

INSPECTION REPORT

Coquet High School
Amble

LEA: Northumberland

Unique Reference Number: 122363

Inspection Number: 189482

Headteacher: Mr Paul Allen

Reporting inspector: Mr Geoff Headley
1714

Dates of inspection: 6 – 9 December 1999

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	County
Age range of pupils:	13-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Alan Hellowell
Date of previous inspection:	September 1996

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Deborah Granville-Hastings <i>(Lay Inspector)</i>		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development; Attendance; Support, guidance and pupils' welfare; Partnership with parents and the community; Staffing and accommodation.
Carmen Rodney	English.	Curriculum.
Tom Shephard	Mathematics.	Efficiency of the school.
Cyndi Milliband	Science; Equal opportunities.	
Terry Parish	Design and technology.	Learning resources.
Ian Bulman	Geography; Religious education.	
Richard Merryfield	History.	
Maureen Sinclair	Information technology.	
Ron Bulman	Modern foreign languages.	
Martin Flatman	Music.	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
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Joe Clark	Special educational needs.	

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- There is a very positive ethos and an effective learning environment.
- The school has a large number of good teachers.
- Teaching is particularly strong in design and technology where standards are high.
- Many Year 9 pupils do very well in the national tests in mathematics and science.
- The school is a harmonious community. Pupils behave very well, they have good attitudes; there are respectful relationships between pupils, and between pupils and teachers.
- There are good links with neighbouring schools and very good links with the community.
- There is good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Administration and routine financial control are very good.

• Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Marking and assessment need to be more rigorous, so that pupils know what levels they have achieved, so that they are set targets and are told how to improve their work.
- II. Information on pupils' prior attainment and their current performance is not used enough to raise standards.
- III. The relatively large senior leadership team is not working efficiently or effectively to monitor and evaluate the work of the school.
- IV. Sixth Form provision needs review because the high cost is leading the school into financial difficulties.
- V. Whilst there are good features in the provision for pupils with special educational needs, there are shortcomings in some important aspects.
- VI. A required element of design and technology is not taught at Key Stage 3; an element of information technology is not taught to all pupils at Key Stage 4; religious education is not provided for all Sixth Form pupils.

The school's strengths greatly outweigh the weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents and guardians of pupils at the school.

· **How the school has improved since the last inspection**

The strengths identified at the time of the last inspection have been maintained and there have been improvements in the quality of teaching and in some examination results.

The school's response to the key issues of the 1996 inspection has been partially successful. A range of strategies has been implemented to raise the standards of attainment; some have been successful but the impact of others has yet to be seen. The number of pupils who have a poor attitude and are inattentive in lessons is now insignificant. The quality of oral work has improved. A systematic approach to monitoring teaching and learning has contributed to the improvement of both. The Sixth Form curriculum has been enriched. Little progress has been made in assessing pupils' progress; there is inconsistent practice across the school, because procedures for checking the implementation of agreed policies are not always effective.

The school has the capacity to make further improvements.

· **Standards in subjects**

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

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

In 1999, the Key Stage 3 English results were slightly lower than in the previous year but the mathematics and science results improved. In both mathematics and science the proportion of pupils achieving beyond the expected level was above national figures and well above the average for similar schools; in English it was in line in both categories. Over several years, pupils' performance has been closer to national figures in mathematics and science than in English. Girls do better than boys in mathematics and science compared with the national average for their gender; there is no difference in English.

In 1999, the GCSE results were in line with the national average after being below average for several years. Boys usually do better than girls in relation to the national average for their gender.

The average points score at A Level has been below the national figures for several years and this was also the case in 1999. Boys did better than girls although sometimes the position is reversed.

· **Quality of teaching**

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 9	Good	English; mathematics	
Years 10-11	Good	English; design and technology	Physical education
Sixth Form	Good	Science; design and technology; geography; religious education	
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

Ninety five per cent of lessons are at least satisfactory, 16 per cent are very good and 5 per cent are unsatisfactory. There is no significant difference between the key stages or the year groups. There is good teaching in varying proportions in all subjects, but in mathematics, design and technology, geography, music and religious education about three quarters of the lessons were judged to be good. There are particular strengths in design and technology, where a large majority of lessons are very good and excellent. Mathematics is the strongest of the three core subjects.

Teachers know their subjects well and plan their lessons thoroughly. There are weaknesses in the marking of work, and in the use of assessment to judge how well pupils are doing and to plan future lessons.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Good; pupils behave well in classrooms and around the school.
Attendance	Satisfactory; unauthorised absence is low but authorised absence is higher than the national average. Punctuality is good.
Ethos*	Good; the school creates good conditions for learning; pupils have good attitudes and relationships are good; there is a strong sense of community.
Leadership and management	Satisfactory; the headteacher gives principled leadership; senior managers, particular, need to be more effective in monitoring aspects of the school's work. Governors are very supportive.
Curriculum	Satisfactory; broad and balanced overall but an element of design technology is not taught in Key Stage 3; an element of information technology is not taught to all pupils beyond Key Stage 3; religious education is not provided for all Sixth Form pupils. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
Pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory; they are taught well and they make satisfactory and sometimes good progress; resources are unsatisfactory and individual education plans lack precision.
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall; spiritual, social and cultural development are good; moral development is very good.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Satisfactory overall; staff are well qualified and effective; the accommodation provides a good learning environment; resources are adequate, but some used for pupils with special educational needs are poor in quality.
Value for money	Satisfactory; the budget is well managed and used efficiently overall; the relatively large senior team is not used efficiently; Sixth Form provision is expensive and leading to financial difficulties.

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

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school

VII. The school is easy to approach and responds to complaints and suggestions.

VIII. The school enables pupils to achieve good standards.

What some parents are not happy about

IX. Inconsistency in homework provision.

The inspectors endorse the generally favourable views of the school expressed by parents in the questionnaire, in letters and at the pre-inspection meeting. Parental concerns about inconsistency in homework provision were confirmed during the inspection. However, its use and effectiveness are good in the majority of subjects.

· KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

To secure the improvements which have already taken place and raise standards further the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- X. adopt a consistent approach to marking and assessment, so that pupils know what levels they have achieved, and so that they are set targets and told how to improve their work;
(Paragraphs: 31, 42-45, 69)
- XI. extend the use of information on pupils' prior attainment and other performance data, so that all teachers can contribute to raising standards, and subject departments can set targets for achieving better examination results;
(Paragraphs: 46, 71, 72)
- XII. ensure the efficient use of the senior leadership team by redefining their roles and responsibilities, so that their contribution to monitoring and evaluating the work of the school is more effective;
(Paragraphs: 69, 70, 87)
- XIII. review Sixth Form provision and develop a strategy which does not lead the school into financial difficulties;
(Paragraphs: 39, 86)
- XIV. deal with the shortcomings in the provision for pupils with special educational needs by: improving the quality of resources, making the individual education plans more precise, ensuring that pupils' progress is monitored and giving sufficient time for co-ordination;
(Paragraphs: 61, 70, 80, 83)
- XV. ensure that statutory requirements are met for information technology, religious education and design and technology.
(Paragraphs: 14, 39, 76, 130, 147, 166)

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

- XVI. reading should be promoted more widely in subjects other than English;
(Paragraph: 11)

- *.department development plans should be more precise and link more closely with the whole-school plan;

- *.*(Paragraph: 73)*

- *.pupils' personal organisers should be used consistently;

- *.*(Paragraph: 22)*

- *.risk assessments should be done more frequently.

- *.*(Paragraph: 62)*

* **INTRODUCTION**

* **Characteristics of the school**

1.Coquet High School is situated on the outskirts of Amble, a small coastal town in Northumberland. The school serves the surrounding rural villages and small centres of population near to the coast. The coal and fishing industries were once significant features of the area but these have declined. The area has high unemployment.

2.The school educates boys and girls between the ages of 13 and 18; there are 598 pupils on roll. With very few exceptions the pupils transfer from one of two middle schools. Currently there are more girls than boys but this is not always the case. All pupils except five are white and two have English as additional language. The socio-economic circumstances of the pupils vary considerably but the majority experience some form of disadvantage. The proportion entitled to free school meals is in line the national average. The proportion of pupils on the special educational needs register is below average but the proportion who have a statement is average. Attainment is below average for the majority of pupils who enter the school in Year 9.

3.The school aims to enable individuals to discover and develop their abilities; to provide a high quality education that will prepare students for life; to enhance the partnership with the community.

4.Academic targets set by the school were surpassed in 1999. Appropriately challenging GCSE targets have been set for 2000 and 2001.

5.Key indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	80	90	170

5. National Curriculum Test		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	36	51	50
	Girls	65	56	54
	Total	101	107	104
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	59(63)	64(61)	61(57)
	National	63(65)	62(59)	55(56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	21(35)	40(36)	33(29)
	National	28(35)	35(36)	20(27)

5. Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	49	54	53
	Girls	67	64	62
	Total	101	108	115
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	68(67)	73(68)	67(62)
	National	64(62)	64(64)	60(62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	27(29)	49(36)	34(29)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28(31)

¹ Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attainment at Key Stage 4²

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	55	85	140

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	18	45	50
	Girls	42	73	79
	Total	60	118	129
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	42.9(35.8)	84.3(84.3)	92.9(96.2)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	90.7(89.8)	95.7(95.2)

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and percentage of *such pupils* who achieved all those they studied:

	Number	% Success rate
School	8	100
National		N/a

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

Attainment in the Sixth Form³

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

Year	Male	Female	Total
1999	21	18	39

Average A/AS points score per candidate

	For candidates entered for 2 or more A Levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A Levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	15.9	10.9	13.9(13.3)	0.5	1.3	1.1(2.4)
National	18.6	18.6	18.6(17.6)	3.1	3.3	3.2(2.8)

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

	Number	% Success rate
School	13	100
National		N/a

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

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:

			%
Authorised	School		9.6
Absence	National comparative data		7.9
Unauthorised	School		0.7
Absence	National comparative data		1.1

5.

5. Exclusions

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

	Number
Fixed period	31
Permanent	6

5. Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	16
Satisfactory or better	95
Less than satisfactory	5

5. **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

5. **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

5. **Attainment and progress**

6. In 1998, pupils' attainment measured by the Key Stage 3 Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science was in line with the national average and above average compared with similar schools; the best results were in science. In 1999, the English results fell slightly but the mathematics and science results improved. In both mathematics and science the proportion of pupils achieving beyond the expected level was above national figures and well above average for similar schools; in English it was in line in both categories. The average levels achieved in all three core subjects place the school above the national average and well above similar schools. Over several years, pupils' performance has been closer to national figures in mathematics and science than in English. Girls do better than boys in mathematics and science compared with the national average for their gender; there is no difference in English.

7. GCSE results have been below the national average for several years; in 1998 they were also below average compared with similar schools. Between 1994 and 1998 the results rose but at a slower rate than nationally. In 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades increased to 43 per cent, placing the school closer to the national average than in previous years. The proportion gaining five or more A*-G grades and one or more A*-G has not increased and remains well below national figures, although in these categories the school's figures are depressed because several lower-attaining pupils take other accredited courses as an alternative to GCSE. The overall results, using the average points score, are broadly in line with all schools and similar schools. Over several years, boys have usually performed better than girls in relation to national figures for their gender. In 1998, the results in art, design and technology and business studies were above the national averages; both English and English literature were in line but all other subjects were below. In 1999, art and business studies improved further; design and technology fell slightly although the results remained above average. The English and English literature results remain in line with national averages. Mathematics and science results have improved and are now broadly in line with national figures. Pupils achieved above average results in history, music and in the religious education short course. Pupils entered for vocational courses usually complete the units and achieve an award.

8. At A Level the average points score has been below the national average for several years, and this was also the case in 1998 and 1999, with a small rise between the two years. In 1999, boys performed significantly better than girls. Entries to some subjects are relatively small, making a comparison with national results difficult; however, an above average proportion gained A or B grades in art and design, biology, design and technology and geography. English attracts the largest number of entries and the proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades is well below average. Pupils entered for GNVQ Intermediate and Advanced courses usually gain a pass or merit although distinctions are achieved less frequently.

9. Evidence from observing pupils in lessons, talking to them and looking at their work shows that attainment is average in the Sixth Form; there is a wider range of attainment at Key Stages 3 and 4, with a significant minority of pupils attaining below the expected level. There are no significant variations in attainment by gender. Attainment is most often above the expected level in design and technology, geography and music, although in all three subjects standards vary between the key stages. Pupils with special educational needs mostly attain the standard of which they are capable. In some lessons, particularly when they receive close support, their work is of a good standard and in line with other members of the class. Only two pupils come from homes where English is not the first language; they are new to the school and current provision is improving their language skills satisfactorily.

10. The previous inspection commented on the poor oral skills of pupils in virtually all subjects. The school has worked hard to tackle this issue by developing and implementing a detailed and succinct policy, supported by a handbook on how to promote speaking and listening skills. As a result, good progress has been made in developing this area of pupils' work. They speak with confidence and clarity when taking part in oral work and most subjects develop good speaking and listening skills during question and answer sessions. For instance, in design and technology, Sixth Form pupils are adept when asking questions, analysing and making deductions about their work. Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 also make good use of these skills in science, information technology and business studies. Group work is used extensively in English, science, mathematics and business studies to develop oral skills. Good discussion skills were seen in modern foreign languages where Sixth Form pupils discussed Jean de Florette. Role-play is used effectively in English and business studies. In the latter, Sixth Form pupils engage in role play to explore different styles of management.

11. Reading is satisfactory overall although with the exception of the English and special educational needs departments it is not promoted extensively in most subjects. Although most subjects do not use the well-equipped library sufficiently, progress has been made in developing pupils' library skills since the last inspection. Most pupils read accurately and can select, use and re-present information, but too few opportunities are provided for them to read aloud in lessons or hear teachers read. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, read aloud in history with great fluency and understanding. Paired reading takes place in English, and some Sixth Form pupils work with the younger ones in Year 9, to help them improve.

12. Pupils generally write accurately and for a range of purposes. Planning and drafting skills are used effectively in science, design and technology, business studies and modern foreign languages. Insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to write at length in several subjects. In design and technology, pupils annotate drawings and designs and exemplars of work are used to stress high expectations. Writing skills are emphasised in geography and religious education; in the latter, pupils are often given challenging writing tasks. In both subjects, pupils write fluently and accurately and the high-attainers make good use of idioms in their writing. In several subjects, Year 13 pupils use a wide range of complex sentences and vocabulary in comparison with Year 12 pupils. Throughout the year groups, subject specific vocabulary is reinforced, particularly in English and mathematics, but in science, technical words are not used often, and when they are they are not understood. Throughout the school, handwriting is mostly legible and neat and the majority of pupils spell reasonably

well.

13. Many subjects provide pupils with opportunities to use and develop numeracy skills. Standards are satisfactory overall, with some of the higher-attainers working very confidently. In geography, bar charts are produced to record climate change over time, and scales are used with confidence; there is excellent use of 6 figure grid references to locate physical features. In science, pupils use a range of formulae and have opportunities to measure as an integral part of their lessons. In design and technology, very accurate measurements are made in the engineering course. There is good use of pie and bar charts in English when, for example, the most admired heroes and villains are being considered. In information technology lessons, pupils use spread sheets and data bases and use graphs to represent results. There is an emphasis in the Sixth Form GNVQ courses on the use of a full range of numeracy skills. These opportunities are encouraged by the staff teaching the courses and fully exploited by the pupils.

14. The use of information technology across subjects has improved since the last inspection; however, statutory requirements are not fully met beyond Key Stage 3. Year 9 pupils are confident and competent at a range of processes, and attainment is generally above national expectations. Key Stage 4 and Sixth Form pupils retain their enthusiasm and those who are involved in accredited courses develop new skills and achieve an appropriate standard. Others reinforce the skills learned at Key Stage 3, but they do not progress sufficiently. They are not given sufficient opportunities to apply their knowledge to new situations; an aspect of the subject is not taught at Key Stage 4 and the core skills expected in the Sixth Form have not been developed. There is some good use of information technology in English, mathematics, geography and modern foreign languages but most other departments are still planning its use. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in literacy and numeracy through using dedicated computer programs.

15. Across all subjects, pupils make at least satisfactory progress in the vast majority of lessons, with little variation between key stages. In about half the lessons, progress is good and it is often very good in design and technology and, to a slightly lesser extent, in religious education and the GNVQ courses. Overall, the rate of progress is the result of good teaching and well-motivated pupils. Unsatisfactory progress, in about 6 per cent of lessons, is related to weaknesses in teaching, sometimes because temporary staff are not sufficiently prepared and sometimes because other staff do not present pupils with challenging tasks. Pupils who receive in-class support from an additional adult, because of their special educational needs, make good progress. This happens because staff have regard for the individual education plans and they make appropriate adjustments to their methods and lesson content. Furthermore, the arrangement for grouping pupils by prior attainment works well because several pupils with special educational needs are taught together enabling teachers to focus specifically on their difficulties.

16. The progress made by pupils over time is generally satisfactory. This is the case for most subjects, including the core subjects where pupils' progress to the end of Key Stage 4 can be measured against the results achieved in the Key Stage 3 national tests. In science, however, several pupils who achieve good national test results do not fulfil their potential in the GCSE examinations. Cognitive ability tests administered by the school when pupils are in Year 8 of

the middle schools are additional indicators of satisfactory progress. The progress of the pupils who continue into the Sixth Form is also satisfactory.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

17. Overall, pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are good. They show interest in their work, sustain concentration and are willing to apply themselves to the tasks set. Most pupils ask and answer questions readily, they join in discussions and contribute well during lessons; their response was judged to be good in two thirds of lessons. Many pupils are confident, good-humoured and relaxed. They are often enthusiastic about learning, particularly in English, design and technology and business studies where they are highly motivated. Good listening skills help pupils to work well in lessons. In English, religious studies and business studies, in particular, pupils work effectively in small groups, discussing problems and arriving at joint decisions. For instance, in English, Year 11 pupils, working on a radio broadcast, showed good collaborative skills. Most pupils organise themselves successfully and carry out tasks well, negotiating roles and talking about their work easily. Many pupils use group work to support each other and they show appreciation of each other's efforts.

18. The behaviour of the vast majority of pupils around the school and in lessons is good, although there is a very small minority of pupils who mis-behave and can cause disruption to lessons and other pupils' learning. A very small number of lessons, mostly involving Year 9 pupils, were affected in this way. Pupils understand the code of conduct, which is displayed in all classrooms. They were involved in reviewing the rewards and sanctions system and consider it to be fair and consistently applied. Pupils socialise well outside the classroom. They identify with their year group social areas and congregate there at breaks and lunchtimes. The atmosphere is good-humoured and calm even when busy, and pupils move on to their next lesson in plenty of time without prompting. Anti-bullying is given a high profile through assemblies and the personal and social education programme. Pupils report there is little bullying and if it arises, it is dealt with quickly.

19. Most pupils with special educational needs show a willingness to learn and their behaviour in lessons is generally good. Almost all special educational needs pupils mix well with other pupils and they are fully integrated into the life of the school.

20. The level of temporary exclusions has risen since the last inspection in response to the unacceptable behaviour of a few pupils. The school has reviewed its behaviour policy and established a school discipline register. This acts as a structured approach towards handling disruptive behaviour and ensures that all situations are dealt with in the same way. The school is also using new strategies to help pupils learn how to become responsible for their own behaviour and be aware of its effect on others. A youth development worker takes a group of Year 11 boys to the Dovecote Centre one afternoon each week where they work on establishing positive attitudes towards others and themselves. An outreach worker will shortly be joining the school to work in a similar way. There have been two fixed term exclusions this term so far which is less than other years. All exclusions are fully documented and parents are involved at all stages.

21. The quality of the relationships in school is good. Pupils get on well with each other and generally have a respectful relationships with staff. Most pupils are polite and friendly. They

are relaxed and chat to visitors easily and naturally.

22. Pupils' personal development is promoted through the personal and social education programme in which pupils are encouraged to think about their own attitudes and approach to school and life in general. This is satisfactorily supported in other subjects. For example, in religious education pupils show sensitivity about the beliefs and values of others. In geography, pupils accept that others will hold a different point of view, illustrated by their discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of different methods of farming. There are few opportunities for pupils to help in the day-to-day running of the school, but pupils say that staff do respond to suggestions and take note of their views. The use of pupils' personal organisers is inconsistent across the school. When they are used well, they offer an opportunity for pupils to become responsible for their own learning and organising their work. The careers programme introduces pupils to the world of work and is well supported by the work experience programme.

23. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities to encourage pupils' personal development. There are drama, music and sporting clubs, field trips and residential trips, and a curriculum enrichment week at the end of the summer term. Sixth Form pupils have a council which organises events and charity work. They also have the chance to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, the Young Enterprise scheme and Changemakers. Through these schemes, pupils are becoming aware of the world outside school.

Attendance

24. Attendance at the school is satisfactory, as was the case at the time of the last inspection.

25. For the school year, the attendance rate was 89.7 per cent but this was the first time it has dropped below 90 per cent. Attendance has consistently been around 90 per cent for several years. The current attendance rate for this school year is 93.4 per cent which is above the national average of 91 per cent. In 1998/99 the unauthorised absence was low (0.7 per cent) but the authorised absence was 9.6 per cent against the national average of 7.9 per cent. This suggests that absence is often condoned by parents despite the school's numerous attempts to persuade parents of the importance of regular attendance. Nearly 20 per cent of the authorised absence for this autumn term was for holidays during term time.

26. The school is shortly moving to a computerised method of recording registration. This should improve the collection and use of data. The school makes effective use of outside agencies, and the support network to help those pupils with serious attendance problems is good. Good attendance is encouraged through termly certificates.

27. Registration is carried out appropriately by form tutors and subject teachers. Registers are marked accurately and there are clear guidelines to ensure staff record absences correctly. Punctuality is satisfactory. Most pupils arrive on time and lessons begin promptly.

28. There is a clear policy for attendance in the Sixth Form. Year 12 pupils must be in school every morning and are allowed study leave in the afternoon when they do not have a lesson. Year 13 pupils only have to be in school when they have lessons. All pupils must sign a contract agreeing to the conditions and stating the exact times they should be at school. They also sign in and out so the school is aware of which pupils are on site. Most pupils respond maturely and the attendance rate for the current term is 93 per cent.

28. QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

28. Teaching

29. In the last inspection, the quality of teaching was judged to be generally sound and often good; about 12 per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory. Since then teaching has improved and it is now good overall. 95 per cent of lessons are at least satisfactory, including 56 per cent which are good, very good and occasionally excellent; 5 per cent of lessons are unsatisfactory. There is no significant difference between the key stages or the year groups. There is good teaching in varying proportions in all subjects, but in mathematics, design and technology, geography, music and religious education about three quarters of the lessons were judged to be good. There are particular strengths in design and technology, where a large majority of lessons are very good and excellent. Mathematics is the strongest of the three core subjects although the difference between it and English is slight. The unsatisfactory lessons are not centred on one subject or year group; they occur very occasionally in, mathematics, science, design and technology, modern foreign languages, physical education and personal and social education. Weaknesses are largely to do with uninspiring delivery of lessons, and with a lack of opportunities for pupils to be involved. Occasionally teachers' expectations are low; there is not enough challenge in the work set and pupils are allowed to work at a slow pace; temporary staff who are not sufficiently prepared, account for some unsatisfactory lessons. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from mainly good teaching. Teachers are aware of their difficulties through the individual education plans and work is set accordingly.

30. Teachers know their subjects well and plan their lessons thoroughly. Their knowledge of the pupils enables them to set appropriate tasks and help them to make at least satisfactory and mainly good progress. A range of features characterises good teaching. For example, Year 9 pupils reading *The Kingdom by the Sea* in an English lesson, benefited from detailed and careful planning which ensured that their understanding was checked and they made appropriate progress. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson, a very brisk pace accompanied by good work on the board enabled pupils to gain a clear understanding of double inequalities. In a very successful science lesson, Year 10 pupils were helped to learn about cells because the teacher used a range of effective self-made resources to explain the phenomenon. Well presented introductions and good use of time and resources, features of several art lessons, promoted Year 10 pupils' skills in, and understanding of, ceramics. Low-attaining Year 11 pupils making tables in design and technology were given precise and skilful demonstrations and then required to work at a fast pace, while receiving close attention from the teacher. Year 10 pupils had the learning intentions clearly explained to them in an information technology lesson designed to teach them about the Internet; the teacher's clear expectations

about their behaviour and the standard of their work were crucial factors in their making good progress. High quality questions and high expectations about pupils' answers were features of a very good geography lesson on landforms taught to Year 12 pupils. A sharp focus on subject vocabulary in a history lesson involving Year 11 pupils secured their knowledge when considering how the Mormons crossed the Great Plains of America. In one of the most successful modern foreign language lessons the teacher made effective use of a tape recorder to provide Year 9 pupils with a change of activity and an opportunity to speak spontaneously in German. A high level of challenge ensured that Year 12 pupils made very good progress in music technology; very good supporting notes gave pupils vital information about such things as melody, tone and harmony. Accurate assessment and the provision and good technical advice helped pupils consolidate and learn new trampolining skills in a Year 9 physical education lesson. Year 11 pupils were given an excellent problem-solving task when exploring evil and suffering in religious education; they were then challenged further by a homework task which required them to provide arguments for and against the existence of God. In a Year 10 business studies lesson pupils were given targets so that they dealt with sufficient material in the time available; they were then presented with problems to be solved and supported by the teacher's good intervention and summaries. Skilful management of a discussion, after the showing a video of *My Left Foot*, ensured that a high-spirited Year 11 class was kept on task and made good progress when considering discrimination in a personal and social education lesson. A group of Year 10 pupils, most of whom have special educational needs, also benefited from watching a video; in this lesson the teacher handled the topic of agriculture skilfully, with humour and patience, dealing with the pupils' short concentration span very successfully.

31. The teachers' use of marking as a means of monitoring pupils' progress lacks a coherent approach across the school and it is uneven in quality. In some cases there is unevenness within a department, such as in mathematics. Pupils' work is usually marked regularly but in most subjects teachers' written comments do not provide guidance on how to improve. There is particularly good practice in design and technology where pupils are involved in the process. The English department mark work very carefully and make some use of National Curriculum levels, but, as in most subjects, they do not share the criteria with pupils or set them targets. Marking in science is occasionally superficial, as it was at the time of the last inspection.

32. The use and effectiveness of homework are also uneven but are good in the majority of subjects. As was the case at the time of the last inspection, teachers usually use homework to reinforce and extend what pupils learn in school. Occasionally it is more carefully planned for the higher-attaining pupils than those in the lower sets. In science, the quality is better in the Sixth Form than in Key Stages 3 and 4. Some parents express the view that homework provision is inconsistent and it is not monitored. A few are concerned about there being too much homework.

32. The curriculum and assessment

33. The school has a curriculum policy with a broad aim to provide a high quality education that prepares pupils for life. The stated aims reflect the National Curriculum, several school policies, local and national priorities, the local education authority's (LEA's) curriculum

policy, and the needs of pupils; the aims take account of practical constraints.

34. An appropriate range of subjects is provided for Year 9 pupils. The curriculum meets National Curriculum requirements except in design and technology. Drama is taught within English but there is insufficient time to deliver it adequately. Higher-attaining pupils study German in addition to French, and the time for this is taken from physical education. As a consequence they receive too little time for physical education and their attainment and progress is adversely affected. Schemes of work are carefully planned, linked to the National Curriculum and they provide for continuity and progression based on a good liaison programme with the middle schools.

35. Pupils are taught in sets according to their prior attainment, or in mixed attainment groups. The setting arrangement contributes to pupils making good progress in several curriculum areas.

36. The curriculum in Key Stage 4 meets the National Curriculum requirements except for an element of information technology. All pupils follow a common core curriculum which includes religious education and personal and social education. In addition, they choose from an appropriate range of options. Pre-vocational courses are offered and are taken mainly by lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. The mixed academic and vocational courses promote a broad and balanced curriculum which prepares pupils for the Sixth Form, where they move on to A Level or the Intermediate or Advanced GNVQ courses. The allocation of time to each subject is adequate in all key stages.

37. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum and are taught in smaller teaching groups, which contributes to their making good progress in most subjects; they have full access to the curriculum. A member of staff from each department acts as a link with the special needs co-ordinator, to ensure that appropriate provision is made in both Key Stages 3 and 4. Support takes place mainly in lessons, and schemes of work usually take into consideration the attainment level of pupils.

38. Careers education is delivered through the personal and social education programme. A specialist team of teachers teaches the programme to all pupils in Year 9 and in Key Stage 4. The arrangements for careers advice are appropriate; additional advice is provided during a parents' evening before Year 9 pupils select their options for Key Stage 4.

39. The Sixth Form curriculum includes a good balance of A Level and AS Level subjects as well as GNVQ courses. Pupils are required to have achieved academic success for admission to the advanced courses. However, the rationale for acceptance on the courses is not clear and the small number of entries to most subjects brings the viability of the Sixth Form into question. The allocation of time to courses is satisfactory. The split lunch hour creates good opportunities for the school to teach a range of advanced examination subjects. For instance, the music department offers music and music technology and the religious education department has recently introduced A Level ethics and philosophy. Religious education is not available to all Sixth Form pupils and in this respect the school does not meet statutory requirements.

40. The narrow specialism of the Sixth Form curriculum criticised in the last inspection has been largely overcome. An enrichment programme is delivered to Sixth Form pupils and includes visiting speakers from industry and commerce, as well as a range of other useful studies and experiences. There is also an extensive enrichment programme for Year 9 pupils. Throughout the school good industrial links are established with a range of business and educational organisations.

41. The extra-curricular provision is good both in variety and quality. For example, opportunities are provided for drama activities and for pupils to develop their writing skills through competitions and writing as journalists for the local papers. There are opportunities for travel, visits to a range of places for the arts, and involvement in musical activities. The Sixth Form pupils are introduced to an array of conferences and seminars in preparation for further and academic life. Pupils with special educational needs have access to all activities but there are no clubs especially for them, to help them with reading or spelling, for instance.

42. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are unsatisfactory, with variations in practice between and, on occasions, within subjects. The school's expectations are set out in policies for assessment and marking, but there is a lack of whole-school monitoring and co-ordination which results in inconsistent practices.

43. Concerns regarding the inconsistency of assessment procedures were raised in the previous inspection as a key issue, but unsatisfactory progress has been made in dealing with it. Policy and practice have been reviewed, and modified procedures established. Assessment is required to be linked to National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades, and reflected in reports to parents. Guidance for marking work has been reviewed in a similar way, providing a common framework within which subjects are expected to operate. However, departments' systems are varied, and the school policies are not sufficiently monitored to ensure a coherent approach.

44. Within some subjects, there has been some progress in improving assessment procedures. For example, English, religious education, and design and technology are developing good portfolios of pupils' work to give internal consistency and help teachers to judge standards. In these subjects, more use is made of National Curriculum levels and attainment targets in assessing pupils' work. Statutory assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 are properly carried out in subjects, but in Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form only a few, including design and technology, history and religious education, use examination criteria when marking pupils' work. Where assessment procedures are strongest, for example in design and technology, religious education, and English, pupils' use of self-assessment is an integral part of the process. However, target setting for improvement is unsatisfactory in many subjects in Key Stages 3 and 4, and only features in GNVQ work in the Sixth Form. Overall, assessment procedures lack focus because of the unsatisfactory implementation and monitoring of the school's policy.

45. The information provided for parents through the annual profile and interim progress report has been improved since the previous inspection. The use of National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades in reports ensures that pupils' attainment and progress is properly

disclosed. However, few subjects provide clear guidance to support improvement, and pupils' self-evaluation and target setting are not well developed.

46. Standardised tests are administered by the school to pupils in Year 8 in their middle schools, and this information is linked to other assessment information in establishing an attainment profile when they transfer. Subject assessment data are good at this stage and help to determine the grouping of pupils on entry, and also help to ensure that they continue to make progress. The school is striving to develop and improve its use of information on pupils' prior attainment in order to analyse and predict success rates in subsequent public examinations. The use of GCSE data to predict A Level performance is beginning to work effectively, and individual pupils' progress is monitored efficiently at this stage. Elsewhere, however, performance information is not used well to plan work or to monitor pupils' progress. Cohort targets are not set in subjects so that success rates can be analysed and compared year on year, nor are minimum target GCSE grades set for pupils in Key Stage 4 as a strategy for raising pupils' attainment. In general, teachers do not have a clear understanding of how to use information on pupils' prior attainment to plan work, and monitor and improve progress in subjects. The use of data relating to pupils' prior attainment requires more systematic and rigorous whole-school analysis to identify the value that is added by each subject as pupils move through the school. Furthermore, the arrangements for assessing pupils with special educational needs are unsatisfactory. The standardised reading and spelling tests are only administered at the beginning of each year, which is insufficient to monitor pupils' progress.

46. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

47. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is significant and effective and is good overall. This is an improvement from the position at the time of the last inspection. The overwhelming majority of staff are fully aware of, and committed to, the school's mission statement and the school's values. The school works hard to enrich community life and to promote truth, honesty and justice. Respect is a hallmark of the way that pupils and teachers and others relate to one another. Almost 80 per cent of the parents stated that the schools' values have a positive effect on their children. Since the previous inspection the school has strengthened its spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision.

48. The school's provision for spirituality is good. The school effectively manages a daily act of worship for all pupils. Year groups meet with their heads of year four days each week for prayers following their form registration periods. In morning prayers, pupils are taught the importance of respect for persons and to care for the community and the environment. Pupils benefit from a series of readings and thoughts for the day which encourage them to reflect and consider key spiritual and moral issues. Prayer is a regular feature of these occasions. On the fifth day pupils meet with the headteacher, or one of the deputies, and they are encouraged to consider the importance of belief, respect for people, the community and the wider world.

49. Some departments contribute much to pupils' spiritual development. Through effective and challenging questioning in religious education lessons pupils are encouraged to think about the spiritual dimensions concerned with life and death. Pupils have been invited to visit the Auschwitz camp in Germany, the Taize community in France, a local Franciscan friary and a synagogue in Newcastle in order to extend their horizons. A local priest, a cell church leader and a Franciscan monk have all spoken to pupils in religious education classes about their spiritual journeys.

50. The school's provision for moral education is very good. Teachers throughout the school do much to promote a positive classroom ethos, in which pupils behave well, work hard and respect other people and the school's property. The code of conduct is posted in all teaching areas and often referred to when pupils need correction. The school's rewards system is very effective and ranges from classroom praise and encouragement to formal commendation awards and to the popular and prestigious annual awards ceremony. The school's awards are for a variety of positive attitudes ranging from effort, improvement, enterprise, community service and achievement in a host of contexts. The staff with responsibilities for pastoral care provide an effective link between class teachers, parents and external agencies and take much time to ensure that pupils know how to conduct themselves. The personal and social education programme helps pupils to come to terms with personal decision-making which will effect their future lives. The teachers invite personnel from the local police force, the careers service, the Samaritans and the prison service to contribute to the lessons. As pupils follow the religious education agreed syllabus they explore moral issues as they learn about various religious views on abortion, euthanasia, medical ethics, war and conflict.

51. The school's provision for pupils' social education is good. Although there are relatively few formal structures within the school, such as a prefect system or a school council, many pupils find ways in which they can take on personal responsibilities that help them to take decisions and to help others. For instance, Sixth Form pupils studying design and technology assist pupils in Year 9. The curriculum enrichment project is another example, enabling all pupils to spend time with fellow pupils and teachers on projects that give them great satisfaction and at the same time benefit others in the community. The group, for example, who decided to build the prayer hut for the school made a splendid building and left a much-valued place of quiet for other pupils to use.

52. The school's extra curricular activities have variable measures of support but all provide good opportunities for pupils of different ages to work together in safe and purposeful environments. Groups for sport, music, drama and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme are popular and numerically strong and rigorously promote team work and skill development. Other groups, such as the debating group, the newspaper group and the Young Enterprise group extend pupils beyond school life and introduce them to the challenges of adult working life and the world outside the classroom. Pupils, for example, who choose to be involved in music making, have opportunities to join the choir, the orchestra, the ceilidh band and other groups, and many will combine to represent the school in the tour of Holland in the Year 2000. The choir, who are making recordings with local radio, are learning much about the way that commercial radio operates and the importance of teamwork.

53. Pupils in Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form learn much about adult working life and practices when they go out of school on their work experience. Sixth Form pupils benefit

from the Understanding Industry course and they also visit higher education institutions to learn about opportunities for advanced study.

54. The school's cultural provision is good. Much is done to promote and celebrate the involvement of the pupils in a plethora of cultural activities. In classrooms and corridors, there are good examples of pupils' work representing several subject areas. Letters of thanks and congratulation from various bodies, such as the local Gazette, with which pupils have worked, are posted in the main foyer for all to read and to enjoy. The school does much to introduce the pupils to the richness of life outside the classroom. The art department ensures that pupils see some of the best works on display in galleries, and an artist in residence scheme gives them the opportunity to develop new skills under the direction of a professional artist working in school. English teachers work hard to provide pupils with texts that reflect the variety of cultures from which writers have been drawn and cover, for example, poems of Benjamin Zephaniah. The study of other works such as *To Kill a Mocking Bird*, *Roll of Thunder and Hear my Cry* contributes to pupils' understanding of cultures other than their own. The drama club presents pupils with opportunities to work alongside a professional actor and to produce plays for the public. The modern foreign languages department offers exchanges to European countries, although recent take up has been limited. In Sixth Form lessons, teachers make sure that as pupils study French and German literature the cultural backgrounds are thoroughly explained. The music department introduces pupils to music as diverse as Elizabethan madrigals, contemporary ceilidh and rock music. The religious education department ensures that pupils consider the religious beliefs of peoples and races from throughout the world and look closely at cultural and historical perspectives.

54. Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

55. The school continues to provide the good level of support and guidance it did at the time of the last inspection.

56. There is a good support and advice for pupils based on an effective system of year co-ordinators and tutors. Tutors and pupils stay together in Years 9, 10 and 11, which gives the opportunity to build stable relationships. In this way, the school provides a caring and supportive environment for pupils. Relationships throughout the school are good. Staff know pupils individually and have a genuine concern for their progress, welfare and personal well-being. Communication between staff is good, and the daily morning briefing is regularly used to pass on information. Pupils find that most of their teachers are approachable, responsive and encouraging. This contributes to their confidence and ability to cope with everyday school life. The school is generally a happy place and most pupils enjoy being there.

57. The quality of support that pupils with special educational needs receive from outside agencies, such as the Hearing Impaired Service, is good. All pupils who are entitled to an individual education plan have one provided and these are available to all teachers. The plans give details of pupils' difficulties but, overall, the information is too general. There are no short-term targets which pupils can reasonably achieve and against which they and their teachers can measure their progress. Pupils and parents are not involved in drawing up the plans.

58. The procedures for monitoring pupils' academic and personal development are satisfactory. The school has a lot of information on pupils' attainment and performance but as yet does not use it effectively to monitor progress. Every half term, subject teachers are asked to identify any pupils about whom they have a concern. The performance of these pupils is then checked across all subjects. In the spring term, pupils are given a grade for overall attainment, effort and behaviour. Year 9 pupils are expected to use their personal organisers, and Year 10 and 11 pupils may do so if they wish. Use of the organisers, even in Year 9, is inconsistent and makes little structured contribution to pupils self-review and target setting. The school has a system of Records of Achievement, but again, this does not contribute effectively to setting targets for pupils to improve. Approximately three times a year, tutors spend a full lesson with their pupils to review their progress. This year the school is using new progress planners from the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) as the basis for these lessons. Assessing strengths and weaknesses, and setting targets are specific activities that will be covered. Some subjects involve pupils in self-evaluation. In religious education, design and technology, and English in Key Stage 4 pupils assess their own work. Similarly, in business studies and the GNVQ courses, pupils complete regular evaluation of their performance and assess how they could improve. However, in most other subjects, pupils find it difficult to explain what they can and cannot do, or where they need to improve. The school offers extra support for those pupils who need it. Homework and revision clubs regularly take place after school, and mentoring of individual pupils has been particularly valuable.

59. The programme for pupils' personal and social education is carefully planned and mostly well taught. Pupils cover a range of topics and have the opportunity to debate and explore aspects of current affairs on local, national and international issues. The school is taking part in a pilot project with the county careers service. The careers co-ordinator is based in school and has direct input into the personal and social education of all pupils. The work experience placements are well managed. The overall quality of careers guidance for pupils is good, and is a valuable contribution to their personal development.

60. There are good systems and procedures for encouraging and maintaining good discipline and behaviour based on a climate of honesty and fairness. The code of conduct is well established and is supported by a system of rewards and sanctions that pupils generally respond to in a positive, mature and responsible manner. The good relationships between pupils and teachers also contribute to an orderly and calm atmosphere. The school has reviewed its behaviour policy since the last inspection and use of the school discipline register provides a structured and staged approach towards, monitoring, recording and handling unacceptable behaviour.

61.Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are satisfactory. An administrative assistant collates information from the registers and produces a daily absence sheet for staff to cross-check. There is an attendance profile for each pupil, recording absences with reasons from the beginning of Year 9. Weekly attendance figures are provided for tutors and year co-ordinators, but there is no monitoring of termly or annual attendance by year, gender or attainment groups, or the effect of non-attendance on attainment. The attendance of special educational needs pupils is not monitored specifically. The school is moving to a computerised registration system which will provide this data in the future. The school has a good relationship with the education welfare service, the home tuition service and other outside agencies. Together they provide helpful support for pupils and families. Good attendance is promoted through termly awards. Pupils' attendance rate is recorded on their annual report but not in their personal organisers.

62.There is an effective child protection policy. The designated teacher attends regular training and ensures that all staff are aware of the procedures. Good use is made of medical support and other outside agencies, and lines of communication are clear. The personal and social education programme raises pupils' awareness of issues relating to health, drugs, sex, safety and relationships. There are good arrangements for first aid and fire procedures. There is a health and safety policy in place. The last risk assessment was carried out in 1995 by the local education authority. The school needs to implement departmental risk assessments on a more frequent basis to ensure that issues are identified and addressed quickly. There were some safety issues raised with the design and technology department during the inspection.

Partnership with parents and the community

63.The school has maintained the good partnership with parents and the community reported in the last inspection and is continuing to develop these links.

64.Parents receive satisfactory information on school life through the prospectus, annual report from governors, the half-termly newsletter and regular letters home. Activities and achievements of pupils receive public recognition in the local press. Formal reporting to parents is through at least two parents' evenings each year; an abbreviated report in the spring term and a full written report in the summer term. Parents' evenings are well attended and the school makes contact with parents who cannot attend to ensure they have the opportunity to discuss their child's progress. The written reports are generally positive and encouraging. An attainment grade is given for each subject, but the teacher's comments rarely give a clear indication of what pupils can and cannot do, and how they can improve. The exception is in English, where the reports are specific and do give parents a clear picture of their child's progress.

65.Parents are positive about the school. Ninety one per cent of parents who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire find the school easy to approach with questions and problems. The home-school agreement was drawn up after consultation with parents. Although parents are expected to sign pupil's organisers, few do and this rarely acts as a means of communication between staff and home. The school has run parents' workshops on specific topics in the past but the attendance was always low. More recently, they have passed on

information during parents' evenings when parents are already in school. The parent/teacher association supports the school well. Not only does it organise several events to raise money for the school, it also acts as a vehicle of communication between parents and staff. Some parents have used it to pass on information, and similarly the school has used it to seek parents views on a range of issues. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed. They are invited to annual reviews and receive regular reports of their children's progress. At the pre-inspection parents' meeting and in letters, positive views were expressed about the school's support for pupils with special educational needs.

66. Links with other schools in the area are good. There are monthly meetings of the headteachers of all the schools in the local pyramid, and subject staff meet to ensure continuous provision across the key stages. Year 8 pupils in the middle schools begin a topic in English which they complete when they arrive at Coquet in Year 9. Transfer arrangements between schools are good and pupils settle into the high school quickly and comfortably. In music, there is an orchestra made up of pupils from first, middle and high schools and they perform regularly together.

67. Links with the local community are very good. The school sees itself at the heart of the community and takes that role very seriously. The programme of classes and activities covers a range of topics and is used by over four hundred every week. The Dovecote Centre is well managed by the school and provides a venue for a range of ventures and activities for all ages within the community. The youth development worker is based in the school and works closely alongside pastoral staff to help disaffected pupils. The school has a close relationship with the local police who often take part in personal and social education lessons. The school gives regular input into Alnwick Drugs Reference Group and assists in compiling the Alnwick Crime Report; some pupils have taken part in a conference on crime in Durham. Pupils organise and run a Christmas party for local elderly residents each year, and many work experience placements are within the care industry in the area. The whole school is involved in many charity events throughout the year and raises money for local, national and international charities. Representatives of charities talk to pupils in assemblies which helps improve pupils' awareness of the misfortunes of others. Through religious education lessons, pupils have visited local churches, friaries and the orthodox Jewish synagogue in Newcastle. Through the GNVQ courses, pupils have used a variety of hotels, hospitals, leisure centres and shopping centres to gather information to support their studies. The school has also many good links within business and industry. Some teachers have been on placements in businesses. There are very good links with Radio Newcastle, and pupils have taken part in a competition held by Quayside Law Courts. There are several examples of links with industry in the region and of the way in which the school uses the resources available in its community to support the curriculum.

67. THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

67. Leadership and management

68. The last inspection report noted that the school is guided by strong values and clear aims; this remains the case. The headteacher provides principled leadership, he is focused on school improvement and gives clear educational direction. He makes a significant personal contribution to many aspects of school life. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Some aspects need greater clarity and rigour to ensure that pupils' attainment is raised and the school moves forward as one. Responsibility for whole-school improvement needs to be more widespread.

69. The effectiveness of the two deputies is uneven. The senior leadership team which comprises the headteacher, the two deputies and four senior teachers is disproportionate to the size of the school and number of staff. The team is not working efficiently or effectively towards school improvement. Although individual's roles and responsibilities are mostly clearly defined, in practice they do not contribute to the monitoring and evaluating programme and their line management of departments is unclear. As a consequence some of the school's policies are not implemented as intended. The marking and assessment policies are examples of this.

70. In response to a key issue in the previous inspection report a systematic approach to classroom observations has been introduced. Documentation indicates that these have been carried out well and they have contributed to raising the standard of teaching. Other features, such as observing particular pupils and scrutinising their work, are also becoming effective. However, the onus falls heavily on the most senior staff, the headteacher in particular. These strategies are not carried out with the same degree of rigour by other senior staff and they are not carried out by heads of departments. In all other respects the quality of the school's middle managers, those who lead subjects and those who have pastoral responsibilities, is satisfactory; some are very effective in their roles. Management of special educational needs has good features in that the co-ordinator ensures that teachers are kept informed about individual pupils and he meets each subject department's liaison teacher twice per term to discuss current issues. However, there are also shortcomings because there is no department handbook and the very modest policy is not a useful document to guide staff on several important matters. Very little non-contact time is given to the co-ordinator to enable him to carry out all aspects of his role.

71. Much has been done to provide detailed information on pupils' prior attainment and this is available to all staff. The use of this data is increasing but needs strengthening. Although there are pockets of good practice the information is not used effectively to monitor progress or raise attainment. There is insufficient monitoring of the progress of pupils with special educational needs, particularly those who have moderate learning difficulties.

72. Departmental reviews take place annually through a meeting between the headteacher and each head of department. These are used to establish priorities for development and to analyse examination results. They now need to be conducted more rigorously so that departments' priorities become more sharply focused and are only concerned with significant areas for improvement. The analysis of results does not lead to performance targets and agreed strategies for achieving these.

73. Development planning is satisfactory overall. The process for identifying whole-school priorities is good, with staff, governors and parents involved at various stages. The current plan is well constructed and lists targets, action to be taken, timescales and staff to be responsible for overseeing implementation. There are weaknesses at department level because there is not always a clear link with whole-school priorities. The relevance of some priorities is questionable and often others are imprecise.

74. The governing body comprises long established members and others who have been appointed more recently. Between them they have a good range of expertise and interests. The chair of governors, a retired headteacher of one of the local middle schools, uses his knowledge of education effectively to advise his colleagues and discuss issues with the headteacher. The structure of the governing body's committees is sound, governors provide a good balance of support and challenge. The chair, in particular, knows the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors' see the school as an important community resource and this is linked to their determination to press for additional funds to maintain and extend Sixth Form provision. As these are not forthcoming governors must now face the consequences of a deficit budget and take difficult decisions about the school's future.

75. The school's aims are consistently promoted. There is a positive ethos, an effective learning environment and a strong sense of community. Relationships are good, pupils are valued and the headteacher takes the lead in promoting the belief that all can succeed.

76. Statutory requirements are mostly met. An aspect of design and technology is not taught in Key Stage 3; an element of information technology is not provided to all pupils in Key Stage 4; religious education is not provided for all Sixth Form pupils.

76. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

77. Overall, the match between the number, qualifications and expertise of teachers and the academic and pastoral needs of the school is good. Most teachers are well qualified to teach their own subjects. The design and technology department requires additional staff to be able to teach the systems and control element of the subject. However, this could be achieved through training the existing staff. In music, the teaching is supported well by a team of seven visiting instrumentalists who contribute to the standards achieved. A group of fifteen staff are involved in the personal and social education programme. Their experience and specialist knowledge supports the programme effectively and has a positive impact on pupils' personal development.

78.The number of support staff in the school is satisfactory, and they provide good quality support. A team of efficient administrative staff ensures the smooth operation of day-to-day routines within the school. A qualified librarian maintains the library effectively. Technicians work as a team offering support across the school. Overall, they are sufficient in number but their time needs to be better deployed. There is insufficient time given to science. Whilst the science lessons are well prepared, there is little time to organise and tidy workrooms. The quality of support for design and technology lessons is also good but is restricted to term time only. The level of support for information technology is satisfactory. Learning support assistants, who work with pupils who have a statement of special educational needs, are experienced, well qualified and provide effective support.

79.Overall, the arrangements for the professional development of staff are satisfactory. The school has a low turnover of staff. Over 55 per cent of full-time staff have been at the school longer than ten years. There is a policy for the induction of newly qualified and experienced staff. All new staff are assigned a mentor, with whom they meet regularly, to ensure that they settle in quickly and that school policies and values are implemented consistently. There is currently no mechanism for the formal appraisal of staff. Senior staff have observed most teachers in lessons, but the emphasis has been on monitoring pupils' learning rather than systematic analysis of teaching strengths and weaknesses. This process has benefited staff but it is not a legitimate replacement for appraisal. Procedures for staff development and training are in place. A recent audit of training undertaken by all staff since 1993, including non-teaching staff, identified several departments and staff where little had taken place. Staff review their own training needs annually. They can apply to attend a training course, and they must indicate how it relates to the departmental and school targets, and complete an evaluation afterwards. During the last year, most of the training has been initiated by individual requests rather than as part of global school development need. The exception to this has been in the area of information technology where most of the staff have received training of some kind.

80.The accommodation is good overall and provides a good environment for the teaching of most subjects. Music accommodation has improved since the last inspection but is still unsatisfactory. There is a need for a sound studio and additional practice rooms for all aspects of the subject to be taught satisfactorily. Changing facilities for physical education are too small. Food and equipment storage in the food technology areas does not meet with current hygiene requirements. There is no dedicated special educational needs base, where records can be kept, where interviews with parents and personnel from outside agencies can be held, and where support assistants can meet with the co-ordinator.

81.The main school building is pleasant and welcoming, and provides a good learning environment. It is kept very clean and in good order, and promotes positive attitudes on the part of pupils. In some areas there is good use of displays, notices and pupils' work, as in English, mathematics and art. There are social areas for each year group to meet at breaks and lunch time. These areas are big enough for year groups to meet for morning prayers. Since the last inspection, the Sixth Form social area has been moved to a room off the hall. The room is not big enough or appropriate for the social and study needs of all Sixth Form pupils. The condition of the site and buildings is mostly good, but the roof structure gives some cause for concern; tiles are often brought down during windy conditions, as observed during the inspection. There is very little graffiti, vandalism or litter around the school.

82.The school has adequate resources to support the current curriculum but some of these resources are showing signs of age and need replacing. In English, there is a need for more literary texts for wider reading in Key Stage 4 and a wider selection for pupils with low reading skills in Key Stage 3. Literature from other cultures is under-represented. The Sixth Form need more literary and language texts to meet the demands of the A Level course. On the other hand, the English department has an extensive video library, which is widely used and supports learning in many areas. Resources in mathematics and science are currently satisfactory, but new and more exciting texts would enhance learning. The provision of computers across the school is satisfactory. Most of them are in special suites with timetabled access. The general software used is appropriate but there is a lack of subject specific software for use within departments.

83.Resources for use with pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory in quantity but poor in quality. Many of those used in English and mathematics in particular, are old and unsuitable.

84.The library resource centre is central to the school and used for research and private study by many pupils. There is an adequate number of books, but closer liaison with subject staff would ensure a more accurate match with pupils' abilities and needs. The section which contains books suitable for pupils with special educational needs is tucked away in a corner and is not prominently or attractively displayed. The computers in the library are well used. Some have Internet access and all have the facility to use CD-ROMs.

84. The efficiency of the school

85.The full governing body and the governors involved in the committee concerned with finance take their responsibilities very seriously and oversee the budget process diligently. Governors are very supportive and meet frequently to consider all aspects of financial matters. The governing body contains governors with useful expertise who are well versed in the needs of the school and financial matters; they are given a firm lead by the chair. Recently governors have had to wrestle with difficult funding and expenditure issues.

86.In 1998 the school's basic budget plus grants and donations equated to an income per pupil which was higher than the national average. The school spent in excess of £8,000 more than it received during the financial year and used much of its reserves to cover the difference. It is estimated that all the school's reserves will be exhausted during the current financial year and its income will not cover the running costs. The governors' commitment and determination to provide a reasonable and appropriate range of Sixth Form courses to cater for a comprehensive cohort is the prime reason for the school moving into a deficit budget. Attempts are being made to resolve this serious financial problem.

87.The proportion of the school's income spent on staffing is above average. This is partly because many of the staff are experienced and have relatively high salaries and also because of the structure of the senior management team. It is larger and more expensive when compared with schools of a similar size and character. This resource has not been sufficiently well focused to provide efficiency in all aspects of the school management, particularly in respect of monitoring the agreed policies and practices. The teaching staff is

generally deployed appropriately. The support staff contribute to the smooth running of the school. They are well deployed and give a raft of valuable support to teachers and pupils.

88.The percentage of the budget spent on educational resources is quite high when compared with schools nationally. However, when taking into account the costs of whole school resource needs, the amount available for capitation at department level is not generous. The money provided through the Standards Fund and for special educational needs are appropriately distributed and used.

89.Financial controls within the school are very good. The school's accounts are regularly audited by external auditors and are found to be sound. The school keeps strictly to financial guide-lines. The school's finance officer manages the accounting system efficiently. She provided regular budget control reports for department heads, governors and other budget holders. No orders are placed or invoices paid without authorisation.

90.The day-to-day administration of the school's activities and routines are very good. The recording of attendance data is currently done manually, but a new system is due to be installed which will allow more detailed analysis for monitoring purposes. The office staff are very efficient with clear understanding of their duties and roles; they are well managed by the finance officer. All members of the administrative team play an important part in the school's smooth running and are highly valued. Communications are good and staff absence cover arrangements work well. The time-tabling process is sound. The site is well managed.

91.In general the school uses its resources efficiently and in a planned way. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are generally used appropriately. Teaching is good and pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory. Pupils' attitude to learning and their behaviour are good. Attendance is satisfactory. There is sound management; the school is giving satisfactory value for money.

91. PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

91. ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

91. English

91.

92. The Standard Assessment Task (SATs) results in Year 9 indicate that for the last three years pupils have achieved in line with the national average. Results show a rising trend and are average compared with similar schools. The 1999 results, however, were slightly lower than the previous year's in the percentage of pupils achieving level 5 or higher.

92. In the GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades in 1998 was just below the national average. There is no overall trend in the performance of boys and girls as their performance alternates from year to year. Results improved in 1999 and were the best since the last inspection. In 1999, pupils' attainment in English was higher than the average for mathematics and science. The number of pupils entered for the subject is below the national average as the lower-attaining pupils are entered for alternative accredited courses. Standards achieved in these courses are good. In 1998, pupils' performance in English was better than the average of all their other subjects; there was no difference in English literature. In the previous year their performance in English was similar to other subjects but they did less well in English literature. No figures are available for 1999.

93. A relatively small number of Sixth Form pupils are entered for the A Level examination. The proportion achieving grades A-B was well below the national average in 1998 and 1999. Results were closer to the national average in 1997 when all pupils achieved a grade, and one pupil was recognised nationally for being among the top five in the country to receive the highest marks in the examination.

94. The department promotes speaking and listening skills in all year groups and has made good progress in developing pupils' oral communication skills since the previous inspection. The previous report stated that some pupils were weak in oral communication because of regional pronunciation, intonation and vocabulary. Current inspection evidence confirms that regional accent or dialect does not adversely affect the spoken and written words.

95. In Year 9, the high and average attaining pupils are articulate when talking about their work. They can speak at length and work effectively in groups to exchange view points. This was well illustrated in a lesson where pupils planned and delivered a provocative piece of drama based on *Z for Zachariah*. Group work and an enthusiastic approach contribute to pupils developing good oral skills. Oral skills are satisfactory for the lower-attaining pupils. Overall, pupils speak softly and do not always project their voice.

96. In Key Stage 4, pupils listen to each other and take different viewpoints into consideration before responding. They use discussion skills to develop their ideas, as seen in Year 11 lessons where pupils worked on prioritising, summarising and presenting a continuous flow of reports and bulletins for a radio broadcast. Pupils do not make an equal contribution to group work and some average and lower-attaining pupils have a narrower vocabulary and are unable to develop their viewpoints convincingly. The high-attaining pupils are vociferous and express their views clearly and forcefully as seen in the feedback

sessions on Armitage's poems. In this lesson, their responses were sustained and they used their initiative to broaden the discussion to include moral and ethical issues. Drama is used in Key Stages 3 and 4 as a presentational device and to develop oral skills. In the Sixth Form, pupils respond satisfactorily to questions but many are reticent speakers and do not contribute to oral work unless they are drawn into it.

97. Good reading skills are encouraged through the regular timetabled lessons for Year 9 and 10 pupils. In these lessons, pupils use the Internet and reference books to develop research skills. Their knowledge of authors and their ability to discriminate in their reading increases when they write book reviews and use the Internet to compile reading lists for a specific age group. In Year 9, the reading project on writing a storybook for young children has a positive impact on the development of pupils' reading and writing skills. The research and standard of many books are outstanding, with well written, illustrated narrative.

98. Attainment in reading is good for the high and many average-attaining pupils in Year 9 and Key Stage 4. In Year 9, these pupils read with understanding and have a good grasp of plot, the use of language and the complexity of relationships between characters. This was seen in their responses to *Z for Zachariah* and *Of Mice and Men*. They understand and know how to select relevant points and quotations to support their views. Pupils with special educational needs read at A Level below the national expectations and do not have a sound grasp of text in order to explain their views.

99. By the end of Key Stage 4, Year 11 pupils use a range of reading skills, such as skimming and scanning, to identify the main points when summarising a text. The average-attaining pupils read with understanding, but the implicit meaning is not always recognised. The high-attainers read analytically, as seen in their textual analysis of Russell's 'Terraces.' They have a grasp of the key features of an article and the use of language when responding to media assignments. This was seen in their work on contrasting and comparing an article as reported in two different newspapers. Sixth Form pupils read critically and have a sound appreciation of literary texts. The high-attaining pupils read closely and are confident in their exploration of the use of language and dramatic devices, as seen in their work on Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urberville* and Friel's Translations.

100. Writing is good for the higher and many average-attaining pupils in all year groups. They write accurately, and extended writing is well structured. Spelling is mostly correct and grammatical features are used accurately. They use a wide vocabulary and creative writing is of a high standard, particularly their poetry and stories for children. The lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, write at length but many make basic grammatical errors. They have a narrower vocabulary and the written power of expression is below the standard expected nationally. There are, however, exceptions as illustrated in a Year 10 class in which there were several lower-attaining pupils. Pupils receiving support and using a range of source materials produced some well written emphatic writing to describe the horrors of the First World War. Pupils use the processes of writing well but editing and proof reading skills are not always carried out with care as they rely on the teachers to correct errors.

101. Towards the end of Year 9, writing is more soundly structured and in Key Stage 4, pupils in their self-assessment sheets show a growing understanding of technical features. Sixth Form pupils use research notes to increase their understanding of literary criticism, and their essays are well planned and written. Handwriting is neat and legible and information technology is used extensively by many pupils to set out their work stylistically.

102. Most pupils make good progress in all areas of the subject. In Year 9, pupils make good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills when they work in groups and use talk to deepen their understanding. The high and average-attaining pupils in Key Stage 4 make good progress when they use talk to explore their learning; lower-attaining pupils make satisfactory progress. Progress is satisfactory in the Sixth Form, although some pupils lack the confidence to make presentations and take part in discussions.

103. Progress in reading is good for Year 9 pupils, because they develop research skills and consolidate their understanding of texts. Progress is satisfactory for lower-attaining pupils in Year 9 and Key Stage 4. In Key Stage 4, higher-attaining pupils make good progress in analysing their reading. Sixth Form pupils make sound progress in developing their understanding of literature; they make more progress in sharpening their critical analysis when they discuss their reading.

104. The high-attaining pupils in Year 9 and Key Stage 4 make good progress in developing their writing skills as they write concisely and skilfully for different audiences. Lower-attaining pupils make satisfactory progress but grammatical errors mar their work. They make good progress when they use scaffolding to plan their work. Good progress is made when pupils use information technology effectively to polish pieces of work.

105. Pupils have good attitudes towards their learning, and they work hard in lessons. Good listening skills contribute to their progress. They are particularly productive when they work collaboratively. Relationships are good. They readily accept instructions and support, and are very much at ease with their teachers. The older pupils in the Sixth Form are studious and take responsibility for their learning as they prepare well-researched papers. However, they lack the confidence to make presentations.

106. Teaching has many positive features; it is good overall with some lessons being very good. Teachers use interesting activities and resources to develop pupils' oral communication. Lessons are well planned. They are particularly effective when planning reflects the needs of all pupils, challenging work is set and teachers intervene to act as an assessor and evaluator. Good use is made of resources, including audio-visual resources; drama and primary source materials are also used well. Questions are used to review learning, although lessons are not always summarised. Activities are not always timed to introduce more challenge and pace, and discussion skills are undeveloped. Homework is used to raise standards. Work is carefully marked but target setting is not used.

107. The curriculum meets national requirements. Drama is taught as part of English but there is not a specialist teacher to provide pupils with a good grounding in drama techniques.

108. The department has clear guidelines for developing pupils' understanding of the subject. Teaching, learning and the curriculum are monitored but data are not analysed sufficiently to set targets as part of the development plan or to identify the action to be taken to improve standards.

109.

109. Mathematics

109. The attainment of the pupils entering the school is broadly in line with the national average. Pupil's attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 in the Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) is close to the national average and above average when compared with similar schools. A higher percentage is attaining Level 6 or above than are nationally. In general, girls attain a higher standard than boys. The 1999 results show an improvement on previous years.

110. The percentage of pupils gaining a GCSE grade in the A*-C range in 1998 was 33 per cent against the national average of 44 per cent; results were better in the previous year but still below average. In both years, pupils' performed less well in mathematics than in the average of all other subjects taken. The results in 1999 show an overall improvement with 46 per cent of pupils gaining A*-C grades, which is broadly in line with the national average. In 1999, the results were similar to science but not as good as English, whereas in 1998 they were lower than the other two core subjects. The achievement of boys and girls varied significantly between 1997 and 1999. In 1997 the boys' results were particularly good compared with the girls; in 1998 the results of both groups were similar. In 1999 the girls performed very well. In 1997 and 1998 pupils performed less well in mathematics than in the average of all other subjects taken. No figures are available for 1999.

111. All seven pupils entering the 1998 GCE A Level examinations gained grades but the percentage gaining higher grades did not compare well with the particularly good results in 1997. In 1999, eight pupils entered the examination. All gained a grade with the percentage gaining grades A and B being broadly in line with the national position. A small number of pupils entered the AS examination in pure mathematics. The sample is too small to make a valid statistical comparison with national results.

112. Attainment assessed during the scrutiny of work, talking to pupils and when observing lessons is in line with national standards in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the Sixth Form. In Year 9, pupils in school since September have settled well and are attaining appropriately. In Key Stage 4, attainment is a little better in Year 10 than in Year 11, particularly in the higher sets. There is no significant difference between the overall performance of girls and boys at this stage of their programme. Pupils with special educational needs are attaining appropriately and some are attaining well, particularly when receiving specific support. Attainment in Years 12 and 13 is variable, but, overall, the levels are in line with last year's results. There are some pupils in both year groups attaining particularly well.

113. In Key Stage 3, pupils' progress against previous attainment is good in the majority of the lessons. In Year 9, pupils are building on previous knowledge and understanding. There is progress in enhancing mental arithmetic skills, with time allocated in some lessons to exercises and tests to improve speed and competence. During most lessons many pupils

make progress when newly introduced concepts are grasped, and they are then able to work at more difficult examples. In Key Stage 4, progress in all the classes seen except one was satisfactory or better. Progress in Year 11 is particularly good, with pupils now facing external examinations. In some groups pupils are able to extend their classroom work by using selected interactive software in a computer room. In one class where computers were used, pupils' understanding of probability was greatly enhanced, and in another the characteristics of polygons unfolded to reinforce earlier learning. Pupils with special educational needs in Key Stages 3 and 4 are making good progress. The department's setting arrangements, teachers' awareness of the individual education plans, and the use of good support staff being significant factors. Progress in Years 12 and 13 is satisfactory overall with many pupils making good progress.

114. The department has been successful in creating a working ethos in which most pupils feel comfortable and supported. They normally respond well to this. In all classes except one, the response was mainly good. Pupils enter the room quietly, settle quickly, and they are attentive during the lesson introductions. In many classes, pupils show a marked reluctance to volunteer answers but when asked directly by the teacher they will confidently and fluently answer in detail, using correct technical terms. They can, and will, explain the reasons for their answers and the methods used. In some cases, pupils will work at the board to illustrate points. Pupils' attitude to the work set is generally good and they behave responsibly. Some groups are highly motivated, keen to complete the work set and generally present their work well. In one class the pupils initially 'tested out' a supply teacher with a diminishing level of success. The pupils in this class were very inconsiderate rather than overtly badly behaved.

115. The quality of teaching in almost all lessons is satisfactory or better; it is good overall and a few lessons are very good. This is maintaining the standard shown in the last report. There is a noticeable similarity in the conduct of most lessons. Aims of the lessons are clear, there are good and often lively introductions, with pupils fully engaged and responding to questions. The quality of some of the teachers' questioning is particularly good ensuring that the pupils understand and extend their knowledge. The content of the lessons is thoughtfully selected and pupils are expected to present their work well. There are some differences in the regularity and the quality of the marking and the review of pupil's work. Teachers demonstrate a good understanding of the level of attainment within the classes. They set appropriate work and offer strong support. However, there is little evidence that pupils are made aware of their own strengths and weaknesses, other than in very general terms. Homework is not regularly set by all teachers, particularly in the lower sets.

116. The head of department respects the professional integrity of the members of the mathematics department and exercises his leadership by enthusiasm and example. He has clear and firm views that are reflected in the policy statements in the department handbook. In the last report there was criticism of monitoring in the department. While there has been some improvement this is still not strong enough. Most members of the department are well qualified, very experienced and with good subject knowledge. Resources are adequate for the day-to-day running of the department but there is little money available for developmental work and the replacement of books as they become outdated or worn.

117.

117. Science

117. In the 1999 Key Stage 3 Standard Assessment Tasks, 61 per cent of pupils gained Level 5 and higher which is above the national average; 33 per cent gained Level 6 and above which is well above average. Results were also well above average compared with similar schools. Girls outperformed boys at the higher levels. Standards have improved since the previous year where they were broadly in line with the national average and over the period 1996 to 1998 when they were close to it.

118. GCSE results in 1999 were broadly in line with the national average. They are an improvement on the previous year at A*-C grades but lower at grades A*-G. Girls achieve more of the A* and A grades than boys. The latest science results are in line with mathematics but a little below English. In 1998 they were better than mathematics and below English. In 1997 pupils performed less well in science compared with the average in all other subjects taken; this position was reversed in 1998. No comparative figures are available for 1999.

119. The number of pupils studying A Level science is too small for valid comparisons to be made with national figures. However, boys were notably more successful than girls. Biology results were best of all, where all pupils achieved pass grades. Work seen during the inspection displayed a wide range of attainment between the discrete science subjects and between Years 12 and 13; a few pupils have achieved top A-B grades so far in modular tests.

120. Standards in lessons, and in work seen during the inspection usually reflect the national test and examination results: attainment by the majority of Year 9 pupils is above the national expectation and that of Year 11 pupils is in line with it. Attainment is affected by the variable quality of teaching: for example, several pupils in lower sets reach higher standards than expected when teachers have high expectations of their capabilities and plan stimulating lessons. In contrast, some higher and lower-attaining pupils achieve lower standards than expected. This is because of weaknesses in teaching, in planning and in knowing how to monitor what individual pupils really understand. Overall, pupils' knowledge and understanding of physical and life processes, living things and materials are better than their ability to explore their ideas by investigation. In learning more about ecology, pupils in Year 9 know why oxygen levels decrease in polluted water. Higher-attainers analyse different food chains for quantities of biomass, and lower attainers do this with their teacher's support. Pupils in the Year 11 top set know that pressure is measured in atmospheres and quickly grasp what might happen to pressure and volume of a trapped mass of a gas. Others do this with guidance. Sixth Form pupils diligently attempt to understand the mechanism of movement in guard cells, the complexities of molar masses of compounds and 'yield point' and 'breaking stress' in wire.

121. Pupils continue to develop good measuring skills, mentioned in the previous report. Number skills are well developed using calculations and formulae. For instance, Year 9 pupils accurately graph experimental results and in Year 13 pupils use complicated formulae to calculate the potential energy of gravity. There are good examples of the use of scientific

vocabulary where teachers emphasise technical language throughout a lesson, although extended writing is not used enough. Good examples of the use of information technology were seen in course-work, graph plotting and data logging, but the general use of computers is restricted because of insufficient software and access to facilities. Standards of handwriting and the presentation of records are nearly always good.

122. By the end of Year 9, a high proportion of pupils carry out class experiments competently, with an understanding of predictions, based on scientific knowledge and fair tests. At the end of Year 11, the very highest attainers identify sources of error and extend their conclusions from closer examination of results. When results are deeply interrogated, good evaluations are made of the patterns discovered while investigating; for instance, the effect of acid rain on germination of cress seeds. However, much class experimental work is carefully structured and guided and there is not enough independent investigative work. Plans are required for course-work investigations but too often a 'method' is recalled written as a recipe, copied from the board or text book for class experiments. While the very highest attainers can quickly interpret results and draw conclusions, others have difficulty using their own knowledge of science ideas and research. Records show confusion between 'analysis' and 'conclusion', but they also illustrate a very good standard of two-dimensional diagrams in much of the work.

123. Progress is good in Year 9 and in the Sixth Form, where teachers are particularly effective in building on work done before and helping pupils cope with new complicated tasks, for example, when studying the elasticity of materials. Their skills of discussion and debate, however, develop slowly. Progress is broadly satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, although there are several pupils who are not achieving their potential standard based upon results achieved at the end of Year 9. Progress is very good where resources are imaginative, interesting and relevant and capture the interest of pupils. In a low-attaining set in Year 10, pupils made very good progress because their teacher had high expectations of their capabilities to make a micro-slide preparation of a leaf and then quickly identify chloroplasts. They did this from watching their teacher build a model of a plant cell from 'everyday bits and pieces' and use green peas to represent chloroplasts. Progress is at its best where lessons are carefully planned to speedily encourage learning. The majority of pupils are able to organise and use a growing range of equipment safely, and make measurements with increasing accuracy, although their observations do not become increasingly sophisticated as expected. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to that of other pupils. This is as a result of the skills of teaching support assistants, and, to a limited extent, because of resources within the department. Pupils within the higher-attaining sets, however, are not given sufficiently demanding activities for them to make their best progress. Progress is slowed down by too much guidance by teachers, and insufficient tasks and questions that require pupils to apply information themselves. Progress is unsatisfactory when too little attention is given to ensuring that daily lesson plans indicate exactly what pupils are to learn. Very occasionally, poor behaviour disrupts learning and inhibits progress.

124. Pupils' attitudes to learning science are generally good. They are co-operative with nearly all of their teachers and they help each other. Sixth Form pupils are always generous, polite and good humoured as they tackle complex problems. Younger pupils cheerfully explain their work as they busily share equipment safely, and happily record results of variable resistances in electrical circuits. For example, they are attentive towards work that interests them about the effects that increased levels of methane gas have upon the environment.

There are, however, not enough occasions when pupils ask questions themselves to enquire more deeply into a topic, mostly because they are given too few opportunities to do so.

125. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with notable examples of good and very good teaching. It is consistently good in the Sixth Form. It is unsatisfactory in a small proportion of lessons. Where weaknesses occur they apply to unsatisfactory planning of ideas, and weak monitoring of what individual pupils have actually understood. In many lessons, pupils are encouraged to learn in a happy atmosphere, for instance, when grappling with understanding the meaning of technical words like 'osmotic potential'. Good lessons continue to be brisk in pace as mentioned in the previous report. In the best lessons, work is made demanding, yet interesting, by using several different resources to explain an idea. In these, teachers meticulously focus upon what pupils need to learn. Expectations are high in these lessons and pupils make very good progress. However, the work provided for higher-attaining pupils is not demanding enough. Marking is still occasionally superficial, as mentioned in the previous report. Occasionally comments on classwork are helpful and focused on guiding progress, but they are seldom acted on by pupils. Homework is regularly set to extend learning in the Sixth Form but it is not sufficiently well organised or imaginative for all pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4.

126. The department is increasingly evaluating its own performance. It has yet to monitor the progress of individual pupils as they move through the school and compile portfolios of work. Schemes of work need revision. Procedures for monitoring teaching and learning and sharing good practice through regular classroom observations, mentioned in the previous report, need now to be implemented. There are few displays that celebrate the achievements of pupils. There is no science club but the curriculum is enriched for Sixth Form pupils through conferences about particle physics, ultrasound and industrial ecology.

127.

127. OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

127.

127. Art

127. The GCSE results have been above the national average for several years and they were well above in 1999. In the last two years a higher proportion of pupils gained an A* or A grade than did so nationally. In 1997, pupils performed better in art than in the average of all their other subjects.; the position was reversed in 1998. No figures are available for 1999. More girls than boys take the subject but there is no discernible pattern to the performance of each gender.

128. The small number of pupils taking the A Level examination makes comparisons with the national results difficult. However, pupils in the school generally do well, with some achieving the highest grades. In 1999, seven were entered for the examination and all achieved at least a grade C.

129. Attainment of the current cohort of pupils in Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form reflects the standards achieved in the past. There is clear evidence of pupils making good progress through both the GCSE and A Level courses. A Level pupils are working to the expected standard in the practical elements of the course, but their knowledge and understanding of the historical and contextual aspects are insecure. Their work, in both two and three dimensions,

shows that they can experiment successfully and use a range of techniques to communicate their ideas. Their paintings are often vibrant, they can manipulate images and work in different scales. They are not always confident to break away from traditional or orthodox subjects but they have sufficient technical skills to ensure that the outcomes are generally of a satisfactory or good standard.

130. Key Stage 4 pupils are working successfully to the GCSE examination criteria. They display similar characteristics to the Sixth Form pupils, in that they need encouragement to take risks when formulating and realising their ideas. As they approach the examination in Year 11, they get better at using sketchbooks to record visual information and to research and explore different ways of working. They can work from a starting point such as architecture or natural form, and express and develop their ideas successfully. Their ability to interpret artistic style and the work of specific artists is not as good as their technical skills. A small group of pupils with special educational needs working towards an alternative accreditation in art have very low level skills in all aspects of the subject, although they are making satisfactory progress. Pupils with special educational needs working within the GCSE groups usually attain appropriately, especially when directly supported. A piece of work depicting stained glass, done by a visually impaired pupil was of a good standard and equal to that of others in the class.

131. The majority of pupils attain below National Curriculum expectations by the end of Key Stage 3, although they are not far below the required standard; this represents satisfactory progress from the level with which they enter the school. Several pupils in the higher-attaining groups have reached an appropriate level and some show good technical and expressive skills in their drawings and paintings. Weaknesses are to do with their insecure knowledge about artistic style and their lack of understanding of how their work might be influenced by a range of factors. Pupils have not developed appropriate research skills and they do not use sketchbooks as they are required to do.

132. Pupils' response to the subject is never less than satisfactory and is good overall. In most classes, pupils can work independently, and at a reasonable pace. They are usually attentive when the whole class is receiving instructions and they listen closely when a teacher talks to them individually. They respond well to teachers' interventions and try to apply the advice given. Most pupils have a pride in their work and talk freely about the processes, and the difficulties they have encountered. Year 9 pupils making paper mache models, as a follow-up to studying figure drawings, were willing learners and enthusiastic about their own efforts. In Key Stage 4, the GCSE groups are purposeful and they collaborate well when required to do so; those following the alternative course comply with the tasks but their interest is somewhat superficial. Sixth Form pupils are becoming serious artists. This is evident when they are working practically because they select their own techniques and materials, and experiment confidently. Their response to an art history, although satisfactory, lacks the same degree of enthusiasm.

133. Teaching is mostly good because of sound subject knowledge, good organisation and planning and respectful relationships with pupils. Resources are carefully selected and pupils are shown work done by other pupils as guidance about likely outcomes. When demonstrations and explanations are necessary they are clear and to the point. Pupils receive sufficient individual attention during all lessons. Teachers suggest solutions to problems and provide good technical advice but they do not always challenge pupils intellectually. They

provide insufficient opportunities for pupils to make evaluative comments about their own work or the work of others. Pupils are taught well about the importance of thinking through their ideas and designs, and then experimenting before starting their final piece. However, teachers do not always insist that pupils make reference to their preparation as the project unfolds, and this lowers the standard of some work. Good quality questioning features strongly in the best lessons. For instance, in a Year 10 lesson where pupils were considering shapes in buildings and then working with clay, the teacher helped pupils overcome some difficulties and develop appropriate drawing techniques by posing open-ended questions. The quality of teaching contributes to pupils making at least satisfactory progress in all lessons.

134. National Curriculum requirements are met overall, although provision for pupils' knowledge and understanding of art needs strengthening, as does their use of sketchbooks. Some of the projects need a modular approach so that pupils' progress can be checked every few weeks. Examination courses are planned and delivered appropriately. The curriculum is enhanced by contributions from resident artists and visits to galleries and other places of interest; this is an improvement since the last inspection. Assessment procedures are emerging but have not been established long enough in their present form to provide teachers with good quality information on pupils' attainment and progress. Assessment of Key Stage 4 work needs to be closely matched to GCSE criteria, and pupils need to be told explicitly how their work matches to examination grades and what they need to do to improve.

135. Some, but not all, of the issues raised in the last inspection have been tackled. The use of information technology is planned but not yet implemented, and provision for more reference books has been made very recently. The department is well managed by a very recently appointed head of department who is building on the strengths of the department and quickly tackling the areas which need development. However, a more precise department development plan is essential if the changes are to be managed effectively.

136. **Design and technology**

136. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below national expectations, but by the end of Year 9 it is close to them, especially in making and designing in wood, metal, plastic, and in food. Their knowledge of systems and control remains below expectations. By the end of Year 9, pupils can cut, shape and join materials, work from a given design and dimensions and produce their own designs which they can present in the form of very good annotated drawings. In food technology they can adapt recipes and produce such products as the 'alternative Christmas pudding' to a good standard.

137. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is well above the national average and has been maintained since the last inspection. In 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining an A*-C grade was 59 per cent and 99 per cent gained at least a grade G. The percentage of higher grades was slightly lower than in 1998 and the same as 1997. However, in the same period the proportion of pupils entered for the examination has risen to 82 per cent of the cohort, well above the national average. It is noteworthy that, of the 39 pupils who took the resistant materials examination in 1999, all of them gained grades between A* and D, with 85 per cent getting an A*-C grade. This is very high compared to national averages. In all aspects of the subject both boys' and girls' results are above national averages; girls perform better than boys, in line with the national picture. Lower-attaining pupils do well. Those considered unlikely to benefit from entry to GCSE take a County accredited course in workshop skills, making such things as tables. This course is proving invaluable in supporting pupils to enter employment.

138. By the end of Year 11, within relevant GCSE options, pupils can create annotated working and isometric drawings to at least a good standard; over half is of a very good standard and the best work is excellent. Pupils are confident in working with wood, metal and plastic. They can discuss their ideas, on the whole fluently, although girls are generally better than boys at this. The lamp ideas in the current Year 11 show an uncommon variety and many have a degree of design flair. Lower-attaining pupils can make things such as table legs with care, and give attention to accuracy and good quality finish. In food technology, pupils can design a variety of foodstuffs, for example breads and take-away items, after carrying out research and questionnaires.

139. In the Sixth Form, pupils do well, making at least good progress from Key Stage 4, and their attainment is in line with expectations. Small numbers of entries, make comparisons with national averages and the identification of trends in attainment difficult. In 1999, the nine A Level results ranged from A to D with three pupils gaining an A or B; this is above the national average. GNVQ engineering results vary from year to year with a mixture of passes, merits, and distinctions.

140. Pupils' work in the Sixth Form is of a good standard. In A Level home economics, pupils can analyse diet and food stuffs for content such as dietary fibre. They can then design recipes and make food products to a very high standard, using ingredients in imaginative ways. In addition, they can use fair testing procedures well to evaluate products such as irons, toasters and coffee makers. In A Level design and technology, pupils can lay out annotated design sheets to a very high standard and make such things as chairs from limited materials in a range of styles. The quality of some is equal to first year undergraduate work. Pupils in GNVQ engineering can write work plans and use a range of tools and machines to fabricate from steel. The highest attainers can design and make their own jigs to help themselves and their peers with the work. The quality of pupils' work and their proficiency with portable electric tools is far better than that found in most schools. This development has been well supported by a local partnership with the company Bosch.

141. Overall, pupils make very good progress through the school, including those identified with special educational needs. Manageable class sizes, very good teaching, the very good attitudes and the excellent behaviour of pupils, all contribute to this progress. Pupils' personal development is also very good. As they get older they show a developing capacity to motivate themselves and get on with work and also help their peers. Relationships between pupils, and pupils and teachers, are always at least good; relationships are excellent in the Sixth Form and in many Year 10 and 11 classes.

142. The quality of teaching is almost always good or very good and sometimes excellent. In this range, teachers' high expectations of pupils are supported by very good planning and individual support for pupils. Pupils' research, investigation and self-reliance are fostered. In the satisfactory lessons, pupils still made satisfactory progress but more able pupils were insufficiently challenged. An unsatisfactory Sixth Form lesson lacked pace and variety and pupils knew and understood little more at the end of it than at the beginning.

143. Teachers' assessment practice and marking of work is very good. Pupils are involved in evaluation of their work and this helps to make clear what is expected of them and how they can improve. Very good use is made of exemplar pupils' work from previous years to help raise aspirations and attainment. Target setting in Key Stage 4, based on Key Stage 3 test results and teacher assessments, is not a feature of the assessment practice.

144. The curriculum in Year 9 serves the three options in Key Stage 4 very well, and good groundwork contributes to very good standards at the end of Key Stage 4. However, it does not meet all the requirements of the National Curriculum. Technological content, especially that relating to systems and control, is thin. The Key Stage 4 curriculum does meet national requirements but does not allow pupils to pursue systems and electronics; this affects the higher-attaining pupils who would benefit from it. Pupils' use of computers in both key stages is unsatisfactory, and resources, such as computer-assisted machining devices are not used as well as they once were. Whilst the pupils studying graphic products are now using computers to support their work this does not extend to other areas, although data are presented in the form of graphs in food technology and GNVQ engineering, and pupils are confident at basic presentation. Pupils are not making sufficient use of the resources on the Internet which are specifically designed for schools. The Sixth Form curriculum is good; A Levels are complemented by intermediate and advanced GNVQ courses.

145. The leadership and management of the department are excellent. There is a collegial style, work is monitored and there is an ethos that fosters high attainment. Appropriate priorities for development have been identified. Resources are generally very good but there are limitations in respect of computer-assisted equipment. There are some health and safety issues associated with the storage of food, and the positioning of hazardous equipment which need attention.

146. The department is very efficient, achieving high standards comparatively cheaply. Many consumable items, such as wood, are obtained free of charge from local sources. The recognition which the department achieved five years ago and which led to an injection of national financing has proved to be very well deserved.

147. Geography

147. On entry to the school, the attainment of the majority of pupils is below average and, for the remainder is well below average. Pupils make good progress as they move through Year 9 and, by the end of Key Stage 3 their attainment is in line with national expectations.

148. Pupils have a secure knowledge of climate. They can use well-understood criteria to analyse, for example, the annual rainfall and temperature ranges of a variety of locations, including desert regions, and explain the patterns for seasons in regions to the north and south of the equator. For instance, in a lower-attaining set in Year 9 pupils made rapid progress in their understanding of deserts, the variation in temperature, animal and plant life through the use of an informative videotape followed by well targeted question and answer and discussion sessions. This experience also enhances progress over time, enabling pupils to understand the impact of climate on the life of the inhabitants of the region.

149. As pupils move through Key Stage 4, progress is good. Many of the pupils who take GCSE geography enter the course with levels of attainment that are generally below national expectations. Examination results over the past three years are below the national average for the proportion of pupils gaining grades in the A*-C range, and in line with the average for the proportion gaining A*-G grades. In the 1997 and 1998 examinations pupils did less well in geography than in their other subjects; no comparative figures are available for 1999. Boys and girls in the current Years 10 and 11 are achieving levels that are in line with the national average.

150. Pupils make satisfactory progress in securing their knowledge and understanding of farming by looking at the process in Canada, and they make good progress through a well-defined case study of shifting cultivation in the Amazon region. They also develop their analytical and enquiry skills through their studies of population and in their map work. For example, pupils can identify both positive and negative factors relating to living in high and low density population areas. Another group made good progress as they developed their map skills. They identified key physical features, using six-figure grid references and their previous knowledge of symbols, to interpret important features in the area of the Hurst Castle Spit. Most pupils, especially high and average- attainers, were able confidently to relate evidence in photographs to the physical features identified on the map.

151. Those who study geography in the Sixth Form, either through the A Level course or the GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism course, make good progress. Although the pupil sample is small and not valid for statistical comparison, the results of those taking A Level are above the course averages for those gaining grades A-E and well above average for those gaining A-B grades. Pupils on the A Level course make very good progress in understanding processes responsible for landforms, making good use of gravity surveys. They make good progress and develop knowledge, understanding and skills in analysing the land movement through the use of a soil catena model. Those seeking GNVQ advanced accreditation make good progress in developing an understanding of changes in the popularity of tourist destinations over the last 40 years. They use a variety of evidence, including the Internet and CD ROM, as part of their researches in an on-going assignment.

152. Pupils who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress, while those with in-class support make good progress.

153.As pupils move through the school they make good progress in the development of their basic literacy and number skills. Their work reflects a growing accuracy in written responses to tasks that are presented well. They use an increasing range of vocabulary and technical terms and express their ideas clearly. Reading, speaking and listening also improve as pupils move through Year 9. Progress in number work is good. It is especially apparent in the understanding of graphs, the analysis of a variety of statistical data and the calculation of distance, time and population density, for example, using a range of geographical data.

154.Pupils have good attitudes to the subject. They show real interest and enthusiasm in the tasks they undertake and they concentrate well, sometimes for long periods of time. They respond well to challenge and to high expectations, they show respect for others, including those that hold contrary views in discussions, and they enjoy productive relationships with their teachers. Pupils work well together, usually in pairs, and they respond well to praise and encouragement.

155.The quality of teaching is good. In over a fifth of lessons teaching is very good and in two thirds it is good. In the remainder of lessons teaching is satisfactory and there is none that is unsatisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Their interest and enthusiasm for the subject is reflected in their teaching. Lessons are satisfactorily planned and most have a clear aim and learning objectives, although these are not always shared with the pupils. Planning is supported by well-conceived schemes of work. Most individual lesson plans clearly identify what pupils should know, understand and be able to do by the end of the lesson or unit of work. This contributes to the pace of learning and progress. For example, in a Year 11 lesson where the objectives were shared with them, pupils made rapid progress and quickly identified the positive and negative factors affecting low and high population density areas. The completion of the task enabled them to be well prepared for their demanding homework. In most lessons the expectations teachers have are appropriately high and pupils respond positively. In a very small number of cases, there is insufficient use of praise in class and encouragement in marking. In the majority of lessons pupils enjoy a range of teaching and learning methods. Their prior knowledge and understanding is well used, in most lessons, to develop their understanding and skills. Usually, but not always, well-defined questions are used to involve pupils in sharing their understanding of a topic. Where questions are very skilfully used, they enable pupil participation to be high and the pace of learning to be rapid. Pupils are sensitively and unobtrusively managed and lesson time and learning resources are well used and chosen to support learning. The use of information technology is developing across the key stages and in the Sixth Form.

156.A variety of assessment methods are used, marking is regularly undertaken and helpful comments are added, although they more usually relate to the quality of the work rather than to what needs to be done to improve standards. Homework is set regularly and tasks are well defined and build on as well as extend the understanding of work done in class.

157.The department is well led and is adequately supported by a range of documents and other guidance. The curriculum is broad and balanced, provides good progression from Key Stage 3 through to the Sixth Form and is well supported by a range of local fieldwork activities. The curriculum fully meets statutory requirements. However, some of the work at Key Stage 4 is not well supported by the current texts and other learning resources.

158. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved significantly, as has the quality of the curriculum and the assessment of pupils' work.

159. **History**

159.

159. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the national average. Pupils have a sound knowledge of the main features of the period studied and can understand and use appropriately terms such as empire, colony, industrial revolution and triangular trade. They are able to empathise with conditions on the slave ships but some find it difficult to use arguments to articulate the case for and against the slave trade. There are deficiencies in their technical writing skills in the areas of spelling and sentence construction.

160. Attainment in the GCSE examinations has fluctuated over the past few years. In 1998, 48 per cent of pupils achieved grades A*-C compared to the national average of 54 per cent. In the previous year the results were above average by about 7 percentage points. In 1999 the proportion achieving A*-C grades rose to 73 per cent, well above average, although the number of entries was substantially reduced. Many more girls than boys gain the highest grades. Among the current cohort the higher-attaining pupils can selectively recall and appropriately deploy detailed information, for example when summarising Galen's contribution to advances in medicine. All pupils can, in some cases with assistance, use the Internet, for instance to gain information on Mormon migration westwards and explain the rationale behind it.

161. Attainment at A Level has been below the national average in recent years. The small number of entries make statistical comparisons difficult, but in 1999 no pupils achieved grades A-B and three of the five pupils who took the examination achieved a grade D or E. Standards are higher in current Sixth Form groups and their attainment is satisfactory. Pupils can understand and use terms such as conservative, radical and liberal, and appreciate how terminology can be used for purposes of political persuasion. They are able to select and use relevant pieces of text to answer conceptual questions, although some find it difficult to articulate their views clearly or make extended oral contributions.

162. The progress of pupils in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory given that attainment on entry is below average. They make progress in source evaluation and learn how historians use these. Lower-attaining pupils would make greater progress if they were offered a wider variety of teaching methods. In Key Stage 4 progress is good in lessons. The overwhelming majority of pupils are attentive, well motivated and make demonstrable gains in knowledge and understanding. The higher-attainers present their material clearly and logically in writing and are able to express and defend deductions and conclusions with some conviction. In the Sixth Form, pupils make satisfactory progress and the higher-attainers handle challenging material with confidence and skill.

163. The vast majority of pupils display a positive approach to the subject, and lessons are characterised by encouragement and praise, resulting in pupils' willingness to contribute orally. In a Year 9 lesson on slavery, pupils responded sensitively to African tribes in the 'Roots' video, as they did also, to North American Indians in a Year 11 lesson on the American West. No examples of poor behaviour were observed, although concentration sometimes wanes a little towards the end of lessons.

164. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and is good in Key Stage 4, where well-planned use of video and the Internet enhances the quality of learning. Teachers are well qualified, they have a thorough knowledge of their subject and explanations are clear. The management of pupils is good and lessons move at a brisk pace. Effective use is made of questions and answers to test pupils' understanding. In Key Stage 3 there is sometimes too much reliance on the textbook and teacher exposition, which inhibits individual learning and restricts the progress of higher-attaining pupils. Teaching strategies are being broadened to encompass a much greater use of information technology. For instance, Year 11 pupils were seen researching the Irish Republican Army and Mormon migration, and Year 12, Marx and Smith. This practice could usefully be extended to Key Stage 3 lessons, which present access difficulties for the lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. Learning objectives are explicit, but not always clearly communicated to pupils at the beginning of the lesson. No group work was seen and there was little evidence of resources specifically targeted at particular attainment levels.

165. Assessment techniques are good in formal National Curriculum and GCSE tests in both Key Stages 3 and 4, but there is little target setting and day-to-day marking is not sufficiently informative. Homework is set and marked regularly and for some groups, but not all, teachers' marks are recorded in tabular form in pupils' exercise books.

166. The subject is conscientiously led, but the head of department's other responsibilities in the school detract from important aspects of his work; this results in unsatisfactory leadership and management overall. For example, teaching and learning is not monitored to ensure consistency and a wider range of strategies at Key Stage 3 and in the Sixth Form. Data is not used to set individual and cohort targets.

167. The curriculum is carefully planned and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Greater consideration should be given to formalising the provision for pupils with special educational needs. Combined Year 12 and 13 groups in some European history lessons are problematic. Progress since the last inspection has been too slow.

168. **Information technology**

168. When pupils enter the school, their standards of attainment in information technology vary because they have had different experiences in their first and middle schools. By the end of Key Stage 3 most have made good progress, and overall attainment is above national expectations. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Systematic teaching of concepts and skills during weekly lessons ensures that all but a very few reach the required levels of expertise. Pupils are confident and competent in the use of word processing, spreadsheets and data bases and they have learnt about control technology. A significant minority of pupils reach higher levels of attainment, especially when accessing the Internet. For example, several Year 9 pupils use the Internet with precision to search for an image of a periodic table. This is used as the basis for a presentation; it is copied into a word processing package and refined through the use of various formats and additions.

169. Pupils' progress in lessons is always satisfactory and is often good. Pupils are motivated by the nature of the task and continuous feedback they receive from the teacher. Through Year 9, pupils make good progress and learning is brisk. They learn about networks and how to log on and delete files. Word processing skills are extended. Pupils can import pictures into word files and create frames and pictures. They set up and use spreadsheets and databases confidently. Data are changed into appropriate graphs with references to scales, keys and titles. Pupils can search the Internet in a variety of ways.

170. Key Stage 4 pupils who follow specific courses, such as the RSA Initial Award in graphics, or units of the GNVQ Intermediate course on leisure and tourism, increase their understanding of certain aspects of the information technology curriculum. The allocation of specific timetable slots for teaching the subject gives pupils the opportunity to develop new skills. These pupils are making satisfactory progress and their achievement is in line with expectations for the particular strands of the National Curriculum. Overall, however, the progress and attainment of all Key Stage 4 pupils are unsatisfactory. Although pupils reinforce the skills acquired in Key Stage 3, there is insufficient progress, and the higher levels of attainment are not reached. Pupils do not apply their information technology knowledge to solve more complex problems or to deal with new situations. The more advanced aspects of control technology are not studied.

171. This lack of progress is, in part, a reflection of the success of the school in achieving its aim to improve the use of information technology as a tool to aid pupils' learning in all subject areas. For example, one Year 11 class, practised but did not extend their word processing skills while completing their Record of Achievement. It is school policy to encourage pupils to bring work from other subjects and the cross-curricular use of information technology is good, especially in mathematics and music. Good work in English and geography is also evident. For instance, in English, pupils ably researched the topic of prejudice as a background to their literature studies and in geography they used digital imaging while studying the local environment. A video conferencing facility, operating for the Sixth Form, enables pupils to learn additional modern foreign languages through links with a local college. Teachers have a positive attitude to using computers. The design and technology, science, music and art departments have specific plans to develop the use of information technology to achieve higher levels of attainment. The enhancement of pupils' capability is well supported by a loan facility for palm top computers, as well as the opening of the computer suite for an hour after school, staffed by knowledgeable teachers. The last inspection report stated that information technology across the curriculum was weak; this is no longer the case.

172. The quality of the work on display and in the pupils' subject folders indicates that the majority of pupils try hard to succeed. Their response in class is always satisfactory and it is good in just under half of the lessons. Pupils engage in the practical activities and maintain interest, quietly helping each other. Their attitudes are less positive when non-specialist supply teachers take the class.

173.The only unsatisfactory lesson came about because an inappropriate task was set. The quality of teaching in the other lessons is at least satisfactory and good in half of them. In these well-planned lessons, good subject knowledge is clearly imparted, both formally to the whole class and less formally during skilled feedback. Main points are reiterated, and the correct use of vocabulary is stressed. Satisfactory teaching still results in sound progress, although the use of written guidance sheets would improve the pace of learning. Very occasionally, inappropriate remarks by pupils are not challenged sufficiently by teachers. Homework is given infrequently.

174.The school does not meet fully statutory requirements and does not offer any nationally accredited course at GCSE level or above, thereby curtailing pupils' ability to specialise. Sixth Form provision is unsatisfactory and does not effectively promote the development of the core skills. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because they engage well with the practical aspects of the subject. Specific software extends their literacy and numeracy skills. There is no appreciable difference in the performance of boys and girls.

175.The subject co-ordinator has a good understanding of the potential and importance of information technology and is ensuring that the school meets all new challenges. For instance, all teachers receive Internet training. Efficient use has been made of external funds to allow for the expansion of the computer network. However, lack of access to computers and the latest technology is a pertinent issue raised by teachers and Sixth Form pupils and this is hindering progress. Pupils record what they do and this is assessed by teachers at the end of the year, but there is no continuous tracking of individual performance. Pupils are not aware of what their attainment is in relation to the National Curriculum programmes of study, and they do not know what to do to reach the next level of attainment. Assessment is unsatisfactory and insufficient use is made of Key Stage 3 data to promote attainment.

Modern foreign languages

176.In 1999, the GCSE results at A*-C in French were well below the national average, although they were higher than in the previous year. A*-C results in German were well below the national average and lower than in the previous year. All students entering for French and German gained A*-G grades. French results at A and AS level rose slightly between 1998 and 1999, although the grades obtained were below the national average. The small number entering for A Level German have gained broadly average grades in recent years. Girls have consistently achieved higher grades than boys in both French and German.

177.Currently, attainment in French at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations. Pupils start German when they arrive in school in Year 9 without having learned it in their middle schools, therefore attainment is correspondingly lower at the end of the key stage. Pupils can follow lessons partially or wholly delivered in the foreign languages. They extract detail from taped or printed conversations and simple descriptive texts. A minority require translation to help them to understand. Many can speak spontaneously or from memory, expressing their opinions about entertainment or earning pocket money. They can also enact simulations of everyday situations, such as shopping, using their textbooks as prompts. Some pupils with special educational needs succeed in these activities, with additional support and specialised equipment.

178. Attainment in French and German at the end of Key Stage 4 is generally below the national average, although a minority of pupils achieve average standards or higher towards the end of their course. Many pupils have good listening skills and can join in lessons conducted in French and German. Higher-attainers can ask and answer questions on everyday topics, such as buying presents and arranging to go out, and they can refer accurately to events in the past. Writing ranges from polished prose, reflecting pupils' own ideas and observations, to simple copied exercises with incidental changes of vocabulary, produced by lower-attainers and those with special educational needs.

179. In the Sixth Form, pupils talk, read and write about contemporary issues, using authentic texts and taped sources. They comment on social problems and analyse works of fiction, supporting their arguments with evidence which they research independently. Their range of understanding and self-expression varies widely, and only a minority can speak as well as they can listen and read.

180. Progress for the majority is satisfactory in Key Stage 3. In French, most pupils consolidate and extend the vocabulary and grammar they acquired previously. Many learn to express opinions and some learn to use past and future tenses. Higher-attainers studying German make substantial progress and can soon talk and write about themselves, their families and daily routines. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4, and for a minority progress is good. The potential of some high-attainers is restricted by the infrequency of challenging tasks, some of which only occur late in their course. Lower-attainers, including those with special educational needs, work methodically through topics related to travel and living abroad, such as asking directions and buying clothes. Sixth Form pupils rapidly develop their vocabulary and expand their grammatical knowledge, benefiting from close supervision and individual attention from their teachers.

181. Most pupils display positive attitudes to learning and only a minority show an unsatisfactory response. Those who are enthusiastic and interested in their work, including pupils with special educational needs, are well behaved and co-operative. Many pupils are motivated by practical applications of French and German, ranging from games and discussions in class, to work experience and exchanges abroad. Very occasionally their energy and creativity are suppressed by lengthy, dull or procedural whole-class activities, although they are usually patient and sustain concentration. A minority of pupils work independently on computers for research, distance learning and to present their work attractively.

182. Teaching is almost always satisfactory, and a minority of lessons in Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form are good. Teachers have excellent knowledge of French and German, and conduct some lessons entirely in the foreign language. Expectations of pupils are usually realistic, although some of the work set is poorly matched to pupils' abilities. Teachers' planning is often sound, but inconsistent in quality. The best lessons exercise skills in a balanced way, involve pupils actively and encourage independent learning. Lessons based largely on the textbook, tape recorder and worksheets are less stimulating and productive.

Teachers have good relations with most pupils, managing their classes through encouragement and reward. Very occasionally unsatisfactory work and behaviour are tolerated. Lessons start punctually and where organisation is good, pupils are kept busily involved in their own and others' learning. Day-to-day testing, marking and assessment are satisfactory, and often reinforced with individual attention and comment. Teachers do not, however, make pupils aware of their National Curriculum levels or inform the majority of the steps they must take to improve. Homework is regularly set to prepare and follow up work in class.

183. Modern languages provision has developed in recent years, attracting more pupils to German and improving standards in French. The strengths noted in the previous inspection report have been maintained. Work now needs to be done to provide more varied and stimulating learning situations, develop regular use of computers, and to match work more closely to pupils' attainment and the demands of external examinations.

184. **Music**

184. Good GCSE results have been maintained. Since the last inspection they have been well above the national average and this has continued into 1999 when ten out of eleven pupils gained A*-C grades, including six who achieved an A* or A grade. Very few pupils take the A Level or AS examinations and results have been low for some years. In 1999, one pupil took A Level but did not pass and the two entered for the AS examination were ungraded.

185. Overall, standards of attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with national expectations. Pupils enter the school with attainment markedly below average but catch up by the end of Year 9. Standards demonstrated by instrumentalists are rising because the pupils are challenged to take graded examinations, to prepare thoroughly and to develop their skills through extra-curricular activities. The standards of practical music-making of the choir, the orchestra and the ceilidh band are high because pupils rise to the challenge of giving regular performances in school and in the community. The high standards of the choir are appreciated by programme producers working for the local radio station. Boys and girls attain similar standards. The attainment of pupils with special educational needs is appropriate.

186. Progress in lessons at all key stages is good overall. The pupils currently taking music in Years 12 and 13 are progressing well, including the A Level music technology pupils, as they come to terms with new software enabling them to compose and record music. The one Year 13 pupil taking the traditional A Level music course is progressing well in her understanding of the works of early composers such as Byrd, Morley and Weelkes. Current GCSE pupils are advancing their knowledge and understanding of the history of music and the rules of composition. Year 10 pupils, in particular, demonstrate good progress in their class performances. Key Stage 3 pupils are progressing satisfactorily, as they follow their keyboard course and learn the rudiments of practical work and the theory of music by setting words to music.

187. The attitudes of pupils to music lessons are positive, except for some Year 9 pupils who have taken much of their first term to settle into necessary routines. The pupils in the Sixth Form who opt for music demonstrate a healthy interest in, and a strong commitment to, the subject. Most GCSE candidates are keen to gain a good grade and also be involved in the school's extra-curricular musical activities. Some of the older pupils, and past pupils, willingly give much of their free time to helping younger ones in music lessons. They also assist the music teacher with daily administrative classroom routines, such as organising furniture, setting up electronic keyboards and filing resources. Attitudes of pupils in the choir, the orchestra and the ceilidh band are very positive.

188. The quality of teaching ranges from very good to satisfactory and is predominantly good. When lessons are very well taught, as in a Year 12 composition and aural lesson, work is well planned for the needs of all the pupils and there is excitement and a purposeful atmosphere. When lessons are satisfactory, such as a Year 9 lesson involving low-attainers, although there are more strengths than weaknesses pupils are not given a range of different tasks to extend them. The sole full-time music teacher copes admirably with teaching all pupils from Year 9 to Year 13 and she works hard to make lessons informative, lively, practical and interesting. She has very good subject knowledge and very good knowledge of the requirements of the different examination boards. Lessons are well planned and aim to turn all pupils into practicing and confident musicians. Clear explanations outlining the purposes of lessons are given, and expectations are made clear to pupils. There are good records of pupils' progress and on-going assessment is a key feature of lessons; teachers' assessment is augmented by pupil self-assessment. Pupils involved in examination courses are set an appropriate amount of homework which is often composition exercises. The schemes of work are comprehensive and appropriately matched to the National Curriculum and examination syllabuses; in all there is a healthy balance of performing, composing and listening activities. Classroom music lessons often augment and complement extra-curricular activities. The instrumental teachers are kept fully in touch with the department's strategy for expanding musical knowledge and understanding, and they make a good contribution to pupils' progress. The teacher in charge of music gives unreservedly to building up the choir, the orchestra and other groups.

189. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets all statutory requirements. In addition the wide range of extra-curricular activities pupils are taken into the community as much as possible to sing and play to different audiences. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from good support from music teachers, and some pupils benefit from additional support staff who work closely with them.

190. The department makes a very good contribution to the pupils' social, moral and cultural development. Concerts such as the Coquet Music Festival provide them with the opportunity to make and enjoy music alongside pupils from the First and Middle schools. Links with a local recording studio help pupils understand how the music industry operates. The choral recordings for local radio give them insight into the standards required for commercial presentations.

191.The leadership and management of the department are very good. In the short time that the head of department has been in post she has introduced many effective and purposeful strategies. She supports visiting instrumentalists very well and has monitored her own teaching effectively. There is a good development plan and the ethos of the department is very positive. The department is on a secure foundation for raising standards and expanding departmental horizons. The accommodation has improved since the previous inspection but there is still no recording studio, no second practice room, no percussion instruments from other cultures and there are insufficient computers.

192. **Physical education**

192.Since the previous inspection GCSE examination results have shown a steady improvement until 1999. Despite rising from well below the national average in 1996, when 25 per cent of pupils gained A*-C grades, to much closer in 1998, when 40 per cent achieved the higher grades, the most recent results dipped to well below the national average again. In 1999, only 25 per cent of candidates were awarded A*-C grades, due mainly to their weaker performances in the theory sections of the examination. Comparison of results show that pupils, and particularly boys, achieve less well in physical education than in their other examination subjects.

193.In work seen during the inspection, attainment in physical education is in line with national expectations. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is above average, especially in games, with most boys and girls, including those with special educational needs, achieving expected standards in their activities. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is average overall, although the range of performance is wider than in Key Stage 3. A minority of boys, and some girls, are achieving above average standards in games activities. The standards achieved by the lower-attaining girls have improved since the previous inspection because more now take part regularly in lessons. Pupils following the GCSE course are achieving above average standards in practical work, but standards in theoretical elements of the course are below average. Since the previous inspection, A Level sports studies has been introduced in the Sixth Form. The course has recruited well, and standards are generally in line with expectations.

194.Progress in physical education is satisfactory across the school. This is also the case for those pupils with special educational needs. In Key Stage 3, boys and girls of all abilities are making good progress as they consolidate and develop what they have learned in the middle schools. In Key Stage 4, progress continues at a satisfactory rate for most pupils although inappropriate time-tabling arrangements for one group in Year 10, together with some very large classes, slow the progress made by some girls in the core programme. In GCSE work, progress in the practical elements of the course is generally good. Progress in some theoretical elements is unsatisfactory, because teaching lacks sufficient pace, and teachers' expectations are too low. In the Sixth Form, progress is satisfactory for those pupils taking the A Level course.

195. Pupils are co-operative and behave well in physical education. Their attitudes towards the subject are positive, with high levels of interest, particularly in Year 9. Participation rates are normally good, and many pupils show good commitment and work hard at their activities. They listen well to advice from teachers, and use it purposefully to improve their skills. In GCSE work, many pupils show a strong commitment to practical work, which is not matched by their response to the theoretical demands of the course. Sixth Form pupils are strongly committed to the academic demands of the A Level course. Across the remainder of the Sixth Form, pupils' response to the optional physical recreation programme is unsatisfactory, with very few girls taking part regularly.

196. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall; but several lessons are good and a minority are unsatisfactory. Subject knowledge and understanding are secure. Lessons are effectively structured, although few opportunities are provided to engage pupils in the planning and evaluation of their work. Tasks are usually matched well to learning intentions, but there is room for greater variation of tasks and resources to ensure the progress of the more gifted and the least able pupils. The teaching of practical activities is generally good across the school, and the proportion of good teaching has improved since the previous inspection. The most successful teaching combines strong subject knowledge with high expectations of pupils' response, and there is positive teacher intervention and feedback to encourage learning. Where this is the case, for example, in Year 9 football and trampolining, Year 10 badminton, and Year 11 GCSE basketball, pupils are notably on task, they concentrate well, are engaged by the work presented, and, importantly, make good progress. In some GCSE theory lessons, teaching is unsatisfactory because pupils are not sufficiently challenged to develop their knowledge and understanding. The pace is slow, and there is a lack of academic rigour and expectation, which results in pupils under-achieving. Elsewhere, relationships and discipline are good, and most lessons are purposeful and brisk. Effective use is made of homework, particularly at A Level, although marking provides too little guidance for improvement.

197. The curriculum arrangements are mainly sound. However, in Key Stage 3, pupils taking a second modern foreign language lose half of their physical education time, affecting their attainment and progress in the subject. This concern was raised in the previous inspection report and has yet to be resolved. The requirements of the National Curriculum are covered in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and the non-statutory Sixth Form provision is appropriate. Planning is secure, with schemes of work established for all activities. Assessment procedures are satisfactory, although pupils' involvement in the process is under-developed, and target setting does not feature as a means of raising attainment. Reports to parents meet statutory requirements, but provide insufficient guidance for improvement, and too little information about what pupils can do in physical education.

198. The department is effectively managed on a day-to-day basis, and administration is sound. Subject development planning is in place, but requires improvement to show strategic detail, costings and timescales for identified priorities. Staff are well qualified, although attendance at recent subject in-service training is uneven. Facilities for physical education are good, but changing accommodation is too small. Resources are generally sufficient, although the establishment of a dedicated classroom base of examination work would improve storage of records and teaching materials. Both full-time teachers are committed to their curricular and extra-curricular roles. With limited, but welcome, support from non-specialist colleagues, there is a good range of extra-curricular opportunities for both boys and girls. The activities are popular and well supported, and enable some pupils to achieve high standards, both individually and within teams.

199. **Religious education**

199. Pupils' attainment in religious education on entry to the school is below the expectations of the local Agreed Syllabus. However, as they move through Year 9 pupils make good progress, so that, by the end of the key stage, their attainment is in line with the objectives of the syllabus.

200. Pupils make good progress in Year 9 in developing their understanding of some of the ways in which the Christian faith is expressed, within the church and society, and especially in relation to justice, peace and human rights. For example, in one lesson for low-attaining pupils, good progress was made by all in understanding the impact of compassion for others on the rights of refugees to live in a peaceful environment. Good quality teaching and high expectations supported the good progress that pupils made. The class responded with serious thought and a solution to a hypothetical situation. Their responses showed real insights into the plight of the homeless, the stateless and those without food or shelter.

201. Progress through Key Stage 4 is also good. In Year 10, all pupils follow the short GCSE religious studies course. In Year 11, those who have chosen it as an optional subject follow the full GCSE course and the remainder take the short course. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999 was well above national averages for the proportion of pupils gaining grades in the A*-C and A*-G ranges in both the long and short courses.

202. The pupils following the short course in Year 10 make good progress in analysing the changing attitudes to important moral questions. For example, in one lesson they looked at changes over time to the family, love, sex and marriage and the impact that this has had on relationships within a Christian as well as a human context. In Year 11, pupils also make good progress in acquiring knowledge and understanding about the existence of God. One group made very good progress when pupils selected a problem from a newspaper, analysed it, and decided whether it was a moral or natural evil and what explanation might be offered for it. Their work was of a high order and their understanding was considerably enhanced by the very good quality of the teaching and the high challenge it offered to pupils at all levels of attainment.

203. Progress through the Sixth Form is very good and attainment in external examinations, on an admittedly small sample of pupils, is well above course averages. Pupils make very good progress, for example, in developing understanding on 'humanism as a world view'. They consider the principles offered by the main advocates and protagonists and the perspective they offer on life and living. Pupils made impressive progress and were able to broaden their understanding of other perspectives, as well as to develop their rationale and critique of other 'world views' offered by, for instance, Christianity.

204. As pupils move through the school the standard of their work is enhanced by the demands which are made on them to think and reason. In Year 9, for instance, pupils' literacy skills improve through the use of more complex sentences and a range of technical vocabulary to express their ideas and feelings. In Key Stage 4, writing is more diligently constructed than previously, in order to present arguments and solutions to problems in a coherent manner. In the Sixth Form, pupils have developed the skills to enable them to write coherently about the views of others, as well as to present philosophical concepts with understanding.

205. Pupils have good attitudes to religious studies. They come to the lessons expecting to work hard and are never disappointed. They enjoy the challenges offered to them to explore beliefs and values and the opportunities for them to develop ideas and views. Concentration is good, although it is generally better in the examination groups than in Key Stage 3. All pupils are provided with real opportunities for personal study, including research, using a range of sources, including the Internet. There are high expectations of pupils' conduct and much emphasis is placed on observing common courtesy and respect for others. Relationships, between pupils and with their teachers, are of a high order. Pupils work well, individually, in pairs and small groups on a variety of demanding tasks. They show great sensitivity about the beliefs and values of others and generally treat differences in discussion with respect. Pupils are willing to show initiative and take responsibility in the classroom. They respond positively to the learning ethos provided.

206. The quality of teaching is good overall and there is none that is unsatisfactory. There is an equal amount of good and very good teaching. Pupils respond with relish to the demands made on them by their teachers and benefit from the interest, enthusiasm and commitment that are features of the teaching. These qualities have a significant impact on pupils' attitudes to the subject. The well-planned lessons have a clear aim and objectives that are usually shared with pupils. There is always clarity about what pupils need to know, understand and be able to do by the end of the lesson and a check of whether this has been achieved.

207. Expectations of all pupils are consistently high and a good range of teaching and learning strategies are used that enable pupils to gain access to the lesson content. For example, in one Year 10 lesson pupils were challenged to identify changes in the ethical and moral dimensions of Christian marriage. Through the contributions of many of them, they continued to analyse the dilemmas facing young people, from a range of cultures involved in relationships today. The sensitivity of the approach enabled pupils to undertake serious thought and discussion as well as to face demanding moral and ethical questions.

208. Pupils are very well managed and expectations of their behaviour are clearly understood within the department's learning ethos. Teachers manage pupils sensitively but with firmness should the situation require it. Any poor behaviour is clearly regarded as an interruption to others' learning. Very good use is made of time to maintain a good pace for learning that is supported by some excellent well-chosen resources.

209. Excellent assessment procedures are used and the outcomes inform lesson planning to meet the individual needs of pupils. The attainment, progress and attendance of all pupils are carefully monitored. Reporting to parents in written and oral form is well supported by detailed recording and a detailed analysis of all marking and the assessment of end of unit tasks. Homework is set regularly and is used for the consolidation of knowledge and the extension of understanding, often through open-ended tasks or questions.

210. The department is well led and provides a high quality of learning for the pupils. The curriculum has very good breadth and balance and provides outstanding progression in learning through the key stages to the Sixth Form. However, the school does not meet statutory requirements by providing religious education for all pupils in the Sixth Form. Learning resources are adequate but lacking in variety especially at Key Stage 4.

211. At the time of the last inspection teaching was reported to be satisfactory overall. The teaching profile is much improved, as are the quality of provision and the academic and behavioural expectations teachers have of their pupils.

212. PART C: INSPECTION DATA

212. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

212.A team of 13 inspectors spent a total of 43 days in the school gathering evidence. 164 lessons, or parts of lessons, were observed. All teachers were seen teaching on at least one occasion, and most were observed several times; teachers' planning and recording documents were also seen. Assemblies and registrations were visited, as well as some extra-curricular activities. Planned discussions were held with the headteacher, other members of the senior management team, and several teaching and support staff. Two inspectors met with governors to discuss their leadership role and the Chair of Governors was interviewed independently. Several other people associated with the school were also seen.

213.In addition to looking at pupils' work in lessons and at other times, inspectors made a detailed scrutiny of all completed work of three pupils in each of Years 9 to 13. These pupils were selected by the school as a representative sample of different levels of attainment. Group interviews were held with pupils from each year to discuss general matters about the school. In addition, a considerable number of informal discussions with pupils took place both in and outside lessons.

215. The views of parents were sought at a meeting, by a questionnaire and by interviews; in addition, several parents wrote to the registered inspector. Their views were analysed, made available to all inspectors and discussed with the headteacher.

216. DATA AND INDICATORS

216. Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y9 – Y13	598	13	40	100

216. Teachers and classes

216. Qualified teachers (Y9 – Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	36.72
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	16.29

216. Education support staff (Y9 – Y13)

Total number of education support staff:	12
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	202.5

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	80.1
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Average teaching group size:	
	KS3 23
	KS4 23

216. Financial data

Financial year:	1999
	£
Total Income	1419480.00
Total Expenditure	1428012.00
Expenditure per pupil	2432.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	14892.00
Balance carried forward to next year	6360.00

216. **PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out: 598
 Number of questionnaires returned: 230

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	14.8	70.4	11.7	2.7	0.4
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	27.5	63.8	3.9	4.8	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	16.1	55.0	20.9	6.2	1.9
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	17.9	69.9	9.6	2.6	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	25.9	63.6	6.1	4.4	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	26.0	65.2	5.3	3.5	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	25.2	61.3	8.3	4.8	0.4
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	16.6	66.4	7.0	8.7	1.3
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	15.4	63.6	15.8	5.3	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	18.1	59.3	15.9	5.8	0.9
My child(ren) like(s) school	24.0	58.2	9.3	6.7	1.8