowledge both theoretical and applied. In a Year 11 lesson, top set pupils who had earlier made simple working model electric motors were subsequently learning the theory of how their motors worked, their interest raised by their own previous failures and successes. Their interest was aroused further by the several examples of industrial motors which the teacher was able to show to demonstrate the practical application of various theoretical points. Only in the lowest sets did attainment fall below national expectations, and this was reflected in the predicted grades of these pupils.
119. Although no complete examples of formally assessed practical work was seen in either key stage, various classes were seen engaged in aspects of planning, experimenting, recording and evaluating separately as part of their practical work. The requirements of a 'fair test' were well known and correctly applied and the pupils questioned could invariably point out sources of possible experimental error and suggest remedies for them. Year 10 pupils are planning and carrying out their own complete investigations confidently and recording and describing them to a good standard. This is an improvement on the previous inspection.
120. Sixth form pupils have made the difficult transition from GCSE to A-level work successfully and in the lesson seen, the standard of work was at least good and sometimes very good, with pupils making rapid progress and high predicted outcomes for the majority. These standards are materially assisted by the tutorial nature of lessons with small groups. More work is done, and is often at a greater depth than would be possible with larger groups, and the teacher has the opportunity to give greater attention to individual needs.
121. The standard of written work is good throughout all years with neat handwriting, clear diagrams and careful attention to technical spelling. Various methods are used to present information and results, and graphs, bar charts, data tables and printed diagrams and reference material all have their place beside hand-written work. Only pupils with literacy difficulties are unable to match the general standard, although they sometimes come close when individually supported in class. A skill not normally seen was a Year 11 class proficient in taking detailed notes while the teacher was explaining, using their text books to supplement the information at the same time.
122. Most pupils enjoy the subject and practical work in particular. They are well-motivated and interested - particularly in the applications of their work - and experiments are done with a healthy competition to achieve acceptable results. At the same time they co-operate well, sharing apparatus and helping each other over minor difficulties. They take pride in well-presented work. Relationships with staff are good, and pupil/teacher question and answer take place freely. A good-humoured, positive learning environment results. Laboratory discipline is good and safety requirements are carefully observed.
123. The standard of teaching is good. Only one lesson observed was unsatisfactory when pace and challenge fell, able pupils lost concentration and began chatting, and progress faltered. The most effective teaching occurs in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, where staff are teaching their own specialisms and their

command of the subject and enthusiasm raise motivation and standards. In both Key Stage 4 and sixth form lessons there is a sensible emphasis on the requirements of the end-of-course examinations and staff assist pupils to write in a way which will display their knowledge most effectively.

124. The good quality of staff-pupil relationships also enables classes to be conducted with a very 'light touch'. Pupils are trusted with apparatus and tasks without the need for constant close supervision. They can therefore experiment and learn at their own pace, with unobtrusive support being given to those with difficulties. Additional information or tasks can also be given to faster working pupils to move them on.
125. There is some non-teaching support for individual pupils with special needs, but no general in-class support which would enable low-attaining pupils to raise their standards further. Some groups contain a high proportion of pupils with learning and behavioural problems, and progress is restricted by the lack of support. There were no examples observed of the use of specially prepared printed material suitable for poor readers.
126. Lessons are well planned and use a variety of resources, although currently IT is not used consistently to support learning. Sixth form teaching is a particular strength. Backing up good teaching is a very efficient and unobtrusive service by a team of technicians who deliver, collect and maintain the resources. Homework is relevant, achievable and many pupils use the Internet to research topics.
127. Reductions in staffing levels have resulted in larger group sizes in laboratories that were not designed for them. The result is a lack of working space, pupils unable to be seated so that they can all see the teacher and the blackboard, tables overcrowded with apparatus during practical work and restricted space for moving about between tables. The monitoring of safety becomes even more difficult, and resources are stretched to the limit. The 33 Year 11 chemists seen in a lab built for about 26 were working at very close quarters, and only very sensible behaviour and good lab discipline ensured a successful outcome.
128. The option choice available at the end of Year 9 encourages many able pupils to choose single award science, as an alternative to the more usual double award course. This has an effect on the balance of boys and girls in Key Stage 4 groups, but it also places a restriction on their career choice post-16.
129. The current reduced time allocation to science is below the recommended amount of curriculum time and is unsatisfactory. It ensures that the curriculum cannot be taught in depth at either key stage. Pupils' chances of gaining good grades at GCSE are therefore diminished for all levels of attainment. To improve pupils' results in their Key Stage 3 assessment tests, the faculty is considering new arrangements which will include planned revision for the tests.
130. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Only the issues of text book provision and the level of use of information technology resources remain uncompleted, the first awaiting additional finance, the latter, revision of schemes of work as the style of examination is changed this year.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

131. At the end of Key Stage 4, the GCSE design and technology: food, graphics, resistant materials, electronics and child development A\* - C grades for 1999 were well above the national average and when compared with similar schools. In all design and technology subjects, except electronics, girls outperform the boys in their attainment of A\* - C grades. The percentage of A\* - G grades in all the GCSE design and technology subjects were above the national average and the results of similar schools. There is little difference in the attainment between boys and girls at levels A\* - G.
132. Key Stage 3, teacher assessments in 1999, indicate some improvement in attainment over the last three years but attainment remains just below the national average. In addition the gap between the attainment of boys and girls is narrowing as boys improve their attainment. Work produced by pupils and in lessons seen during the inspection indicate that pupils are working in line with national expectations. Pupils gain a wide range of basic skills in designing and making products of good quality in food, resistant materials, graphics and electronics. Pupils are able to analyse existing products and draw appropriate conclusions on

the design features of those products. The electronics course is now well developed as part of the Key Stage 3 curriculum and pupils benefit well from this knowledge. In an electronics lesson for example, pupils were asked to design and make a printed circuit board. With the support of the teacher, the whole class was able to demonstrate their ability to make and test their circuits and connect them up to a framed display that enabled LED lights to work. Pupils are guided through the stages of designing and in graphic design, they are taught a range of two and three-dimensional drawing skills and some pupils are beginning to apply these skills in other areas of technology but not consistently. At the end of Key Stage 3, however, pupils' ability to apply the full design process to their own design work is underdeveloped. Work is more teacher led and there are less opportunities for pupils to use the process to their own designs. They are less independent in the way they work than might be expected at this stage. This is due to the limitations in the range of teaching methods used.

133. Pupils generate a range of ideas, develop, make and evaluate their work. They are encouraged to plan their work in detail using drawings and notes to explain each stage of development. In food technology pupils are well supported in planning their work using structured worksheets and time plans. They generate and use numerical data in the form of charts, graphs and food calculations to produce very good end products. However there are some missed opportunities for pupils to extend their knowledge about the richness of other cultures. An example of this was in a food technology lesson where 'parcel foods' were being developed. Pupils were familiar with sausage rolls and pasties but did not touch on the more basic foods such as a samosa from other cultures. Lower attaining pupils with poor literacy skills, do not benefit fully from all lessons due to the limited range of learning resources and teaching strategies used in the classroom. Teachers are aware of the need to differentiate the work to suit the needs of individual pupils but some further development to provide this information as part of planning within the schemes of work is still needed.

134. In the main pupils at Key Stage 4 in lessons seen, are working in line with national levels expected of pupils at fifteen years of age with higher attaining groups working just above national levels. Pupils show good levels of analysis of both products, considering the market and reviewing the intended purpose of their own designs. In an electronics lesson, pupils demonstrated a high level of accuracy in making their products and this was well supported by effective testing and recording of results. In food, pupils demonstrate a high level of food preparation skills, they work in an organised and hygienic way and successful results. They use a range of food testing skills and are able to interpret and present their results in a variety of ways for example, using graphs, bar charts and tables to evaluate their products. In all GCSE coursework, pupils are encouraged to use IT; some pupils use computer aided design, and computer aided manufacture. In the sixth form, pupils show good application of their design skills to their own project work. In design and technology A-level lessons, pupils working in resistant materials show an interesting range of projects from designing a jewellery box and a portable drawing board, to a car trailer and a sofa bed. Pupils produce projects which show understanding of a more advanced and refined process of design and are able to develop work to more rigorous specifications and criteria.

135. In the main, teaching in design and technology is good at all levels and in some lessons teaching is very good. The department is well managed and benefits from a strong team approach. Teachers are well planned and organised for lessons. Teachers have a good knowledge of their specialist areas, and rarely teach outside their specialisms. At Key Stage 3, pupils are taught a good range of basic skills in all material areas and are encouraged to apply these to their own design ideas although the scope for them to apply the design process more independently is still limited. In Key Stage 4, teachers effectively use examples of past GCSE coursework well to guide pupils. In the sixth form teaching is good and teachers support pupils very well with their individual work as their projects develop. Pupils form good relationships with their teachers and the pace of lessons is appropriate for their needs. Marking is inconsistent across the department, and does not always recognise what is good about the work or suggest to pupils how they might improve further.

136. The curriculum in design and technology is well planned and there is a reasonable balance of experience for pupils in all material areas. There is good coverage of food, graphics electronics and control technology which has become a real strength. However, examination groups tend to have more girls choosing food and child development and boys doing resistant materials and electronics. The school now needs to ensure that all pupils make the best use of the opportunities open to them and not to be guided by stereotypical choices alone when they make their options.

137.Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Leadership of the department has improved and this can be seen in a number of aspects. There is a clear development plan, linked to the budget and there is a strong team spirit amongst the staff. The quality of teaching has improved. Pupils are beginning to transfer graphic skills more readily across all areas of the subject, although this remains inconsistent. Technology now meets National Curriculum requirements. Assessment systems need to be developed further to include pupils in their own assessment and target setting. Performance data is not used effectively to inform planning and set learning targets for individual pupils. The use of information technology has improved across all key stages. Accommodation and resources are of a good standard overall although the work area in resistant materials is particularly restricting when large groups are taught.

## **EXPRESSIVE ARTS**

### **Art**

138.The achievement of pupils aged 14 is in line with the national expectation. GCSE results for 1999 were well below national averages and the trend over the last three years, whilst variable, has produced results lower than average for schools of this type. Pupils achieve slightly lower grades in art than in the other subjects they take. Boys have achieved significantly lower grades compared to girls over recent years although adjustments to schemes of work and an improvement in the teaching provision have begun to address this. By age 19 the few pupils taking the GCE advanced course achieve very high standards. The number of pupils taking post 16 courses is too low for a valid statistical analysis against national figures to be made.

139.Work seen at the end Key Stage 3 matches the national expectation. Pupils produce a well balanced range of outcomes in two and three dimensions, using a good range of media and developing a good understanding of the properties of materials they use. Many pupils can accurately record what they have seen and develop ideas within a thematic study. For example Year 7 and 8 pupils' work on portraiture, from direct observation, is executed with confidence and maturity, Their knowledge of other artists however is limited and not effectively integrated into their work. Too little work shows appropriate knowledge of important artists and their methods and the influences of our multicultural society. There is also a lack of study related to contemporary art and pupils' own cultural influences. Work using information technology, although limited to Year 9, shows a good understanding and some skill in using the applications available.

140.At the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is in line with expected levels, although Year 10 pupils reach higher standards than those in Year 11. Deeper, more thorough research, leads to well thought out personal ideas, often executed in a range of media. Most pupils, including those in Year 11 have developed appropriate skills in drawing and other graphic media and work is most effective when imagery is based on pupils' direct observation. Technical skills are generally good throughout the key stage and the majority of pupils can express their ideas in two and three dimensions. In both key stages pupils with special educational needs achieve at least expected standards. In the sixth form A-level pupils are reaching well above average standards and several pupils produce impressive work especially in their preliminary study. Their research into the work of other artists is invariably thorough and relevant to their personal ideas. Pupils at this stage are skilled in using and experimenting with a range of media. They are often innovative in the use of both two and three dimensional media and techniques.

141.Attitudes to teaching and learning are good at all stages with limited exceptions. In these rare lessons where attitudes are unsatisfactory, teaching fails to engage pupils. They are bored and whilst not badly behaved, they learn little or nothing for large part of lesson. In general however, pupils are well behaved and engage with the learning. They respect the feelings and beliefs of others and co-operate well with each other and teachers. The majority of pupils are committed to their work, and concentrate well throughout the lesson. Pupils are clear about the work set and its purpose.

142.The quality of teaching is satisfactory during Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. In most lessons teaching promotes good learning. Tasks make sufficient demands and lessons are well

paced and structured to allow all pupils to acquire new knowledge and skills. Teachers are clear about lesson objectives and these are shared with pupils to promote understanding and purpose of the lesson. Teachers use their knowledge of the subject to enhance their effectiveness during demonstrations and particularly when working with individuals. For example during some Year 9 and Year 10 lessons teachers were able to present additional challenge to higher attaining pupils by suggesting further study connected with the individual's ideas and research. Pupils' rate of learning is also improved by the carefully produced written guidance. The project 'outlines' contain useful knowledge and information to support the less able and clarify the objectives of the project. However teachers make only summative reference to assessment and insufficient time is given to the identification of strengths and weaknesses during lessons. Some teaching however is effectively focused on knowledge of pupils' strengths and weaknesses. For example in a Year 8 'mixed-media' lesson the teacher questioned the group to ascertain the extent of understanding prior to them working individually. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, the teacher's limited overview of the lesson and the lack of challenge provided by the task diminished learning for a significant number of pupils. The teaching and learning environment is enhanced by displays of work and information although the general feel is drab and visually unexciting.

143.Improvements since the last inspection have been satisfactory. The subject is satisfactorily managed on a day to day basis. The subject leader provides a good ethos and maintains good relationships with teachers and pupils. Monitoring of teaching and learning, where it takes place, is currently remote from the needs of the subject. Strategic leadership, informed by monitoring and evaluation of standards and identification of strategies for improvement, is not well defined. Subject leadership should seek to engage all teachers in a collective stance on improvement issues working to a clearly defined improvement plan.

### **Drama**

144.Drama is taught to all pupils in Key Stage 3 and a good number opt to take GCSE drama. In 1999 seventy-five percent achieved A\*-C grades in the GCSE examination, which is above the national average and continues the upward trend from previous years. At A-level eight pupils gained A\*-C grades, five of them A or B grades. Work seen during the inspection was good. Pupils at Key Stage 3 can develop the dramatic elements of a story such as a village murder, imagining the reactions of the various characters in the village and devising scenes to explore them. Boys and girls work well together and those with special needs, including those who are wheelchair-bound, are included in a positive manner. At Key Stage 4, pupils have learnt to work out and refine their own improvisations. They demonstrate initiative and independence in their work and some potentially difficult boys show their ability to concentrate in practical work. In the sixth form, A-level pupils engage in convincing role-play, show good analytical skills in evaluating their own and others' work. They have a good understanding of the theatre. Essays are well-crafted and well argued. The positive attitudes of pupils are a result of good teaching that challenges and inspires them to produce good work. Drama is managed within the Expressive Arts Faculty and good leadership, characterised by effective teamwork, underpins success. The extra-curricular productions, theatre visits, drama workshops and dance classes enrich the learning experiences of many pupils. Teachers are to be commended for the commitment that makes this possible. The subject has continued to flourish since the last inspection.

### **Music**

145.Standards in music are similar to those at the time of the last inspection. Inspection findings show pupils' attainments are broadly in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3 and there is satisfactory achievement overall. The school does not assess pupils against National Curriculum expectations at the end of Key Stage 3. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C grades was considerably above the national average. Similarly, in the 1998 examinations, results were above average. The number of pupils taking A-level over the last two years is too small to make reliable comparisons with the national averages.

146.In work seen during the inspection, most pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 play keyboards in line with expectations. Pupils devise melodic and rhythmic ideas to form group compositions, as part of a rap project, and add voice parts to create a group performance. Most pupils are able to evaluate their work and state how they would improve their performances. Higher attaining pupils choose keyboard sounds and backing rhythms carefully, making musical decisions in order to achieve a particular effect. However, in

some lessons, several groups underachieve and produce pieces that are short, lack development and are under-rehearsed. When performing, pupils listen carefully to other members of their group and generally keep together well. When listening to other groups' work, pupils identify features that they feel worked well, although they do not always have the opportunity to reflect on each other's music in this way in all lessons. No singing occurred during the inspection in Key Stage 3 lessons, therefore it is not possible to judge this aspect of music.

147. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards are above expectations and pupils make good progress in listening, performing and composing. Many pupils play instruments to a good standard, and their instrumental and musical skills are put to good effect in their compositions. For example, one pupil wrote an effective piece for brass quintet, which showed a good awareness of the technical scope and sound qualities of the various instruments. Another pupil composed a well-structured piece for drum kit, bass and percussion, which involved at one point some complex, interlinked rhythm patterns; these gave the piece energy and momentum. Pupils have a suitable grasp of compositional devices used by composers and can often identify these when listening to pieces. Most pupils can comment on some of the stylistic and structural features of the pieces and higher attaining pupils use terms such as 'counterpoint' and 'sequence' correctly and notice subtle changes, for example in orchestration or melodies.
148. A-level pupils make good progress in covering the course requirements. They have a good knowledge of musical styles and periods and their written work shows good analysis of set pieces. They use their knowledge well to support their opinions, which they illustrate by quoting appropriate examples from the score, or from other related pieces of music. The pupils' knowledge of musical terms has clearly improved since the last inspection. It was not possible to judge pupils' performing abilities during the inspection but video evidence shows that many older pupils give confident and often technically assured performances. Pupils use a range of harmonic and structural devices when working on their composition projects.
149. Pupils have satisfactory attitudes to the subject. They are well behaved and work together well when undertaking group work. They listen particularly carefully when groups are performing and occasionally show their appreciation of each other's effort by bursting into spontaneous applause. In some lessons, pupils appear to lack interest, particularly when they are required to share keyboards and have to wait to play. In some lessons across the school, pupils are subdued and often need a lot of encouragement to express ideas and contribute to discussions. This was also found to be the case at the time of the last inspection.
150. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Key Stage 3. It is good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form and helps to promote effective learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this has a positive impact on the rate of progress pupils make in GCSE and A-level classes. For example, in one A-level lesson on fugue, the teacher provided informative and pertinent information on how composers such as Bach and Stravinsky use fugue. Teachers use a variety of methods to probe and challenge pupils' thinking. For example, in one Year 11 lesson, the teacher re-phrased questions and re-played the compact disc several times to help pupils identify features in a piece by Walton, which they were finding particularly difficult. In the most effective lessons, teachers foster good relationships with pupils and use humour effectively to encourage them to respond and contribute. In Key Stage 3, pupils who learn instruments are not stretched sufficiently in all lessons; in some cases, the teachers do not set more challenging tasks for them, or are even unaware of pupils' instrumental capabilities. The quality of instrumental teaching varies widely and ranges from good to very poor. In the best lessons, pupils make clear progress in developing their technical and musical skills. In the single very poor lesson observed, the pupil learned very little, the standard of piano accompaniment impeded learning and there was too little emphasis on developing correct technique.
151. The management of the subject is satisfactory. The head of department is dedicated and works hard to provide a range of opportunities through both the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. The main weakness in the leadership of the subject is the lack of time she has to monitor standards and the quality of teaching across the department, including the instrumental teaching. The curriculum planning is satisfactory but the time allocated for music in Key Stage 3 is below the national average. This means that lessons are often rushed and there is a lack of time to hear pupils' work at the end of lessons. Information technology does not make sufficient contribution to pupils' learning, particularly in Key Stage 4 and A-level. Teachers put a lot of energy into directing extra-curricular groups and this has a major impact upon the development of pupils' musicianship. The school's ensembles and choirs perform regularly and videos

show that standards are often high. Concerts and full-scale shows, such as the recent performance of 'Grease', make a positive contribution to the musical life of the school and its wider community.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

152. In teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, the percentage of pupils gaining Level 5 or above was below the national average. Girls achieve better standards than boys. At GCSE, results for Key Stage 4 pupils have improved over the last three years, and in 1999 the percentage of pupils achieving A\* - C grades was just above the national average. Boys' results are consistently below those of girls at grades A\* - C but are improving. At A-level, pupil numbers are low and statistical comparisons are not valid. Although all pupils passed in 1999, the average points score was below the national average.
153. At the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils have made satisfactory progress in a variety of skills including work with maps, diagrams and field sketches. They produce satisfactory fact files on different countries, and all pupils complete enquiry projects on topics such as volcanoes. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils drafting a report on Mt St Helens, illustrated the ability to make notes and draw sketch maps from video and secondary source material and also showed good place knowledge. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils presentation of work improves, and all pupils make satisfactory progress in skills, knowledge and understanding by the end of Year 9. At Key Stage 4 pupils achieve in line with national expectations. Pupils are proficient with graph work and show good use of this in their individual studies. There is evidence of good extended writing but insufficient variety is shown in written tasks; detailed annotation and spider diagrams are infrequent. Map, atlas and field sketching work is mostly good and pupils show good place knowledge. Skills in IT are used in both classwork and individual coursework and pupils' work is mostly well presented. All pupils undertake well-organised, locally based fieldwork and also have the opportunity to spend a week in Chamonix for more adventurous and exciting fieldwork. All pupils can explain their work but they do not use geographical terminology with confidence.
154. At all levels, pupils' attitudes to learning are satisfactory. All pupils work well together, concentration is often good, and there is respect for each other and for teachers. Lapses in concentration detract from the pace of lessons and slow down learning but overall behaviour is satisfactory.
155. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4 and good in the sixth form. Lessons are well planned with a variety of tasks but there is insufficient use of differentiated tasks in some middle and low ability classes, which have a wide ability range. However, an effective lesson in Year 9 was observed on volcanoes when work was set and resources made available to suit the prior attainment of all pupils in the class. Pupils' learning was good, particularly in relation to their skills in report drafting, note taking, sketch map drawing and place knowledge. In other lessons, progress is limited by talking unrelated to the lesson topic and pace is lost. In a Year 11 lesson on water, pupils were effectively challenged to consider the usage and cost of water as a resource. Pupils found this a fascinating task and there was good co-operation as ideas were exchanged. Teaching in the sixth form is good. Good, targeted questions are used to challenge pupils, and there are opportunities for presentations, paired work and thoughtful discussions. In one lesson, pupils made individual presentations about the problems for farmers in semi-arid environments. The presentations had to be understood by the farmers and showed good imagination in presentation. Both in presentation and answers to questions, pupils demonstrated clear understanding. A-level pupils show good learning overall. They always concentrate well. Pupils produce good extended writing and good individual studies which show creative thinking and thoughtful judgements. They develop good graph skills and when pressed they are articulate and can explain their work clearly.
156. Schemes of work are well planned and effectively promote progression through the use of selected case studies. Fieldwork is well planned and provides very good opportunities for learning in depth. Assessment procedures are satisfactory and a portfolio of work is being collated for standardising National Curriculum Levels at Key Stage 3. Good records are kept of assessments and work is underway to track pupils' progress from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4. Marking on classwork is brief and sometimes unhelpful to pupils.

157.Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory, although some weaknesses remain. Boys' results remain significantly below those of girls, and split classes affect learning in Key Stage 3. There are however some good improvements. A-level results and numbers have improved and almost every pupil now makes at least satisfactory progress. There has been an overall improvement in the presentation of work and both the quality and quantity of extended writing has improved. Problem solving skills seen as satisfactory at the last inspection are now a strength of pupils' work from Year 8 upwards.

## History

158.Standards are good overall. Teachers' own assessments of pupils' work at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 are in line with national expectations, but standards of work seen for the current Year 9 are above expectations. This represents good progress from their attainment on entry. Standards at GCSE are in line with national averages. This represents sound achievement overall, although a small number of pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Nevertheless, standards have improved since the last inspection as. Girls have achieved better results than boys over recent years, but the smaller number of boys gained an equal number of 'A' grades as the girls in 1999. All pupils passed, maintaining the commendable one hundred per cent pass rate over recent years. Pupils taking GCSE history in 1999 fared better in history than in other subjects they took. The trend over the past three years is one of steady improvement. All four candidates at A-level in 1999 passed, three with C grades, and one with an A grade. These numbers are too small for valid statistical comparison with national averages. The standard of written work, knowledge, understanding and of analytical skills evident from a debate in Year 13, is high.

159.Pupils have a good range and depth of historical knowledge and can express themselves well orally; their understanding helped by judicious use of timelines throughout both Key Stages 3 and 4. In Year 7, boys in a boys' only class can recall accurate detail about the battle of Hastings, and events leading up to it. In Year 8, middle to lower ability pupils' understand the religious influences in Tudor and early Stuart times well enough to anticipate problems resulting from the decisions of Charles I. This good recall and transfer of knowledge from previous work enabled pupils in a Year 11 lesson to participate in heated, well informed discussion on what the agonising death of Charles II revealed about the discrepancy between theory and practice of medicine at the time. In doing so, these pupils also displayed impressive analytical skills. There is some excellent authentic writing in pupils' books, from diaries about life in the American West and guidebooks sent "home" to perceptively argued letters of protest from factory owners who employ orphans and provide them with better conditions than they have known. A superb example of how effectively more able pupils can interpret the conditions and feelings of a past time was in a vivid piece of writing about the mining camps which included much dialogue, correctly punctuated, ending with the evocative question: "What else can we do but mine the very metal that has ruined our lives?"

160.There is a big gap between the good standards of average and above attainment and that of pupils of lower ability. There is much unfinished and disorganised work in exercise books seen in the work sample of lower attaining pupils at Key Stage 3. However, pupils in a lower set answered questions which showed a sound basic understanding of work done on technological innovations in industry at the time of the Industrial Revolution; this enabled them to absorb new knowledge about the Peterloo massacre with reasonable confidence. There is some incomplete and poorly spelled written work at Key Stage 4, but in one file the better standard of work in an examination paper suggests some poor effort at other times, but persistent difficulties with spelling. While good work is being done in the department to assist pupils who have literacy difficulties, this is still an area of relative weakness especially for those boys who have not had the benefits of the current single gender focus in Key Stage 3.

161.The standard of work seen during the inspection in the sixth form is good. Pupils write lengthy but detailed essays with good attention to evidence and include references, which indicate appropriate wide reading. They maintain a log to record plans, progress and problems in relation to their individual studies and these indicate good awareness of research and an ability to plan and change tack if necessary.

162.Teaching standards are good overall at all levels, despite some minor shortcomings observed in some lessons. All history teachers have good pupil management skills and this contributes significantly to the orderly atmosphere, enabling pupils to concentrate and to listen both to the teacher and to each others' responses. Subject knowledge and expertise is consistently good across all key stages, ensuring a good

range and depth of pupils' historical knowledge, understanding and skills, even though several lessons observed were taught by specialists in other subjects. In the best lessons, the teacher inspires and challenges pupils by way of fascinating delivery and skilled questioning resulting in a high level of enthusiastic debate, in depth analysis and very good progress. In one such lesson, the teacher rarely supplied any information which, with skilful questioning, could not be elicited from the pupils themselves. This promotes pupils' intellectual effort as well as their independence. Within an interesting mix of teaching and learning styles, the most effective methods employ a high level of pupil participation such as recapitulation in the form of dramatic reconstruction of the Norman Conquest, a game about decision-making for Charles I and pupils reading around the class from well chosen and illustrated texts. These methods result not only in effective learning but also in obvious enjoyment, which in turn promotes productivity. Good use of resources included well-edited video clips about the struggles over land between Plains Indians and American settlers, contributing effectively to pupils' understanding of moral, cultural and spiritual issues of the times.

163. Where teaching relies too heavily or too long on exposition with questions, pupils lose interest. The more done for them, the less they apply themselves, and it was when this was observed in lessons that underachievement followed. Few teachers use the board effectively especially in summing up, to consolidate learning for the many pupils who learn best by seeing rather than listening. Homework is set regularly, usually consolidating classwork but sometimes it is imaginative, resulting in commendable creative effort and productivity. This was clear from "scrolls" produced at home, written by Year 8 pupils in the role of Privy Counsellor humbly begging His Majesty King James I to attend the advice therein.

164. Teaching in the sixth form is different by nature and is at least of good quality. Pupils learn efficiently and with confidence as a result of their teachers' detailed subject knowledge. Good relationships with and amongst pupils adds to the quality of learning for all concerned. The feature of the best teaching is instilling a mix of reassurance and adventure in pupils, encouraging them forward by giving them challenging tasks, while supporting them so that they succeed. Such high expectations were seen to be justly rewarded in one lesson where two pupils presented carefully researched opposing arguments about the extent of Stalin's responsibility for the terror and purges of the 1930s, others challenged and interrogated them, then another gave a clear and succinct summing up. This exacted tremendous intellectual effort as well as courage, but it is the stuff of learning of a high order.

165. Pupils' behaviour is good and attitudes in most lessons observed were good, promoting good quality learning overall. This is partly due to good pupil management but also because in most lessons pupils evidently enjoy their work. They participate well in discussions and many put in considerable effort into their work as in painstakingly pencilled, censored, stained letters as from a German soldier in the trenches to his family. Many pupils word-process their homework. Where there is a shortage of textbooks for homework, pupils arrange sharing co-operatively. Where teaching is dynamic, pupils respond with enthusiasm, and ask many questions. They listen in silent attention when one of them is reading aloud in class and are keen to read themselves. Pupils with special educational needs taught in smaller classes make satisfactory progress, helped not only by more individual attention but by greater teacher continuity and a suitably adapted schemes of work.

166. The well-chosen programme of study provides good continuity, progression and range of interest; schemes of work at Key Stage 3 are well planned to meet the needs of all pupils. The introduction to history part of a humanities module for Year 7 pupils is cleverly designed and covers all key elements, but there is insufficient use of information technology in teaching across all key stages. Marking is a strength in history. Teachers assiduously tick good points in work, correct errors including in basic skills, and comment fully and constructively both on pupils' work and in end of module profiles. More use could be made of statistical information to give an overview of progress to inform targeting. A weakness is the imbalanced timetable for some classes, many split classes and a lower than normal time allocation for history at Key Stage 3. The head of history has insufficient time for effective monitoring. Despite this, he manages, with competence, a department which is innovative and forward-looking. There has been sound improvement since the last inspection.

## **Religious Education**

167. Results in the most recent GCSE short course examination were below the national average at grades A\*-C

but above at grades A\*-G. 85 per cent of the year group were entered for the examination. Girls performed significantly better than boys. This was the first year in which candidates had been entered. No targets have been set for this year.

168. By the age of 14, standards are in line with the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus, but there is some underachievement in some classes. Pupils understand some of the ways in which belief affects the lives of believers and can give simple accurate examples from the faiths they have studied, for example festivals, dress, worship, sacred books and moral codes. They are less able to appreciate the feelings and emotions which underlie religious observances such as Hajj for the Muslim and do not readily make the connection between what they learn and their own lives.
169. By the age of 16, attainment is satisfactory but with underachievement especially among boys and lower attaining pupils. Pupils with higher and average attainment have a working knowledge of Christianity and Islam and understand what these faiths teach about ultimate questions such as suffering and death. They know how the faiths celebrate the more important occasions in life such as marriage and their attitude to divorce. Their oral work in class is often better than their written work. Lower attainers have not achieved a secure base of knowledge and understanding although they can make links between some specific moral issues and religious teaching. There is no evidence of attainment in the sixth form due to absence of provision.
170. In both key stages the attitude of pupils is satisfactory. Most behave well but they are heavily dependent on teachers and show little willingness or ability to engage in independent learning. They settle to tasks and remain reasonably focused when supervised. However few are self-motivated and most do solely what they are asked. Whilst in all classes there are a few pupils who ask searching and perceptive questions and contribute to discussions, most are happy to be passive observers. They are not good at listening to their peers. Written work is usually brief with presentation varying from immaculate to scrappy and disorganised. The response to homework tasks is generally unsatisfactory.
171. At Key Stage 3, the quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. Teachers have a friendly relationship with pupils and classes are managed in an effective manner which establishes a learning environment. However this relationship lacks rigour and leads to underachievement and standards of written work lower than they should be. A variety of activities is usually planned for lessons using texts, resource sheets and video clips and the necessary materials are organised. Because most planning does not identify what pupils will learn, they do not make sufficient progress in knowledge and understanding. Most lessons are heavily dependent on teacher input and therefore pupils are not developing their skills of either collaborative or independent learning. Where opportunities are given for pupils to reflect on what they are learning and to experience some of the more spiritual aspects of the subject such as pilgrimage or Buddhist meditation, they show considerable empathy and involvement. In some lessons, such in a Year 7 class, pupils appear to have a greater knowledge than the teacher expects and the teaching fails to exploit and extend this knowledge. The head of department supplies good lesson plans clearly setting out work well matched to different abilities but few lessons appear to take note of the information. The specialist teachers have good subject knowledge and other teachers who teach the subject prepare background adequately. Where pupils with special educational needs are taught by specifically qualified teachers the subject is taught in a satisfactory and sensitive manner with methods and materials well matched to their ability. The marking of exercise books is infrequent and, in some cases cursory. Because of this the standard of written work is not sufficiently good and pupils are getting little information about how they can improve. The timetable organisation which provides for short intensive periods of time devoted to the subject rather than regular time throughout the year does not help pupils build a cohesive and secure knowledge of the subject.
172. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. Although many of the weaknesses remain from Key Stage 3 work is more focused on examination outcomes. There is more specialist teaching and pupils have a weekly lesson throughout the course. Factual information is provided so that pupils with self-motivation can gain the necessary knowledge through careful revision. Themes are explored in class in an interesting manner and pupils are managed with humour and respect. Well focused questioning by teachers results in some pupils expressing their opinions and beliefs in a thoughtful and perceptive manner. Good relationships exist between teachers and pupils but again this too often results in insufficiently high expectations. Insufficient demand is made of able pupils to produce thoughtful extended writing. In classes of lower attaining pupils there is a serious lack of urgency in the teaching and time is not used effectively.

For instance in a Year 11 class pupils spent 30 minutes sticking pieces of paper on to a sheet exploring an idea which could have been covered in five minutes. The course lacks sufficient structure and built-in motivation and therefore too many pupils are relying on last minute revision to achieve examination success. As in Key Stage 3 the marking and assessment of work is not of a high enough standard to obtain consistently high standards. The lack of urgency in teaching is reinforced by the absence of individual target setting for examination candidates.

173. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is a well focused section of work on spirituality in Key Stage 3 and there are references to moral and social issues throughout the course. There is however a lack of collaborative work and the coverage of world faiths needs to be more vivid. A team of youth workers based in school and financed by local churches makes a contribution to pupils' spiritual development through a number of extra-curricular clubs and activities.

174. The subject is taught by a large team of teachers of which only two are subject specialists. Many classes at Key Stage 3 have more than one teacher. Lessons take place in many rooms. In this situation the lack of systematic oversight of standards of teaching and pupil work is having a serious effect on standards in the subject. In the absence of regular team meetings it is difficult for the subject manager to create an ethos of high standards. Although the subject has its own web site on the school's intranet and some subject specific software is available, little use is made of information technology to enrich teaching.

175. Since the last report more time has been allocated to the subject at Key Stage 4 and a large proportion of pupils are now entered for a GCSE examination. There is still much non-specialist teaching and there is no regular planned provision at sixth form level.

### **Business Studies and Economics**

176. Business Studies is a popular option at GCSE and regularly attracts one third of each year group. Examination results are excellent and are consistently above national expectations for comparable schools. In 1999, 66.9 per cent achieved grades at A - C with nearly one in five pupils achieving A and A\*. The proportion achieving top grades has improved over the last three years. Pupils' work and class contributions show a secure understanding of key business concepts and course work demonstrates the ability to apply and use these concepts in real world applications and shows an increasingly sophisticated use of information technology skills. A well designed simulation used in Year 10 provided excellent opportunities to consolidate learning about costs, pricing, and profits. Recent examination results for A-level economics have been very good and above those for comparable schools in other parts of the country. In 1999 there was a 100% pass rate and 42% of candidates gained A and B grades.

177. Planning and preparation for both examinations and course work is extremely thorough and pupils are given detailed guidance on how they can raise their levels of achievement. Considerable progress has been made to overcome the short comings identified in the previous inspection report and a greater variety of teaching strategies is now used, including extensive use of business links, the use of simulations, group work and more effective use of information technology. Not all classes are taught by subject specialists.

178. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is well planned and meticulously organised. Pupils have very detailed notes and show good recall of key economic concepts. This is demonstrated in their responses to teacher questioning but pupils were given few opportunities to reflect in depth on their understanding and there was little discussion between pupils. Greater attention could be paid to choosing modern contexts and examples of contemporary theoretical debates.

### **Psychology**

179. Psychology has been added to the curriculum since the last inspection and standards achieved by pupils are good and above those reached in comparable schools. In 1999 95 per cent of pupils passed A level with 40 per cent gaining A and B grades. The proportion of pupils gaining top grades has improved over the past 3 years.

180. Classes are lively and very positive pupil responses are well used by the teacher to encourage a critical

understanding and debate about the demands of the discipline. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent, enabling rapid learning to occur. Boys are under represented in A-level groups, and poor accommodation limits opportunities to use a wider range of teaching strategies.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

181. At Key Stage 3, teacher assessment indicates that attainment of pupils are slightly below the national average in information technology (IT) although the results show some improvement in attainment over the last three years. The percentage of pupils achieving A\* - C grades in GCSE combined Business and Information Studies is well above the national average. Girls outperform boys.

182. In the work seen and lessons observed during the inspection, the majority of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 are working in line with national expectations with some pupils in higher attaining groups working at levels higher than national expectations. By the end of the key stage, pupils' cover a good variety of basic skills in IT and are taught to use a range of software packages. They are able to use desktop publishing (DTP), spreadsheets, cover aspect of control using a specialist program, and search for information using both CD ROM and the internet. Information technology is used well in English to produce newspaper articles, in science for data logging, and in art to apply colour, and manipulate the effect of original hand sketches. However, the use of IT is still underdeveloped in music, mathematics, modern foreign languages and physical education.

183. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment meets expectations. Most pupils make satisfactory progress. Year 10 pupils are able to use DTP, spreadsheets and databases, and scanner to produce their own design for business cards, letterheads, newsletters, room layouts and a website. However, progress is uneven for those pupils who do not take IT as a GCSE subject, because not all subjects use IT sufficiently. In some subjects, pupils are encouraged to build on the range of skills they acquire during Key Stage 3 and to select and apply the appropriate software and skills to develop their own project work. This is particularly good in design and technology, where all GCSE pupils use IT in their coursework projects. Pupils following this course develop good skills in desktop publishing, using a digital camera, scanning research information, using spreadsheets and charts for handling data, and even using computer aided design, and computer aided manufacture.

184. The level of attainment in the sixth form is above expectations and IT is effectively used in GNVQ courses where key skills are well integrated into the courses. Teaching is good and is focused on supporting pupils on a more individual basis with their project work. Good work was seen in health and social care, where pupils used information technology effectively to present work using DTP and showed the use of spreadsheets and databases to produce tables graphs and charts to a high level while planning a charity swimming event. All GNVQ pupils produce projects on equal opportunities showing effective use of the internet for research and information handling software for analysing and presenting information. In graphics, pupils show the application of spreadsheets well to support their work and they develop website pages as part of their coursework.

185. Overall, the quality of teaching is good at all levels. Teachers in the main show a high level of planning and preparation. In most lessons there are clear objectives that support the pupils in their learning. Teachers explain the technical language associated with IT and encourage pupils to use it correctly. Workbooks are produced which are helpful in moving the pupils learning forward when they undertake projects. They show good knowledge of their subject and in the main use questions effectively to assess how much the pupils learn and understand. Where teaching has shortcomings, it is because of a lack suitable strategies to interest and engage all pupils. Assessment data is systematically recorded, but needs to ensure that all subjects contribute. The school does not meet the statutory requirement to report the progress of pupils to parents at Key Stage 4 and will need to develop a method for recording progress in IT.

186. Since the last inspection, the school has made good progress. There has also been some considerable improvement in the provision of computers and resources and training for teachers to use IT in their subjects. The department is well managed, and the development plan is clear and realistic.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

187. Overall, attainment in French at the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4 is broadly in line with national expectations. There is insufficient evidence to comment on standards at the end of the sixth form. Teacher assessed data in French, the first foreign language, show attainment in 1999 to be in line with national expectations for pupils attaining Level 4 and above. There was no formal standardisation process to support these teacher assessment judgements and so it is unclear how reliable these figures are. This also applies to 1998 and 1997. At the end of Key Stage 4 attainment at GCSE in French in 1999 was roughly in line with the national average. Boys did not achieve as well as girls which reflects the national picture. Both boys and girls however, performed worse in French than in other subjects in the school. In 1998 attainment was well below average but this was the first year all pupils had been entered for a modern language examination at age 16. It is impossible therefore to establish a trend in French over three years. At A-Level, numbers over the last three years have been too small to make reliable statistical comparisons. There have, however, been fewer pupils achieving A and B grades than is nationally the case.
188. In work seen during the inspection attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 in French meets expectations. There has been a focus by the teachers of higher attaining pupils in Year 9 to address the need for pupils to work at higher National Curriculum levels. These pupils are trying to extend their utterances in French and are attempting to use a range of tenses. Their books and assessment tasks contain some examples of extended writing. Other pupils rely heavily on models from the teacher for their written work and experience difficulty with sentence construction when allowed free rein. The recall of too many pupils is unsatisfactory and many find it difficult to read aloud with accuracy. In German at the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' understanding of the spoken word is satisfactory. They understand some of the grammar rules they have been taught but few are able to use the language in a communicative way. At the end of Key Stage 4 attainment in French meets expectations, but there is underachievement in written and spoken skills. Again recall is not good and this prevents many pupils from being able to talk at length or with confidence. Often when spoken to in French, even higher attaining pupils answer in single words or even English, and are not always challenged to do otherwise. Pronunciation is very variable particularly when pupils are using a written stimulus as a support for oral work. The standard of written work is unsatisfactory overall, but the work of higher attaining pupils is accurate in exercises and in response to models but there is limited evidence of free or creative writing.
189. Attitudes are generally satisfactory. In Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form they are satisfactory or better. In Key Stage 4 the majority of pupils' attitudes are satisfactory. Relationships with teachers and each other are generally good. Pupils' ability to work well in pairs and groups is a noticeable strength as is the way in which many pupils are starting to work more independently using dictionaries to support themselves. Pupils rarely show any great enthusiasm for language learning but most come to the lessons ready to work. There are some pupils who exhibit negative feelings towards modern languages. These pupils do not respond well to the number of worksheets in the lessons and some pupils feel that their progress is being hampered by the poor behaviour of others. Pupils are however, on the whole, well behaved. The small amount of unsatisfactory behaviour seen was exemplified by groups of pupils being off task for periods of time, discussing their social life or, as in one instance, throwing things across the classroom. The presentation of work is generally good and most pupils are well equipped for their lessons.
190. Teaching in French and German is satisfactory overall but with significant shortcomings at both key stages. There is a small amount of good teaching. Teaching in the sixth form is consistently satisfactory. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good and most teachers provide good models of French and German for the pupils. Some teachers also exhibit a very good knowledge of the National Curriculum levels at Key Stage 3 and how they should guide pupils' progress. In one Year 9 lesson pupils were being constantly encouraged to use the tenses which would enable them to perform at a higher level. When planning is good and activities carefully structured, pupils are able to use the language of the lesson with confidence. If lessons are not structured at all, such as when there is open ended group work, pupils find it difficult to maintain levels of concentration. Many teachers have difficulty managing the timing of activities and this can mean that significant activities are rushed whilst more low level tasks are lingered over. This can be a particular problem when classes are shared which is frequently at Key Stage 3. Generally expectations are not high enough so that pupils are not challenged to speak in any extended fashion nor are they provided with written tasks which go beyond the mechanical. This is particularly the case with older pupils. When however, pupils are challenged to work more independently or creatively

they are engaged and positive and learning is good. Most teachers use a range of methods and activities to try to ensure that pupils make progress in lessons. In a Year 7 class in French, the teacher told a story using a puppet to revise previously learned language, then taught new vocabulary with a range of footwear as props! This was then reinforced with a listening activity and the lesson finished with pupils using the new language in written form. Pupils' progress is impeded in those lessons where teachers try to teach too much material so that pupils lack time to practise or become confused. Learning and progress is also limited when insufficient attention is paid to the needs of all ability groups in the class. The progress of pupils with special educational needs at both key stages is unsatisfactory because activities and resources are not matched appropriately to their needs. The management of pupils is generally satisfactory.

191. The use of ongoing assessment is satisfactory but uneven. Homework is set regularly but books are not marked as regularly by all teachers neither is there a consistent approach to the use of the faculty mark scheme. This inconsistency was identified as a weakness in the last inspection. Overall pupils make satisfactory progress but where this is not the case, this is not linked to the ability of the pupil but to the response to teaching styles or expectations.

192. The curriculum is enhanced by links with both France and Germany. A new and detailed scheme of work is now in place but there are significant omissions. The use of information technology is not a core part of the scheme of work; neither are opportunities for extended reading. Both of these were highlighted as issues in the last inspection. There is also a lack of medium term planning for pupils with special educational needs. Although a good start has been made at Key Stage 3 on establishing a clear system for tracking pupils' progress, the assessment of pupils at Key Stage 4 is still an area of weakness in the department. There are plans to improve the system for GCSE pupils but these are not yet in place. The monitoring of the work of the department is not satisfactory. There is no regular observation of teaching neither is there regular monitoring of marking. A start has, however, been made to establish a consistent approach. There is comprehensive documentation and development planning to support the teaching of modern languages and the department is now established as a team in a suite of rooms.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

193. Achievement in lessons observed by the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with national expectations and match teacher assessments. Standards by the end of Key Stage 4 are also in line with national averages. GCSE has been introduced since the last inspection with the first cohort entered in 1998. Examination results are below national averages with 41.6 per cent achieving A\* - C with girls achieving significantly better than boys. A-Level examination results are below national averages with 81.1 per cent achieving A - E but are improving over time.

194. In Key Stage 3 lessons were observed in badminton, netball, rugby, basketball, hockey and gymnastics. By the end of Year 9 pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of the rules and positional play in a range of games. They perform the basic sending and receiving skills with increasing confidence and control and apply them into full, recognised games. In boys' rugby, a number of high attainers are able to anticipate moves and think ahead to outwit their opponents. In Year 8 gymnastics girls are achieving above average. They plan, perform and evaluate gymnastic movements, linking actions together with increasing control, fluency and body tension using both the floor and apparatus creatively.

195. By the end of Year 11 pupils increase their knowledge and understanding in a range of chosen activities. In health related exercise pupils plan and evaluate their own physical fitness programme, improving their stamina, strength and mobility. In all years the majority of pupils demonstrate sound levels of physical fitness, although they lack a knowledge of the muscle groups. They are aware of their own and others' safety and use the equipment and facilities with due care and attention. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into the physical education programme and make good progress.

196. Pupils have positive attitudes to their work, are well behaved, willing to participate and be physically active. This is due to the good role models and high expectations of the staff. Pupils develop good social and co-operative skills in group gymnastics and in competitive team play demonstrating fair play and good sporting behaviour. A small number of boys in the GCSE groups have poor attitudes to work and lack concentration and this has a detrimental effect on their progress and learning.

197. Teaching in the lessons observed is good. All staff are experienced specialists knowledgeable in a variety of activities. Lessons are well planned, managed and organised, providing a safe learning environment. In Year 8 gymnastics the pace of the lesson kept the girls on task and time was used effectively for girls to create and select movement ideas. Positive relationships are fostered, with the pupils developing trust and respect; teachers know their pupils well. Praise, encouragement and evaluative feedback are given throughout lessons. For example in Year 9 rugby lesson, effective feedback developed the pupils' confidence to practise and improve their ability to ruck and maul. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school and are able to practise, select and modify moves and further develop their knowledge and skills in a range of sporting activities
198. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is broad but not balanced with an emphasis on games especially invasion games. Time allocation is below average and the length of some units of work are not long enough to consolidate and apply newly acquired skills. The curriculum in Key Stage 4 benefits from the introduction of GCSE physical education, but there are no opportunities to study accredited vocational courses. A-level enriches the curriculum for a small number of pupils but the provision overall for sixth form physical education is limited. Extra curricular provision is good and girls and boys have access to a range of sporting, recreational and outdoor and adventurous activities. Pupils represent the school in a variety of competitive sports and a number of gifted pupils compete regionally and nationally.
199. Leadership and management are good and the department is effectively and efficiently managed, although monitoring of standards is not well developed and the use of information technology is limited. Strong links with the community and achievements in the department have been recognised by receiving the Sportsmark Award. The provision of accommodation is good, however maintenance and cleaning of the facilities are poor. Overall improvements since the last inspection have been satisfactory.

## **VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **GNVQ**

200. Pupils completing most GNVQ courses achieve high standards. In 1999 distinctions were gained in advanced business, advanced health and social care, art and design and leisure and tourism. Four merits were achieved by pupils taking intermediate courses. Pupils reaching the end of their courses show highly developed skills of independent learning. They are able to set and meet their own deadlines and plan and carry out complex assignments designed to meet assessment requirements. They tackled these tasks with confidence and self-assurance. However, a significant number of pupils have failed to complete GNVQ courses. Twenty-two out of thirty-seven pupils who started GNVQ courses in 1997 left college before completing their courses. These results are broadly in line with national expectations.
201. GNVQ provision has expanded significantly since the previous inspection to include one third of pupils in Year 12 and 28 out of 69 pupils in Year 13. Staff have developed individual programmes of learning supported by highly effective mechanisms for recording and tracking achievement. Pupils are able to take full advantage of a newly equipped and well-resourced learning area and this enables good integration of key skills.
202. Pupils are encouraged to persevere with their studies and are provided with extensive individual support to assist the transition to the vocational and distinctive demands of GNVQ. They are encouraged to arrange a series of work placements for one day per week and are also provided with specialist assistance to meet the learning objectives in all six key skills. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. The emphasis on individually negotiated programmes of learning, however, limits opportunities for group work and more traditional approaches to whole class teaching. Some pupils reported that they would value an increase in sessions devoted to teaching particularly demanding aspects of their courses. Pupils are given considerable freedom to choose when and what classes they attend, and some would benefit from greater direction. Similarly, more systematic approaches to work experience would provide greater opportunities to enrich the vocational aspects of GNVQ.
203. Staff recognise the need to retain more pupils and greater attention is being paid to selecting those pupils who will benefit most from the vocational programmes. Opportunities are also being taken to involve more A-level staff. This should ensure that good practice is shared across programme areas but will require

appropriate staff development.