

# INSPECTION REPORT

**St. John's School and Community College**

Marlborough

LEA area: Wiltshire

Unique reference number: 126500

Headteacher: Dr. P. Hazlewood

Reporting inspector: Mr. M.G.Michell  
3670

Dates of inspection: 20 - 24 March 2000

Inspection number: 186610

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11-18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Orchard Road  
Marlborough  
Wiltshire

Postcode: SN8 4AX

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Dr. G. Wilkinson

Date of previous inspection: 22 – 31 January 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr. M.G. Michell	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities	What sort of school it is; the school's results and achievements; how well pupils are taught; what the school should do to improve further
Mrs. G. Tyrell	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; how well the school works in partnership with parents
Mr. R. Bailless	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
Mrs A. Bradshaw-Coates	Team inspector	English	
Mr. K. Clark	Team inspector	Art, music	
Mr. S. Dengate	Team inspector	Science	
Mr. D. Garmon	Team inspector	Geography	
Mr. G Gast	Team inspector	Information and communications technology	
Mr. P. Gateshill	Team inspector	Religious education	
Mr. J. Lockett	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Mr. B. Munden	Team inspector	Design & technology	
Mr. C. Parsons	Team inspector	Business studies, economics	
Ms. P. Plato	Team inspector	History	
Mrs. M. Roger	Team inspector	Drama	How good the curricular and other opportunities are; how well the school cares for its pupils
Mrs. E. Trickett	Team inspector	Special educational needs	How well the school is led and managed
Ms G. Watkins	Team inspector	Physical education	

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

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7 - 10</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>11 - 13</b>
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>13 - 14</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?</b>	<b>14 - 16</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>16 - 17</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>18 - 20</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES : The Sixth Form</b>	<b>21 - 22</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>23 - 27</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>28 - 47</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St. John's is a large comprehensive school of 1373 pupils aged 11-18, with 294 students in the sixth form. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school at age 11 is average overall. One hundred and twenty pupils have special educational needs, a proportion which is below the national average. Fewer than one per cent of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and eight pupils have English as an additional language. Both these figures are well below national averages. Forty pupils are entitled to free school meals, well below the national average. The school is located on two different sites over a mile apart. Although the governors and school management are putting great efforts into future reorganisation of the school onto the upper school site, at present the split site severely affects the work of the school.

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

This is a good and effective school which is over-subscribed. It offers good teaching, above average and improving standards of achievement and it cares for its pupils very well. It is sufficiently self-critical to have improved well since its last inspection. The ethos is very strong, pupils behave very well and are enthusiastic learners. Leadership and management are strong and the school provides good value for money.

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

- Pupils of all ages regularly achieve above average standards of attainment.
- There is strong focussed leadership, underpinned by clear vision and values, from the headteacher and senior management team.
- An overall good standard of teaching leads to good pupil learning.
- The behaviour of pupils both inside and outside the classroom is very good. Bullying is rare and, when it occurs, is very well dealt with in the eyes of both pupils and parents.
- The school's ethos, that is the climate for learning, attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards, is very strong.
- Staff demonstrate very good knowledge of, care for and support for the needs of the individual pupil.
- It provides very well for those pupils who have special educational needs.
- It has very strong community links, offers very good careers education and guidance and provides a high quality programme of extra-curricular activities.

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

- The school does not use the high quality data it holds on pupils sufficiently well to guide its planning of the curriculum and its setting of targets for individual pupils.
- There is insufficient systematic monitoring of teaching and learning, both through classroom observation and regular reviews by management of the quality of pupils' work.
- Boys do not achieve as well as girls, especially in design and technology, geography, history and religious education.
- The school does not comply with the legal requirements to teach the full National Curriculum in music or in information and communications technology at Key Stage 4, to offer a daily act of collective worship to all pupils and to provide religious education for all the sixth form.
- The school should address certain health and safety issues detailed in the full inspection report.

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

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

The school was last inspected in January 1996. Since then it has improved in most aspects of its work. Teaching has improved, from an already good standard, and attainment shows a rising trend. Standards in art and design and technology, which were criticised at the time of the last inspection, have risen and there are better expectations of pupils of average ability. There is now a clear rationale for the deployment of teachers across the two sites though this has given rise to a greater level of movement between them. The monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school by governors and senior management is more rigorous, though the monitoring of teaching and learning is insufficiently consistent. The school has markedly improved the provision of information and

communications technology at Key Stage 3 and is now well placed to secure commensurate improvements at Key Stage 4. The school now meets statutory requirements for the provision of religious education in Key Stage 4 though not in the sixth form. The poor quality of the accommodation, and pupil and teacher movement between sites, remain issues for the school which it does well to minimise in most respects.

## STANDARDS

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

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

  

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

The school has achieved good results at all levels since the last inspection, demonstrating a rising trend which mirrors the picture nationally. In 1999 attainment at Key Stage 3 was well above average compared with all schools. Attainment in 1999 in both GCSE and Advanced level examinations was below that of previous years though comparing results against pupils' levels of prior attainment shows that the school did at least as well with its pupils as the national picture. The school's targets, which are appropriately challenging, show significant improvements at both GCSE and Advanced level for 2000. High standards are attained in mathematics, geography and business studies and the standards of work in the sixth form are well above average.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are keen to come to school and show interest in their lessons, demonstrating enthusiasm and concentration both within the classroom and for extra-curricular activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	In classrooms this is very good overall, being unsatisfactory in only two per cent of lessons. Outside the classroom it is very good. Pupils are considerate of others, the site is free of graffiti and litter and few pupils exploit the many opportunities for disruption offered by the split site and the poor accommodation.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Bullying is infrequent and very well dealt with when it does occur. Pupils reliably work well on their own and display excellent sense of responsibility when given the opportunity. Relationships between pupils and their peers and pupils and adults are excellent.
Attendance	Satisfactory and in line with national averages. The school has comprehensive procedures for dealing with absence and it works well with the Education Welfare service. Punctuality to lessons is often a problem due to the split site and it is important that all in the school maintain vigilance over this issue.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is a strength of the school. It is satisfactory or better in 98 per cent of lessons, very good or excellent in 34 per cent and unsatisfactory in only 2 per cent of lessons. It is consistently good in all subjects, including English and mathematics, and is very good in geography and drama. Strengths include teachers' subject knowledge and the high expectations they have of pupils. The use of assessment to plan for the needs of individuals, although satisfactory, could be better. Overall standards of reading, writing, speaking and listening are satisfactory, though the teaching of literacy in subjects other than English is still varied. The standard of numeracy within the school is good. The mathematics department ensures that all pupils have a firm grasp of number. Other departments contribute to good practice but there is not a comprehensive numeracy policy operating within the departments. The very good provision for pupils with special educational needs helps the school to meet the needs of all its pupils very well.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality and range of learning opportunities are good and the provision of extra-curricular activities is very good. However the school does not meet the legal requirements to provide a full curriculum in music at key Stage 3, information and communications technology at key Stage 4 and religious education in the sixth form.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This is a strength of the school. Pupils are very well supported in Key Stage 3 and make sufficient progress to proceed confidently into Key Stage 4 where they obtain good and improving results in GCSE examinations.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The very small number of pupils with English as an additional language are well provided for and very well integrated into the life of the school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good though there are insufficient opportunities within the curriculum for them to develop a real understanding of non-European cultures. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a strength of the school. There is very good knowledge of, care for and support for individuals who are known well by staff.

Procedures for the assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic work are satisfactory overall, with good or very good features in certain subjects. The school works very well in partnership with parents. There are some areas of health and safety that require attention.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides strong and committed leadership and a clear vision for the future of the school. He is very well supported in this by the senior management team.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Overall they fulfil them well though recent changes in the makeup of the governing body bring an acknowledged need for further training. The governors have begun to address the application of best value principles to their decisions.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Governors and senior management have a good understanding of school performance and appropriately challenging targets are set. There is good data held on individual pupils which is well analysed by management but not effectively used across the school to plan the curriculum and to set targets for individual pupils.
The strategic use of resources	The school faces considerable difficulties in this area owing to its split site and the aim to move to one site. At the moment much of the accommodation is poor and the necessity to deploy pupils and teachers across two sites wastes and duplicates resources. Nevertheless the school minimises, though it does not remove, this problem.

Staffing and learning resources are sufficient to support the school's curriculum. There is insufficient systematic monitoring of teaching and learning, both through classroom observation and regular reviews of the quality of pupils' work.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The standards achieved by their children</li> <li>• That their children are happy at school</li> <li>• The way the school deals with their concerns</li> <li>• The attitudes and values the school teaches</li> <li>• The quality of the teaching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality and level of homework</li> <li>• The information they are given about their children's progress</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views on the school. The inspection revealed that homework is set regularly for a large majority of pupils though occasionally it is not used very well to support learning in school. The inspection team is of the opinion that the level and quality of information for parents is very good. There are frequent, informative newsletters and parents' views were sought whilst drawing up the recent home/school agreement, which is a clear and concise document. The school uses a system of contact books to communicate with parents about day-to-day matters, and this system is working quite well. Parents receive comprehensive written reports which give good detail about work covered and standards achieved as well as useful targets for the future.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. In 1999 at age 14 pupils' achievements in both the end of key stage tests and teacher assessments are well above national averages. This is true of all of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The results are above average for those pupils attaining level 5 and above, which is the national expectation. More pupils than average also attain the higher level 6 or above in the three subjects. For the years 1996-99 the three-year trend for all three subjects was also well above the national average. When compared to schools having similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals the school's results are in line with expectations for English and mathematics but above similar schools for science.
2. In 1999 at age 16, pupils' achievements in General Certificate of Education (GCSE) examinations were above the national average in terms of the percentage of pupils attaining five or more A\* to C grades and close to the national average for those attaining five or more A\* to G grades. However the school's results in 1999 were less good than in previous years and the performance based on a three-year rolling trend is consistently well above national averages. This is true for both girls and boys, whose performances have both been well above national averages. Although girls do better than boys the differences are close to the national differences. The school's results are improving in terms of average GCSE points score per pupil and this upward trend is better than the national trend. When the results for 1999 are compared with those for similar schools, however, the schools did less well, the results being well below those for similar schools. When the school's results are compared with a similar cohort of schools in Wiltshire they exceeded LEA expectations in 1999. The GCSE performance was also superior to that predicted on the basis of prior attainment for the pupils when they commenced their GCSE courses in 1997. The school has a challenging set of targets for 2000 including that 60 per cent of pupils will obtain five or more A\* to C grades, 98 per cent will obtain five or more A\* to G grades and the average GCSE points score per pupil will rise to 40.0.
3. The school's performance at GCE Advanced Level shows a similar picture with an average points score of 17.3 for those students taking two or more Advanced Level examinations in 1999. This is close to the national average though the previous three years show well above national expectations. The target figure for 2000 is 20.1 points per student, which will be well above the national average. Evidence from the inspection indicates that the school is progressing well towards this target.
4. At the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is well above average in English, mathematics, science and information and communications technology. It is above average in art, design and technology, drama, geography, modern foreign languages and physical education. It is average in music and religious education. At the end of Key Stage 4 it is well above average in mathematics, drama, geography and music. It is above average in all other subjects but well below average in religious education. In the sixth form attainment is well above average in French, geography, German, music and physical education and above average in English, mathematics, design and technology, business education and history. It is average in science and media studies. Overall progress made by pupils with special educational needs is well above average and that of gifted and talented pupils is good. The very small number of pupils with English as an additional language are very well integrated into the life of the school and their progress is very good. The attainment of boys is below that of girls overall and particularly in design and technology, geography, history and religious education. This is a key area in which the school could improve further.
5. Overall standards of literacy in the school are above average. Following in-service training, a whole school literacy policy was introduced in 1998, including developing the libraries to offer more support for reading, information communication technology and study skills. In practice, however, despite high levels of awareness, the development of literacy in subjects other than

English is still varied. Good practice is evident in some subjects, for example the development of speaking and listening in information communication technology and physical education or reading for information in history and mathematics. Speaking skills are fostered throughout the curriculum and the resulting standard is higher than standards in reading and writing. Despite this, opportunities to move from passive listening into active response through discussion are underdeveloped. In drama, art and physical education pupils are being challenged to discuss and evaluate. Reading skills are generally sufficient to allow access to the curriculum. When reading aloud, pupils are sometimes hesitant and lacking in expression. Many departments do use writing frames to support learning but writing skills are still weak with some pupils finding it hard to present work neatly or meet the length requirements for GCSE. There is still inconsistency across subject areas in the marking of spelling or other language errors. Poor presentation is frequently not addressed. The school is working hard to develop whole school literacy but this remains an area for development.

6. The standard of numeracy within the school is above average. The mathematics department ensures that all pupils have a firm grasp of number and the four rules. Other departments contribute to good practice but there is not a comprehensive numeracy policy operating within the departments. Good practice was seen in art, science and design and technology in measuring and in calculating density. Investigations using numeracy were underdeveloped as was the evidence of problem solving except in geography where there was an investigation into the roundness of pebbles. Some data handling was used in science, design and technology and physical education where athletics results were used to produce graphs. Calculators were used properly in mathematics and some use was seen in science to calculate  $(\sin i/\sin r)$  but pupils did not know what 'sin' meant. Few instances were seen of mental numeracy skills being required.

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

7. Pupils overall attitudes are very good. All of them, including those with special educational needs and sixth formers, are keen to come to school and show interest in their lessons. They concentrate well and demonstrate enthusiasm for learning over a wide range of subjects. There is a good range of extra-curricular clubs and the pupils appreciate these and are eager to participate.
8. Behaviour around the school generally is very good, especially considering the difficulties presented by pupils sometimes having to travel between the two separate sites. Behaviour in a significant number of lessons observed was good or better and the number of exclusions does not give rise for concern. Most teachers in the school deal with any potentially disruptive behaviour within the classroom quickly and efficiently in order that learning for the majority is not affected. Behaviour on the buses between sites is exemplary. Pupils are polite to visitors and during the inspection they frequently opened doors and offered to accompany inspectors to the correct room when asked for directions. Pupils are happy that there are no serious cases of bullying or otherwise aggressive behaviour, and there is very little evidence of litter or graffiti on either of the school sites. Most parents who attended the parents' meeting or completed questionnaires were happy with standards of behaviour at the school although a few expressed the opinion that behaviour deteriorates as pupils move up the school. A few teachers find it difficult to manage the very small number of pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour and this is the main reason for the very small number of unsatisfactory lessons.
9. Pupils are often invited to reflect upon the impact of their behaviour upon others, for example in a 'Lifestyle' lesson a Year 7 class was observed discussing problems brought about by peer pressure. During a Year 8 tutorial session there was consideration of possible problems experienced by those who will be new to the school this coming September and pupils expressed thoughtful and sensitive opinions.
10. Most pupils display excellent initiative and sense of responsibility when given the opportunity. They can be relied upon to work well on their own and are able to plan and organise their own work and study without supervision with increasing maturity as they progress through the school.

11. Pupils of all abilities work well together in pairs or groups and form very good relationships with one another and with teachers and other adults. This is a major strength of the school, contributing a great deal to the positive atmosphere for learning.
12. Attendance is in line with national averages and the school has set up comprehensive procedures for reporting absence, despite registration taking place in lessons rather than in tutor groups in order to make the best use of time. The rate of unauthorised absences is also broadly in line with national averages. It was observed during the inspection that pupils are often late arriving for lessons, sometimes caused by movement between the two sites, but it is important that the school is vigilant to ensure that pupils do not take advantage of this situation.

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

13. Overall the quality of teaching in the school is one of its strengths. It is satisfactory or better in 98% of lessons, good or better in over three-quarters and very good or excellent in three out of ten lessons. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 is very good, in Key Stage 4 it is good and in the sixth form, where there were no unsatisfactory lessons observed, very good.
14. There are no subject areas in which the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory and in most areas the teaching is also a strength. In two-thirds of lessons in English the teaching is good or better, in mathematics three-quarters is good or better and in science the teaching is good in three-quarters of lessons and very good in nearly half. In all subjects outside the core, there are examples of very good teaching. Teaching is particularly good in drama, geography and physical education.
15. In Key Stage 3 teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects is very good, they manage pupils well and make good use of time and resources, even though these are sometimes constricted by the nature of the school site. Planning is good in Key Stage 3 and in Key Stage 4, except in music where the curriculum is too narrow. Teachers employ a suitable range of methods and organisational strategies and assess pupils' work regularly and conscientiously, though the use of assessment to inform planning and future teaching could be improved in some subjects. Homework is set though pupils and parents comment that the homework timetable is not always adhered to and there are a number of cases where the quality of the tasks set need improvement. Good use is made of contact books to enable communication between school and home. The work of pupils and students is usually marked regularly and effectively.
16. In Key Stage 4 teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects is good and their use of homework satisfactory. Teaching is particularly good in geography, drama and physical education. The best teaching places clear expectations upon pupils that they bear some responsibility for their own learning and successfully extends their thinking skills. Overall management of pupils is very good but a few teachers find it difficult to manage the very small number of pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour and this is the main reason for the very small number of unsatisfactory lessons. Again, though marking is regular and conscientious, there are areas where the use of assessment to inform planning and future teaching could be improved.
17. In the sixth form teaching is very good and there are no unsatisfactory lessons. It varies from satisfactory in about 15 per cent of lessons to good in 55 per cent with examples of excellent and very good teaching in drama, history and geography. The best teaching develops students' capacity to analyse, interpret and critically evaluate learning and materials. It promotes original thinking and challenges the high attaining student at the same time as enabling all students to make appropriate gains in their knowledge and understanding.
18. The arrangements for setting are appropriate and are kept under regular review. The school has careful criteria for allocating pupils to particular groups. There is, however, the potential to develop a greater degree of matching tasks to pupils' abilities when there is a wide ability range within the group. High attaining pupils and students are given suitably challenging work. Great

emphasis is placed on accelerating the learning of pupils with particular abilities or talents.

19. There are examples of effective strategies for the teaching of literacy skills in the school. Where seen these approaches are of good quality with a practical bias such as the display of the key specialist subject words in classrooms and laboratories. Strategies for teaching numeracy skills are satisfactory. In neither literacy nor numeracy is the teaching sufficiently consistent throughout the school.

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

20. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good throughout the school. The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of pupils and students. Access to the curriculum and attention to equality of opportunity are good. The school's aim to foster the scientific, technological, sporting and cultural achievement of its pupils is successfully met. Statutory requirements are in place, with the exception of information and communications technology at Key Stage 4, where there is insufficient coverage in certain subjects such as art and mathematics, and the tracking and recording of pupils' progress in these subjects is not secure. In the sixth form the school does not provide the necessary programme of religious education for all pupils.
21. At Key Stage 3 all subjects of the National Curriculum are studied, though there is a weakness in the breadth of the music curriculum, and learning opportunities for pupils are enhanced by the provision of drama and personal, social and health education. The latter is delivered through the 'Lifestyles' and tutorial programmes, in which there is an appropriate emphasis on the development of pupils' learning and social skills.
22. At Key Stage 4 pupils follow an appropriate core curriculum of: English and English literature, mathematics, science, technology, religious education, personal, social and health education (Lifestyles) and a modern foreign language. They then have a wide range of fourteen subjects from which they can choose to study. Some examples are art, business studies, humanities, Latin, classical civilisation, music, physical education, information and communications technology, keyboarding and child development. In addition pupils who have a more practical bias can choose to follow complementary studies, which allows them to gain an ASDAN Youth Award, acquire first aid qualifications and the Junior Sports Leaders' Award. For those who require learning support there is an additional study option. Throughout the school the curricular provision and planned support for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
23. In the sixth form there is a very good range of Advanced Level courses and opportunities to study an appropriate range of General National vocational Qualification courses, at both intermediate and advanced levels. Students also benefit from general, complementary and social studies including a good range of physical education and leisure activities and Royal Society of Arts business German and Spanish. There is good attention to the development of students' key skills and this will be strengthened as the school has been chosen to become part of a national pilot. As noted the legal requirement for a programme of religious education is currently not being met. This issue therefore remains outstanding from the previous report.
24. The values of self-respect, self-awareness and respect for others underpin the curriculum. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. The programme is thoughtfully planned. Pupils feel well supported by the informative and reassuring approaches taken in sex education and the programme on misuse of drugs. They value the provision. The school makes good use of outside speakers who make beneficial contributions to the Lifestyles programme. Attention to the work-related curriculum and careers education and guidance is very good. Pupils and students benefit from the advice of a specialist careers adviser and within the sixth form advice on applying to university and colleges is well planned. There are periods of work experience in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. These allow useful insights into the world of work. A particularly strong feature of careers guidance is the way in which pupils with special educational needs are supported at the fourteen plus transition review by helpful action plans to assist their career choices. Preparation for adult life is good and includes such

activities as: mock interviews, careers conventions, school and sixth form councils, study skills days and older students running activities, such as the highly successful drama club, for younger pupils.

25. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. Within the curriculum and the life of the school opportunities are well used to foster these important dimensions. In lessons and assemblies pupils are encouraged to reflect on their experiences and explore the values of other individuals, groups and societies. Examples include: in religious education a comparison of Christian and Islamic funerals and beliefs about life after death, events to help Kosovan refugees and a very good lower school assembly on world hunger and the need for compassion and "quiet generosity". Pupils successfully discuss themes and issues such as right and wrong, justice and injustice, responsibility and values.
26. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. A broad range of aesthetic and sporting activities is provided within the curriculum through art, drama, music, sport, media and theatre studies. Drama is a particularly strong feature throughout the school. It is of outstanding quality and enables pupils and students to build their confidence and develop a repertoire of personal and performance skills.
27. Extra-curricular provision is very good with pupils having access to, for example, regular opportunities to participate in sport, instrumental lessons, jazz, chess, debating, Christian Union, Duke of Edinburgh Awards, funky fitness and drama productions, such as the highly successful 'Oliver'. Pupils enjoy an extensive range of visits. Recent ones include Year 7 to Plas Pencelli, pupil exchanges to France and Germany, visits to the Christmas market in Cologne and to Euro-Disney, a poetry day in Bath, Salisbury fashion show, a classics trip to Italy and a trip to the musical Mama Mia in London. The school is the North East Centre for Young Musicians. The high quality and range of extra curricular activities and visits has a very beneficial impact on learning and promotes very good gains in knowledge and understanding.
28. Pupils also regularly participate in charity work and there is a scheme of special envoys in the sixth form when students work in the community and visit the elderly. These activities make a valuable addition to pupils' cultural, moral and social development. Pupils and students appreciate their own cultural traditions and an appreciation of European cultures is strongly fostered. Whilst there are some opportunities for pupils and students to understand the richness and diversity of other cultures there are still insufficient planned opportunities within the curriculum for them to develop a real understanding of non-European cultures. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Assemblies are of a high standard and have appropriate themes. These are often creative and challenging occasions, which develop pupils' ideas, increase their understanding and enable them to reflect on the circumstances and feeling of others. However, assemblies are not held daily nor are they always acts of collective worship. Therefore the school, in its provision is not complying with current legislation. There is greater scope for the inclusion of prayer and periods of quiet reflection and contemplation in assemblies, and for additional planned opportunities within lessons to promote pupils' spiritual development more securely.
29. The school links with the community are extensive and of very good quality. They include links with the local Rotary Club and leisure centre, an after school care club for younger children, with feeder primary schools, Swindon, Salisbury and Lackham colleges and with employers such as Marriot Hotels. These opportunities have a positive impact on the learning of pupils and students. Pupils are also encouraged to show initiative and develop independence. Such activities as the Childline concert, GNVQ fashion shows for charity, business enterprises, sports leaders and young neighbourhood engineers and scientists, promote the qualities of resourcefulness and self-reliance.
30. Since the last inspection there has been an improvement in the quality and range of the curriculum. The issues raised in the last inspection report have been successfully addressed, with the exceptions of non-compliance in the provision of a daily act of collective worship and RE in the sixth form and some weaknesses in information and communications technology at Key Stage 4.

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

31. The school cares well for its pupils and students, although there are some areas of health and safety, which require attention. Overall provision is good with high levels of personal support and guidance for all pupils. The individual help given to pupils with special educational needs is of a very high quality. Very good practice is also evident in the promotion and management of positive behaviour.
32. The school takes seriously its duty of care and there is a strong commitment to health and safety, which has resulted in sound and well-established procedures for dealing with daily routines, accidents, fire drills, evacuations of the buildings and emergencies. There is a governors' health and safety policy in place and additional procedures for dealing with specialist aspects of health and safety are laid down in the school's health and safety manual.
33. The working environment is properly supervised and careful attention is paid to the difficulties caused by narrow site entrances. These remain an issue from the last inspection but staff vigilance helps to lessen potential hazards. However, consideration must be given to overcrowding in the lower school assembly and to a number of health and safety issues in science. There is also a need for more vigorous procedures in carrying out safety risk assessments in design and technology. In addition the kiln in the pottery room must have a suitable guard. This remains an issue from the last inspection. The nature of the two sites is problematic and greater clarity is therefore needed in the management of health and safety and the respective roles and responsibilities of those involved. The remaining issues raised in the last report have been resolved, with improvements in technology and the upper school medical room.
34. The management and monitoring of pupils' behaviour are both very good. There is a good range of rewards and sanctions with a suitably staged approach to incidents of misbehaviour. Members of staff emphasise and seek positive responsible solutions rather than being punitive. This has resulted in a very positive ethos, which pervades classrooms and other areas of the school. Bullying is not a problem but if it occurs is dealt with promptly, effectively and sensitively. Pupils speak highly of the support they are given by the tutors, teachers and pastoral staff.
35. Pupil attendance is taken very seriously and there are satisfactory strategies for monitoring and improving attendance by the senior management team and by principal tutors and their assistants. There is close and effective working with the Education Welfare Officer, who identifies patterns of absence and works on preventative and alternative solutions where difficulties arise. Contact on the first day of absence for identified pupils or persistent offenders would enhance current arrangements. The school monitors lateness to lessons but because of the split site arrangement increased vigilance is necessary to ensure a prompt start to lessons and activities.
36. Arrangements for child protection are good. They reflect the requirement to involve the appropriate specialist agencies. An experienced member of the senior management team who has received appropriate training, is the designated child protection officer. The school has a detailed and useful policy. The correct procedures are in place and staff are aware of them. There is a beneficial range of links with the caring and specialist agencies.
37. Procedures for the assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic work are satisfactory overall, with good or very good features in certain subjects. The statutory requirements are in place but the relatively brief policy gives insufficient guidance on the use of assessment for diagnostic and formative purposes. National Curriculum arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 are in place for all subjects. Some aspects of recording and reporting need attention in mathematics, modern foreign languages and information and communication technology. Increasingly teachers use assessment to guide curriculum planning and planning for individual pupils' work but overall this is not satisfactory. There is excellent practice in art and in the sixth form GNVQ programmes; very good practice in physical education, business studies, design and technology and in geography at Key Stage

4 and in the sixth form.

38. There are, however, weaknesses in other subjects, for example English, history and religious education. The practice of setting targets is becoming more secure with good practice in Year 7 and in Year 9. In the sixth form subject teachers and tutors set targets but the use of objective data to inform and support the progress of pupils and sixth form students in is its infancy. It is intended that the good practice started in Year 7 will be extended. Here good use is made of the data received from primary schools to establish a base line from which to measure subsequent progress. Monitoring and targeting in Year 7 has some excellent features, which focus on raising attainment. These include an analysis of the preferred learning styles of each pupil. Systematic target setting supported by the use of data has been appropriately identified as a priority for development throughout the school. Procedures for the identification and monitoring of pupils with special educational needs are very good. Statutory requirements regarding annual reviewing and transition plans are met and a particularly good feature is the resulting action plans. The monitoring and support of pupils with behavioural difficulties or who are vulnerable is very good. There is a staged approach to the management of behaviour in line with the Code of Practice. Pastoral support plans are a very good feature of provision and take careful account of the parental views. The pupil targets are specific and helpful. In addition group activities to promote social skills and self-esteem and confidence have a positive impact, as do mentoring schemes and the support of a counsellor.
39. Since the last inspection improvements have been made in the monitoring of pupils of middle ability. There is a specified member of staff who effectively monitors and supports their progress. Significant improvements have been made in the monitoring and promotion of high standards of behaviour, and in the tracking and management of the negligible amount of bullying or oppressive behaviour. The results in these aspects have been highly successful. The school has made some progress in the systematic use of prior attainment data and assessment to inform planning but these remain areas for development.
40. The monitoring of pupils' personal development is good and arrangements for their personal support and guidance are very good. The programmes of personal and social education provide valuable information and guidance. They encourage the development of a personal moral code and responsible behaviour. Teaching and non-teaching staff work hard to model qualities such as courtesy, consideration and non-oppressive behaviour. In this they are successful. Pupils and students are well known to staff. They speak very highly of the accessibility and responsiveness of their teachers and tutors, especially in times of distress or difficulty. However, the use of tutor time is inconsistent with some examples of good practice but with lack of purpose pervading other groups. Tutorial time is the main vehicle for monitoring homework and greater consistency is needed to ensure effective follow up in cases where homework has not been done. The difficulties are heightened by the split site arrangement, as the regular tutor is sometimes not available. The rolling tutorial programme lessens some of these difficulties and makes a positive addition to the monitoring, support and development of pupils' learning skills.

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

41. The majority of parents are very supportive of the school. Most of those who attended the parents' meeting or completed questionnaires are satisfied with the standards achieved by their children and how the school helps them to make progress. They also feel that their children are happy at school and are being encouraged to develop mature and responsible attitudes. A large proportion feel confident to approach the school with any questions or concerns in the knowledge that these will be dealt with to their satisfaction.
42. A small number of parents expressed the opinion that the school does not work closely with parents and that they are not kept well informed about their child's progress. However the inspection team found that the level and quality of information for parents is very good. There are frequent, informative newsletters and parents' views were sought whilst drawing up the recent home/school agreement, which is a clear and concise document. The school uses a system of contact books to communicate with parents about day-to-day matters, and this system is working well. Completely successful use of these books also depends upon parents using and signing them regularly.
43. Parents receive a written review of their child's progress during the autumn term, which clearly states grades and any concerns within particular subjects. There are also very comprehensive written reports issued later in the school year which give good detail about work covered and standards achieved. These contain useful targets for the future and there is an opportunity for parents to contribute a written comment after receiving them. There are appropriate arrangements for formal meetings at which parents can discuss their child's progress and the school also encourages parents to contact them informally with any concerns. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are invited to become involved in their children's education.
44. A minority of parents also stated that they were not satisfied with the quality or levels of homework. Examination of a selection of contact books across the school showed that homework is being set regularly, although the work does sometimes consist of finishing off work from lessons. The school benefits from having several parent governors on its governing body who bring several different areas of expertise to the management of the school. There is also a school association, which organises social events and raises valuable sums of money for school equipment. The association has provided a useful link with the local community by running stalls at community events and organising an open day for pupils and members of the public to learn about the Internet.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

45. The very effective, subtle but strong leadership of the school by the head teacher gives clear direction that the most important focus of management must be the relationship between the child and the teacher, and in this they are extremely successful.
46. The senior management team of the school lead by example; all of them teach throughout the school and to a full range of abilities. Pupils themselves report that they trust the staff in the school, and if they required support they would know how and where to find it. The school's vision is 'to be a school which is recognised for excellence in teaching and learning, that places the learner at the centre of all endeavour and that sets the standards to which others aspire'. There is a common purpose within the senior management team and the school's governors to raise the current quality of teaching and learning from very good to excellent. This vision and common purpose effectively pervades the school. The vision extends to the school being at the heart of the community and in this they are extremely successful. They open their doors to all learners and provide an excellent educational service, which has been particularly enhanced by the technology college status. If the school could provide this service on one site it could be even more effective for all pupils, students and the community as a whole.
47. The new management structure provides a more purposeful approach to ensuring an improved quality of education. By having three 'schools' focusing on particular aspects there is more

cohesion in the monitoring of provision and performance. This structure allows staff to have a broader view of the school, to share common issues and be an integral part of the improvement process. The senior managers monitor provision both formally, through observations and work scrutiny, and informally. They visit classrooms regularly and are in evidence on corridors and around the school between lessons. Less well developed are planned opportunities for directors and heads of departments to monitor their curriculum and classroom provision in order to develop the range, and 'fitness for purpose', of teaching strategies to deliver the curriculum.

48. The systems for appraisal and development of performance management are very good and this has been recognised by the award of 'Investors in People' when the school's commitment was found to be exemplary.
49. The school has appropriate priorities and targets for development. These are clear in the strategic development plan, the school improvement plan and monitored by the extensive annual professional development review of all staff. The main thrust of the priorities is towards raising achievement and this is evident to all, including the pupils. However, although there have been considerable achievements and improvements made in many areas, there are still some which are not yet benefiting fully from the technology college status. Examples of this are in mathematics, where there are no departmental computers, and in art where, similarly, pupils are unable to use a computer facility for design purposes. The problems of the split site severely inhibit the school's strategic planning; making overall progress on school priorities and targets slower than it should be, given the true capacity of the management to succeed.
50. Governors are fully aware of their responsibilities and accountabilities. They adopt the role of 'critical friend' to the school, and are challenging when they have concerns. They do not currently have specific links with areas of the school, apart from the case of special educational needs, though such a system was formerly in place. The governors' commitment to succeed in their vision is very strong and universally upheld.
51. Although the school is currently operating with a deficit budget, financial management is good. The strategic development plan details ways in which the school is able to increase its income through both community college and technology college status. Financial monitoring by the governors is rigorous and the plan to be back within budget is clear and on target. The local education authority has recognised the school's capacity to retrieve the deficit within an agreed time. Educational priorities are supported through careful financial planning but the headteacher is aware that by a greater emphasis on making bids for development, rather than the current formula approach to delegated budgets, the school would be able to make greater headway with some of its improvement plans. Overall the school provides good value for money.
52. Staff with management responsibilities have clear job profiles and are fully aware of their responsibilities. Some of the directors have insufficient time to monitor provision in their directorates, either by observation or through meetings. This is not least because of having to commute between sites, but it remains an aspect to address.
53. Where the directorates have immediate access to the new technologies available there is very good practice. Pupils and students also make very good use of the technology available in the lifelong learning centre and the lower school library for their personal research and studies. However, there remain some directorates with little or no immediate access to information technology and this is not satisfactory. The use made of the specific grant for technology college status is thorough and is having good effects on the areas of the school where it is being fully implemented.
54. The induction of new staff to the school is satisfactory. For new experienced staff it is thorough and appropriate information is available immediately. Newly qualified teachers do not have an experienced personal mentor, and in some cases this is necessary. Although they have appropriately sized timetables they do not have the opportunity to meet with other newly qualified teachers, in the local education authority, for professional development. The deputy headteacher ensures that they have a good school based, professional development programme, and meets with them each fortnight. The school benefits from providing initial

teacher training with Bath University. This is a very successful feature, which complements the professional development in the school.

55. There are sufficient staff in the school and their qualifications are good. The improvements in professional development leadership ensure that if a member of staff is teaching in a subject, where they are not a subject specialist, there is access to help through the strong management structures and through the professional development reviews. Learning support staff are very effective and make an important contribution to the learning of pupils with special educational needs.
56. The accommodation in the school is poor overall and this is exacerbated by the split site. Some teachers teach in different rooms an unacceptable number of times and are rarely in specialist rooms. This has a negative effect on the quality of teaching, as they are only able to make use of the resources they are able to carry from room to room and site to site. Coupled with this some of the rooms in which lessons are held are shabby and have very little storage space. The only good facilities are outdoors for physical education. Art accommodation is satisfactory but shabby with unguarded kilns, history and geography are just satisfactory but the rest remains unsatisfactory or poor. The improvements since the last inspection are the new technology and ICT suites, together with the new lifelong learning centre. Its constant use displays the extent to which it is appreciated by all the school. However, the site manager and maintenance staff are a very effective team. They ensure that the accommodation is as clean and as well maintained as possible,
57. Overall the adequacy of learning resources is unsatisfactory. This is not least because of the organisation of working on two sites. Many of the rooms have insufficient storage, for example in science, where it is essential. Information technology facilities have improved considerably since the last inspection but are still not fully available to all departments. The library in the lower school and the lifelong learning centre are extremely well used, staffed and equipped and give very good support to pupils in their personal study and research.
58. The school is beginning to address the principles of best value. Governors and managers compare themselves statistically with other schools but there is less use made of data by directors, and heads of departments, in order to raise attainment. The school addresses its challenges and its endeavours, through strong leadership, are effective. The school consults all its partners and the wider community and this has been particularly reinforced by community college status. Given accommodation issues and the deficit budget the school is less advanced in the area of competition but is increasing the extent to which the community and other schools are able to make use of its facilities, particularly technology. Overall, this is a satisfactory response to 'best value'.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

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

The school should make more effective use of the high quality data it holds on pupils, better to inform curriculum planning and target setting for individual pupils.

There should be an increase in the systematic monitoring of teaching and learning, both through classroom observation and regular reviews by management of the quality of pupils' work.

The teaching of information and communications technology in Key Stage 4 should be improved so that it fully meets National Curriculum requirements.

The school should ensure that, in some areas, the achievement of boys parallels that of girls.

The school does not meet certain statutory requirements. These are that it does not teach the full National Curriculum in music, it does not offer a daily act of collective worship to all pupils and it does not provide religious education for all the sixth form.

The school should address certain health and safety issues detailed in the full inspection report.

## OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

### The Sixth Form

60. Attainment for students entered for two or more Advanced Level subjects has been well above the national average for the last three years. However, in 1999, results were in line with the national average. Attainment is good for students taking Intermediate GNVQ with a high proportion of students achieving merit grades. Completion rates, however, are well below national expectations. The attainment of students taking GCE advanced level ranges from average to well above average and their learning is good or better in over 85 per cent of lessons. For most students taking GNVQ attainment is above national expectations. Girls make better progress than boys in the sixth form.
61. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is very good overall. It varies from satisfactory in about 15 per cent of lessons to good in 55 per cent with examples of excellent and very good teaching in drama, history and geography. The best teaching develops students' capacity to analyse, interpret and critically evaluate learning and materials. It promotes original thinking and challenged the high attaining student at the same time as enabling all students to make appropriate gains in their knowledge and understanding. Most students in the sixth form are very well motivated and displayed a mature attitude to their studies. Many use the library and resources centres purposefully for independent study and research. Relationships between students and their teachers were always good and often very good.
62. Overall the quality of learning in the sixth form is good, with an appropriate range of both academic and vocational courses at advanced and intermediate levels. Provision is enhanced by an enrichment programme designed to promote the development of students' skills and broaden their experiences. These include a range of sporting, aesthetic and cultural activities for example, visits to St Malo in Geography and Greece in Classical Civilization. Students are able to choose from an extensive programme of thirty advanced level GCE subjects and twelve GNVQs at Advanced and Intermediate level.
63. An acting head of sixth form, supported by a deputy, leads a team of experienced and

committed tutors. Students are appreciative of the high levels of individual support and guidance that they receive. Teachers and subject teachers monitor progress and set targets. However, the use of data to inform students' progress to predict A-level grades is yet to be systematically introduced.

64. High quality information and advice is given to students before entry to the sixth form. If appropriate, they are encouraged to research and gain first hand experience of other post sixteen providers. The majority of students follow coherent well-planned programmes. Overall provision is good and cost effective. Areas for improvement include: the systematic use of data to inform student learning and progress; the rigorous monitoring and evaluation of students taking GNVQ Intermediate courses to improve completion rates and the provision of a programme of religious education to meet statutory requirements and promote students' spiritual development.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	230
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	68

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	31	42	22	2	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	1079	294
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	40	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	20	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	110	10

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	8

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	36
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	53

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	7.4
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.7
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	121	98	219

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	92[77]	95[69]	96[68]
	Girls	85[75]	81[68]	75[66]
	Total	177[152]	176[137]	171[134]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	80.8 (80.9)	80.4 (72.9)	78.1 (71.3)
	National	63	62	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	41.1 (52.1)	55.7 (47.3)	37.4 (36.2)
	National	28	38	23

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	85	103	98
	Girls	86	83	75
	Total	171	186	173
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	77.6 (73.4)	84.5 (80.3)	77.6 (78.2)
	National	64	64	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	46.1 (30.9)	53.0 (51.1)	41.6 (37.2)
	National	31	37	28

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	115	96	211

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	58	106	113
	Girls	60	92	92
	Total	118	198	205
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	55.9 (59.6)	93.8 (95.9)	97.2(97.2)
	National	46.3	90.7	95.7)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	43.4 (42.7)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

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

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999	63	52

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	16.5	18.3	17.3	5.2	5.2	5.2
National	17.7	18.1	17.9	2.7	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	0	N/A
	National	N/A	82.5

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	7
Indian	1
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	3
White	1362
Any other minority ethnic group	

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	41	2
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

### **Teachers and classes**

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	73.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.7

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	452

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

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

Key Stage 3	25.1
Key Stage 4	22.3

### **Financial information**

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	3603392
Total expenditure	3913952
Expenditure per pupil	2851
Balance brought forward from previous year	165182
Balance carried forward to next year	-145378

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1040
Number of questionnaires returned	210

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44.0	46.0	5.0	4.0	1.0
My child is making good progress in school.	43.0	46.0	5.0	2.0	4.0
Behaviour in the school is good.	24.0	57.0	9.0	2.0	8.0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29.0	50.0	18.0	3.0	1.0
The teaching is good.	30.0	56.0	8.0	2.0	4.0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	23.0	54.0	17.0	4.0	1.0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	42.0	47.0	8.0	2.0	0.5
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51.0	38.0	5.0	3.0	3.0
The school works closely with parents.	26.0	49.0	16.0	6.0	4.0
The school is well led and managed.	38.0	48.0	5.0	5.0	4.0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	34.0	55.0	3.0	4.0	4.0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23.0	46.0	12.0	3.0	16.0

### Other issues raised by parents

None

## PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF

## THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

### ENGLISH

65. Pupils' attainment in English at Key Stage 3 over the last three years is well above the national average and broadly in line with the performance of similar schools. In 1999, 82 per cent of pupils reached level 5 or above, showing an increase of 17 per cent on 1998 results. Nationally and in this school, girls outperform boys in English. Attainment in lessons broadly matches test results with pupils attaining higher than expected levels in over half the lessons seen. Pupils generally achieve well in relation to their abilities and the performance of lower attaining pupils is especially good but a few higher attaining pupils underachieve in English.
66. Speaking and listening skills are good. Pupils speak confidently in a range of contexts and most are able to sustain explanations and contributions to discussions. The majority of pupils are confident users of standard English. Pupils in Key Stage 3 listen carefully and sensitively in lessons to teachers and other pupils. Reading is fluent but sometimes lacking in expression. Pupils are encouraged to read independently and to visit the library regularly. Most pupils confidently read a range of materials, both fiction and non-fiction, and show a genuine love of books, actively fostered by the department's strategies to develop good reading skills and habits. Pupils write in a range of forms and often express themselves imaginatively. Writing, an issue raised in the last report, has been developed in Key Stage 3. There are agreed assessment and marking policies but some inconsistency of practice across the department. Both written and oral feedback to pupils on their work does not always make clear what pupils must do to improve or set out clear targets for the next piece of work.
67. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment overall is above national expectations. Results in English Literature in 1999 were also above average. Attainment in Key Stage 4 lessons inspected is variable. In some lessons, pupils' attainment is well above national standards but in others, it falls below expectations. Generally, both the higher and lower attaining pupils are achieving well in relation to national standards and their abilities. However, some pupils in middle or lower sets where attitudes and behaviour are poor, and where teaching has unsatisfactory elements, are not realising their potential in this subject.
68. Speaking skills are satisfactory overall but listening skills are less well developed. Some pupils, especially in Year 11, need reminders to listen to the teacher and to each other. Standards of reading at Key Stage 4 are good. Pupils read a range of texts in lessons, exploring key themes, for example bias and viewpoint. Private reading is less well developed at Key Stage 4 as compared with Key Stage 3, where most pupils carry reading books with them. Some pupils find it difficult to locate extracts from texts to support their arguments and technical accuracy is a problem for some pupils who struggle to write at the length required for the higher grades at GCSE. In order to support pupils with structuring extended essays, drafting is encouraged and the technique of writing frames is used successfully. The presentation of written work is variable. Whereas many pupils take painstaking care over layout and presentation, some pupils show little pride in their work. Many pupils are confident users of word processing packages and use information and communication technology to enhance their work in English. The successful inclusion policy and support systems enable lower ability pupils and those with special needs to achieve well in English in relation to their abilities; all but two pupils entered in 1999 achieved pass grades in both GCSE subjects.
69. Attainment in English in the sixth form is above national expectations. 69 per cent, i.e. 27 of the 37 students, reached at least the average C grade in 1999. Attainment at the highest level, grade A, is very good with 21 per cent i.e. 8 pupils achieving this top grade. The pass rate of 100 per cent was also above national expectations. Attainment in lessons is broadly in line with national expectations. Attainment overall in the sixth form is above national expectations. This pattern of high attainment is also reflected in the standards seen in lessons.
70. Learning in the sixth form is always good and in a quarter of lessons seen it is very good. It is almost always satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good or better in over half of the lessons seen. Learning is sometimes affected at Key Stage 4 by poor behaviour from a minority of pupils who

lack self-control or by teaching which lacks sufficient challenge. Drama techniques could be used more effectively to help pupils of all abilities develop empathy with characters and deepen their understanding of key issues in texts. Using information and communications technology to enhance learning in English, raised as a key issue in the last inspection, is emerging as a strength of the department. Opportunities to use information and communications technology more comprehensively and creatively to enhance the quality of pupils' work, for example in producing the 3000 word extended essays at A-level, are now being exploited. Attendance affected progress during the inspection. Learning is found to be satisfactory or better in all but four of the twenty-five English lessons inspected. Therefore, learning is judged to be good overall.

71. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour overall are good and frequently very good in English. Pupils show interest in their work and behave sensibly in most lessons, arriving on time, with books and materials, expecting to work. Pupils are courteous; they respect each other, their teachers and the environment. Relationships are very good. Pupils often sit with others of the same sex but benefit greatly in classes where teachers are consciously mixing the sexes, for example in discussions. When required to do so, pupils collaborate well in groups but too few opportunities are offered, especially at Key Stage 3, for pupils to use initiative and take responsibility for their own learning. Lessons are occasionally teacher dominated and led. Where this is the case, pupils have few opportunities to exercise choice and negotiate tasks. In the sixth form, students show commitment, enthusiasm and maturity. Pupils studying English Literature, drama and media studies to A-level show the ability to transfer knowledge and skills across subject disciplines to good effect.
72. Overall the teaching of English is good. Teachers are well qualified, committed and professional. In almost all lessons teaching is judged at least satisfactory, with two thirds being graded good, very good and on occasion excellent. Teachers expect good behaviour and there is evidence of progress since the last inspection with regard to behaviour management. Teachers prepare diligently, although the use of assessment to inform planning is underdeveloped. Well-planned support is provided for lower ability pupils. Sometimes, pupils, particularly the higher attaining, are not fully challenged and wander off task. Teachers show good command of English, being good role models in terms of vocabulary and Standard English expression. Pupils are not always offered the chance to work in mixed sex groups or with different pupils. In the best lessons, teachers ask challenging questions then allow pupils time to prepare their responses, thus requiring a deeper engagement. This approach helps both boys and girls in English. Assessment at Key Stage 4 is more clearly structured being explicitly and helpfully linked to the success criteria. Marking practice is inconsistent: written comments are not always focused on the steps needed to secure progress. A department portfolio of pupils' work compiled by both special needs and English staff would exemplify agreed standards and help to draw together this large team. In lessons, positive oral feedback on pupils' work is offered and praise is often well used to motivate pupils and promote learning. Despite this, some pupils report feeling unclear about what grade or level they are working towards and what they need to do to improve. Homework is not being used to support and extend pupils' learning. It is not always recorded successfully by pupils and many do not appreciate the purpose of the homework set. Teachers use resources well, many of which are skilfully designed to interest pupils and differentiated to support learning.
73. The subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. The quality of leadership and management is high. The Director of English works very hard to tackle key issues, seeking to develop a vision for the subject. The department is a team with a strong ethos and integrity, which shares the responsibility for raising standards and for its own professional development. Tasks are shared and teachers feel supported in their work. Relationships are excellent. The high quality of leadership ensures all teachers feel valued and have a voice in the decision making process which is open and democratic. Staff, including newly qualified teachers, value the professional support and quality mentoring offered. The Director of English would benefit from time to formally monitor and evaluate teaching, learning, assessment and marking systems in the department.
74. Accommodation for English is poor and some rooms are overheated and underventilated, causing a soporific effect, detrimental to progress. Resources are well-managed, however, they

are generally insufficient and often inaccessible as teachers have to struggle to cope with the inadequate English accommodation in both upper and lower schools. Resourcing issues are affecting the quality of the curriculum in English, for example pupils do not have access to dictionaries or thesauruses in lessons and access to computers is restricted. The choice of drama texts, non-fiction texts and texts from other cultures and traditions is limited. Teachers have insufficient access to video and information and communications technology facilities in the department and there are related training issues. Displays are good and support learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactorily managed in English. Pupils at all key stages engage in discussions about attitudes and values and how these have changed over time. Pupils are required to reflect on changes in language use and to read and analyse texts from other centuries, cultures and traditions. The work of the English department adds to the rich experience of the school. Extra-curricular trips to theatres and a host of other activities such as working with a Shakespeare theatre company contribute to the stimulating range of opportunities offered. Teachers give generously of their time and offer excellent one to one support for pupils out of lessons.

## **Drama**

75. A specialist head of drama leads the subject, which is taught separately from English by a team of two specialist teachers. Pupils learn a range of drama skills such as movement and observation; they are encouraged to evaluate their own and others' work using a specially designed and accessible system, which explains success criteria for drama. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is above expectations and by the end of Key Stage 4, it is good. At Key Stage 4, GCSE drama is offered as an option where the take up is good. Attainment in the sixth form is good. lessons, teaching is very good and sometimes excellent and pupils' attitudes and behaviour are usually very good. Some useful documentation has been produced to support the teaching of drama but this is an area for development, as is the assessment of some aspects of speaking and listening for English. Drama is contributing positively to standards in English as well as raising pupils' self-esteem. Extra-curricular activities are being offered to pupils. Drama also contributes greatly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the exploration of such topics as "The way west in America". Accommodation and facilities are poor in both teaching areas, which is detrimental to progress. Technical facilities, such as lighting and sound, need to be developed in order to secure curriculum provision, especially at A-level for the teaching of production and directing skills. Inadequate storage facilities prevent pupils accessing the full curriculum in drama. There is a thriving drama club that is enjoyed by pupils of different ages and abilities. It is ably led by sixth formers and this is an example of excellent practice, which provides sixth form students the opportunity to develop leadership skills.

## **Media Studies**

76. Attainment is judged satisfactory in lessons and just in line with national expectations in the sixth form and at Key Stage 4. GCE A-level students show enjoyment and enthusiasm for the subject. Year 13 students are particularly committed and some show good transfer of skills and confidence into other subject areas i.e. English Literature A-level and drama. Teaching is judged to be satisfactory and on occasion very good, with teachers displaying good subject knowledge, especially with use of subject terminology. Pace is satisfactory and praise is used well to motivate pupils. Quality feedback is offered and pupils are encouraged to reflect on issues and participate in discussion. Progress in lessons is judged good overall. Pupils listen carefully and make valuable contributions to discussion, which show understanding of the key issues and vocabulary learned in previous lesson.

## **MATHEMATICS**

77. Pupils come into the school with abilities in mathematics above average in terms of National Curriculum levels. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment, as measured by the national tests and by teachers' assessments, was well above the national average. The attainment of

the current pupils in Year 9 is well above national expectations and their attainment is about average for pupils in similar schools. The attainment is rising at about the same rate as the national trend.

78. By the end of Key Stage 4 the percentage of pupils gaining GCSE A\* to C grades was significantly above the national average. There is little difference between the performances of boys and girls. The trend shows the maintenance of high levels of attainment, therefore progress and learning is good throughout the Key Stage. The attainment levels of the current pupils in Year 11 are well above levels expected nationally.
79. At the end of their courses in the sixth form students' attainment, as measured by their A-level grades over the past three years, was above the national average although in 1999 students' attainment was at the national average. The attainment of the pupils in the current sixth form in A-level, GNVQ, and GCSE resit classes is above attainment levels expected nationally. This shows satisfactory progress during this period.
80. The attainment of pupils with special educational needs is well above that expected nationally. Almost all pupils were entered for GCSE in 1999 and pupils in the sixth form studying GNVQ numeracy attained standards above those expected nationally. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in all areas of mathematics. Higher attaining pupils achieve appropriate high standards in all Key Stages.
81. The pupils' attitudes are a very positive feature of the work in the department. They work hard and produce a high standard of mathematics especially in algebra and statistics. They concentrate well, are good at answering questions and are most courteous and well behaved. Their strengths are in the amount of work produced and in completing the tasks set. They are less good at open-ended, less structured, tasks. The students' work in the sixth form is a credit to them in A-level, GNVQ numeracy and in GCSE resit courses. Their folders are organized well and mathematical abilities are high. Good numeracy skills are a feature as are the pupils' sense of responsibility in coming to lessons well provided with writing and drawing implements.
82. Teaching in all key stages is at least satisfactory with approximately three quarters of lessons judged as good or very good. However, in some lessons where teaching is satisfactory the very positive response of the pupils is a major factor in giving the grade. The strengths of the teaching are in the preparation of the lessons and the teachers' basic mathematical knowledge. Teachers' expectations are high and lessons have a good pace. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, as is the amount of work demanded from the pupils. Homework is set regularly and checks made to see that it is done properly. Homework is linked to the work in class. Work is usually marked well but there are instances of a large number of unmarked pages in some exercise books. Assessment is used well both for reporting, setting pupils in classes, and in setting individual targets for pupils. However, marking and assessment is not closely linked to National Curriculum levels and targets. Where teaching is less effective it is in the limited teaching strategies employed, mainly caused by the lack of specialist rooms and the lack of resources in those rooms. Teaching lacks variety and some opportunities are missed. For example, there is a lot of whiteboard drawing and sketching with little use of prepared slides on an overhead projector. Lessons are often based on the textbook and there is little evidence of low ability sets doing practical tasks with drawing and cutting equipment. There is a lack of formal geometrical drawing skills in lessons or in the scrutiny of the pupils' work. The continuity of teaching is good as is the progression from simple to more difficult mathematics but pupils' presentation skills do not progress at the same rate. The exercise books used do not lend themselves to encouraging the proper layout of mathematics and there are many instances of drawings in ink, inaccurate graphs and sketches done without a ruler. There is some graffiti on exercise books and pages are sometimes torn out of them. Pupils with special educational needs are sometimes not identified on the lesson plan but they integrate well and the work they are given is of a suitable standard. The less able benefit from good teaching but would benefit from having a specialist room base where more practical mathematics could be done. Gifted pupils are helped by the setting system and by the further mathematics course at GCSE A-level.

83. The management of the department is good with a director of studies who shows commitment and enthusiasm. There is a very good emphasis on monitoring and evaluation, directed towards improvement. Money is spent wisely and there is a new scheme of work and a comprehensive department curriculum handbook. The teaching load is spread fairly amongst teachers and the professional development of the teachers is organized properly. Pupils in Year 7 are not placed in ability sets until the end of the first half term, partly because of the lack of information received from the primary schools. This disruption of the pupils' education hinders progress.
84. Mathematics is taught in 25 rooms in the school with only a proportion of them with any specialist mathematics facilities. A key point for action in the last inspection report was to improve the quality of the accommodation. This has not happened. Both teachers and pupils feel a need for a 'home base'. There is evidence of pupils' work, mathematics posters, GCSE revision information and sixth form careers information involving mathematics on display in the classrooms but it relates only to a small percentage of the pupils using the rooms and so the environment within the rooms suffers. There is a serious lack of information and communications technology equipment in the mathematics department. Whilst the computer rooms are used well for 'Successmaker' and 'Headstart' and the sixth form use the facilities in the library well, teaching and learning opportunities are missed by the absence of information and communications technology systems in the classrooms. Little information and communications technology work was seen in the exercise books or the coursework folders in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in one lesson pupils were seen copying graphs off the monitor screen and so information and communications technology statutory requirements are not met in Key Stage 4. Improvements since the last inspection include the greater use of information and communications technology especially in Key Stage 3, a new series of text books linked to the scheme of work, a special educational needs teacher absorbed into the department, a new scheme of work and a new comprehensive curriculum hand book. Overall these have ensured that high standards have been maintained.

## SCIENCE

85. The attainment of pupils when they reach the end of Key Stage 3 is well above the national average and above the average for similar schools. Standards have risen since the last inspection. This situation has, broadly, been consistent since 1996. Overall the standard of work produced by pupils is above average. However, the quality of written work, particularly scientific diagrams is generally of a lower standard than expected. In lessons and over time, average and less able pupils make satisfactory progress in gaining scientific knowledge and understanding. Higher attaining pupils make significantly less good progress during Key Stage 3 than they do during Key Stage 4. Progress in gaining experimental skills is variable, depending on the approach taken by individual teachers. A less able Year 9 pupil could, without prompting, identify and name the petal, stigma, stamen and sepal of a flower she had been dissecting. During an extra-curricular lunch-time activity a group of pupils were able to locate and clean the bones of small mammals found in owl pellets. They could suggest possible animals that related to the bones they found.
86. At the time of the last inspection results in science at the end of Key Stage 4 were well above the national average. Currently, they continue to be above the national average. The school's targets for attainment in science in 1999 were met. In relation to other subjects in the school, science is a little less successful than the average. Over Key Stage 4 and during individual lessons, pupils of middle and lower ability make satisfactory progress in gaining scientific knowledge and understanding. Higher attaining pupils make very good progress. Overall, the standard of work in lessons is above average for able pupils and average for pupils of other abilities. Higher attaining Year 11 pupils were able to explain the operation of an electrical transformer, understanding the key feature of the production of a changing magnetic field, and could relate the voltage produced to the ratio of primary and secondary coils. Lower attaining pupils of this age could demonstrate the operation of a home-made loudspeaker, explain its key components and suggest possible improvements.

87. Over recent years, the attainment of students undertaking sixth form study of science is broadly in line with national averages and this has been fairly consistent. However, results for physics have been steadily improving since 1996 and, unlike the situation at the time of the last inspection, results in chemistry are no longer well above national averages. Results for biology have been variable each year. The standards of attainment demonstrated by students in their biology, physics and chemistry lessons are average or above. End of module test results for the current academic year suggest a significant improvement for 2000 in chemistry and physics. The progress made by students completing their A-level science courses last year was variable, with some not achieving the potential suggested by their GCSE grades. Students in the final part of their A-level biology course are able to use a microscope competently and can identify unknown biological specimens by relating their observations to those seen earlier in the course. Sixth form physics students could devise, plan and carry out an investigation into the craters formed by model meteorites, taking measurements with appropriate accuracy.
88. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress in their study of science. Pupils who are gifted and talented make good progress overall and very good progress during Key Stage 4. There is no significant difference between boys and girls in their attainment or progress.
89. The quality of science teaching is good. At the time of the previous inspection most lessons involved sound teaching and nearly half of the teaching seen was judged as good. The quality of teaching has improved and it is now at least good in nearly three-quarters of lessons and very good or better in nearly half. Science teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge and high standards are promoted in lessons. Teachers have high expectations of pupils in terms of the level of work set and pupils are managed very well. The teaching methods employed are effective, with good use being made of lesson time and the available resources. However, at present, insufficient use is made of information and communications technology. The planning of teaching is satisfactory, but insufficient attention is given to the systematic development of pupils' scientific and investigative skills across each key stage, particularly in Key Stage 3. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory. Assessment is satisfactory and statutory requirements are met. However, more could be achieved by determining pupils' potential from their prior achievement and using this and other data to monitor their progress and that of teaching groups. The marking of pupils' work does not provide pupils with sufficient feedback to know how well they have done and how they can improve the quality of their work. While regularly set, insufficient use is made of homework to extend and enrich learning. Too often homework assignments are insufficiently challenging and therefore contribute little towards increasing attainment. High quality teaching of more able pupils results in very good, and sometimes excellent, progress being made by these pupils. Some teachers are able to demonstrate strengths in the teaching of less able pupils. During science lessons, teachers show that they value contributions made by the pupils themselves. Pupils are encouraged to add their ideas and to ask questions. The overall good quality teaching of science makes a very positive impact on pupils learning.
90. In most lessons pupils make a very good intellectual effort to succeed and generally make good gains in scientific knowledge and understanding. However, progress in investigative skills and information and communication technological capability is limited because the necessary teaching approaches are currently under developed. Pupils work productively and at a good pace. Most show a keen interest in the subject and concentrate very well. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in their study of science. Pupils' attitudes are nearly always good, as is their behaviour. In half of the lessons seen, the behaviour of pupils and their attitudes towards study of science was very good or excellent. Teaching successfully addresses the personal development of pupils, for example, pupils are able to demonstrate the ability to organise their own work without direct supervision and they are encouraged to show initiative and independence. The successful learning that takes place in most science lessons is built on the warm and constructive relationships between pupils and their teachers.
91. There are significant difficulties involved in leading and managing the science department which is located in several places on both school sites. There are no central preparation or storage facilities and professional contact between science teachers is limited by the science accommodation. However, despite these constraints, the leadership and management of the

science department is satisfactory. The department has clear policies and science staff understand the identified priorities for development. Appropriate improvement targets are set and some monitoring procedures are in place. Resources for science teaching are adequate, although the insufficient availability of computers for laboratory use is limiting the development of data-logging. Problems have been experienced in the recruitment of qualified and experienced technical support staff and this is having a negative impact on the quality of teaching in some lessons. The school's laboratories are of a poor quality and are insufficient in number. The inadequate provision and use of storage and preparation space leads to inefficient working and unsatisfactory access to the available resources. There has been no overall improvement to the quality of science accommodation since the last inspection and, as reported then, this is having an adverse effect on the overall quality of the pupils' learning.

92. The quality and range of learning opportunities for science are very good for each key stage. At present there is no alternative course available for students for whom academic courses are not appropriate. However planning is in place to address this through the provision of a GNVQ course from September 2000.

## ART

93. Standards in art at Key Stage 3 are above average and have been raised considerably since the last inspection. In drawing, painting, print-making and three dimensional work, pupils are making good progress not only evident in the very good display of art work around the school but also in the careful and detailed work that is done regularly in lessons and for homework. Standards at Key Stage 4 are also above average and results in GCSE examinations are improving with a general rising of standards in the quality of outcomes. In the sixth form, intermediate GNVQ students are working at a level expected of higher GNVQ students and A-level work is good now that the head of department has refocused the course and ensured that students are covering appropriate work. The secure and clear routines in lessons, with the production of high quality work in sketchbooks and carefully recorded annotations, enable pupils with special educational needs to make very good progress in art.
94. The quality of teaching in lessons is good overall. It is always at least satisfactory and in 80 per cent of lessons it is good or very good. There have been considerable improvements since the last inspection, particularly in the quality of teaching and learning. The new head of department has enabled more consistent implementation of routines and higher expectations in art lessons throughout the school. Scrupulous assessment procedures enable pupils to be accurately guided, through clear and detailed feedback, in improving their work. The teaching staff are able to offer their specialism within art in their work with particular classes so that they work with confidence and clarity. The curriculum is broader than at the last inspection in both Key Stage 3 and 4 and schemes of work are being developed which include a range of imaginative projects covering the curriculum. These improvements will be further enhanced by increasing the range of teaching strategies and by developing the use of pupil self-review.
95. Pupils work with confidence, care and enjoyment in their art lessons. They are able to sustain concentration in their tasks over prolonged periods of time and are able to discuss their own work, and that of other artists, showing knowledge of a specialist vocabulary related to the development of visual literacy. Their work is often related to an understanding of historical, environmental or spiritual contexts.
96. There has been much improvement in art since the last inspection. The department is well led and is now meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum. High standards are promoted through good teamwork, and coherent and consistent practices. There is a need for students to have easier access to information and communications technology in their art lessons, not only to be able to carry out research within the Internet, but also to carry out design aspects of the curriculum.

## BUSINESS STUDIES

97. Attainment in business studies at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is consistently above average, apart from GNVQ where it is at, or just below, average. GCSE standards have been excellent over each of the last three years and better than would be expected for similar schools. 72 per cent of pupils achieved grades A\*-C in 1999, compared with the school average of 58 per cent, making business studies the highest subject performance in the school and well above average in terms of national expectations. The pass rate (A-E) in A-level economics has been good over each of the last three years, although the actual grades achieved were disappointing in 1999. Results in Business and Leisure and Tourism at GNVQ Advanced level have been sound, with ten passes from 15 students in 1999, although seven students gained merits or distinctions. There have also been a high number of merit grades from students sitting GNVQ Intermediate level. However, in both these courses, the drop-out rate causes some concern. In GNVQ Intermediate six out of 15 left (40 per cent) and, in GNVQ Advanced, five out of 19 left early on (26 per cent). This makes the final pass rate less satisfactory as a proportion of those who started the course.
98. Several improvements have been made since the last inspection. The department has removed the multiplicity of pre-vocational courses, which had developed with little apparent rationale. Some have been incorporated in GNVQ courses, which involve students much more effectively in planning their own learning. The teaching of Key skills has improved but, although this has occurred, this area has been identified by GNVQ external assessors as a continuing target for improvement. The availability of resources was a criticism and partly remains the case although there have been some improvements. Accommodation still remains a key concern in terms of location, condition and display.
99. Teaching and learning are consistently good, sometimes very good and never unsatisfactory. There are a number of features that characterise effective teaching in the department. Teachers explain things well and support this by good use of question and answer. Pace is usually good and there are clear learning objectives. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are confident in using it. Lessons include good use of business vocabulary and there is good understanding of key business terms. Some of the coursework assignments submitted at GCSE as part of pupils' homework are of a very high standard and make excellent use of information technology. Students maintain good levels of interest and demonstrate good attitudes to learning. The subjects cater well for pupils and students of all abilities. There are good staff/student relationships throughout all courses. Assessment is thorough and is particularly effective at GCSE and GNVQ. The latter has led to particularly good strategies for improvement. The learning style of GNVQ is often innovative and promotes very good independent learning. It has been particularly effective for lower attaining students. The progress made by pupils and students in their lessons and in the work they undertake at home is consistently good. They demonstrate regular gains in knowledge and understanding. A particular feature of this progress is the way in which they move from an understanding of what happens in business towards an understanding of why it happens. In other words, they are often able to explain what occurs as well as describe it.
100. Teaching and learning would be further enhanced by a wider range of lesson techniques and better use of source materials in the classroom where they would be more effective in promoting independent learning. The use of some numerical calculations by students would have helped to consolidate some of their learning. For example, they might have calculated for themselves the increases in budget taxation that would have been needed to cover the expected growth in inflation.
101. Monitoring of courses is good and data analysis is a particular strength, which leads to very appropriate school improvement strategies. The subject is well managed and there is effective departmental organisation. However, the issue of overall curriculum balance needs to be addressed. The department needs a clearer vision and clearly identified strategies as part of its five-year plan, including the development of specific A-level and GNVQ courses to address the identified market need. The head of department needs wider understanding of what others do and how they face the dilemmas of long- term departmental planning.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

102. At the end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments have been well above the national average but when compared to current performance this appears to be an over estimate. Current overall standards are above the national average and more girls achieve higher levels than boys. GCSE results in terms of A-C grades have fluctuated from well above the national average in 1997 and 1998 to just above in 1999 but only the 1999 results were for all Year 11 pupils. Results for graphics products course have been consistently well above the national average but in resistant materials and food technology results have fluctuated and in the case of food fell to below the national average in 1999. Textiles has improved from a low base to be well above in 1998 but fell to above the national average in 1999. Girls achieve significantly higher numbers of A-C grades than boys but both boys' and girls' results are slightly above their respective national average. Boys and girls of higher ability achieve A\*/A grades but overall the total is slightly below the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A\*-G is above the national average in all design technology subjects. A-level results have continued to be good with almost all students achieving A-E grades, however, no students have achieved an A grade.
103. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils develop good skills in both designing and making across the range of design technology materials. All pupils develop a good range and depth of technical knowledge and skills and these are used effectively in specific focussed tasks and in addressing design problems. Pupils are extending their knowledge and carrying out research which results in the development of design ideas, and then producing final solutions which address the design brief and specification for the product. Pupils research, analyse and develop good ideas in the hat project in textiles and the clock project in resistant materials. Drawing and presentational skills are developed which enable these ideas to be well presented in individual folders. Practical work is of a good standard with good application of knowledge and sound use of tools and equipment. Pupils produce good outcomes in specific food preparation exercises, well-made hats in textiles and well-finished clocks, using wood, plastic and metal. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are able to engage in the structured programmes of work and achieve results that are commensurate with their ability. Pupils produce well-ordered folders of work and pupils of higher ability produce work that is of a high quality in terms of both content and presentation. Written work is generally neat and the drawing skills being taught are improving the quality of sketching and enabling pupils to express their ideas. Work includes opportunities to practise literacy and numeracy skills and there is some use of computers to enhance the quality of work, however, this is an area that could be improved.
104. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards achieved at the end of Key Stage 4 are above the level expected of pupils of the same age nationally. The content of course work in folders is good in all of the contributory design technology subjects. Pupils follow a structured approach, which enables them to address all the elements required by the examination. Work is researched, they evaluate existing products, develop a range of design ideas and final solutions and evaluation of this work is good. Almost all pupils present folders to a satisfactory or better standard, often using information and communications technology to enhance their work. Girls and pupils of higher ability produce very good quality outcomes in terms of both content and presentation. Knowledge development is good although knowledge retention is limited for some lower ability pupils. Practical modelling and making is of a good standard across the range of materials used, with pupils often demonstrating good levels of skills in more complex practical activities. Most folders include good written work with applications of numeracy. Pupils with special educational needs and pupils of lower ability are well supported by the structured approaches being used and are therefore able to raise their standard of both folder and coursework.
105. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is satisfactory or better in all lessons and in a majority it is good or very good and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Teachers use their good technical knowledge well, planning is satisfactory and teachers have suitable expectations of all pupils. They use effective teaching methods, manage pupils well and use time and

resources effectively. Marking and assessment procedures are good and are used effectively to inform future work, but homework could be used more effectively to enhance coursework. In better lessons planning is more detailed, good use is made of short-term targets to focus activity and clear criteria are set for the assessment of work in order to raise expectation.

106. Pupils' learning is generally good throughout the school. They acquire skills and knowledge in set exercises and are keen to apply these in their folder and practical work. Knowledge retention is limited for some pupils but most pupils can talk about their work and explain the process they have followed. Structured learning activities enable all pupils to address the tasks set and some are able to develop original and creative ideas. Most pupils work at a good pace and show interest and independence when engaged in the set exercises but there are a number who require constant reinforcement in order to maintain their interest. Pupils with special educational needs make progress in line with their peers and often perform above expectation. Most pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes to their work and this results in good behaviour and high levels of motivation. However, the work of some pupils could be improved by including shorter and more focussed learning activities, setting time limits for completion and making clear how good work will be recognised.
107. The design technology curriculum provides good access to the National Curriculum but the short rotational timetable used in Key Stage 3 does affect the levels which pupils can attain. All statutory requirements are met. Schemes of work are well planned and detailed but could be improved by further consideration of progressive development of knowledge, skills, language and information technology across the key stages. There is some use of information technology in specific exercises but the lack of direct access to computer facilities is affecting the development of this area of work.
108. Leadership and management are good. Both documentation and the co-operative approach being adopted across the subject areas provide a positive approach to the improvement of teaching and learning. Effective use is made of staffing, resources and accommodation. There is clear educational direction for the subject and a shared commitment to improve performance, however, there is a need for more vigorous procedures in carrying out safety risk assessments.
109. Aspects of accommodation and resources continue to be unsatisfactory even though some improvements are in process as part of the technology college programme. This programme is providing some facilities to address aspects of control technology but does not provide a cohesive plan for the improvement of design technology accommodation, the refurbishment of work areas or the provision of tools, equipment and other resources.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

110. Geography is presented as a lively subject relevant to the everyday lives of pupils and, although a narrow range of teaching strategies are used, pupils achieve standards in line with national expectations by the end of Year 9. At Key Stage 4 and above teaching is rigorous, expectations high and lessons are intellectually demanding, enabling pupils to achieve well above the national average at GCSE and A-Level. Boys, however, at GCSE do less well than girls.
111. Key Stage 3 pupils have a sound vocabulary, can give good verbal descriptions of weather observed and describe the characteristics of the rainforest. They are aware of the need for sustainability and can talk about the effects of global warming on the UK. They have a sound locational knowledge and understand possible consequences of earthquakes. They can use coordinates to locate places and describe positions using eight points of the compass.
112. At Key Stage 4 some pupils understand the relationship between death rate and birth rate. They understand the implications of changes in Sri Lanka on population growth and can give reasons for the variable effects of earthquakes on settlements at different stages of development. Pupils are also able to make good links with events in the news and local

examples. Sixth form students use appropriate geographical vocabulary, can discuss the impact of internet shopping on the central business district and make links between the Marlborough bypass development and other issues.

113. Pupils demonstrate a strong work ethic in all lessons and often with little teacher direction. They readily engage in discussions, applying existing knowledge and giving sustained answers to teachers' questions. Pupils take great care over the presentation of project and course work and achieve high standards, particularly in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. However, opportunities to write more than short responses in Key Stage 3 are infrequent.
114. The quality of teaching is very good overall and is never less than satisfactory. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject, are very confident in the classroom, are enthusiastic about the subject and communicate this to the pupils. They also know their pupils well and use this knowledge to give them access to the curriculum. The staff team are committed to ensuring pupils achieve and give of their time unstintingly to run clinics for exam courses, which are much appreciated by the pupils who attend. A good fieldwork programme involving all year groups is integral to the scheme of work. Teaching is never less than satisfactory, but is often good or very good throughout the school. Although not an explicit element in schemes of work teachers do provide pupils with good opportunities to exercise their basic skills in numeracy and literacy. Targets are set throughout the school and good use is made of them at Key Stage 4 and above to raise pupils' achievements; however, although set in Key Stage 3 they are often not followed up.
115. Since the last inspection greater consistency in teaching has been achieved by developing a stronger team approach and monitoring is now better developed. Information and communications technology development is hampered by the availability of rooms, however, staff have developed their skills and pupils are word processing project and coursework and obtaining information from CD ROM's and the Internet.

## **HISTORY**

116. Attainment in history at Key Stage 3 is above national expectations. The Year 9 work on the Blitz is good and of a very high standard for some pupils. By the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils can use sources critically and produce well structured explanations of historical events. Attainment at Key Stage 4 has continued to be above the national average since the last inspection. In 1999 67.5 per cent of pupils gained grade A\*-C passes at GSCE. In the sixth form attainment in A-level history has been above national average for higher grades (A/B) since the last inspection, but dropped for the first time in 1999. The percentage of students achieving A-E grade passes at A-level in 1999 is in line with national expectations.
117. Most pupils make good progress at Key Stage 3. The most able pupils make very good progress and pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress given their prior attainment. At Key Stage 4 progress is very good for the more able, and good for most other pupils. A small proportion of lower ability pupils have difficulty in organising and communicating their understanding of history in writing. Girls make better progress than boys do at the end of both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.
118. Pupil attitudes and behaviour in history are good and in most lessons very good. Pupils are courteous and many exhibit a genuine enthusiasm for the subject. In a Year 10 lesson on the discoveries of William Harvey pupils enjoyed working together in pairs and responded eagerly when asked questions by their teacher. Pupils in a Year 8 class worked well together and were able to discuss and evaluate the social conditions of nineteenth century industrial cities.
119. All teaching by members of the department is good and often very good. All subject specialists have a secure command and knowledge of their subject. Teachers successfully adopt a wide range of teaching and learning strategies and use an interesting range of resources and materials to meet the full range of pupil ability. The approach the department has taken to assessment and the structuring of written work has proved very successful. All lessons seen were well planned and homework is set weekly. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and foster positive relationships in their classes. Teaching in the sixth form is very good and students are encouraged to think independently. During an A-level lesson in which students were studying the unification of Germany and the role of Bismarck there was a good balance between imparting information and challenging students to critically evaluate different interpretations of history.
120. Since the last inspection standards of attainment have been improved and is now above national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. The quality of teaching and learning is good in almost all lessons and often very good. The quality of learning at A level is good and standards of attainment are in line with national expectations for grades A-E. The strengths of the department are the quality of teaching in particular teacher subject knowledge, planning, and the use of a range of resources in lessons. Areas for improvement are the analysis and use of attainment and assessment data to inform pupil progress and the implementation of strategies to narrow the difference between the achievement of boys and girls. The management of the department remains sound.

## **INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY**

121. The examination courses offered in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form have been introduced in only the last two years. As a consequence there are no previous examination results to enable comparisons with national averages. Year 9 teacher assessments show those pupils gaining level 5 or above in 1999 are well above the national expectations and are part of an upward trend over the last three years.
122. In work seen in information and communications technology lessons, attainment at age 14 is above national expectations. A majority of pupils have good keyboard skills and are able to use the main software programs with confidence, from Year 7. Good standards are evident in pupils' application of communicating and handling information using word processors,

presentation and graphical software, also in their use of spreadsheet and database applications. All pupils make good use of 'Sucessmaker' to support their numeracy and literacy skills in particular. Pupils demonstrate a good level of knowledge and understanding of computer applications and are able to select appropriate software to perform tasks and incorporate files from different sources effectively, using a variety of text styles for different purposes. The majority of pupils search effectively for information and images using both CD ROM and the Internet. For example in a Year 7 lesson introducing multimedia applications, pupils selected and searched CD ROM titles to find relevant information and create a presentation about other countries and cultures. Attainment in modelling activities is average and is developing, but attainment is lower than expected in measuring and control, as pupils currently have insufficient opportunities to develop and apply these competencies.

123. At age 16, attainment is above national expectations in the GCSE Information Systems course. Within these lessons, pupils demonstrate a high standard of skills particularly in the quality of presentation and in their use of a database, word processor and spreadsheet. All are able to respond carefully to a brief, for example in a Year 10 lesson where pupils conducted a questionnaire to gather and enter data, prior to using formulae and presenting their findings in graphical form. By the end of this course, these pupils also have a good understanding of the effects of the new technologies on the lives of people and its applications within business.
124. In the sixth form, attainment in lessons is above average in both the A-level Computer Studies course and the CLAIT (Computer Learning and Information Technology) course. Students demonstrate a high standard of computer skills and knowledge of the use of computers in business and society. Pupils with special educational needs in both key stages and in the sixth form are achieving standards in line with their peers and above those expected nationally.
125. The quality of teaching within the core information and communications technology course is good at Key Stage 3. Teachers demonstrate many strengths in their organisation of learning activities, taught in lessons organised across alternate weeks. Effective strategies are used to maintain the pace and depth of learning across a sequence of lessons, which can at times be disrupted by external events. Teachers manage pupils and resources well to enable a high percentage of practical computer access, particularly on those occasions where pupils have to share computers. The carefully planned scheme of work appropriately sets tasks which are progressive and challenging. As a consequence, learning is good and pupils make progress within lessons which are briskly paced and where effective use of teaching materials and extension activities fully supports pupils of all abilities. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is also good. Teachers set high expectations and have a good level of subject knowledge which they use to plan and set suitably demanding tasks. Lessons have clear learning outcomes and are effectively organised to develop specific understanding and competencies. For example in a lesson for Year 11 pupils, the activities were well structured and suitably organised to enable them to assess their knowledge and skills and inform their revision needs. Pupils make good progress as they develop their skills and use of computers to organise and present information for different purposes. In the sixth form, teaching is very good. Teachers provide suitable challenge through well-planned activities that effectively develop an understanding of theory and for practical opportunities to acquire further knowledge and skills. Students receive a high standard of individual support that ensures a good level of learning.
126. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are good and in Year 11 in particular they are excellent. Pupils and students work hard and sustain interest, motivation and effort across a sequence of lessons. In Key Stage 3, pupils are particularly enthusiastic and clearly enjoy using computers in lessons as well as at lunchtimes when they can continue class work and engage in projects of their own design. GCSE and sixth form students make good use of the learning resource facilities and computer rooms outside of lessons to access and send e-mail, complete projects and pursue their own interests and development. Some students very effectively contribute to the school's Intranet by assisting staff with the designing and building of pages to support teaching across other areas of the curriculum.
127. Since the last inspection, the management of the subject has changed and the school has taken on technology status with considerable implications for developments in information and communications technology. A great deal has been accomplished in the development of good

quality computer resources across both sites and a high quality core-course programme and teaching materials for Key Stage 3, although the school is not meeting the requirements in this subject for all pupils at Key Stage 4. Developments in the communicating and handling information strand of the National Curriculum are well covered and the focus on modelling is developing. The "Successmaker" programme has been introduced for all pupils. Plans are in place for activities in measurement and control within science and design technology teaching, but these are as yet underdeveloped, mainly as a consequence of a lack of access to appropriate resources, although the design and technology department has just recently established sufficient equipment for this purpose. The use of information and communications technology is developing in music, modern foreign languages and in geography. Learning support and careers also make good use of computers. Within other areas of the curriculum it is still underdeveloped and in all areas it is insufficiently resourced, but particularly on the lower school site, where access to computer suites is heavily oversubscribed. However, a substantial programme of staff training is in place and this forms part of the New Opportunities Fund professional development for teachers that the information and communications technology directorate manage, along with a growing programme of support and training for local primary schools and their staff. The development of procedures and practice in this subject has also greatly improved. Attainment is also now recorded effectively within the core course, although there is still a need to extend this assessment across the curriculum, to record and monitor the provision, and report against both strands of the programme of study.

128. The management of information and communications technology has been effective in the development of staff skills, in the action taken to establish a good quality programme at Key Stage 3 and examination courses at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Although there has also been a substantial investment in good quality resources and specialist facilities, the use of computers across all areas of the curriculum and sufficient resources to support this will need to be further planned and developed more coherently, as part of the next phase of development. In addition, the continuity of curriculum time within the core course will need to be considered along with the procedures for assessment and reporting on information and communications technology capability, across curriculum areas.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

129. Overall standards of attainment in modern languages are above average. At GCSE pupils' pass rates are higher than the number of pupils achieving A\* to C grades nationally. In 1999 pass rates in French were over 20 per cent higher than in similar schools. In German pupils achieve better than in most of their other school subjects and a significant number achieve A\* or A grades. Achievement in the sixth form is also good and significantly improved since the last inspection. A-level pass rates are high in both French and German in 1999. There is satisfactory attainment at GNVQ in both languages.
130. Teachers' assessments of 14 year old pupils' National Curriculum levels and evidence from the inspection show that most pupils' attainment is a little above the national expectation. By the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils use some different tenses describing what they have done, or will do. In French higher attaining pupils use the conditional tense to say what they would buy if they won the lottery, for example, and they ask and answer questions using this tense. Most pupils listen to short cassette recordings and accurately match details to pictures or fill in grids. They make good progress in understanding their teachers' rapid French or German and by the end of Year 9 higher and average attaining pupils write short descriptions within familiar topic areas with increasing accuracy, extending their range of vocabulary and phrases. In short dialogues they learn to develop increasingly accurate pronunciation as a result of careful guidance and support from their teachers who revise previously learnt language with them and provide visual material on the overhead projector. Some lower attaining pupils, however, have hesitant, anglicised pronunciation and have difficulty in copying short phrases.
131. By the end of Key Stage 4 in German higher attaining pupils write accurately and at length on a range of topics such as the environment and other issues. They use a variety of tenses. They make good progress in redrafting earlier course work, recognising areas for improvement using

resources specifically prepared by their teachers. Lower attaining pupils in French use a variety of tenses and, with the help of symbols on cards which guide their learning, carry out short rôle plays about buying tickets at a railway station with increasing confidence by the end of the lesson.

132. In a Year 10 German set of lower attaining pupils, oral work is more limited and mechanistic. Pupils have difficulty in retaining vocabulary from previous lessons but the teacher's skill in revising and representing key words enables them to make good progress and, guided by a grid, they classify accurately information played in German on a cassette. In a few lessons where too much unfamiliar language is spoken by the teacher and presented through worksheets, pupils answer only in single words, often using English or anglicised pronunciation. Overall attainment, however, is well balanced across reading, writing and listening and there is good progress in all these areas.
133. In the sixth form attainment is above average. At A-level pupils listen to rapidly spoken radio recordings on topics such as advertising and answer questions confidently in German with good accents. Some use the language spontaneously between themselves and with their teachers. In a French lesson they answer questions on the day's news with enjoyment and provide a good range of detail on the David Beckham haircut and the BMW débacle! Higher attaining students write at good length progressing from everyday language to describing more abstract topics although other students continue to have some difficulties with sentence construction and writing at length.
134. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are usually good. They listen attentively to their teachers speaking French and German, settle quickly to work and aim to complete tasks set on time. In pair work and rôle play they help each other complete dialogues. They choose booklets for independent reading responsibly, and often volunteer answers before being asked. In a small number of classes, when the work provided is too difficult, or only involves passive activities, there is some unfocused chatter and lack of interest.
135. The majority of teaching is good, and there are some very good lessons. Teachers are fluent French and German speakers and a particular strength is that they use the foreign language for all, or nearly all, of their lessons. Teachers know the pupils well, give individual support and praise regularly and usually plan a good range of activities. In a German lesson in Key Stage 3 in which pupils learn to say what they like doing, a bean bag thrown from pupil to pupil rapidly elicits questions and answers from the recipients. An alarm clock is used to time activities and this gives a sense of pace and concentrates learning. Telephones are used to simulate phone calls and the lesson ends with a song to reinforce teaching objectives. By the end of this class all pupils have learnt to express up to eight new favourite activities with confidence and enjoyment.
136. At Key Stage 4, teaching of lower attaining pupils is skilfully matched to their levels. Vocabulary is revised with pictures on the overhead projector. Pupils match words and pictures and the range of different ways used by the teachers of practising small amounts of language enables good progress to be made. Homework builds on the content of previous lessons and is usually marked in sufficient detail to allow pupils to learn from their mistakes. In a few lessons the foreign language used is at too high a level for pupils to comprehend and this requires them to use English for translation. In these classes difficulties in the management of pupil behaviour result in excessive use of writing with worksheets. This demotivates pupils and encourages passivity.
137. Pupils are well provided for with a good range of language choices and opportunities. Extra-curricular activities such as exchanges, educational visits and work experience abroad enable pupils to learn about European countries at first hand and to put their language learning into context.
138. The languages department is well led. Teachers work effectively together, clear guidance is given and there is a positive sense of direction and ethos. Most of the issues raised at the last inspection have been addressed. There has been a particular improvement in extending the use of the foreign language by teachers in class. Assessment is still underdeveloped and

pupils' attainment is insufficiently matched to National Curriculum levels. Resources for teaching languages are satisfactory but a significant number of lessons are taught in non-specialist accommodation without easy access to specialist equipment and books.

## **Latin & Classical Civilisation**

139. In relation to national percentage pass rates GCSE attainment in Latin and classical civilisation is satisfactory and A-level results in classical civilisation are good. In Latin by the end of Key Stage 3 many fourteen year old pupils are familiar and confident with a range of verb tenses and grammatical structures such as gender agreement of nouns and adjectives. They translate with satisfactory levels of accuracy both from and into Latin, and they have a good grasp of key elements of Roman civilisation to set their learning into context.
140. At Key Stage 4 scrutiny of pupils' work demonstrates that pupils recognise, and most use, more complex grammar such as the perfect passive participle and that they are familiar with the imperfect and pluperfect subjunctives. Pupils make good progress from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 in extending their knowledge of syntax and vocabulary and their recollection and use of a broader range of verb tenses.
141. The teaching of Latin is good. Important aspects of the language are well reinforced by a variety of exercises and practice such as pair work, testing of verbs and helping pupils pick out language rules after comprehension work on texts. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to progress through rapid revision of previous work and setting out what is to be covered in the next lesson. There is good support for individual lower attaining pupils but also high expectations of pupils who achieve well, with open-ended questions helping to extend pupils' answers. Although some lower attaining pupils find Latin hard, they nevertheless enjoy learning the subject.
142. In classical civilisation pupils' work and lesson observation reveal that at Key Stage 3 pupils read short classical texts in translation and most understand their content and their social or historical significance. Pupils progress to develop increasing knowledge and understanding of the society, politics and culture of the classical world. They make short but informed responses to classical artefacts such as a mask of Medusa and can use evidence from literary and archaeological sources.
143. In a lesson at Key Stage 4 using selections from Virgil's Aeneid describing the incident of the Trojan Horse, pupils answer confidently, writing accurate answers to a comprehension exercise and demonstrate knowledge and understanding about well known events in the classical world. In the sixth form attainment is usually good. At A-level students demonstrate understanding of the main themes of a play by Sophocles, summarising key issues in relation to the plot. However, the oral answers of a few students lack confidence and are not always fully developed despite skilful questioning.
144. The teaching of classical studies is good. There are no significant weaknesses. Teachers are confident and enthusiastic in their subject matter and use a variety of activities such as paired work, class discussion and brainstorming. Work is timed to maintain pace and resources are ready to hand. There is usually good behaviour by pupils as a result of teachers' firm expectations. Homework is regularly set and marked in helpful detail. Nearly all pupils are able to choose to study classics and there is a good range of provision, including regular visits and extra-curricular activities. Teaching in classics is well organised and clearly planned and together with Latin it makes a worthwhile and distinctive contribution to the school's curriculum provision.

## **MUSIC**

145. Standards in music at Key Stage 3 are average overall. In aspects of playing and composing the standards are above average. In the use of keyboards, for example, pupils are able to

select appropriate sounds and create and play melodies and simple accompaniments with care and fluency. Their knowledge of a musical vocabulary is well-developed and aural discrimination and recognition of instrumental sounds is well above average. Singing and other forms of acoustic music-making are insufficiently covered in the music curriculum and are below average. At Key Stage 4, with relatively few pupils, standards are high with many pupils able to play and compose with confidence and high levels of success. Levels of instrumental playing are very high with some pupils demonstrating exceptional performance. In the sixth form, in both music and music technology courses, standards of students' work are very high with evidence of strong aural and technical skills building upon the main focus of work in Key Stages 3 and 4. At all key stages, pupils show that they are able to work with sustained concentration over prolonged periods of time in performing and composing tasks. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress.

146. The lack of emphasis in the curriculum on live music-making, and particularly on singing, brings about standards in these areas that are lower than average, although singing in extra-curricular groups is average. Few boys take part in singing activities at school.
147. The quality of teaching is a strength of the department and in the majority of lessons is good or better, with 50 per cent of lessons seen judged to be very good. All lessons seen were at least satisfactory. In good and very good lessons, relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. Teachers know their pupils very well, are able to support and guide them according to their needs and have high expectations of them. Teaching is enthusiastic, energetic, very well organised and makes the most of the high levels of teachers' skills and knowledge bringing about lessons in which pupils give of their best and often show their enjoyment. The accommodation does not provide an adequate nor appropriate space for singing, group or ensemble music-making. Planning is thorough and enables pupils to make progress through the key stages, but pays insufficient attention to the breadth of activities in the music curriculum that should be provided to all pupils.
148. Since the last inspection, there has been little improvement in resolving the main issues for improvement identified at that time. Singing and other forms of acoustic music-making are still under represented in the curriculum. Accommodation is still poor and resources are narrowly focused on electronic instruments with no evidence of instruments representing a range of cultures. These issues will need to be resolved before further improvement is possible. However, the department is well led and is aware of what needs to be done to make further progress in ensuring that music has a more appropriate status in school life.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

149. Standards in physical education are in line with or slightly above national expectations at all key stages. The proportion of pupils achieving A\* - C grades at GCSE examinations are higher than the national averages. The A-level results are very good. 25 per cent of pupils achieve A grades and all pupils achieve well in relation to their ability.
150. At Key Stage 3 pupils generally perform to a good standard and demonstrate their skills in a number of contexts. In games, the pupils show good control, moving well into space and anticipating the responses of others. They understand health-related exercise principles, often taking responsibility for their own warm-ups, and are able to undertake energetic exercise for a sustained period. In dance, the girls have a good sense of rhythm and are able to create motifs that show imagination, varying the formation and levels. The boys particularly achieve well in invasion games, for example in a Year 7 inter-form rugby game the boys showed good lines of running and made good use of second phase ball. At Key Stage 4, pupils demonstrate a greater depth of knowledge and understanding, for example in a Year 11 health-related exercise, the girls can plan and lead an aerobics session for their peers and in hockey and basketball, the boys can act as coaches. In the sixth form students demonstrate the ability to organise themselves by working effectively sometimes without direct supervision. The students taking the Community Sports Leaders Award can analyse an activity and make good suggestions to make the situation easier, harder, or safer etc.
151. The quality of teaching at all key stages is usually good or very good, and none is less than satisfactory. Relationships are very good. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, in terms of their behaviour, effort and performance. Lessons are well organised, have good pace and contain a high level of physical activity. Teaching has a clear purpose, which could be shared more regularly with pupils. The teachers use a variety of approaches, providing opportunities for pupils to take the initiative, make decisions and develop their ideas, for example Year 8 pupils, in pairs, organise the measuring, timing and recording of their fitness tests. A strong feature of the teaching is the contributions made to pupils' personal, social, health and moral development, for example pupils in Year 11 demonstrate sporting behaviour by owning up to infringements during a game. Pupils are able to work well co-operatively and competitively in pairs, groups and teams, supporting and encouraging each other. Teachers are very good at assessing and giving feedback to improve the pupils' skills, knowledge or understanding and homework is set appropriately at all key stages. Pupils with special educational needs progress well in physical education.
152. Pupils are highly motivated and their attitudes to learning in physical education are very good. They concentrate very well, making good use of opportunities to practise and trying hard to improve. For example in a mixed Year 8 tag-rugby lesson, boys and girls integrate fully and work out their tactics for drawing a defender. In the majority of lessons pupils achieve well and make good progress. The few non-participants are constructively involved in most lessons enabling them to make a positive contribution. In the majority of lessons teachers set whole-class activities, but on occasions, particularly with mixed ability groups, there is insufficient adaptation or modification of tasks and/or equipment to match the differing abilities.
153. The curriculum is very well supported by a range of extra-curricular activities and internal and external competitions. Both individuals and school teams have been successful at local and regional level. There are very good links with a number of sports clubs and organisations, which enhance the recreation, accreditation and career development opportunities for pupils. The department is very well managed by its two directors of sport. Long term planning is good, though medium term planning lacks the detail which would help teachers link more closely learning objectives and assessment criteria. The assessment and recording systems are well used and teachers make very good use of targets for improvement. There is a mismatch between the assessment and reporting criteria, which is not helpful. With the exception of the books in the lower school library, which are old and outdated, the resources for learning are good and well used. The department works very well as a team and shows a strong commitment to the pupils and their achievements.

154. The provision for physical education has improved since the last inspection. At Key Stages 3 and 4 the teaching was satisfactory to good, now it is usually good or very good. In the sixth form the quality of teaching and learning is now sometimes good. There is little or no evidence of disruptive behaviour in any lesson. The school provides sufficient time for physical education at Key Stage 3.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

155. At Key Stage 3, the school meets the requirements of the locally-agreed syllabus for religious education and pupils' attainment overall reflects the standards expected within the programmes of study. In some cases, pupils in Year 7 are confidently working at the level expected for the end of Year 9, for example when exploring the nature of God through an analysis of biblical texts. This lesson also contributed to pupils' literacy skills. The majority of pupils are able to use key terminology appropriately and are confident in discussing some of the key beliefs and practices within Christianity and other world religions. They are able to recognise religious symbols and talk about their significance. By the end of the key stage, they are able to draw out similarities and differences between religions. Many pupils are both confident and articulate and enjoy expressing their own beliefs and viewpoints in their religious education lessons. Standards are however, variable, with a high number of non-specialist teachers teaching in non-specialist accommodation. This can have a dampening effect on pupils' achievement, particularly through the lack of access to appropriate resources.
156. At Key Stage 4 the school meets the requirements of the agreed syllabus, as all pupils follow the GCSE short course in religious education. This is a key improvement since the last inspection. Results for last year were poor, with pupils performing well below the national average for grade A\*-C passes. There is evidence that standards are improving steadily. Girls out-perform boys, reflecting a national trend. There are a small number of boys underachieving at Key Stage 4 and this is a cause for concern. Pupils' performance is enhanced when they are encouraged to develop evaluative skills; backing up their own views by explicit reference to the religious beliefs under study. In one effective lesson, pupils were able to demonstrate good research skills using the Internet. They were exploring web sites developed by Christian ecumenical communities throughout the UK and France.
157. The quality of teaching and learning at Key Stage 3 is mainly good. It is rarely unsatisfactory, and sometimes it is excellent. At Key Stage 4, the quality of teaching is always sound and is often good or better. Effective teaching at both key stages is characterised by the use of a variety of teaching strategies, which enable all pupils to fully participate, whatever their ability. In these lessons, pupils are very clear about the aims of the lesson and are able to choose from a variety of resources. In some lessons low-attaining pupils are well supported with appropriate tasks and resources. In the same way higher-attaining pupils are challenged with tasks which encourage a range of higher-level tasks, with resources to match. However, this good practice is not universal throughout the school and requires further development.
158. Planning in some lessons is meticulous and promotes a good balance between the two attainment targets: learning about religion and learning from religion. This balance ensures that religious education is relevant and meaningful to the majority of pupils. In one excellent lesson, pupils were encouraged to reflect on their own views about whether or not there is an afterlife and to compare these views to a Christian perspective. Pupils' responses were poignant and well articulated. Reflection within the lesson was enhanced by the use of a candle and an extract from Faure's Requiem. This lesson made a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development.
159. Assessment of pupils' work is often good, but is inconsistent across the department. Where it is good, marking is constructive, challenges pupils to think at a deeper level and makes it very clear what improvements need to be made in order to raise achievement. The regular setting and appropriateness of homework is also inconsistent. Good practice, when evident, reinforces work done within the lesson and anticipates future learning. Inconsistency in the areas of assessment and homework reflect the fact that the school is presently without a subject co-ordinator.

160. Pupils' attitudes to their learning in religious education at both key stages are, on the whole, extremely positive. The majority of pupils enjoy the opportunity to learn about religions and the impact which faith makes on the world stage today. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are positive, allowing for real dialogue to take place within the classroom.
161. There are two specialist teaching rooms for religious education, but these are insufficient for the needs of the school. The present lack of accommodation impacts upon the overall quality of religious education throughout the school. The school still does not meet the requirements of the agreed syllabus to ensure the provision of religious education within the sixth form