

INSPECTION REPORT

RATTON SCHOOL

Eastbourne

LEA area: East Sussex

Unique reference number: 114604

Headteacher: Mr D Linsell

Reporting inspector: Sandra Tweddell
1709

Dates of inspection: 30 April - 04 May 2001

Inspection number: 187722

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Park Avenue Eastbourne East Sussex
Postcode:	BN21 2XR
Telephone number:	01323 504011
Fax number:	01323 520364
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs C Beckhurst
Date of previous inspection:	02/10/1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1709	Sandra Tweddell	Registered inspector	English as an additional language Media Studies	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? The school's results and achievements How well are pupils or students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9868	David Ashby	Lay inspector		How high are standards? Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
4749	Martin Ash	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
4677	Valerie Banks	Team inspector	Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
8361	Malcolm Burley	Team inspector	Science	Assessment
27411	Heather Butensky	Team inspector	English	
15706	Roger Crocker	Team inspector	Music	
17015	Lawrence Denholm	Team inspector	Information technology	
4372	Ralph Fordham	Team inspector	Religious education	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
2385	Sylvia Greenland	Team inspector	History Special educational needs	
8501	Paul Hartwright	Team inspector	Design and technology	
3807	Richard Hickman	Team inspector	Art	
4454	Iain Kerr	Team inspector	Physical education	
11548	David Lee	Team inspector	Mathematics Equal opportunities	

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates Ltd
Demeter House
Station Road
Cambridge
CB1 2RS

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33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Ratton is a mixed comprehensive school with 1095 students on roll. Students come from a wide range of social backgrounds, a significant number from areas that have attracted extra government funding to combat the effects of unemployment. The school has recently opened a social inclusion unit to support students who have difficulty settling into school and those who are at risk of exclusion. There are more girls than boys in the school, 600 girls and 495 boys. The imbalance is particularly marked in Years 8, 9 and 11. The attainment of students on entry to the school is broadly average, although the attainment of the current Year 7 on entry is above average. The percentage of students who are entitled to free school meals is average at 13.3 per cent. 204 students (18.6 per cent) are on the register of special educational need and 17 (1.9 per cent) of these have statements of special educational need. These figures are similar to the national average. The number of students who speak English as an additional language is low and very few are at early stages of learning English.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

In the last inspection Ratton was judged to be a good school. It has continued to maintain its effectiveness and has since developed many very good features. This is because a key strength of the school is the willingness of all the staff to seek further improvement. Management systems are very good although there has been inevitable delay in implementing some systems due to major changes at senior management level during the Spring term. The school has a focus of high achievement and is successful in its aim of *Achieving Together*. This is due to the way in which all people who are involved with the school, teachers, associate staff, governors, parents and students, are involved in making decisions about how the school operates. Students achieve highly and when they leave, their attainment is above average, and in some subjects well above average. Teaching is consistently good across departments due to the level of commitment of the staff and the monitoring by senior staff. Another key strength that contributes to the school's success is the very good support that is given to all students. The support has some excellent features. This is one of the reasons why behaviour is good and students' attitudes towards their work are very good. The value for money is good.

What the school does well

- Students achieve well and attainment is above average when they leave the school. Attainment in some subjects is well above average.
- The quality of leadership, management and governance is good and one result is good teaching throughout the school.
- The welfare and guidance for students are very good and have excellent features.
- The provision for social and moral development is very good so relationships are very good and most students develop highly positive attitudes towards their work.
- The extra-curricular provision is very good and supports high standards.
- The provision for special educational needs is very good.

What could be improved

- Not all departments use the information from data about performance effectively to set and review targets for students.
- As the school is aware, attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) is not as high as in other subjects.
- Provision for spiritual development and for preparing students to live in a multicultural society is unsatisfactory as it is inconsistent across the school.

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 November 1995. Good progress has been made on the main areas that were identified for improvement. Very good management information systems have been established and all teachers have been appraised. The curriculum for older students has improved and all students who are entitled to an individual education plan now have one. The school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

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
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	B	B	B	A

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

The table shows that the attainment of school leavers in 2000 was above the average for all schools and well above the average of similar schools. Although boys performed less well than girls, they did better than boys nationally. Attainment has been above average for the last three years and the trend in the school's performance has been similar to the national trend. The school failed to reach the target it had set for GCSE which was 60 per cent five or more A* to C grades. This was because the target was ambitious in the light of the attainment of the year group that took national examinations.

Attainment of fourteen year olds in 2000 was above average in mathematics, average in science and below average in English. This was an unusual picture for English as, in the previous three years, attainment was well above or above average. In comparison with similar schools, attainment was well above average in mathematics, above average in science and below average in English. Boys attained less highly than girls but, when compared with boys nationally, attainment was broadly similar.

The inspection found that attainment is similar to that of last year apart from attainment of fourteen year olds in English which has risen to that of previous years. Attainment of younger students in science is improving. Students achieve well throughout the school. Boys do less well than girls in most subjects but perform as well or better than boys nationally. Most students of higher attainment are challenged by their work and so achieve well, although there are exceptions. Students with special educational needs achieve highly because the provision is very good. The few students for whom English is an additional language also achieve well as they are supported by good management. Attainment in ICT is below average at both key stages. Attainment in art, music, dance, drama and physical education is well above average when students leave the school.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Students have very good attitudes to the school and to their work in lessons. There is very good interest and involvement in their work, very good co-operation and enthusiasm, which very positively helps them with their learning and personal development.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in classrooms is good and often very good. Behaviour around the school is satisfactory but can be boisterous, although not malicious.
Personal development and relationships	Students have very good relationships with staff, adults and with their peers. They are very good at accepting opportunities that extend their personal development.
Attendance	Attendance is consistently just above average for schools nationally.

Students develop very good attitudes and behave well because of the mutual respect that they and staff have for each other. There is strong trust between students and adults who work in the school. Students respond well to the many opportunities they are given to take responsibility and many leave school as confident citizens. Many enjoy coming to school. There is a small but significant minority whose behaviour is challenging but these are handled very well and, apart from a few occasions, they do not cause disruption.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is at least good in 77 per cent of lessons and 30 per cent of lessons are very good or excellent. The proportion of satisfactory or better teaching is 95 per cent. There is little difference between the teaching of younger and older students. The teaching of English, mathematics and science is good. Approaches to literacy and numeracy have recently been developed but are not yet implemented by all departments. Apart from a few exceptions, staff have high expectations of the work of their students so they achieve well. Students work hard and develop good understanding, knowledge and skills because of the effective teaching. Teachers have a good understanding of their subject which enables them to extend the learning of students, for example, by asking questions which provoke discussion. Students with special educational needs are taught effectively and in many lessons, higher attaining students are challenged by their work and so achieve appropriately. In the very small number of unsatisfactory lessons, students who have difficulties controlling their behaviour were not well managed and so the lessons were slowed down.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall. The curriculum for eleven to fourteen year olds is good and for fourteen to sixteen years olds is satisfactory. Not all aspects of ICT are taught thoroughly and older students do not have enough time for religious education.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good and, as a result, students make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The provision is satisfactory overall and the management is good. Good use is made of specialist services
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Provision for social and moral development is very good. For cultural development, provision is satisfactory and for spiritual development is unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. Very good systems are used to ensure students' welfare.

The curriculum is enhanced by the very good provision of extra-curricular activities which includes residential visits. There are some excellent features in the welfare and guidance of students. The new social inclusion unit is beginning to have a positive effect on the behaviour and attitudes of those who do not know how to behave appropriately. Although students receive very good opportunities to develop an understanding of Western European culture, there are few to develop an understanding of other world cultures. Music is an exception. Senior management is aware that some departments provide well for spiritual development but this is inconsistent and there is no overview across the school. Good information is collected about the attainment of students, but the use of this data is inconsistent across departments. Links with parents are very good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The overall leadership is good and there are very good systems to manage the school. All senior staff have worked hard during a time of change to support adults and students.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. Governors have a very good understanding of their responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good overall and very good at the level of the whole school. Students, parents and associate staff are involved in evaluation.
The strategic use of resources	Very good.

Major changes at senior management level meant the school was adjusting to change at the time of the inspection. Despite this, the strength of leadership continued and is the main reason why attainment in the school is high. The new team is appropriately focused upon improving it further. Management systems are well established at whole school level and the School Support Team has the role of helping staff and students to teach and to learn effectively. As a result, team work throughout the school is very good and all adults work hard and with great commitment. There has inevitably been some slippage in the implementation and monitoring of management systems during the past term, but the school is aware of this. Governors know the school very well and are constantly seeking to develop more refined methods of monitoring its work. The school assiduously measures its performance against local schools and those nationally and uses this information as a means of ensuring the best value for money. It is beginning to use the information to set targets for students and to monitor the targets through mentoring. This work is inconsistent across departments as not all use the information from data effectively. Staffing, resources and accommodation are satisfactory overall but the increase in student numbers is putting pressure on the accommodation.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students make good progress in the school and standards of work are high. • Parents would feel comfortable about approaching the school if there were a problem. • Students are expected to work hard. • The values and attitudes taught by the school are good. • Staff give much of their own time to support students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistency of homework. • Information about how well students are doing. • The links with parents.

The inspection found that parents are justified in their views of what pleases them. Homework is set but there is inconsistency across departments. The School Support Team is aware of this and has begun to monitor it by looking at homework diaries. Parents receive information about their child's progress through reports and meeting staff. The reports are clear about what students have achieved but are less clear about what students need to do to improve. The inspection found that the school does all it can to establish links with parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. In 2000, the attainment of school leavers was above the average for all schools and well above the average of similar schools. Although boys performed less well than girls, they did better than boys nationally. The school measures the difference between the grades that are predicted for examinations by standardised tests and the grades that are actually achieved. Both boys and girls do better than their predicted grades, but boys do better than girls. Attainment has been above average for the last three years and the trend in the school's performance has been similar to the national trend. Students achieved 53 per cent five or more A* to C grades at GCSE which was below the target it had set of 60 per cent. Art, English, English literature, French, German and geography attained more A* grades than nationally. Other subjects achieved fewer. Performance in information technology and design and technology was relatively weaker than other subjects.
2. Attainment of fourteen year olds in 2000 was above average in mathematics, average in science and below average in English. This was an unusual picture for English as in the previous three years, attainment was well above or above average. In comparison with similar schools, attainment was well above average in mathematics, above average in science and below average in English. Boys attained less highly than girls but when compared with boys nationally, attainment was broadly similar.
3. The inspection found that attainment is similar to last year, except that attainment of fourteen year olds in English has risen to that of previous years and the attainment of younger students in science is improving. Students generally achieve highly throughout the school although there is a variation in a few subjects. The school has analysed the performance of its students and is aware of differences in performance of boys and girls. A mentoring programme has been developed to encourage all students with their work. There is not yet a whole school approach to dealing with differences in attainment between boys and girls, although some departments, such as media studies, mathematics and drama, handle it well by careful choice of resources which motivates boys. Generally, higher attaining students achieve appropriately as they are suitably challenged by their work. In a few departments, these students are sometimes not challenged and underachieve. The few students for whom English is an additional language achieve well as they are supported effectively by the special educational needs department who use external specialist services well.
4. Students with special educational needs make good progress because of the strong support they receive in lessons and, where appropriate, when they are withdrawn from lessons for individual teaching. They are also often well supported by their peers. They are given every encouragement to produce a high standard of work and last year every Year 11 student on the register of special educational needs gained GCSE pass grades. At the last review 30 of the students on the register of special needs had progressed well enough to be moved to a lower stage or removed from the register altogether. In many subjects these students are progressing as well as the other students.
5. The school has adopted approaches to literacy and numeracy for use by all departments. There is inconsistency in how departments use these approaches, although most students generally apply their skills well. Most students read fluently and use a range of methods to gain meaning from the text. They use their skills proficiently for research and many enjoy reading for pleasure. Many students write confidently and accurately and choose words and phrases appropriately to express meaning. They use discussion well to share and extend their ideas and many express a point of view confidently. Attainment of fourteen and sixteen year olds in English is above average and they achieve highly. A relative strength is the students' oral skills although their skills of reading and writing are also strong.
6. Skills of numeracy are also developed well, but mainly by the mathematics department. Many students calculate with speed and accuracy and they handle number well. Many are skilled at presenting and making sense of information in the form of charts and graphs and they use

measurement confidently. Attainment in mathematics is above average and students achieve highly. They are proficient in all the areas of mathematics that are identified in the National Curriculum.

7. Attainment in science is average for fourteen year olds, but is rising in the younger classes. Students achieve appropriately. For sixteen year olds, attainment is above average and students achieve highly. A strength is the development of practical skills, but students have a sound knowledge and understanding of other areas of the science curriculum.
8. Across the school, attainment of fourteen year olds in ICT is average and students achieve appropriately. For sixteen year olds, attainment is below average and achievement is unsatisfactory. Departments such as mathematics, science, geography and history make very good use of ICT so students develop their skills well. However, the inconsistency of use leads to uneven development and application of the skills of ICT.
9. Students achieve highly in religious education and attainment of younger students is average and for those taking examinations at sixteen is well above average. Many students have a good awareness of religious ideas and they begin to develop skills of critical analysis.
10. In modern languages, students achieve highly in French and German and attainment is above average throughout the school. Strengths of the subjects are skills of speaking; writing is relatively weaker.
11. Attainment in history and geography is average and students achieve appropriately, although there is inconsistency in both departments. In geography, students develop sound skills and understanding but their ability to recall facts is weaker. In history, higher attaining students analyse historical sources, write short and extended descriptions and explain the causes and effects of historical events. Most students have a good level of research and interpretation skills.
12. Attainment in the performing arts is well above average for the students who take the subjects for GCSE and students achieve highly. They develop very good skills of performance in all three subjects of dance, drama and music. In dance, students perfect very good techniques and are skilled at choreography. In drama and dance, they learn to evaluate their own and others' performance sensitively and critically. Students achieve highly in media studies and attainment is above average. They have a very good understanding of the techniques of media presentations and many use the language of media well. They use these skills well when they analyse videos, films and advertisements.
13. Students achieve highly in physical education and attainment is above average particularly in planning and performing. They are relatively weaker in evaluation. In art, attainment is well above average in GCSE and above average for fourteen year olds. Students make good use of their sketch books to experiment with ideas. They evaluate well and have a good understanding of critical studies.
14. The attainment of fourteen and sixteen year olds in design and technology is broadly average, although it is well below average in resistant materials. Girls attain more highly than boys. Most students have a sound understanding of the process of design, and skills of graphical design are satisfactory. In resistant materials, although many students use research techniques well, the final products are often modest.
15. The last inspection found that attainment was in line with the national average and now it is above. Information and communication technology was not used in departments. This has improved in that some departments use it most effectively, but others do not. Also, there is inconsistency in the development of skills of using ICT as its teaching is dependent on subject departments, some of which do not use it well.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. Since the last inspection, students have consistently responded very well to the school rules and conventions and there is a positive ethos established in their consistent very good attitudes and good behaviour. Most students of all ages and attainment have very good attitudes to their school work and there are some excellent examples during lessons. For example, excellent attitudes were seen in lessons in English, history, art, drama, dance, religious education and modern foreign languages. A very large majority of students are eager to come to school and participate with enthusiasm and enjoy their lessons. They respond very well to adults and to each other. The majority of students are very well motivated and they work with enthusiasm. They are very good at co-operating with each other, they value each other's work and make a very good contribution to the lessons. They sustain very good levels of concentration and work very well individually when actively engaged in lessons. Students listen very well to each other when interacting in the lessons and encourage one another. In a very small minority of lessons some students did not have positive attitudes and behaviour was unsatisfactory. This resulted in less positive learning and achievement.
17. For the largest majority of students, behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good and has a very positive impact on pupils' work and concentration. The majority of students with special educational needs are positive about the help they are being given. They behave well in lessons and many of them take full advantage of the lunchtime homework club. Most students respond very well to the expectations of teachers, support staff and adults for their behaviour. Sometimes in a very small minority of lessons when students are not effectively challenged some pupils behave unsatisfactorily. The school's inclusive practice for sanctions and support of behaviour is clearly seen by students and by parents as very fair and supportive. The result is a very positive climate for learning with little evidence of aggressive or racist behaviour. Misbehaviour is infrequent and when it occurs it is dealt with promptly and effectively. The small number of exclusions which occur do so only in appropriate circumstances within the framework of the school's excellent inclusion ethos. Permanent exclusions are exceptional and only occur when students have not responded to the significant support and guidance provided by the school. Fixed term exclusions are an integral part of the inclusion arrangements. Most students respond to the internal and external sanctions by modifying their inappropriate behaviour.
18. During the transfer from primary school and the time students attend the school they establish very good relationships with staff, with adults and with each other. Students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs or with English as an additional language, are positively included as part of a very well cared for and supported community that copes confidently with their daily work activities. Students have very good opportunities for personal development through their roles as senior prefects, prefects or school councillors. They organise significant events, are involved in identifying and influencing issues raised in school, they support school functions as organisers or guides for visitors to the school or ambassadors when making visits to other schools or organisations, or when on visits abroad. They are very involved and supportive of charity and community projects. A very significant number of students take part in a very good range of sports activities, music and drama productions. Students from all year groups have very good opportunities to go on residential visits such as the Year 7 visit to Le Touquet in France and the Year 8 visit to camp. They also make visits to a range of curriculum related places of interest as part of their course activities. Students take part in these activities with enthusiasm and show a sense of pride in their achievements. The opportunities for taking responsibility and to take such an active part in curriculum activities, trips and visits have a very good, positive impact on students' personal development.
19. Attendance is around average and has been consistently slightly above national levels since the last inspection. Most students clearly like coming to school and are punctual to school and lessons, which has a very good impact on the start of lessons. There is a low level of unauthorised absence because of the school's very active and persistent efforts to persuade parents to provide acceptable reasons for absence. A significant proportion of students are awarded a certificate recognising their high level of attendance at over 95 per cent. A minority of students have a much less satisfactory level of attendance and the school liaises closely with parents to encourage them to ensure their children attend school regularly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

20. Teaching is good throughout the school and there is little difference between the teaching of younger and older students. This is a tribute to the hard work of the staff and to the monitoring of teaching by curriculum managers and senior management. 95 per cent of teaching is satisfactory or better and 30 per cent is very good or excellent. The proportion of good or better teaching is 77 per cent. The teaching in most departments is good. In the few departments where teaching is satisfactory, this is because there is inconsistency of teaching amongst the staff. The overall good quality of teaching ensures that the learning of students is good and they develop their knowledge, skills and understanding well.
21. The quality of teaching and learning of students with special educational needs is good overall. In lessons in which students are withdrawn into small groups, they learn well because they receive individual attention from teachers who understand their problems and can structure the work accordingly. In many mainstream lessons the skill of the learning support assistants coupled with suitable resources lead to good learning. For example, in a science lesson an autistic student was given the confidence to handle apparatus and make good progress in understanding the topic.
22. The few students for whom English is an additional language are taught well. They are supported effectively by the special educational needs department who are available to advise on planning. In a drama lesson, one student was encouraged to contribute by the teacher and had the confidence first to respond to a question put to the whole class, then contributed very well to a group improvisation. There is insufficient external language support for students who are at the early stages of learning English. However, the emotional support offered to them is very good.
23. The school has developed approaches to literacy and numeracy for all departments to use but the policies are recent and so are not yet consistently implemented. The development of skills of numeracy is done mostly by the mathematics department which is highly successful. However, many more departments encourage students to develop and apply their skills of literacy. Many departments encourage students to use word banks of specialist vocabulary. Teachers encourage students to develop and extend their ideas through discussion. A Year 11 geography class revising for examinations consolidated their learning by using the word bank to summarise key points of the topic of energy. Another Year 11 class, this time studying religious education, engaged in a very good discussion about their own prejudices about race and, as a result, deepened their understanding about the reasons for prejudice. In this lesson, they also used writing as a means of reflecting on their understanding. These features enabled students to learn effectively.
24. The vast majority of teachers have a very good understanding of the subjects they teach. Supply teachers are highly competent practitioners who cover lessons well, but sometimes inevitably lack specialist knowledge to move students on in their learning. In a lesson on the holocaust, which was taught to a Year 9 class by a specialist teacher, the excellent subject knowledge was used to create an ethos of empathy with the victims of the holocaust. The aim of the lesson was to help students understand the feelings and attitudes of ordinary Germans at that time. Students gained a deep understanding of cause and effect, in this case, in relation to a totalitarian government. Boys, girls and students with challenging behaviour were totally engrossed in the lesson and achieved highly.
25. Relationships in most classes are very good and support a learning environment in which students, including lower achievers, are confident to try out ideas. In a Year 8 games lesson in poor weather the very good relationships resulted in students taking part with interest and enthusiasm and then were able to talk about the effects of warm-up on their bodies. In a Year 10 mathematics lesson, the teacher used the very good relationships as a means of challenging the class to extend their understanding of equivalent fractions. The management of behaviour is usually very good and enables students to listen and learn. A Year 11 class studying media studies was composed of students with a wide range of attainment and attitudes. The very good control, based on firmness with compassion, led to all students contributing to the lesson with interest and, therefore, they achieved highly.
26. Many staff use questions skilfully to probe and therefore deepen knowledge and understanding. Year 11 students were effectively drawn into a lesson on functional notation by questions which

led them to understand the idea and clarify the process. In another example, Year 7 students' previous knowledge of leadership qualities was brought to life by skilful question and answer techniques. Clear explanations and instructions which help students to understand the topic is another strong feature of many lessons. All students, including the lower attaining ones, in a Year 7 art class were clear about what they had to do when they worked from direct observation. Year 10 students writing a design brief for design technology had clear instructions on an overhead transparency and also gave very clear explanations so all the students understood the idea. Year 11 dance students were very clear about the requirements of the examination board following a good introduction to a lesson.

27. Teachers generally have high expectations of the work of their students so students work hard. Year 11 vocational students studying citizenship were challenged by the careful choice of a video to consider the effects of breaking the law. Year 9 students reached high standards of performance in music because of the high expectations of the teacher. High expectations and a brisk pace to a science lesson led to Year 10 students gaining a good understanding of how metals are extracted from ore.
28. Homework is set appropriately by most teachers but sometimes it involves finishing off work which can penalise lower attaining students and not challenge higher attaining ones. It is also set inconsistently so students have difficulty in organising their time after school. Senior management began to monitor the allocation of homework before the changes in the team. It is planned to pick this up shortly. Homework and other work is marked regularly but, in many cases, the marking gives little indication of how the student could improve the work as comments are supportive rather than evaluative.
29. In the few lessons that were unsatisfactory, the challenging behaviour of some of the students was not managed well so the lesson was slowed down and little learning took place. In a few lessons with unsatisfactory elements, the match of task to the attainment of the students was poor so all did the same work. Higher attaining students were not challenged and lower attaining students found the work difficult. In a few lessons, low expectations of the work of the students led to little sense of urgency so the lesson appeared to go slowly.
30. Teaching has improved further since the last inspection, there are now more good or very good lessons taught throughout the school. Students' attitudes to learning have improved and although the teaching of ICT has weak aspects, more departments are using it successfully to support learning. The good quality of teaching is a major contributory factor in the high achievement of the students.

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

31. The school's curriculum provision is good, meets the needs of most students, and is enriched by an extensive range of extra-curricular activities. Access to it is good because of well-organised support for students with special educational needs and English as an additional language and because grouping arrangements suit most students. The total teaching time is appropriate.
32. Students in Years 7 to 9 study a broad curriculum which includes all the National Curriculum subjects, as well as religious education and personal and social development. Dance is taught as part of physical education. Students have the opportunity to learn both French and German in Years 7 and 8. Those with an aptitude for languages, including many boys, continue to do so in Year 9. A literacy group in Year 9 supports students with reading and writing difficulties well and helps to prepare them for examination work in the upper school. As a result, all students are equipped with basic language skills. Drama is taught as part of the performing arts and students learn to express themselves confidently through drama lessons. Information and communication technology is not taught separately but is integrated into the other subjects.
33. The school has made good progress in developing its Key Stage 4 curriculum since the previous report. Provision for information and communication technology, modern foreign languages and religious education has improved. However, the school is not meeting requirements to provide ICT

for all students because, unless they are taking it as an examination subject, there are uneven opportunities elsewhere to develop skills in the required depth. In religious education, there is insufficient time to cover the Locally Agreed Syllabus

34. In Years 10 and 11, students follow a broad, traditional GCSE curriculum. They benefit from being able to study between seven and eleven GCSEs according to their ability. They study a common core of subjects, designed to provide a balanced range of experiences. As well as being able to continue with performing arts, art, drama and music, students are able to choose from a range of options including media studies, sociology and short courses in physical education and religious education. A range of choices within the sciences is also available. In the performing arts, which are popular choices taken by a large number of students, these opportunities have led to high standards. A shortcoming of the present curriculum is the lack of courses, with parity to GCSE, for students who are more vocationally inclined. Lower-attaining students are well catered for and can take a Diploma of Vocational Education. A few follow restricted timetables and spend some time at local colleges. The new social inclusion unit has helped those few students who would otherwise be disaffected with the school. Care is taken to ensure that these students follow the curriculum. As a result attendance has improved and the exclusion rate has fallen.
35. The new senior management team is aware of the limitations at Key Stage 4. Taking advantage of the new flexibility in the 14-19 curriculum, it has a clear long-term plan to extend the curriculum, providing a series of alternative pathways to better meet the needs of all its students. It will increase, for example, the opportunities for students with marked aptitude to develop particular strengths for whom the provision at present is not coordinated. Next year it is extending the work-related aspects by introducing GNVQ performing arts and tourism and leisure. There are plans to broaden the examination courses for media studies, which is another popular subject.
36. Provision for students with special educational needs is good at both key stages. Ten learning support assistants and six learning support teachers work as a team with the special educational needs co-ordinator to provide support in lessons, teach small groups, and liaise with subject teachers to produce suitable materials to meet the needs of these students. Dedicated accommodation provides a base for many of these students to learn with suitable resources away from mainstream classes. A thriving lunchtime support club provides extra help with homework. A disabled student has full access to the curriculum. Gifted and talented students have been identified and plans are afoot to provide extra enrichment and fast-track examination entry where appropriate.
37. The programme for personal and social education is good and supports students' social development. It includes sex, health and drugs education. Elements of these are also taught in science, physical education and religious education. Outside speakers with skills in these areas give talks. It is well planned and effectively taught by a trained team. For example; having finished their diploma course, Year 11 students have usefully embarked on a citizenship programme about law and the individual, which is helping to equip them for their roles and responsibilities in society. In a well-organised group work lesson, Year 7 students usefully learned about the impact of smoking on health.
38. Provision for careers education and work-related experience is good and support learning well especially at Key Stage 4. It is taught as part of the personal and social education programme from Year 9. Through the programme, the school has established extensive links with local firms, the community and partner institutions so that students are well prepared to transfer to work or to the next stage of education. The careers service is closely involved with the school in helping students make informed choices. Students appreciate the advice that they are given. Good emphasis is placed on helping disaffected students. The careers library is small but up to date. Students seeking information do not use it as well as they could. Year 10 students have a week's work experience. It is carefully planned and organised. Last year, almost every student in Year 10 took part and many thought that it had been very helpful.
39. Curriculum planning is good. The school has good links with primary and post-16 colleges enabling smooth transition at all educational stages. Visits and exchanges in to primary schools, for example, have improved the quality of information and are helping teachers to prepare for the secondary literacy initiative. 84 per cent of students continue with further education.

40. The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good and supports high standards. A school survey shows that activities are well supported by most year groups. There is a very good programme of visits and international exchanges for students to enjoy a curriculum based residential experience. These increase students' enthusiasm in lessons and help them to gain first-hand understanding of other cultures. This year over 400 students were involved. Music, dance, drama and sporting activities are particularly strong and popular with students. Almost two thirds of students are involved in performing arts. Some clubs support classwork well. Art and design and media studies have an "open-door" policy. A lunchtime support club helps students with special educational needs. The Learning Resource Centre is available for students to do their homework. Well-established and well-attended Easter revision courses help students to improve their examination grades.
41. The school has excellent links with a wide range of businesses and organisations that provide very effective support for the work experience programme. They also are substantial sponsors of prizes for student achievements, art college application and community development plans. Some organisations provide industrial mentors for a small number of students. Teaching staff are able to have experience of work placement or exchanges. A number of businesses have provided sponsorship for the school for a mini-bus for transporting students to activities arranged as part of the school's extended curriculum. Local artists and theatre groups such as the Royal Shakespeare Company add significantly to students' experiences. This rich range of support very positively extends the curriculum available for students.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

42. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. There are many examples of these dimensions referred to in the school's documentation, especially regarding collective worship, behaviour and equal opportunities. This area is not co-ordinated and steps need to be taken to involve the whole school in planning its development. Assemblies tend to address social and moral issues and are a useful vehicle for the celebration of student achievement. However, little attention is given to reflection, and assemblies rarely constitute worship. There is a need for staff training in order to develop a shared policy for the planning, teaching and monitoring of this area across the school. The personal, social and health education (PSE) programme is an integral part of the school's provision of spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. It is co-ordinated well, with clear aims and delivered by a specialist team. Teaching strategies are flexible and meet the needs of the students. Statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not met. This was also the case at the last inspection. The school is aware of the need to tackle the issues mentioned above.
43. Provision for students' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Assemblies take place once each week for each year group. They make little contribution to the spiritual dimension. There is no culture of prayer and reflection although recent changes herald its introduction. Tutors have a book entitled *Pause for Thought* which provides material on a weekly basis, but, with a few notable exceptions, this is rarely used. There is little evidence of any planning in departments for spiritual development, and the PSE programme does not make any significant contribution in this area. In some subjects, opportunities for the spiritual development of students were observed. In science, students are encouraged to think about wider issues and in modern foreign languages, certain text material teaches about other faiths and festivals. In music, feelings, emotions and reflective opportunities make a good contribution. In religious education, students are encouraged to respond to religious beliefs and experiences. In history, a lesson on the Holocaust had a spiritual dimension. Generally however, opportunities are missed to develop this important aspect of student development.
44. Provision for moral development is very good. This is a strength in the school. Opportunities are targeted largely through the well-planned PSE programme and in religious education. Topics such as attitudes to bullying, alcoholism, sex education, drugs awareness and prejudice provide a sound curriculum for discussion and development. The school has clear expectations of students knowing right from wrong and students respond well when they are corrected. Some subjects contribute well in providing opportunities for moral development. In physical education, there is good evidence of teamwork reflected in behaviour and attention to fair play. In geography, environmental issues are discussed and, in modern foreign languages, teachers encourage a

positive attitude towards forgiveness. In ICT, there are links to an awareness of the impact of human behaviour on the environment.

45. Provision for social development is very good. This is also a strength in the school. Students are actively encouraged to take responsibility and develop social understanding. The PSE programme provides many opportunities in this area. Topics include health, responsibilities, relationship and family life. There is a prefect system and a school council that encourages democracy and the development of social skills. The school consults students regularly on a range of issues and there is a Governors' Focus Group that includes students. Consultation and discussion are key aspects of the school's culture. Assemblies make a significant contribution to social development. Topics such as learning from experience, giving to others and feeling worthwhile are good examples. Some subjects contribute towards social development. In ICT, careful attention is paid to equal opportunities and the Web is used to access information about other cultures. In science, there are good opportunities to discuss key social issues such as genetics and pollution. In physical education, staff are good role models, and there is as good team spirit amongst students. There are residential trips to France and German and Italian exchange visits. Good collaboration in practical work was seen in geography. In music, there are many groups and activities including trips abroad that necessitate good teamwork. The group *Student Voice*, which is being convened to evaluate the teaching and learning in the school, offers further opportunities for students' social development.
46. Provision for students' cultural development is satisfactory overall. There are many opportunities for students to be involved in activities to extend their cultural development. In English, there is a wide range of theatre visits, productions and workshops. A large number of activities including dance trips, visits to museums and art galleries, trips abroad all make significant contributions to cultural development. In music, there are many opportunities including the *World Music Group* performances and appearances on *Blue Peter* and *Classic FM*. Music and instruments from other cultures are studied. For example Japanese and Caribbean music and indigenous instruments such as conch shells and African drums and rattles contribute well to cultural development. The school's curriculum, however, does not provide planned opportunities for students to develop an awareness of the variety of different cultures and traditions that exist in this country. The PSE programme's contribution in this area is minimal, thus equipping students for life in a multi-cultural society requires attention. This was also an issue at the last inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

47. The school has established very good all around care for its pupils including some excellent features such as the inclusion arrangements and counselling facilities. Staff and adults in the school are vigilant, sensitive and very supportive of the students in their care. Monitoring, promotion and practice of its support, safety and security arrangements are shared by the senior management, curriculum managers, teachers and support and administration staff.
48. Child protection arrangements are well established in the school. Staff are aware of the need to keep the co-ordinator informed of any concerns. Training for all staff has been provided and there are refresher arrangements at the beginning of each year. New staff are made aware of the child protection arrangements as part of their induction training. Guidelines are included in the staff handbook. Appropriate local agencies have been very effectively consulted when there are issues, however the new co-ordinator has yet to establish future training and communication links.
49. Staff and students are aware of health and safety practice and there are clear guidelines and procedures being established. Health and safety is reviewed and checks are made to the buildings and grounds, to ensure the learning environment is safe. There is however no regular risk assessment carried out. Staff are aware of the need to report any issues. There are good regular arrangements for safety checking school, fire and physical education equipment. Electrical equipment checks are carried out. The standard of care of the premises and grounds is very good. A small team of cleaning staff work hard to maintain a clean environment throughout the premises. This adds very positively to the atmosphere of the whole school.
50. Promotion and monitoring of behaviour has become very well established with very good arrangements and excellent inclusion arrangements. Staff, students and parents are very clear

about the school's expectations and practice. This underpins the very caring atmosphere the school community enjoys. It ensures aggressive or racist outbursts are unlikely to occur or if they do there are very appropriate strategies available to deal with them. *Ratchat*, a group of Year 11 students, is available to support younger students who may find difficulty in settling into the school, or who experience problems. The school's inclusion unit manages and underpins the very good strategies and practice for dealing with any issues should they occur. The school is very careful to ensure that all who wish to attend visits, residentials or other out of school activities are supported financially if there is a need. This supports the policy of equal access to the curriculum.

51. Promotion and monitoring of attendance are also very well established with very good effective school systems and management. Pupils and parents are equally clear about what the school expects for attendance, punctuality and authorisation of absence. Very effective monitoring arrangements ensure the school can react to any issue very quickly. There are links with the educational welfare office when required or if there are any more urgent issues on request. The school nurse provides very good support to the school for medical and support of personal and health issues. Counselling facilities from *Relate*, police and agencies dealing with drugs and stressful circumstances are an excellent regular weekly provision, which is available to all students on a confidential basis.
52. In the previous inspection the quality of the school's assessment recording and reporting policy was found to be exemplary. The policy has since been recently revised and continues to provide excellent guidance on appropriate procedures. The school has made an investment in information technology and installed the *Assessment Manager* program from the *Schools Information Management System*. This is used well to record assessment information and provides a valuable database from which the progress of each student can be mapped. Information from contributory primary schools is recorded and made available to staff. This is used to provide information on setting where appropriate and contributes to the identification of students with special educational need. Information is collected from departments twice a year. The school has developed a valuable way of improving the information given by national curriculum levels. A sign indicates whether a student is working at, just above or just below a level. The school is beginning to use this information to set targets for students and to monitor the targets through mentoring. It is also beginning to use the system to record and update information on individual education plans for students with special needs. It is developing procedures which will allow departments to input and access information through the school's internal computer network.
53. Some departments, notably mathematics science and geography, make good use of computers to record information and analyse examination results. In history, schemes of work and lesson plans are constantly modified in light of outcomes. In art, student self -evaluation is used to good effect. Formative feedback is given consistently with targets which move students on. The extent to which assessment information is used is inconsistent across departments. It is not always used effectively to inform curriculum planning and pupil progress. Overall the quality and regularity of marking is satisfactory but it does not always tell students what they have got wrong and what they need to do to improve.
54. Monitoring and assessment of the progress of students with special educational needs are good. Parents and outside agencies are involved in regular reviews; subject and pastoral staff are kept fully informed of the outcomes of these reviews, and all teaching staff hold copies of individual education plans. A concentrated review week is held in the summer term. Links with partner primary schools are very good with visits by the department staff to the schools, and special preview days.
55. The school has a special ethos which is welcoming and supportive. This comes largely from the highly effective systems that have been developed to ensure students' well-being.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

56. The school has established very good links for parents. There is appropriate information communicated to them regularly. The school provides parents with good opportunities to have

close links with staff, and parents can approach them at any time. Some parents who respond to the school's *Achieving Together* initiatives make very good contributions to students' learning and are very supportive to the school. The majority of parents are less positive in their participation in these initiatives. There are good levels of parent interest and most parents and carers are satisfied with most aspects of their children's education. Homework is provided but is not consistent across all departments

57. Parents feel that this is a very good school. Most parents have a good interest in their children's progress. They are very good at attending school reviews in open evenings with a specific focus on their children. They also are very supportive at performances and concerts put on by the students. The school Parent and Friends' Association is very active and it raises significant amounts of funds for the school, such as for the computer equipment and to support the proposal for performing arts college status.
58. The school has worked hard to establish good communications with parents. Parents know that the school is open and welcoming. All staff get to know and understand their students and their families very well. Most students are with the same tutors throughout their time at this school. Most parents respond positively to commitments to work with the school to maintain high standards of behaviour and in support of the home school agreement, which clearly sets out the respective responsibilities of the school, the family and the students. Parents have the opportunity for encouraging students to complete their homework through reviewing the student planners provided by the school. There is some inconsistency in this support.
59. The quality of information provided by the school is appropriate to inform parents of the work of the school and how their children are progressing. Students' annual reports however do not show sufficient information on future targets or how the student could improve. There is information for parents and students about all aspects of the school's work and the achievements of the students. These reports are reviewed with parents at parent evenings and, if parents are not able to complete the review in these meetings, staff are available to see parents at other times. The prospectus and the annual governors' report to parents are informative and meet requirements. Individual educational plans for students with special educational needs are reviewed regularly.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

60. At the time of the inspection, there had been major changes in the senior management team due to staff leaving. The new headteacher had been in post for a week and in the term prior to this, the school was led by acting headteachers. Very strong management structures and the good team spirit from all adults ensured that the school was successfully managed during this period, although there was inevitably some slippage in the monitoring of the systems.
61. The leadership and management of the school are good overall. Leadership is clearly focused on maintaining and improving the attainment of the students and the management systems in the school reflect this. The new management team, although still shaping, is equally determined to continue to improve the school and a shadow management structure, which strengthens responsibilities for school improvement, has been discussed. All aspects of the school's work are monitored, for example, extra-curricular activities and the homework policy. Teaching is monitored closely and the results of the last two rounds of monitoring of teaching will be used to write a policy for teaching and learning. This was put on hold until the management team was secure. The overall monitoring is currently good, but aspects of it, such as evaluating the school's performance at whole school level, are very good.
62. The school aim is *Achieving Together* and the school is successful in this aim. The focus of the work of staff is raising and maintaining achievement and in improving the school. All who work in the school have a role in shaping and reviewing policies. Students are involved through the use of surveys and a new group, the *Student Voice*, has been established with the help of the University of Sussex. This group is helping students to form skills of evaluation thus preparing them for their role in society. These skills are planned to be used to move the school forward. The team work amongst the staff is good. The senior managers are known as the School Support Team to reflect the collegiate type of management. Their role is to support staff and students in implementing the policies that have been decided jointly. School documentation also reflects the

team approach in its use of language which is inclusive. The documentation is clear, unambiguous and helpful.

63. Governors are highly knowledgeable about the school and are continuously seeking ways to improve their involvement. They are linked to departments and have recently refined their visits by making them more formal. They have devised a form to use when they visit their departments and this is used to report to the full governing body and to inform them about the work of the school. They have successfully tackled the sensitivities that can be involved in visiting classrooms. Following in-service training, governors drew up an action plan for their work which has been used successfully to reach targets they had set. The plan is not linked to the school development plan, but this is the next step. Governors are highly supportive and use their considerable expertise well.
64. The school development plan is clearly focused on continuous improvement and is a comprehensive and detailed document, used well as a focus for ensuring that priorities are met. It identifies appropriate priorities, responsibilities and how to measure when the priorities have been reached. Departments have their own plans but, in the same way as the governors' action plan, these are not always linked to the whole school plan. Senior managers are aware of the need to ensure that the plan is reviewed systematically.
65. Curriculum managers are effective and offer good support to the staff in their departments. Each manager has a link to the School Support Team, but there has inevitably been some slippage in communication during the time of change. Most curriculum managers monitor the work of their departments through observing colleagues, checking planning and looking at the work of students. This information is used to ensure consistency of approaches to the work of the department.
66. The school has a wealth of data about its performance which is used very well by the senior management team to measure how effective the school is. Its use is being refined to set targets for students, mainly for older students, although work is beginning in Year 8. All staff have been trained in using the information.
67. Some departments, such as mathematics and modern languages are skilled in using the data to improve the departments further and to set targets for individual students. Other departments are coming to grips with the information and are not as skilled.
68. The school is fully aware of equal opportunities and does all it can to ensure that students have equal access to the curriculum. The provision for special educational needs is particularly strong and students are enabled to take a full part in the life of the school. The provision for students for whom English is an additional language is satisfactory, although the management of the provision is good. The school monitors the performance of boys although there is as yet, no school approach to dealing with their weaker performance when compared with girls. Generally, the school complies with all statutory requirements apart from provision of ICT, religious education at Key Stage 4 and the daily act of collective worship.
69. The large team of teachers for students with special educational needs and support assistants are very effectively managed to provide good support for the greatest number of students, according to their individual needs. They also provide support for subject teachers in preparation of suitable teaching resources. Documentation is good, with clear targets on individual education plans, which is an improvement on the situation at the time of the last inspection. Links with parents are good; they are included in reviews of their children's progress and frequently contacted informally. Financial management is good, with designated funding spent as intended. The department gives strong support to the school's drive to raise standards.
70. Improvement in the special educational needs department has been good since the last inspection. Dedicated accommodation has been provided, though the teaching rooms are small and too cramped for some groups. Individual education plans are now properly completed with clear, achievable targets. The documentation for students with statements is thorough, with reviews carried out at the appropriate time. The number of support staff has increased and is under the effective management of a new co-ordinator. There is good cross-curricular liaison and

support for subject departments. The new Social Inclusion Unit for students with behavioural problems is a valuable addition to the resources.

71. The strategic use of resources is very good and the school manages its resources efficiently. The quality of financial planning is effective and is well linked to educational improvement. There are appropriately close links between the school development plan and the planning of finances. Special grants are used well for the purposes for which they were intended. There is sufficient flexibility to allow for the opportunity to target resources when there is urgent need.
72. The governing body fulfil their responsibility very well to oversee the school's income and expenditure. The minutes of the finance committee testify to the strategic role of governors in financial matters. The budget is managed efficiently and effectively. The school's accounts are audited on a regular basis and demonstrate the fine quality of financial control in the school. Internal controls are very good and the principles of best value are used effectively to form the basis of making decisions.
73. The last inspection found that the leadership and management of the school were strong and this is still the case. The very strong management systems are a key factor in the school's success.

Adequacy of staffing.

74. There is an adequate range of staff who are well qualified. There has been a large turnover of staff in the past two years and a number of temporary teachers have also been employed to cover staff who have been seconded or absent. There are good methods to ensure that staff know what is expected of them and to make them feel comfortable with the routines of the school. New staff are supported well by departments and by senior managers. In religious education, where many teachers are non-specialists, the effective planning and good organisation of the department, ensures that pupils attain appropriately. In history, four of the staff who teach the subject are from other departments. Although this is managed well by the head of department, it causes difficulties with co-ordinating the subject.
75. Very good methods have been established to identify priorities for the professional development of individual staff. These include the involvement of curriculum managers and the School Support Team. Staff are expected to identify in what way the course will contribute to their own and the school's development. It is planned to introduce ways of evaluating the effectiveness of the course on school improvement.

Adequacy of the accommodation.

76. Since the last inspection, the pressure on the accommodation has become more acute due to the increasing number of students. Overall the accommodation is satisfactory but very stretched for the number of students and staff at the school. In some areas such as for English, art and science, the facilities are fragmented. Curriculum departments and the services to them are split around the site and require skilful management to reduce the impact on meeting the needs of the National Curriculum. The range of accommodation that is available is variable in size and suitability for the purposes of meeting the full needs of the curriculum and this has to be very carefully managed to prevent excessive negative effect on the achievements of students.
77. Much of the accommodation is under threat from weather penetration through the vast areas of flat roofing that is regularly being patched up to prevent water damaging the interior. Some of the internal décor and interior furnishings are in need of refurbishment. The school has a rolling programme of improvements to meet these needs but it is as and when finance becomes available within their agreed budget. Where the accommodation is very good or excellent it is in very good decorative condition, has very lively and informative displays and students' work is seen to be valued.
78. Where the accommodation is only adequate there is a lack of space for the numbers of students, the furniture is inappropriate or not in good condition, the décor and fittings such as blinds are missing and there is a lack of appropriate storage. The lack of a large assembly hall has an impact on the school's ability to provide statutory collective worship but it can also be identified as a factor in not accommodating parents effectively for student reviews and productions. The

restrictive corridors and access routes are a potential health and safety issue. It is only because of the high level of good behaviour and students' attitudes when moving around school that the current arrangements are able to cope. The lack of space in corridors significantly reduces the opportunities for displays to value students' work and to be able to promote the work of the school. Good arrangements are provided for a student relying on a wheelchair access but there are some areas that are not accessible to wheelchairs, for example, art and technology areas on the first floor. There is no purpose built space for dance, students work in a carpeted area.

79. The school recognises the need to improve the accommodation and to extend the premises to provide facilities that will more effectively meet the needs of the school, particularly for English, dance, science, art, ICT and for the number of students on role. A very good example of the school's vision and determination to provide attractive, comfortable and appropriate accommodation is seen in the modern languages area and in the studios for drama and music.

Adequacy of learning resources.

80. Overall the adequacy of learning resources is satisfactory. The resources for languages and history are good and for music and religious education they are very good. For physical education, science, mathematics, geography, religious education, creative arts, and careers, resources are satisfactory. Although the resources for some subjects are satisfactory overall there are aspects of the subjects that are without adequate provision. The library is satisfactory and has a good range of computer facilities, CD-roms and tapes. The county library services are used to support the library resources for curriculum requirements or projects.
81. The school has adequate resources to teach the ICT curriculum. Access to these resources is variable in curriculum departments. Facilities are adequate in dedicated areas, although the converted laboratory provides unsatisfactory layout and user seating. Access can be booked by any department to fit in with their curriculum needs. The school has made a very good commitment to invest in the installation of a good extended network giving good access to the system in many parts of the school. Further investment in extending the equipment and software is now a priority for the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to maintain high standards and improve them further, all who work in the school should;

- (1) Ensure that all know how to use the extensive data about performance that the school has collected to set targets for improvement by departments and to ensure that students, particularly boys, achieve as highly as possible. (paragraphs 1, 2, 11, 14, 29, 52, 53, 66, 67, 68, 85, 93, 94, 97, 111, 112, 125, 127, 130, 131, 134, 141, 152, 154, 155, 166, 190, 193, 200, 210, 213, 214)
- (2) Improve attainment in ICT by ensuring that there is progression in the teaching of skills and understanding of all students, improving assessment and ensuring that all departments use it consistently well. There is some very good practice in departments that could be drawn on for this latter aspect. (paragraphs 8, 33, 110, 95, 124, 126, 132, 152, 159, 160, 162, 164)
- (3) Improve the provision for spiritual development and for preparing students to live in a multicultural society by developing a whole school approach and then monitoring its effectiveness. (paragraphs 42, 43, 46)

Other areas for development that governors should consider in their action plan are;

Consolidate the management systems which have slipped during the time of change, particularly the roles of line managers. (paragraphs 60, 65)

Encourage all departments to draw up action plans that reflect the priorities of the school development plan and which give a schedule for tackling issues within the departments. (paragraphs 64, 212)

Ensure that teaching is consistently good in all departments by using the information from monitoring to establish guidance for effective teaching. (paragraphs 11, 14, 17, 20, 29, 61, 131, 136, 155, 162, 167, 169, 198)

Continue to support staff who find it difficult to manage the behaviour of the challenging students. (paragraphs 16, 17, 29, 146, 157)

Implement the approaches to literacy and numeracy. (paragraphs 5, 23, 96, 104, 107, 148, 166)

Ensure that marking of work gives guidance to students as to how they can improve their work. (paragraphs 53, 93, 108, 118, 136, 188)

Rigorously apply the homework policy. (paragraphs 28, 58)

Meet statutory requirements for religious education, ICT and the daily act of collective worship. (paragraphs 33, 68, 84, 162, 211)

As finances permit, improve the accommodation. (paragraphs 70, 76, 77, 78, 79, 81, 94, 119, 132, 149, 176)

Ensure that expectations of students' work are consistently high and that work matches the attainment of all in the class. (paragraphs 3, 29, 100, 106, 107, 116, 120, 123, 131, 138, 145)

KEY STAGE 4

82. Students leave the school with above average attainment and in some subjects, notably the performing arts, their attainment is well above average. They achieve highly apart from in ICT. Higher attaining students are usually challenged by their work and lower attaining students are well supported and so achieve highly. Boys' attainment is below that of girls, but generally, they achieve well because of effective teaching that motivates them. There are few students for whom English is an additional language but they make good progress in English and achieve well.
83. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is good overall. 96 per cent of teaching is satisfactory or better and 78 per cent is good or better. Almost a quarter of teaching is very good or excellent. Teachers have good understanding of their subjects and they generally challenge students appropriately. Expectations of work and behaviour are usually high so students' learning is good. There are some students whose behaviour is challenging, but these are usually managed very well and do not cause disruption to lessons. The majority of students have very positive attitudes towards school and their behaviour is good.
84. The curriculum is satisfactory although provision for ICT and religious education does not meet statutory requirements. Students have the opportunity to study a wide range of subjects for GCSE and there is a vocational option for lower attaining students. They study a common core which is designed to give a balanced range of experiences. Amongst the choices are media studies, performing arts, sociology and short courses in physical and religious education. The curriculum is being extended in the Autumn term to include GNVQ courses. Careers guidance is good and most students in Year 11 receive their first choices. There are many opportunities for students to take responsibility, such as representing the school on the governing body and taking part on the school council. As a result, many students leave as confident young people, prepared to take a place in society.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	155
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	61

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	25	47	18	5	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	1095	
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	146	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	17	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	204	

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	27

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	31
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	28

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	8.2
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.5
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
	2000	110	117	227

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	47	67	70
	Girls	79	89	71
	Total	126	156	141
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	56 (75)	69 (63)	63 (54)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	20 (38)	43 (38)	26 (23)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	59	70	69
	Girls	90	91	86
	Total	149	161	155
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (75)	72 (63)	69 (75)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	29 (41)	47 (38)	43 (26)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	93	119	212

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	43	91	93
	Girls	72	115	118
	Total	115	206	211
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	54 (53)	97 (93)	100 (99)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	42
	National	38.4 (38)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	4
Black – other	4
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	7
White	1064
Any other minority ethnic group	15

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	61.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	21
Total aggregate hours worked per week	557

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.1
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24.7
Key Stage 4	22.4

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	46	3
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	2,860,395
Total expenditure	2,922,695
Expenditure per pupil	2669
Balance brought forward from previous year	47,300
Balance carried forward to next year	-15,000

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1096
Number of questionnaires returned	314

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	47	7	4	1
My child is making good progress in school.	45	47	6	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	22	57	12	2	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	54	15	6	4
The teaching is good.	32	55	6	1	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	48	15	4	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50	42	4	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	40	5	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	28	48	16	3	5
The school is well led and managed.	33	44	7	2	14
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	51	8	1	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	39	12	3	11

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

ENGLISH

85. At Key Stage 3 tests in 2000, attainment in English was below the national average and below the average for similar schools. This was an unusual result as the school's results have been above average since 1997. The school has identified the reason for Year 2000 results as a staffing issue which has been successfully tackled. The performance of boys over three years 1998-2000 was below average, whereas the performance of girls was above.
86. By the end of Key Stage 4 in 2000, attainment in both English language and literature were above average. The A* results for both subjects were above national averages. There is little difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
87. The inspection found that students achieve highly throughout the school and attainment is above average. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment in speaking and listening is above average. Most students listen well and have the confidence to take part in oral work. Students showed good discussion skills in a Year 9 lesson on Macbeth, which developed their understanding of characters and theme. A student with speech and language difficulties was able to contribute to this discussion with confidence. At the end of Key Stage 4 attainment in speaking and listening is above average and is well above average for higher attaining pupils. This was apparent in a Year 11 lesson in a debate on gender differences. A particular strength was the ability of students to use precise language when they described their research on the Internet.
88. The writing of fourteen and sixteen year olds is above average. Fourteen-year-old students write expressively. They can adapt their style to one that is appropriate for letters, reports or recording information. They are fluent at writing stories or writing personally to express feelings or emotions. The presentation of work is of a high standard, spelling, grammar, and punctuation are usually accurate. Lower achieving students benefit from either support and use of literacy strategies to help them in their structured writing. All pupils redraft their work frequently in order to express their ideas clearly and have exercise books for this purpose. There are dictionaries in every classroom, which are used in the re-drafting. At the end of Key Stage 4 higher attainers write with confidence and fluency; for example, a Year 11 student wrote;
- a single salty tear ran down her cheek taking with it a line of mascara and an individual grain of blue-green glitter.*
89. One year 11 student wrote his argument for the debate *Women have a harder time in men's society than men.* He compares the way men are perceived in the work place to the negative way female managers can be perceived;
- Where has this stereotype come from? More males leave their jobs and drop out of school. Boys are also more troublesome and more than four times as many boys are expelled than girls. So how in a matter of a few years have young men turned from unreliable thugs to warm, ambitious responsible people?*
90. Some lower attaining pupils are able to produce imaginative work and work that is appropriate for the task.
91. Attainment in reading is above average at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. At Key Stage 3, most students read fluently and draw on evidence from the text. In a Year 7 poetry lesson, students read with understanding and could discuss the ideas of the poem. By the end of Key Stage 4, students read widely and with discrimination. The department is tackling the lower attainment of boys in reading by using ICT and bringing in texts that appeal to boys' tastes.
92. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good at both key stages. Pupils always respond to learning opportunities in a mature and responsible manner whether providing feedback from a discussion or answering questions. Students are co-operative with each other and relationships between students and teachers are good and generally good-humoured. Most students display a capacity to work well independently in small or large groups. Students support each other well. An

example in a lesson was a boy supporting another for whom English is an additional language. Students demonstrate that they enjoy their lessons and respect and appreciate their teachers. Work is well presented and demonstrates pride in the subject.

93. The quality of teaching is good overall and at Key Stage 4, many lessons are very good. As a result, progress is good for all students including higher attainers, students with special educational needs and students for whom English is an additional language. They make good progress in the acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding. Teachers have a very good understanding of their subjects, expectations of students are high, planning is good and homework is set regularly. Work is generally well marked but assessment and setting targets for students need further development. The ability to manage and control students is very good. Teachers have a good structure to the lesson with clear learning objectives. The tasks are appropriate for the student's attainment, well focused and usually challenging. Resources are used well, for example, there is a good mix of fiction and non-fiction texts. Students with special educational needs are supported well in their classes. The effective planning of work assists students to attain the learning objectives. The tasks for the lesson are explained and ideas discussed with the class, followed by a well planned series of activities, some individual, some in small groups and some whole class.
94. This is good department that is working collegially towards the aims of the school. The department is well led by a new curriculum manager who gives clear guidance and good support to the teachers in the department. The planning is good and future plans are meant to enable the department to further their work as a team. The curriculum manager has identified the need to improve boys' attainment and to forward the department's work on assessment and target setting and has a firm action plan for next September. There is limited use of information technology in lessons. Resources in the department need expanding, particularly in relation to recognising the work of writers from all cultures. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Two of the mobile classrooms are small and the department is located in two parts of the school, which limits the sense of cohesion of the department.
95. Since the last inspection, there has been some progress in ICT. Students word process 60 per cent of their course work and are required to undertake one area of the scheme of work in ICT. Students use the Internet to research, for example, for debating purposes.
96. The school has developed a whole school approach to the teaching of literacy but this is implemented on a patchy basis across the school. Most departments identify key words and have them displayed in the classroom. All classrooms have dictionaries in them. Some literacy strategies are being deployed such as use of a mnemonic in a science lesson to support the learning of the order of the planets. Some good speaking and listening was identified in art, English and religious education. The school's literacy co-coordinator has identified the need for more work in implementing the strategy, particularly more in-service training for staff. There is a group that meets with curriculum area representatives to monitor the implementation of the strategy.

MATHEMATICS

97. This is a good department. Attainment in mathematics by the end of Year 9, in national tests, continues to improve. The 2000 results for the school were above average. When compared to similar schools, performance is well above average. The achievement by boys is below girls at levels 5 and above, but closer to them at the higher levels.
98. At the end of Key Stage 4 in 2000, the proportion of students achieving GCSE grades A*-C was above the national average. Almost all pupils, who were entered for GCSE in 2000, gained an A*-G grade, which is above the national average. Girls achieved the greater proportion of the A* - C grades, exceeding the national average by 11 percentage points. These results are consistent with the performance students achieved in the national tests at Key Stage 3 in 1998. The overall performance in mathematics is similar to the figures for English, and above those for science. Despite the performance by boys overall, the proportion attaining the higher grades, A*/A, exceeds that of the girls, and students nationally. The proportion of A* grades for the school

however, remains below the national average. Since the last inspection the number of students achieving the higher grades A* - C grades has steadily improved.

99. Evidence from observation of lessons, discussion with students and an examination of their work, indicates that achievement by students in Year 9 is above average. Students are developing good mental recall and gaining confidence with numerical calculations.
100. The higher attaining students are achieving very well across the attainment targets. These students are able to apply their mathematics in different situations commensurate with the higher standards in national tests. For example, a high attaining group in Year 9 working on the circle, accurately calculated circumference length and the area through a range of problems. Greater consideration for the needs of the highest attainers in such a group would enhance their chances of achieving level 8 in national tests. Lower attaining pupils in Year 9 and those with learning difficulties work well with decimals and percentages; they add and subtract numbers accurately, because these basic skills are well taught. In a well-managed Year 8 lesson, students were able to increase their knowledge of linear equations through using a computer package. They viewed the graphs of these equations and were able to interpret the impact of changes to various values in the equations.
101. Students consistently demonstrate very good attitudes, behaviour and sustained concentration. These features make a very positive contribution to the standards and the good learning that they achieve.
102. The work seen in lessons during the inspection revealed that the overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is above that expected for this age group. High attaining students in a Year 10 group were stretched by their teacher with work on calculating various averages. Because of their confidence and improving competence in this aspect of the subject, students were able to extend their understanding to data arranged in groups. The very good teaching in another Year 10 group enabled students to competently rearrange improper fractions and mixed numbers accurately, and to convert fractions to their lowest form. Both sets of students set out their work in a logical way, demonstrating their confidence and understanding with these topics. A Year 11 class of high attaining students were extending their knowledge and understanding of mathematics by expressing relationships in functional notation. They quickly grasped the concept and were able to evaluate a range of expressions accurately, building on work undertaken in earlier years. Another set of Year 11 students made very good progress in revising work associated with speed, time and distance travelled. Through a range of questions set by their teacher, they correctly interpreted various graphs, and by finding the area under these graphs, were able to calculate speed of an object. The quality of students' coursework for GCSE is of a particularly good standard and demonstrates their ability to apply their mathematics successfully to new situations. The presentation of such work is of a very high quality.
103. The large proportion of students with special educational needs continue to make good progress with their learning through both key stages. These students gain confidence with basic mathematics and because of the very good support these students receive in class, particularly in Years 7 and 10, their learning is enhanced considerably. They continue to develop these skills in Years 10 and 11, and all have the opportunity to be entered for GCSE.
104. The department has a clear aim to develop students' numerical skills through their mathematical education. The recently revised subject guidance for Years 7 to 9 makes provision for this basic skill development. The vast majority of students acquire good skills in the handling of number, measurement, fractions, decimals and percentages, and are able to manipulate between the various forms confidently. In subjects other than mathematics, students apply their numeracy skills in a satisfactory way. They understand co-ordinates and interpret data presented graphically. They use scatter graphs in geography to determine the correlation between sets of data. Scientists develop high standards in numeracy through regular practice in measuring, plotting graphs and converting formulae and interpreting tables of values. Students apply their numerical skills through choreographing patterns in dance. In the absence of a whole school approach to numerical competence, further development of these skills will be restricted. Students generally have good listening skills, and their oral skills and confidence in explaining mathematical processes is well developed. The active use of strategies from the whole school literacy policy, for example key words, will aid students' writing and help them to spell correctly

words commonly used in mathematics. Through investigations and coursework at GCSE students are able to display their intellectual and creative skills.

105. The quality of teaching in mathematics is never less than satisfactory. In over four fifths of the lessons at Key Stage 3 teaching was good or better. A similar picture occurred at Key Stage 4. This situation is an improvement from the last inspection. Teachers work hard at planning interesting lessons that motivate and stimulate students to learn. This is impacting on the standards they achieve and the quality of their learning. All the main teachers of mathematics have very good subject knowledge, which is effectively used through exposition, demonstration and questioning of students.
106. In the very good lessons, teaching is exemplified by very well planned three-part lessons, that move on at a brisk pace, where expectations are high and students succeed well, making good gains in knowledge and understanding. The skilful mix of probing questions, discussion and a range of exploratory activities underpins the standards that are being achieved by these students. Tasks are generally well matched to the range of ability within the teaching group, although in some lessons the higher attaining students would benefit from being further stretched and challenged. Listening skills are well developed due to the high expectations teachers have of their students. Teachers share the purpose of each lesson with students at the start, and usually spend five or ten minutes on a mental warm up activity to enhance and improve basic skills. Teachers readily use the responses from students to ascertain prior knowledge, understanding and to stimulate discussion. The very positive relationships that exist between students and teachers ensure that a purposeful working atmosphere is created in virtually all lessons.
107. Where teaching is not so effective it is because the expectations for the higher attaining students are insufficiently structured to meet their needs. More use could be made of the words displayed around each classroom to secure greater understanding by students of the words in common use in mathematics. In planning lessons teachers should give greater consideration to the skills that students may need to use in the lesson and readily identify these early on. The strategy of a short summary to conclude a lesson has brought notable benefits to students' learning and to establishing links to the next one.
108. The marking of homework is systematically undertaken and students receive some feedback from teachers on where they can improve. The regular use of tests and more rigorously assessed pieces of work act as a good motivator for achieving success at the end of Key Stage 3 and 4. However, greater attention needs to be given to informing students where they need to improve and how.
109. The department has a team of dedicated, enthusiastic and largely experienced teachers who share the management of the subject. The working practices of the team are of a high standard. The sharing of ideas and good practice enhances the professional dialogue that occurs throughout the day, and this extends further through regular monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department. There is a very strong team ethic that has effectively supported and sustained teachers over a number of years, including recent appointments. The development plan reflects the priorities identified by the school.
110. The department has made good progress with the issues arising from the last inspection, in particular with the development of students' numerical skills and the introduction of the three-part lesson. It continues to strive to increase the access and application of ICT in the teaching of mathematics across all years, and a review of the scheme of work for Key Stage 4 is urgently needed. There is considerable capacity within the department to take forward the issues raised in this report.

SCIENCE

111. This is a good department with some very good features. In the 2000 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, the proportion of students reaching level 5 and above and the proportion reaching level 6 and above was close to the national average. These results are better than those obtained in the last two years. Results in science are better than those in English but not as good as those in mathematics. Levels of attainment are above average in comparison with schools with students from similar backgrounds. The performance of girls is better than that of boys.
112. In the 2000 examination in GCSE science, results overall were above average. In science (double award) the proportion of students awarded grades A* - C was average. The performance of girls was above average and was much better than that of boys. Of those students entering separate examinations in chemistry and biology, the proportion obtaining grades A * - C was above average. For those who took physics, the proportion obtaining the higher grades was average.
113. Observations of lessons and work seen during the inspection show that standards towards the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with the national average. Most students have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of topics in all four attainment targets. The attainment of some students in Years 7 and 8 is above average. They have a sound knowledge, for example, of the solar system, the way in which light is reflected and the difference between solutions and suspensions. A Year 8 group was observed carrying out, very competently, an experiment to find out the acidity or alkalinity of a range of household substances.
114. Towards the end of Key Stage 4, the highest attainers have a sound and comprehensive understanding of the science curriculum. Year 10 students demonstrated, for example, a good understanding of oxidation and reduction and the cause and effect of air pollution. A group competently investigated exothermic and endothermic reactions. The majority of students attain average standards.
115. Students with special educational needs make good progress. They are well supported by teachers, learning assistants and by fellow students. For middle and higher ability students the standard of written work is good. Lower attainers have difficulty with spelling, grammar and the presentation of their work which leads to lower standards overall. Diagrams are often less than satisfactory. Mathematical skills are satisfactory for the needs of the science curriculum. Most students are good, both at drawing and interpreting graphs. Students are very competent with using a range of skills in information and control technology.
116. The standard of teaching at both key stages is good overall and is often very good. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and lessons are very well prepared. Objectives are clear and most teachers share them with students at the beginning of the lesson. As a result, students make good gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding of science. Relationships between staff and students are excellent. Praise, which raises self esteem, is a feature of many lessons and humour is often used to good effect. In the best lessons teachers use a variety of activities to maintain interest and provide constant challenge. Expectations are generally high. In some lessons the pace is too slow. In these, a lack of clear focus and inappropriate timing limits the progress made. Students are generally well behaved and enjoy science but some lack a sense of urgency. Teachers are aware of the problems faced by low attaining students and those with special needs. However they do not always adapt their teaching materials sufficiently to allow them to make maximum progress.
117. Students respond well to innovative teaching. Following a good introduction to the solar system, Year 8 students were involved in a relay race to collect pictures of the planets and assemble them in the correct order. They were then asked to invent their own mnemonic to remember the order. Students made progress in their scientific knowledge as well as improving their literary skills. They enjoy practical work, which is always carried out competently and safely. In practical lessons however, teachers do not always take the opportunity to introduce investigative skills such as predicting, analysing and considering variables. Whilst investigating the nature of solutions and suspensions, a group of Year 7 students examined a wide range of materials, some of which presented results which challenged their skills of interpretation. Their practical skills improved and they made good progress towards an understanding of the topic. Lessons for students approaching public examinations are handled very well. Various strategies are used to

involve them in revision as well as ensuring that they have good examination techniques. These are effectively taught. Teaching and learning are enhanced through the department's involvement in the Cognitive Acceleration through Science Education (CASE) project.

118. Marking is regular and follows the department's policy. Comments however do not always tell students what they have got wrong and what they need to do to improve. Procedures for collecting, recording and analysing assessment information are excellent. This information is used to inform pupils of their progress and predict future performance.
119. The subject manager provides strong positive leadership. Staff work well together and share a good commitment to raising standards. Three laboratory technicians ably support the department. Accommodation is at present just adequate. Some laboratories are small and others are in need of refurbishment. Some classes are large and so the value of practical work is inhibited. The department's documentation is clear and informative. The use of information and control technology, which includes a dedicated internet website, is a strength of the department.
120. The department has responded well to the last inspection report. Teaching strategies have improved and the department has made huge developments in the use of information technology. The department benefited by establishing ways to learn from the best practice of others. Methods of matching tasks to the different attainment of students need further improvement.

ART

121. GCSE results for 2000 were significantly above the national average compared to schools of a similar nature. The results are consistently high and art performs better than most subjects in the school. Standards of work in art lessons is generally mostly above the level expected in Years 7, 8 and 9.
122. Students make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of art, particularly in Years 10 and 11. There is a significantly higher take up of the art and design option amongst girls; the department is actively pursuing ways of dealing with this gender imbalance. The great majority of students are extremely well behaved in class and respond positively to their teachers.
123. Teaching is good or very good throughout the department, with a range of teaching methods used, and there are instances of excellent practice. Lessons are well planned and in most cases are briskly paced and well structured; the art classrooms are effectively managed, ensuring good behaviour. The effective planning and preparation of art and design lessons at Ratton school brings about a very good quality of learning at all levels; higher attainers have the opportunity to consolidate their learning. Care is taken to ensure continuity and progression with lessons building upon students' previous learning. There are, however, instances of over-prescriptive teaching which on occasions holds back the higher attaining students as they have little opportunity to explore ideas for themselves. Students with special educational needs are generally well catered for in terms of individual attention. Homework is well used by teachers to complement work done in class.
124. There is good use of critical and contextual studies to inform development of students' work, particularly amongst older students. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for their subject, this motivates students, especially in Years 10 and 11, where they can use a range of media with a high degree of control and sensitivity. There are, however, some lost opportunities for introducing students to a broader range of art forms, this is exacerbated by little use of ICT. Students' self evaluation forms are used to good effect at Key Stage 3, to monitor and guide progress.
125. Students learn effectively, due in the main to teachers' subject knowledge and appropriate use of language; care is taken to ensure that students use terms correctly and understand the concepts behind them. Students know about the work of artists and have a very good knowledge of some 19th and 20th century painters. They also develop skills in making and investigating, using a range of media in 2 dimensions, such as painting, drawing and printing, and in 3 dimensions, such as use of papier mache and wire construction. Some excellent process work is done in sketch-books. Assessment practice in the department is a real strength, with students actively

involved in monitoring their work; there is also very good ongoing feedback given by teachers. Students generally take pride in their work, but boys' presentation skills are not strong.

126. Some improvement in the use of ICT has occurred since the last inspection but this needs to be actively built upon and developed much further. The department is very well managed, which has a direct positive effect upon the quality of teaching and learning within the department.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

127. GCSE results have varied considerably in recent years and in 2000 were a little below the national average with 41 per cent of pupils gaining grades A*-C compared with a half of pupils nationally. Much of this decline can be attributed to the poorer performance of boys, particularly in the GCSE resistant materials course. Food technology, taken by a majority of girls, achieved standards closer to national average but for both sexes, on average, students performed less well in their design and technology courses compared with their other GCSE results.
128. Standards at the age of 14 are average. Most students have a sound understanding of a design process particularly when the work focuses on a particular problem or need and involves exploring ways of improving or modifying existing products. Lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, have greater problems in understanding the open-ended planning activities, and are less likely to complete them. The increasing opportunity to use ICT is evident in recent work on computer-aided design as well as in the increasing use of the Internet for research. Graphical skills are generally sound though practical skills are more variable in the different areas of the subject. In the food and textiles technologies, students benefit from regular making activities and are able to handle equipment confidently and work with some accuracy. This was evident in a Year 8 textiles technology lesson where students independently produced their own decorative designs and demonstrated hand and machine skills in making place mats. Students have some understanding of electronic systems though practical skills in constructing circuits and cutting, shaping and joining timber and metal are less well established.
129. In lessons and work seen, standards at the age of 16 are average and show a modest improvement from the last examination results. The major project work recently completed in three of the course areas of food, textiles and graphics, reflects standards a little above national average. The higher attaining pupils' work in food technology for example, shows extensive research, detailed development with effective use of sensory analysis in evaluation. In textiles technology the best work contains wide research, an understanding of different material properties and well-finished products. In contrast, the standard of work in resistant materials continues to be well below national average and this depresses the overall level of attainment in design and technology. In resistant materials, the higher attaining students demonstrate good research techniques as well as an ability to use different drawing techniques with annotation. However, the final design ideas and finished products are often modest. The work of lower attaining students in the course indicates difficulties in understanding and developing a design specification and completing products.
130. Students come to the school with limited experience in using a variety of tools and equipment and most benefit sufficiently from the learning programme in Years 7 to 9 and achieve appropriately. Girls generally make better progress than boys, who appreciate the practical activities though are less engaged by the greater emphasis on written work. For all students, this over emphasis on preparatory written work slows the development of manufacturing skills. In Years 10 and 11, the majority of students, most of who take the courses in food, textiles and graphics, now make sufficient progress to reach standards in line with the prognosis of their Key Stage 3 attainment. However, a significant number, mainly boys, make unsatisfactory progress in resistant materials. Good teaching in some of the Year 10 resistant materials lessons is helping improve this area, evident in a packaged jewellery project, where mainly boys are making good progress in their practical and presentation skills.
131. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory and in over a third is good and on occasion, very good. The very good practice is characterised by interesting and varied activities that develop understanding and encourage students to respond. This was illustrated in a Year 10 resistant materials lesson where the teacher had established a positive relationship with the group and,

within a lively though orderly context, enabled students to discuss and develop their ideas. In the good lessons, particularly those in food technology, students respond to the more varied activities and high expectations of the teacher with enthusiasm and greater industry. Much of the satisfactory teaching is soundly planned with well-informed guidance and useful learning materials. This was reflected in many of the lessons preparing students for the imminent GCSE examinations. On occasion though, teachers make insufficient use of questioning and other activities to elicit ideas and engage interest. Teachers are mostly aware of the learning of particular students with special educational needs though in some instances, they do not always ensure that all are involved and making sufficient progress. Efforts have been made to revise schemes of work in Years 7-9 though the learning activities focus on paper tasks at the expense of developing more practical planning and making skills. Teachers are conscientious in their regular marking of work and continue to make good use of target setting, an identified strength in the last inspection. The learning activities now need to be more challenging and clearly linked to the outcomes of assessment.

132. The curriculum manager for design and technology is conscientious and keen to raise standards in the subject. To this end he has been working with his team to identify and implement an effective strategy for improvement, though the development of the subject continues to be hampered by cramped accommodation and modest furniture and equipment levels. It has increasing access to information and communication technology facilities though computer-aided design and manufacture equipment is limited. Technician support is good and staffing is well deployed though changes in teaching staff have slowed the progress of pupils in some lessons. The subject meets National Curriculum requirements but has not succeeded in sustaining some of the strengths identified in the last report, particularly in the areas of standards, teaching and curriculum. It is important that the curriculum manager implements changes by building on the strengths in some areas of the subject.

GEOGRAPHY

133. In 2000, students' attainment in GCSE was average. Most students gained a pass grade and the number of higher grades was above average. This was achieved despite staffing difficulties caused by maternity leave. Boys did better than both girls and boys nationally and better in geography than in most of their other subjects. The performance of girls was below the national average and they did less well on average than in most of their other subjects. The examination results have fluctuated since the last inspection. The department has analysed the results, but has not yet set practical targets to close the gender gap and to further improve its performance.
134. Standards in geography in lessons and in the work seen at the end of Year 9 are average. Most students use skills including mapwork skills competently. Most use ICT well for presentation and for research. It helped them to exchange information with students in Kyoto and increased their knowledge of Japan. In general, their knowledge of particular countries lacks detail. Fieldwork in Year 7, for example infiltration, is helping to develop critical skills. Otherwise, there are limited opportunities to develop these through fieldwork. Most students show a sound understanding of environmental concerns and volcanic and limestone processes. Higher attaining students offer good explanations for these. Many students show some gaps in their understanding, for example, about the formation of swallow holes. Most use technical terms correctly, because teachers give good attention to improving vocabulary and organising ideas and many students write well at length. Lower attaining students have less confidence with skills of literacy so their work is less well presented. Most students speak confidently, the result of good encouragement to take part in role-play and oral presentations. Their numeracy skills support them well.
135. The inspection found that by the end of Year 11, standards are average. Students know more about places and have a sound range of practical skills. However there are fewer opportunities for students to demonstrate what they know through decision-making exercises. Higher attaining students show good knowledge and understanding of settlement patterns and issues involved in coastal management. Many students show sound understanding although they are not as good at remembering information in detail. In well-presented individual projects, higher attaining students link their findings well to theory and make sound evaluations. The conclusions of average students are less precise. Lower attaining students make weak links between their practical work and the

background information. Throughout, they use their numerical skills and ICT effectively to support their work.

136. Students enter the school with slightly below average standards in geography depending on how much geography they have learnt in primary school. Throughout the school they make satisfactory progress, their very positive attitudes contributing to their learning. They make better progress in Year 7 than in Years 8 and 9, reflecting the variety of interesting activities in the new subject guidance. Students' activities include: field sketching, extended writing about their primary schools based on digitised photographs, models of volcanoes and creative poems. Their achievement is improving as the department has appropriately introduced methods to improve literacy skills in geography. Year 10 build well on earlier work and improve their practical skills through fieldwork. Not enough use is made of marking and assessment to improve achievement by focusing on particular areas of weakness. Teaching methods vary. Students make most progress in lessons characterised by a lively interaction between students and staff, and with a good balance between instruction and activities. These attributes were illustrated in a Year 7 lesson about the British Isles. Talking about national flags and the census, the teacher captured students' imagination and involved them in an interesting discussion about their national identity. In some lessons, progress is slower when the teacher does not involve students sufficiently to develop their ideas and does not intervene enough to keep students fully occupied or when students are not listening. In well-organised group activities, appropriately supported by the teacher according to their needs, they helped each other through animated discussion. As a result they make very good progress in organising and clarifying information, using the resources well to identify, sort and locate places and features correctly. In a similar lesson, students only made satisfactory progress because the lesson did not motivate them and was over-directed by the teacher so that students worked at the same pace for much of the time.
137. Students with special educational needs and English as an additional language make good progress, benefiting from effective classroom support. They all gained a grade at GCSE. Students with physical difficulties are fully involved in field visits.
138. Teachers are aware of their individual work plans although not enough use is made of them to target individual needs in geography. Students with marked aptitude are identified. There is no special provision for them although one boy in Year 10 is doing GCSE a year early.
139. Most students behave well and respond well to practical work and research, their interest shown by classroom displays of their work. Their enthusiasm is less apparent when the lesson is not motivating and they become distracted
140. Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory and has good features. It varies between unsatisfactory and very good. Teachers use their knowledge well to give clear explanations to develop understanding. They plan lessons well, are well organised and give clear guidance so that lessons start promptly. Most vary their resources well to give variety and interest to the lessons, making good use of the whiteboard to reinforce the aims and synthesise information.
141. The department is well organised and there is an informative handbook to support teachers. Since the previous inspection, standards have been maintained although examination results are still fluctuating. Good work plans are developing, using published materials as a basis. Good teaching ideas need to be shared so that all students make similar progress. Good methods are in place to monitor students' progress. The department now needs to use the information that it has about both the examination results and students more effectively to provide practical ideas for improving standards further and for helping individual students.

HISTORY

142. Attainment is average at the end of Year 9 and above average at the end of Year 11. At the end of Year 11, the proportion of pupils attaining GCSE results of grades A* to C has been above average for the past three years and has improved steadily. In 1998 and 1999 all students gained a pass grade in the A* to G range but this fell in 2000 to below average. Average point score targets were met in 2000, but the subject results were below those for many other subjects in the school. Boys' results have been above the national averages in these years and girls' results have been well above average.

143. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average for fourteen year olds and above average for sixteen year olds. The best students in both key stages can analyse historical sources, write short and extended descriptions and explain the causes and effects of historical events. All work shows a steady development of knowledge and understanding and a good level of research and interpretation skills. Year 9 students have begun to develop a real understanding of the feelings and motives of people in other times and in Year 11 they have prepared thoughtful pieces of work about topics such as the black civil rights movement in the U.S.A. and the Vietnam War.
144. Students' achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. In Year 9 higher attaining students write good extended answers and they are beginning to be able to use evidence to argue points. They have used local sources to study the bombing of Eastbourne and written sympathetic descriptions of the feelings of ordinary people during the raids, and of the ideals of conscientious objectors. Lower attaining students have produced some good work but written pieces are shorter and some presentation is poor. Achievement is good in Years 10 and 11. Even the weaker students are competent in analysing evidence and skilled in drawing conclusions and understanding both sides of complex political situations, such as the outbreak of the Vietnam War.
145. Because much of the learning is through either group work or discussions led by teachers which draws everyone into the lesson, students with special educational needs usually make similar progress to other members of the class. However, in some of the lesson planning, not enough attention is given to providing individual guidance and resources for students with different learning needs. No students were observed whose standard of English prevented them from playing a full part in the lesson.
146. Attitudes and behaviour are good overall. Year 10 and Year 11 students clearly all enjoy their history lessons. They work well and take responsibility for their own learning in role-play and group discussion lessons. However, in Years 7 to 9 the response is mixed. In some lessons students work positively and behaviour is exemplary, but in lessons where the work tasks are not carefully thought through by the teacher some students are left under-occupied and become noisy and restless.
147. The standard of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Students learned particularly well when they were put into the situation of internalising the fears and feelings of people in the past, rather than just finding out facts, as in an excellent lesson introducing the perceptions of ordinary German people at the start of the Holocaust. In a very effective Year 11 GCSE revision lesson, students learned the material through preparing to teach it to other members of the class. Teachers used their excellent subject knowledge to extend students' understanding, and homework was well used to extend research started in lessons. Some of the unsatisfactory elements of teaching include a slow pace and, on other occasions, students were not drawn into the topics by effective questioning and they were not fully occupied with productive tasks, so that attention wandered and time was wasted.
148. Literacy is developed through reading aloud and in pairs, and writing in a variety of styles. There is no organised teaching of numeracy in the subject. ICT is well used to present information in lessons, and most pupils are competent in desk-top publishing and using the Internet for research. One group of Year 10 students were competently preparing a class presentation using the programme *Powerpoint*.
149. Management is good, with very good leadership and good improvement since the last inspection. New subject guidance has been put in place and teaching is now monitored by the curriculum manager and senior management staff. At Key Stage 3, assessment is starting to be linked to National Curriculum levels. No long term planning is in place to drive forward future improvements in an organised manner. Students' records are well kept and monitoring of group and individual performance is being developed. Accommodation presents some difficulties because one of the dedicated rooms can only be reached through the other and this sometimes causes distraction at the start and end of lessons. Subject co-ordination difficult to achieve as the department is staffed by two full time departmental teachers and four who fill in from other departments, although this is not affecting attainment. The new curriculum manager has worked very hard, and successfully, to

strengthen the team and to improve standards and there is high potential to build towards further success.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

150. Last year, 78 Year 11 students, only a third of the possible cohort, entered for the GCSE examination. For this group, the percentage of students gaining a pass at grade C or above was 36 per cent. The pass rate for boys at 26 per cent was substantially lower. Students who do not take a GCSE in the subject are offered ICT experience as part of their Key Skills programme.
151. At Key Stage 3 also there is no teaching of ICT as a separate subject, but there is an ambitious scheme to develop the necessary skills through the use of ICT in other subjects, with only a very minimum introduction to the core ICT skills at the start of Year 7.
152. In order to meet statutory requirements, however, there has to be very careful mapping of skills across the subjects through which they have to be taught, while assessment, and the maintenance of accurate assessment records, is also an issue.
153. At present, the evidence of achievement comes from a self assessment schedule that is completed at the end of Year 9, in which students lay claim to competence against a number of statements of attainment which are matched very roughly to National Curriculum levels in the various strands of ICT. The subsets of skills used in this exercise are word processing, desk top publishing and PowerPoint; spreadsheets and modelling; databases and data logging. Taken at face value, the data suggests good levels of attainment. From the 195 out of 218 forms submitted, records suggest that the mean score overall for girls was 6.38, and for boys 6.36 which is well above average.
154. However this does not match with the evidence of the students' work which was limited in quantity, with much that was repetitive or in the form of printout, and with little evidence of high level ICT skills, for example, in the structuring or design of databases and spreadsheets or the analysis of information.
155. In the absence of systematic assessment by teachers, there are some reservations about the reliability of the data and of the choice and match of attainments at each of the levels (someone who ticked the claim to have "Designed a spreadsheet which could be used by someone else" is on this basis assigned a level 8). Although the level of ICT competence on entry to the school varies widely, the school has only a brief orientation programme to tackle this: ICT is not taught as a separate subject, and many students are hindered in their access to the technology by a lack of basic keyboard skills. Some teaching observed at Key Stage 4 was unsatisfactory, with a failure to engage pupil interest or to deal appropriately with challenging behaviour.
156. Students are encouraged to use ICT for exploration and research, and many show high levels of skill in this area. They make extensive use of a presentation programme, and some of the work seen in science where students helped each other in GCSE revision through sharing group presentations on specific topics with the rest of the class was especially good. There are well developed internal web sites in science, mathematics, ICT and history which give students access to an enormous range of skilfully chosen information, matched to well designed worksheets and tasks which are also stored on the system. There is good provision of extension material which allows higher attaining students to progress at some speed.
157. Students treat equipment with respect, and there is good use of lunchtime access where the supervision offered by the department's technicians is greatly appreciated. Year 11 students make good use of lunchtime access for revision and completion of course work. However it is also in Year 11 that there are some students whose behaviour is extremely challenging and who need careful supervision.
158. In terms of management, the three teachers severally responsible for Key Stage 3 have made an extremely good start to a complex exercise.

159. Some of the ideas which have emerged, and the departmental developments, are extremely good but they are not yet fully bedded into the system. The methods of assessing how well students have done are unsatisfactory and do not allow the school either to plan for the development of skills, nor accurately to track and assess achievement in the subject. The self-assessment schedule which is used by students, is an excellent diagnostic tool within the context of the school but there are reservations about the validity of the measurements it offers.
160. There are also reservations about both the teaching and assessment of Key Skills in Key Stage 4. For ICT skills to be fully manifested through non-specific assignments there needs to be a degree of planning, oversight and mapping which is not yet fully evident.
161. The use of ICT in the management of the school is very well developed, and the contribution of the Information Systems Manager and her staff is excellent.
162. Not all departments (and departmental staff) are equally well equipped or equally skilled and there are a number of issues to be tackled if the school is to meet statutory requirements in respect of the ICT curriculum, and to provide staff and pupils with the support they need. The fact that ICT at Ratton School does not meet statutory requirements and has some weakness in both teaching and management should not obscure the excellent progress that has been made by many departments and quite substantial pockets of excellence which can be used as a strong foundation on which the school to build.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

163. All pupils study French and German in Year 7. Most learn French and German in Year 8; some only learn German. Most learn French and German in Year 9; some only learn French or German. All continue with one language in Years 10 and 11, and some also do both French and German.
164. The organisation of the curriculum meets statutory requirements. The head of modern languages monitors the progress of students in French and German. The department is very well led and organised, has prioritised development plans, and works well as a team. The department lacks sufficient effective blinds, text books, readers, magazines, and computers. Visits to France and exchange visits to Germany encourage social interaction and personal responsibility, and improve language competence. The text books and other materials used, together with the visits abroad, help develop awareness of the diversity and richness of other cultures. The quality of most teaching, the attitudes of most students, visits abroad, and the leadership of the head of modern languages have a positive effect on standards. However, insufficient use of pair work and the foreign languages by teachers, lack of resources, and the errors students make in written work are preventing students from achieving higher standards.
165. The department has tackled all the issues raised in the previous report. The quality of teaching and learning has improved, and this has improved standards at all levels.

French

166. GCSE results have been well above national standards in recent years. In 2000, the proportions achieving grades A* and A at GCSE were above national standards. GCSE results have been higher than standards in similar schools. Standards have also been higher than in most other subjects in the school. Assessments made by teachers at age 14 were slightly above national standards in 2000. Over half the students in the current Year 9 in May 2001 have already reached level 5 in listening, speaking, reading and writing, which is slightly above average. Attainment in Years 10 and 11 is just above average. At both Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils are stronger in listening, speaking and reading, and weaker in writing. When listening to a tape, a Year 7 class could identify various towns and villages from the information they heard. When speaking, students in a Year 11 class were able to perform role-plays for the whole class. When reading, students in a Year 10 class were able to understand details in a letter about a boy's visit to France. Students in a Year 9 class were able to write about what they would wear for various activities, including the colours of the clothes and footwear. Overall, there is a satisfactory amount of written exercises and sustained writing; however, students make unnecessary errors in grammar and spelling. Students do not check their written work carefully enough: the errors

students make in written work are preventing them from achieving higher standards. Girls usually attain better results than boys. There are no significant variations between students of different ethnicity, background, nor ability. Students have regular reading sessions: these contribute to their general literacy and develop their French skills and knowledge, including the use of dictionaries. They spend most of their time using the foreign language in listening, speaking, reading and writing: this contributes to their literacy skills, but these are at lower levels than they would be in English. Numeracy activities are limited, but included where possible. Students have limited access to computers, but use them well when they have the opportunity.

167. The overall quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good or excellent. Almost all of the lessons seen were good or better. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The quality of teaching is improving standards and ensures satisfactory or good progress. The teachers plan a sequence of activities, are proficient in French, project their voices clearly, and have good accents in French. They use the foreign languages for parts of the lesson, but sometimes use too much English so that students do not consolidate their knowledge of key phrases. Some use overhead projectors well, but others do not use them sufficiently. They use other resources effectively to increase learning. Behaviour is generally good, but a few students find it difficult to concentrate sufficiently. Time is used well, and teachers are good at encouraging oral work in pairs: however, sometimes they do not use pair work sufficiently. Staff display students' work, maps, posters, and other authentic material, which increase the students' knowledge of the languages and countries concerned. However, more maps and display are needed in some classrooms. Students' work is assessed regularly, and results inform subsequent teaching. Useful homework, which consolidates learning, is set regularly. The teaching of those with special educational needs is good, and meets the needs of these students as well. Teachers manage classes well and give pupils a variety of good experiences in the classroom, including songs, games, role-plays, and the use of video cameras, which consolidates and extends their learning.

German

168. In recent years GCSE results have been above average, and in 2000 they were well above average. GCSE results have been higher than in similar schools. Standards have also been higher than in most other subjects in the school. The inspection found that attainment in Years 10 and 11 is just above average. Over half the students in the current Year 9 in May 2001 have already reached level 5 in listening, speaking, reading and writing, which is slightly above average. The inspection found a similar picture, attainment is above average. At both Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils are stronger in listening, speaking and reading, and weaker in writing. When listening to the teacher talking about his Easter holidays, a Year 8 class were able to understand what he had done. When speaking, students in a Year 10 class were able to talk about various professions, and express opinions about them. Students in a Year 8 class were able to read information about different towns and identify them from the details given. Students in a Year 11 class were able to write a role play in pairs about buying a train ticket. Overall, there is a satisfactory amount of written exercises and sustained writing: however, students make unnecessary errors in grammar and spelling. Students do not check their written work carefully enough: the errors they make in written work are preventing them from achieving higher standards. Girls usually attain better results than boys. There are no significant variations between students of different ethnicity, background, nor attainment. Students have regular reading sessions: these contribute to their general literacy and develop their German skills and knowledge, including the use of dictionaries. They spend most of their time using the foreign language in listening, speaking, reading and writing; this contributes well to their literacy skills, but these are at lower levels than they would be in English. Numeracy activities are limited, but included where possible. Students have limited access to computers, but use them well when they have the opportunity.
169. The overall quality of teaching is good. All of the lessons seen were good or better. The quality of teaching is improving standards and ensures good progress. The teachers plan a sequence of activities, are proficient in German, project their voices clearly, and have good accents in German. They use the foreign languages for parts of the lesson, but sometimes use too much English so they do not consolidate their use of the target language. Some use overhead projectors well, but others do not use them sufficiently. They use other resources effectively to increase learning. Behaviour is generally good, but a few students find it difficult to concentrate sufficiently. Time is used well, and teachers are good at encouraging oral work in pairs: however, sometimes they do not use pair work sufficiently. Staff display students' work, maps, posters, and other authentic

material, which increase the students' knowledge of the languages and countries concerned. However, more maps and display are needed in some classrooms. Students' work is assessed regularly, and results inform subsequent teaching. Useful homework, which consolidates learning, is set regularly. The teaching of those with special needs is good, and meets the needs of these students as well. Teachers manage classes well and give pupils a good variety of experiences in the classroom, including songs, games, role-plays, and the use of video cameras which reinforces and extends their learning.

170. The vast majority of students behave well. They show interest in their work, sustain their concentration, and develop good study skills. Their response is at least satisfactory and often good or very good in Key Stages 3 and 4. Many students show an obvious sense of enjoyment in lessons. They work well in pairs and groups, and sometimes have opportunities to use their initiative in creating role-plays and working independently. Their positive attitudes are enabling them to improve their performance. However, a few students find it difficult to concentrate and achieve their potential. Most students, including the higher and lower attaining and those with special educational needs, make good progress in lessons at both key stages.

PERFORMING ARTS

Dance

171. Results in GCSE are very good with over 90 per cent of students consistently achieving A*-C since 1997. They are better than other results in the school.
172. Due to the timing of the inspection, only two GCSE dance lessons were observed. Standards in lessons and work seen are above average. A significant minority of students are achieving beyond this. Teaching in dance provides opportunities in most lessons for the development of independent learning. Students make very good progress from being able to remember, refine and repeat short dances to demonstrate good techniques and performance skills. They can use a variety of compositional principles to convey dance ideas and work on their own and others to devise, rehearse and present dances.
173. Students demonstrate good technical and expressive skills when performing. They perform dances that combine physical, formal and expressive elements to communicate the idea from stimuli offered by the teacher or their own creation. Students' ability to pose questions, solve problems and self evaluate is good. Progress and response of the students are very good.
174. The behaviour, attitudes and values in GCSE dance are very good. The high expectations of the teacher are reflected in the interest, enthusiasm and self-confidence of the students. They are totally committed to dance as an art form and they display high levels of concentration, application and pride in their work. The students in Year 10 and 11 GCSE groups are fully committed to examination work and display good levels of performance and understanding of choreography.
175. Teaching is very good in dance with some excellent features. In particular the commitment and inspiration of the teacher is very good. Learning across the attainment range is good in the GCSE group. The progress of students is accelerated through good extension programmes and enrichment activities outside of the formal dance curriculum. Expectations are high, particularly with regard to performance, behaviour and personal approaches to dance. The students' attitudes to learning are very good. They listen to instructions, communicate appropriately in groups, and confidently try new skills. Systematic progress is aided by well-planned and supportive teaching. In a Year 10 practical lesson the teacher created a stimulating learning environment through the effective use of music, videos of performance and enthusiasm. Curricular planning is good and there are effective assessment strategies linked to a range of opportunities to plan and judge performance.
176. Accommodation for dance is unsatisfactory. There is no appropriate dance space. The leadership and management of dance is not clear and there is a need to establish roles and responsibilities to further develop the curriculum, staffing and coherence within the performing arts as well as the school as a whole.

Drama

177. Attainment in drama in 2000 was well above average although the number of A* grades was fewer than nationally. Results for girls and boys were above average, although girls attained more highly than boys. The department carefully analysed the results and has used the information to try to increase the number of A* grades this year.
178. The inspection found that students achieve very highly throughout the school and attainment is well above average for fourteen-year-olds and sixteen-year-olds. This includes students with special educational needs and students for whom English is an additional language. Although boys achieve highly, their attainment is not as high as girls. Boys and girls respond equally well to questioning. In a lesson a boy for whom English is an additional language responded well to questioning. Higher attainers can enter a role with conviction and no student shows immaturity or embarrassment. Pupils use body language well. In a Year 9 lesson students learned how to develop a character through body language. Most students understand the language of the subject such as freeze frames and hot seating and have confidence to use it in discussion which gives precision to their ideas. The majority of students have confidence in performance and sixteen-year-olds in evaluating their own and others' work. Fourteen-year-olds have less confidence in evaluation, although higher attainers are skilled in this. Most students develop good skills in improvisation.
179. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good at both key stages. Every student works hard and participates with great concentration. They display maturity and collect resources sensibly showing good independence, which is expected by the teachers. Boys and girls respond to learning opportunities in a mature and responsible manner. Students are very co-operative with each other and collaborate well to extend their learning. Relationships between students and teachers are very good. Students are sensitive to the emotions of others and respect feelings. Most students displayed a capacity to work well in small or large groups. Students enjoy their lessons and respect and appreciate their teachers.
180. The quality of teaching is very good at both key stages. Teachers have an excellent understanding of the subject which they use well to take the learning of the students forward. Their expectations of students' work and behaviour are very high. This results in prompt and orderly starts to the lessons. In one room, students enter, change quickly and sit attentively in a circle. In another room, the teacher sits quietly on the floor in an expectant manner and as students enter, they quickly remove their shoes and join the circle. Planning is very good and homework set regularly. The ability to manage and control students is excellent. Teachers have good structure to the lesson with clear learning objectives. The tasks are appropriate for the students' attainment, well focused and always challenging. The tasks for the lesson are explained and ideas discussed with the class, followed by a series of activities, some individual, some in small groups and some whole class. Very high expectations are seen in the brisk pace of most lessons, effective questioning and the way students respond. Through probing questioning, pupils evaluate their work on an ongoing basis.
181. Enhancement activities support the subject very well. For example a European funded trip was organized to New York. The pupils had opportunity to attend a workshop with actors and talk to them about the reality of a career in acting as well as being able to explore the city.
182. The department is very well led by the curriculum manager who gives clear guidance and good support to staff in the department. The subject makes an excellent contribution to the personal development of students.

Music

183. Teacher assessments in 2000 at the end of Key Stage 3 indicate that there is little difference between the attainment of boys and girls who both attain around the national average.
184. Student numbers taking GCSE have fluctuated since the last inspection and comparisons are difficult. Results were well above the national average in both A* - C and A* - G ranges between 1997 and 2000. The number of entries each year has been above the national average. An upward

trend is predicted in 2001. The department has introduced strategies to encourage more pupils to be interested in studying music at both GCSE and GNVQ performing arts.

185. Taking into account students' prior attainment, standards of work seen in Year 7 are broadly average. The scheme of work is matched to the needs of pupils including those with special educational needs because of tasks that are suitable for different students. Students increase their level of achievement in Year 8 because of the improvements in performing, improvising and the rich level of activities. Some students' work lacks depth and variety because of the irregular practice in basic skills. In a Year 7 lesson students provided an improvised reply in *Scat-singing* style that helped them to appreciate English as an additional language. Boys and girls progress equally well in lessons. A pupil in Year 8 with special educational needs is provided with electronic keyboard tutorials that help co-ordination, self-expression and build confidence. Support for literacy is very good. Key Stage 3 lessons refer to syllables, nonsense words and the use of long text passages that are sung and spoken from memory. Effective use of contrasting words such as 'bright' and 'dark' describes musical sounds in Japanese music. Music supports numeracy in the understanding of note patterns and musical shape. ICT is good because most students can use a wide range of features on electronic keyboards such as recording, saving and playback, including changes to speed and rhythm.
186. Few lessons were seen in Years 10 and 11 because of the timetable which runs over two weeks. Taped material shows breadth and depth in class and extra-curricular activities. The skills and knowledge of higher attainers are enriched through the *Ratton Players*, vocal groups and *World Music Groups*, and other ensemble activities that take place at lunchtimes, after school and on special occasions. Students' achievement is currently above the expected standard and high in performance when using a range of styles, ingenuity in harmony, and both instrumental and vocal textures. Sampled sounds from CD Rom, the Internet or pre-set on keyboards are noted in students' commentaries for their exam compositions. This ensures that originality and the use of such material are properly acknowledged. There are small errors of technical detail in some commentaries. Achievement in groups working outside the classroom is among the highest nationally, for example in the *World Music (Fusion)*, *Rhythm and Blues* and *Stage Band* groups. Over half of the student population takes part in instrumental music, music groups and school productions. An LEA Area Music Centre is also based in the school and provides for another sixty students on Saturday mornings.
187. Attitudes and behaviour are good overall with some very good moments when students support others who find singing difficult. Students benefit from music skills activities and when participation is actively encouraged in vocal work.
188. Teaching is good overall and sometimes very good. The match of teaching strategies to the needs of pupils at both key stages is appropriate and teachers have very good subject knowledge. There is a very high quality of provision of visiting instrumental and vocal music teachers both from the *County Music Service* and other teachers who structure lessons carefully, attend regular in-service and arrange LEA '*Music Days*' for students. Where class teaching is good or very good, the pace is brisk, progress is marked and review takes place frequently, for example in developing work with the voice in a piece called *Tintinnabulam*. Students make advances in reading music, singing along with a polished performance and following the shape or structure of the piece on a score. In cases where teaching lacked energy and variety there was an absence of work on music key skills and insufficient numbers of examples. Students' spiritual development is supported by opportunities to reflect on the power of music, for example when the teacher played along with a 'fusion' of styles and in what the *Ratton Singers* could achieve. The use of a wide range of music from different cultures including *Gospel* and *Blues* helps students to appreciate living in a multi-cultural society. There are many opportunities to play a wide range of tuned and untuned percussion and keyboards. Homework is not set and the marking of work is mostly absent at Key Stage 3, while reports to parents contain comments relating more to attitudes and behaviour rather than to targets for learning in music.
189. Students in all year groups learn well. Most make improvements to their own work and talk about the result they want to achieve. Low attainers produce effective repeated patterns and discover that playing in pairs provides a new texture. In Years 10 and 11, students are confident learners when practising for the listening test of the GCSE examination. All students achieve a high mark in this exercise that contributes to their predicted examination grades. Some instrumentalists do

not have opportunities to use their skills in class lessons. The identification of gifted and talented students takes place for the *World Music Group* and some stage groups.

190. Leadership and management are very good. There is a high level of commitment in the department. Assessment is regular but not used to influence planning for the future. At Key Stage 3 the department's internal system of grading students' work and the National Curriculum levels are not yet linked. Students are given useful information on the standards expected for GCSE. The music department is in demand to provide performances in school and locally. Several groups have appeared on national television and competitions and produce CDs of their work that are of very high quality. The use of computers is low although familiarity with electronic keyboards is very high. Accommodation is generally good and exceeds what is available in other schools. Resources are very good especially in ethnic instruments including *Djembe* drums, rain sticks, didgeridoo and numerous shakers. There are no Indian sub-continent instruments. Space in which to expand is now exhausted as the student numbers rise to levels which were not envisaged before and, while the staff is committed and energetic, staffing levels will soon need review.
191. There has been good progress since the last inspection. Standards have improved overall while maintaining the quality of planning and teaching. Year 7 and 8 students build suitably on their previous attainment and are assessed using the new criteria. Singing has become a more integrated part of the music curriculum. The level of provision for students in music groups is extraordinarily high. The school is seeking Performing Arts College status and this will be amply supported by the high quality of the department.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

192. Standards and achievement in physical education overall are good. By the end of Key Stage 3, the students' attainment as indicated by the assessment by teachers shows that attainment is above average and GCSE results are well above national averages.
193. The inspection found that the attainment of fourteen year olds is above average. Students show a good knowledge of the principles of an effective warm up and an understanding of the methods and activities, which can be used safely to raise pulse rate, increase muscle flexibility and joint mobility. In striking/fielding games and athletics, students show good skills and good understanding of how to apply their skills. Assessments of their own and others' performance is generally accurate, but its use to improve performance is inconsistent.
194. There is insufficient evidence to assess attainment across Key Stage 4. However, examination results at GCSE are very good. They have improved since the previous inspection. In 2000, all students achieved a graded result and 73 per cent of students gained A*-C grades in GCSE and 70 per cent A*-C in the GCSE short course. The results are significantly above the national averages. Rates for A*-C have been significantly higher than average since 1997. An analysis of the results indicates that students do better in physical education compared to achievements in other subjects of the curriculum.
195. At both key stages the students' ability to plan and perform is good. Their understanding of the evaluation strand of the attainment target in physical education within activities is inconsistent. Their capacity to analyse, comment and demonstrate their understanding of their own and others strengths and weaknesses appropriate to the activity is satisfactory. Where standards are high, students' analysis of their own and others' performance improved levels of individual and group performance. Some students could clearly demonstrate their ability to take the initiative to improve the quality and standard of performance of themselves and others. The application of evaluation to improve performance in all areas of activity is a key aspect to raising standards further in physical education.
196. The previous inspection identified that the students were highly motivated and had a positive attitude towards physical education, and this is still the case. Learning is good in most lessons and students work hard, levels of concentration are good, and they take pride in their work. Students are polite and are committed to working collaboratively in partnership with the teaching staff to develop their performance. There are very few non-participants in the lessons seen and there is a strong commitment to an ethos of mutual respect in the department.

197. Overall the quality of learning and teaching is good. At both key stages, teaching and learning is good in over 90 per cent of lessons. Teachers show a good understanding of the National Curriculum programmes of study and the activities being taught. Students achieve well in relation to prior attainment. Overall students concentrate well, listen attentively and follow instructions. They are eager to answer questions and maintain good levels of physical activity. The care of physical education resources is good. Teachers manage students well and maintain very good relationships with their classes. Their expectations are high, particularly with performance and behaviour, so ensuring a positive ethos for all. The rate of progress throughout the school is good. Significant proportions of students progress well and are supported by the very good extra-curricular provision in sport. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and there have been further improvements in planning since the last inspection. They have supported learning in the students' ability to develop and apply skills and techniques as well as apply tactics and compositional ideas.
198. There is some inconsistency in the planning of lessons. The good teaching is exemplified by effective planning. In these lessons, there are clear aims to ensure that students make progress in evaluating and improving their performance. The planning ensures that students develop an understanding of fitness and health related exercise in relation to the activity. Some teachers share the aims of the lesson with students so they are clear about what they have to do. The activities are challenging so that students achieve highly. The department tries to ensure that all students have equal access to the curriculum but sometimes, the match of task to the different attainment of the pupils is not appropriate. There is very little evidence of unsatisfactory teaching but where it exists there is lack of challenge so pupils do not make satisfactory progress.
199. The Key Stage 3 subject guidance ensures coverage of the statutory curriculum. At Key Stage 4, the statutory regulations are covered through the rigour of the GCSE short course in Year 10. The physical education team is to be commended for introducing the GCSE short course. There is access for all students and it is a positive aspect in raising the profile of the subject as well as raising standards in the subject. The department has piloted a new options programme in Year 11 this year. It aims to develop and utilise off-site activities but evaluations show there are significant gaps in the approach, progress and learning of a significant number of students. Evidence supports the departmental evaluations that the programmes of study at the end of Key Stage 4 do not ensure progress for all students which was evident in previous years. There is a need to ensure more rigour in the planning of teaching and learning within the Year 11 options programme of study. Enrichment opportunities are extensive and well supported by a significant number of students continuing in sport out of school hours. As at the time of the last inspection, students achieve excellence through representation at area and county level.
200. The department provides a very caring atmosphere in which students can learn and grow and there are good procedures for the monitoring of attainment and curriculum coverage. Assessment procedures are established and there are plans to implement the new levels of the National Curriculum in physical education. The current policy is under review and a key area for development is the on-going assessment of students in lessons.
201. The leadership and management of the department are good. The team has a clear vision and plans for improvement. The curriculum manager provides clear direction and has built a good ethos within physical education. All teachers and students are valued and this leads to a department that works well together. He is fully supported by a dedicated team of specialists committed to continual improvement. Standards in GCSE are very good and there is a commitment to raise achievement throughout the school.
202. Accommodation is adequate for the teaching and learning of physical education. There have been significant improvements in the quality of the indoor facilities. A core team of specialists teaches most of the classes. This supports good teaching in the subject. The department is involved in partnerships both internally and externally which enhance the curriculum. Staff development needs are considered carefully and deployment is satisfactory. There is a need to conduct an audit of individual needs and to develop a more balanced approach to roles and responsibilities within the team

203. Documentation is helpful, schemes of work are being developed using national guidance, and risk assessments have been completed. The departmental action plan is in place and includes a balanced approach to team and whole school issues. Further development should focus on a more long-term improvement plan with clear criteria for evaluation.
204. Comments in the last report were positive and since then there have been a drive and commitment to further improvement. The school has achieved the Sportsmark Award. There has been a focus on raising standards, developing a range of curriculum opportunities and planning for improvement in many areas of physical education. This has raised the status of the subject and there is a determination within the department to be in the forefront of developments in physical education and sport.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

205. Attainment in Years 7 to 9 is in line with the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus for 14 year olds and there are occasional examples where this is exceeded. This provides a very sound basis for improvement. In Years 10 and 11, attainment is above average and this has improved since the last inspection. Results in the GCSE short course were well above average.
206. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, attainment of fourteen year olds is consistent with expected levels. There are many good examples of students developing their knowledge and understanding of religious principles and concepts, such as equality, prophecy, creation and resurrection. They make sense of what they study and can relate it to their experiences of life. In Year 7, students developed a sound knowledge of Muhammad as a messenger from God. Students in Year 8 were able to demonstrate a balanced argument for and against Jesus' resurrection from the tomb. In Year 9, discussion enabled students to relate religious concepts, such as life, death and justice to their own lives. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress although some attention needs to be given to increasing the use of appropriate materials and resources. Overall, learning is good.
207. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, attainment in Years 10 and 11 reaches expectations and sometimes exceeds it. In Year 10, students demonstrate a developing understanding of religious concepts such as suffering and concepts of God. There are good signs of the development of a problem solving approach and evidence of developing values. In Year 11, examination preparation work shows good evidence of an analytical approach, leading to the early development of abstract thinking. Students in all years displayed confidence in discussion and there were many examples of good creative writing.
208. Overall, students' attitudes to learning are very good and in some cases excellent. They behave very well, are generally highly motivated and apply themselves well to their work. They collaborate very well with each other and work at a productive pace. The relationships between teachers and students is very good, and teachers support individuals both academically and personally. Teachers are particularly attentive to the specific educational needs of both higher and lower attainers.
209. Teaching is good overall. It is good or better in three quarters of lessons, and very good in half of all lessons seen.
210. There is one qualified specialist and three non-specialist teachers in the department at present. All teachers are secure in their knowledge of the subject, and display confidence in the use of material and resources. Planning is good, and builds up students' knowledge, understanding and skills progressively. Lesson aims are shared with students in most cases so that students are clear about what they have to learn. Teachers make good use of questioning to consolidate current learning and to review previous work. They use a suitable range of styles that help pupils to maintain their interest and develop understanding of religious principles and concepts. Resources are well used, especially worksheets and video material. These enable students of different needs to learn appropriately. Teachers manage student behaviour very well. Extension work and homework are used to good effect. However, the setting of homework is inconsistent. Assessment of students' work is generally satisfactory and helpful comments are made in exercise books. Although the procedure does provide a sound basis for assessing what students

know and understand, it does not inform the teaching and learning cycle and the planning of new work. The department is inconsistent in setting detailed targets against which it can assess students' progress.

211. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is broad, balanced and meets the requirements of the East Sussex Agreed Syllabus. Schemes of work are well planned and appropriate. The short course GCSE is taught to all students in Year 10, and some in Year 11. Other Year 11 students follow a general course broadly in line the GCSE, but not for examination purposes. Although all students take religious education, the statutory requirements are not met with regard to sufficient time to meet syllabus requirements. This was a key issue at the last inspection and, although action has been taken to provide the subject for all students, this requirement is still outstanding. Syllabus material does make provision for spiritual and moral development. There are opportunities for students to respond to religious beliefs and practices, but fewer chances for reflection.
212. The department is well managed, with a clear sense of purpose and direction. The acting curriculum manager is very well supported by the team. The department is well organised and planning is good, and monitoring of the work of the department is adequately carried out. Support for the newly qualified teacher is good. A new curriculum manager has been appointed for September 2001. Currently, there is no departmental development plan to tackle priorities and form the basis for future action. Documentation is generally good. There are regular formal meetings of the department. The minutes suggest that these provide a good arena for the discussion of issues. Accommodation is satisfactory with good displays that celebrate student achievement. Curriculum resources are good.

MEDIA STUDIES

213. Media studies is taken at Key Stage 4 although some is taught at Key Stage 3 within English by teachers who have the expertise and interest. Attainment in 2000 was average but this was unusual as in the previous two years, attainment was well above average. Girls outperform boys significantly.
214. The inspection found that attainment is above average and there are still differences in performance of boys and girls. The subject is taken by students with a wide range of attainment, many of whom have difficulty with literacy skills which prevent them from articulating their ideas clearly and with detail. Nonetheless, achievement is high because of the good teaching which motivates the students. A strength in their attainment is their ability to analyse media texts. Many have a good understanding of the techniques used in video, film and advertising. They draw well on this knowledge to produce their own work and to analyse the work of others.
215. Students are managed very well, particularly those who are less motivated. As a result, behaviour and attitudes towards the subject are very good. In the lessons observed, every student worked hard and sustained concentration throughout the lesson. They collaborate well in groups and both boys and girls are prepared to participate. In one lesson, a lively debate ensued between the students about a point in a video they had been watching. Their learning was extended through the debate. Many are independent; all make notes when listening to or watching media text making very good use of the forms that have been devised by the staff. They arrive ready to work. Their behaviour and attitudes are a contributory factor in their high attainment.
216. Teaching is good overall and many features, such as the management of behaviour, are very good. Teachers have a very good understanding of their subject and they use this well to select resources that will motivate the students, particularly the boys and those who could be disaffected. This also supports the development of students' skills in the subject. They use the technical language of the subject well so that students are confident about its use and their discussion has more precision. They are enthusiastic about the subject which motivates the students. Very good encouragement is given to developing literacy skills, such as making notes, and encouraging students to present information in different language forms, such as video, tapes or graphics. Discussion is used particularly effectively to extend students' knowledge and understanding of the subject. Questions are open-ended which provokes thought, thereby deepening the students' understanding. Expectations of work and behaviour are high so

students work hard. Relationships are very good so students are confident to try out their ideas in small groups or in front of the whole class.

217. The department is led most effectively and staff put much of their time into supporting students, for example through the lunch-time club which is available on most days. Subject guidance for Key Stage 3 is being developed to ensure that students make good progress in their learning. There are plans to introduce a wider range of examination options to give students more choice as it is a popular subject.