

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **LAURENCE JACKSON SCHOOL**

Guisborough

LEA area: Redcar and Cleveland

Unique reference number: 111724

Headteacher: C. S. Lord

Reporting inspector: David Morton  
13154

Dates of inspection: 6<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> November 2000

Inspection number: 223925  
Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Church Lane  
Guisborough  
Redcar and Cleveland

Postcode: TS14 6RD

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr G. Smith

Date of previous inspection: 25<sup>th</sup> September 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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David Morton 13154	Registered inspector	Drama	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school
		Equality of opportunity	The school's results and pupils' achievements
			Teaching and learning
			Leadership and management
			Key Issues for action
Norman Shelley 13762	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			Pupils' welfare, health and safety
			Partnership with parents and carers
Jim Arnold 1751	Team inspector	History	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
Patricia Caspari 13139	Team inspector	English	
Jack Haslam	Team inspector	Design and technology	
		Information and communication technology	
Alrene Lees 27665	Team inspector	Music	
Michael Morecroft 11765	Team inspector	Science	
Allan Paver 12118	Team inspector	Geography	
Tony Pearson 19452	Team inspector	Physical education	
		Religious education	
Jennifer Radford 15678	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
John Ratcliffe 3793	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
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Susan Schofield 30901	Team inspector	Art and design	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Laurence Jackson School is a larger than average comprehensive school with 1454 boys and girls on roll aged eleven to sixteen. The school's population is generally stable; few pupils join or leave the school except at the usual times. The school serves the community of Guisborough and its surrounding villages; a fifth of pupils come from the fringes of Middlesbrough and from East Cleveland. Less than one per cent of pupils comes from ethnic minority communities; this is below average. The attainment of pupils when they enter the school at the start of Year 7, taken as a whole, is average. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, 15 per cent, is about the same as the national average. The percentage of pupils on the register of special educational needs, 14.7 per cent, is broadly in line with the national average and the percentage with statements, 1.4 per cent, is below the national average.

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

Laurence Jackson School is a good school with a number of outstanding features. It provides a rich and enjoyable education for its pupils with many opportunities for them to take part in a wide range of activities. The school is an important part of the community of Guisborough and valued accordingly. Teachers are committed to ensuring that pupils value and benefit from the time in school. Pupils make good progress in relation to their levels of attainment on entry to the school in response to consistently good, and often very good, teaching. Girls' attainment is generally above average, but that of boys is below the national average. Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for and also make good progress. The leadership of the school has sustained a good climate for learning; it has created a habit of self-evaluation and improvement through which most members of staff strive to better their own past provision and performance and that of pupils. The school has achieved re-recognition of its Investor in People Investor status. The school gives good value for money.

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

- The leadership of the headteacher and senior staff provides a good climate for learning.
- Teaching in over four out of five lessons is good; in a third of all lessons teaching is very good.
- Pupils' attitudes to their learning are very good. This is the result of good behaviour, very good relationships throughout the school, the school's very good provision for pupils' social development and the care with which it provides for pupils' welfare and security.
- The school environment encourages positive attitudes in pupils; resources are used well and the care and maintenance of the site and its accommodation are good.
- Analysis and assessment of pupils' performance and that of teachers contribute significantly to the school's wish to improve on its previous best.
- Provision for pupils with special education needs is good and these pupils do well.
- There is a very good range and take-up of extra-curricular activities, especially in the arts and sport.

### What could be improved

- The consistency of performance in GCSE examinations between subjects should be improved and the overall performance of boys is currently unsatisfactory in most subjects.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning in all subjects is currently insufficient.
- There is a need to extend current good provision for the school's self-evaluation and improvement to include the sharing of good practice, through classroom observation, designed to help all teaching be as good as the very best seen in the school as a part of a drive for an even higher quality of teaching.
- Through more effective and frequent reporting to ensure that parents are better informed of the progress their children are making.

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

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

The school has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection in 1995. Standards in Years 7 to 9 have improved steadily in line with the national trend. Results in GCSE examinations have not shown the same consistency of improvement although, taken all in all over the most recent three years, results have been above the national average, despite a dip in 2000. The expectations of pupils and teachers are now higher than they were in 1995 and there is less underachievement, although many boys do not achieve their potential. The proportion of teaching that is good or better is significantly greater now than in 1995. Homework still remains inconsistent in quality and purpose and there has been little improvement in the use of ICT to support learning in subjects. The school still does not meet the requirement to hold a collective act of worship for all pupils each day. However, the provision for pupils' spiritual development is now good. The school's self-evaluation of its performance is now very good.

### STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	B	B	C	A

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

When compared with all schools in the country and those with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, overall attainment in National Curriculum tests at the age of 14 is above average. These results have improved at a similar rate as that shown by the national trend. Results in English in 2000 show a significant improvement over 1999 and are well above average when compared with all schools and similar schools. Results in mathematics and science are above average compared with all schools and well above average when compared with similar schools. Although the school's results in science have improved, in 2000 they do not compare as well with all schools as they did in 1999. There has been a significant improvement in mathematics to the standards seen at the previous inspection. In all subjects, higher-attaining pupils have successfully achieved the higher levels 6 and 7, especially in mathematics. Although the performance of boys is broadly in line with the national average in English, mathematics and science, their overall performance falls short of that of girls.

When compared with the results of all schools in the country in the GCSE examinations in 2000, the school's performance was in line with the national average. Compared with similar schools in 2000 results were above average; although results have been variable year on year, they have been better every year since those reported for 1994 at the time of the previous inspection. In 2000, the percentage of pupils obtaining five or more passes at the higher grades A\*-C, 55.3 per cent, was above the national average, 49 per cent, although the school did not achieve its target of 60 per cent. Across the full range of grades A\*-G, the school improved on previous performances, achieving a percentage of 96.7 per cent, was also above the national average of 88.8 per cent; this result across all grades met the targets the school set itself. However, the success rates in GCSE examinations varies considerably across subjects; for example the percentage of pupils achieving a significantly higher proportion of the higher grades is better in science, drama, German, food technology, mathematics and English literature than in all other subjects. The percentage of pupils achieving higher grades in French, ICT and in the resistant materials and graphics strands of design and technology is significantly lower than all other subjects. The performance of boys in the 2000 GCSE examinations was much weaker than that of girls in all subjects.

Standards of work by the age of 14 seen in school during the inspection are above average in English, mathematics, science and all other subjects. By the time pupils leave the school at the age of 16 standards are also above average overall. Standards in English and mathematics are above average and those in science well above the national average. In other subjects, standards seen during the inspection at the age of 16 are above average in all subjects except drama, where standards are well above average, and in ICT, French and religious education where standards are in line with the national average. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, generally achieve well during Years 7 to 9 and make good progress in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. They make good progress in Years 10 and 11, sustaining standards that are above average. Boys generally perform less well in lessons and homework than girls and their progress is less rapid. Throughout the school, standards of literacy and numeracy are good and both support learning across subjects. This is not the case with ICT, where such support is rarely seen.

## **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are very enthusiastic about the school and have very good attitudes to their work in lessons and extra-curricular activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils respond well to opportunities provided and make very good progress towards becoming mature and responsible young adults. Relationships in the school are very good.
Attendance	Rates of attendance and punctuality are good.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Pupils' quality of learning is good owing to teaching that is consistently good or better. In 99 per cent of lessons teaching is satisfactory or better and is good or better in 85 per cent of lessons. A striking feature is the very good teaching in 35 per cent of all lessons. A key to this success is the high expectations teachers have of pupils. As a result, pupils have positive attitudes to their work, want to learn and make good progress as they move through the school. Pupils are mostly curious and inquisitive and teaching encourages this. Teaching is good in all subjects and very good in English throughout the school and pupils' skills of literacy support learning in all subjects. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good in art and design, science, drama and history. The teaching of mathematics is consistently good and pupils' skills of numeracy support learning in all subjects. Teachers do need to continue to explore ways of teaching that has a greater impact on the achievement of boys, despite the efforts that have already been made. In addition, as more computers become available in school, teachers should be more effective in using ICT to support learning in all subjects.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Provision overall is good. Statutory requirements are generally in place, except for the use of ICT across subjects, and too many pupils are allowed to choose not to take a strand of design and technology in Years 10 and 11. There is very good provision and take-up of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good and these pupils do well at school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' personal development is good overall and very good for their social and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Provision for pupils' health, safety and welfare is very good. Assessment of pupils' performance is very good, although some teachers could use day-to-day assessment more effectively.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Almost all parents are pleased or very pleased with the school and many are involved in supporting the work of the school. This is a good partnership.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has maintained the long-standing good reputation of the school and sustained an atmosphere in which effective learning occurs. The deputy headteacher plays a key role in ensuring the effective running of the school. Senior management gives good support and the work of heads of department and heads of year is good, often very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are well informed about the day-to-day life of the school and give good support whilst stringently holding the school to account.
The school's evaluation of its performance	A strength of the school is the attention it gives to an analysis of its performance in tests and examinations. This is used by most departments for setting targets for steady improvement.
The strategic use of resources	The school's finances are managed effectively and planning incorporates financial considerations; when making purchases the school seeks to obtain best value for money. Staffing and accommodation are good and use of resources is always satisfactory and often good.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching and progress are good and pupils are expected to work hard and achieve their best.</li> <li>The school is approachable.</li> <li>The way good behaviour is promoted.</li> <li>The quality of public performances in sport, drama and music.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some communication with parents; information about pupils' progress.</li> <li>Pupils to achieve higher attainment grades.</li> <li>The amount of homework.</li> <li>Standards of behaviour of some pupils in and out of school.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with all of the positive views expressed by parents.

Inspectors take the view that the school values its parents and has the best intentions regarding its communications with parents; good arrangements are in place. The school recognises that it does not always satisfy all parents. Inspectors agree that parents are not adequately informed about pupils' progress. Annual school reports are not completed consistently between subjects and there is insufficient focus on pupils' academic knowledge and understanding and what they can and cannot do. Homework is not consistently set within some subject departments. It does not always constructively supplement lessons or contribute sufficiently to the development of pupils' independent study skills. The standard of behaviour in school of the very large majority of pupils is good. The school cannot be held responsible for behaviour out of school.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The school's results on the 2000 National Curriculum tests for pupils at the end of Year 9 were above average when compared with all schools in the country and compared with schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. Results in English were much improved compared with those of 1999 and in 2000 were well above average when compared with all and with similar schools. Results in mathematics and science were above average compared with all schools and well above average compared with similar schools. Although the results in science in 2000 have improved, they do not compare as well with science results in all schools nationally as they did in 1999. Since the previous inspection results in mathematics have improved significantly. In each of these subjects higher-attaining pupils have successfully achieved the higher levels 6 and 7; this is especially true of results in mathematics. Although the performance of boys is broadly in line with the national average in English, mathematics and science, it is, nonetheless, significantly below that of girls.

2. When compared with the results of all schools in the country in GCSE examinations in 2000, the school's performance was broadly in line with the national average. Compared with similar schools results at GCSE are above average. Although results have been variable year by year, they have been better every year since the previous inspection in 1995. In 2000, the percentage of pupils obtaining five or more passes at the higher grades A\* to C, 55.3 per cent, was above the national average, 49 per cent, although the school did not achieve its target of 60 per cent. Across the full range of grades A\* to G, the school improved on previous performances, achieving a percentage of 96.7 per cent, above the national average of 88.8 per cent; this result across all grades achieved the targets the school set itself. However, the success rates in GCSE examinations varies considerably across subjects and the school has not yet put fully in place strategies to remedy this by seeking reasons why some subjects are more successful than others. For example, the percentage of pupils achieving a significantly larger proportion of the higher grades is better in science, drama, German, food technology, mathematics and English literature than in all other subjects. The reasons for this have not been fully ascertained by the school. The school also has not fully determined why the percentage of pupils achieving higher grades in French, ICT and in the resistant materials and graphics strands of design and technology is significantly lower than in all other subjects. Some departments do not respond fully to the implications provided by the data collated by the school. The performance of boys in the 2000 GCSE examinations was much weaker than that of girls in all subjects except physical education and business studies.

3. The findings of the inspection, after seeing work in class and carefully analysing in detail samples of pupils' work indicate that standards by the age of 14 are above average overall in English, mathematics and science. The success of strategies to improve literacy accounts for the continuing improvement in English, even since the 2000 tests and examinations. By the time pupils leave the school at 16, standards seen by inspectors in these subjects are also above average overall and well above average in science. Pupils make good progress and achieve well in Years 7 to 9 in relation to their attainment on entry to the school in Year 7; they sustain good progress in Years 10 and 11 by maintaining standards that are above average by the time they leave the school. Work seen by the end of Year 11 is above average in all subjects except drama, where standards are well above average, and ICT, French and religious education where standards are in line with the national average. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, generally achieve

well and make good progress. However, boys generally perform less well than girls in lessons and homework and in consequence their levels of attainment are generally below average.

4. Pupils with special educational needs usually attain the standards that teachers expect of them and in 2000 many excelled and performed better than expected owing to the quality of teaching and their own attitudes to their learning. For example, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to G in five or more subjects at GCSE was above the national average. This is good achievement for pupils with special educational needs.

5. Throughout the school, standards of literacy and numeracy are generally good and support learning across subjects. Pupils talk fluently and with expression and are usually good and effective listeners. There is a wide range of attainment in reading when pupils enter the school, some have reading ages more than two years below their actual age; in 2000 a number of such pupils were successful in GCSE examinations. Other pupils enter the school with reading ages more than two years in excess of their actual age; the pupils extend their reading skills by tackling more difficult texts and use extended skills when using books effectively for reference. During the inspection a number of examples of extended pieces of writing in a variety of genres was seen. Pupils are also using skills of numeracy effectively to represent data in a number of graphic forms and to interpret information, for example when reading a map. The use of the basic skills of ICT are less widespread and this remains an area for further improvement.

6. In lessons, most pupils with special educational needs make good progress. They make particularly good progress in their literacy programmes.

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

7. Pupils are very enthusiastic about school. Their behaviour is good and they make very good progress towards becoming mature and responsible young adults by the time they leave the school. Pupils' attendance and punctuality are good. The school has maintained these standards since the previous inspection. Parents are generally pleased with the standard of behaviour in the school.

8. Pupils are keen to come to school and they enjoy the range of learning experiences that are offered to them. Large numbers of pupils take part in extra-curricular activities and educational visits. Many take part in the popular dramatic and musical performances of which parents speak very highly. Pupils have a high regard for their teachers and are conscientious about their work. A very good example of pupils' attitudes to their education occurred when the school decided to discontinue Latin due to insufficient numbers. The pupils involved successfully pressed for reinstatement of the subject on an extra-curricular basis.

9. Pupils with special educational needs mostly behave well and have very positive attitudes to their work and school life as a whole. They make substantial gains in self-confidence and organising skills as they move through the school.

10. Behaviour is good overall with many examples of very good and sometimes exemplary behaviour. In the large majority of lessons pupils are orderly, listen well and do not waste time. In assemblies and when addressed by visitors they are very respectful, give their full attention and are quick to express their appreciation. Organisations, with whom the school is associated, remark very favourably about pupils' attitudes.

11. A few pupils are disruptive in some lessons, the cause of some vandalism and not always considerate towards others when moving about the school. Last year there were 97 instances of fixed-term exclusions. A small number of pupils have difficulties exercising adequate self-discipline and they receive special support.

12. Relationships between pupils are very good. They get on well together, are mutually supportive and are interested and appreciative of each other's work and views. Bullying is not a significant issue in the school although isolated instances and some teasing occur.

13. Pupils develop well their understanding and tolerance of the values and beliefs of others through their studies in religious education and assemblies. The programme of personal and social education contributes to their self-awareness, knowledge of social issues and sense of community. Work experience, community service, numerous extra-curricular activities, including visits overseas and visiting speakers, contribute to pupils making very good progress in their personal development. Pupils have opportunities to develop their sense of responsibility and they respond well, for example, as prefects, members of year group councils, librarians or by helping younger ones with their reading. Considerable resourcefulness is shown by many pupils when raising very substantial sums of money, for charitable purposes, through sponsored activities.

14. Attendance last year was above the average for secondary schools and unauthorised absence was well below the average. Due to the introduction of first day contact with parents of pupils who are absent, attendance has improved and unauthorised absence decreased during the current term. Pupils arrive punctually for the start of the school day and make their way to lessons without undue delay.

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

15. The overall quality of teaching is good; teaching is good or better in 85 per cent of lessons, being satisfactory or better in 99 per cent of lessons. Significantly since it has been the main factor in the good progress made by pupils as they move through the school, teaching is very good or better in 35 per cent of all lessons, and of these, teaching is excellent in six per cent of lessons. Teachers know their subjects, have high expectations themselves and have fostered the same in pupils. The quality of the girls' learning reflects these high expectations, but too many boys are too casual about extending themselves to achieve their very best. Teaching is consistently good in all subjects; it is very good in English, drama, history and science in Years 10 and 11. Teachers in lessons and through the tutorial system have been successful in encouraging the very good attitudes to their learning shown by pupils. As a result the quality of that learning is good in all subjects, although it is hampered somewhat in religious education in Years 10 and 11 owing to insufficient time being allocated to the subject. The quality of learning is very good in drama and history, and in science in Years 10 and 11.

16. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught in lessons. When teachers have good knowledge and understanding of pupils' needs and adapt teaching styles and learning materials to meet these needs, pupils learn with confidence and make good progress. Teaching is also good in the small groups of pupils withdrawn for extra help. This is because teachers have high expectations and are skilled at using specialist techniques. The good

relationships that exist between teachers and pupils have a positive impact on pupils' learning.

17. Teachers in most subjects pay attention to the development of the basic skills, especially of literacy. At the lowest level, attention is drawn to key words of the subject and these are referred to at appropriate times during lessons. Teachers ensure that pupils know their meanings. At best, teachers seek to provide opportunities for pupils to speak in appropriate language registers in working on particular tasks; the use of this in drama and role-play in modern languages, history and religious education is especially effective. When there is a requirement to write, especially in more extended forms, best practice shows that teachers pay sufficient attention to the accuracy of style, grammatical form and spelling.

18. Teaching and learning are very good where, for example in history, confident teaching uses a wide range of historical skills enabling pupils to engage in genuine investigation of controversial issues in Year 10. Such issues were addressed in drama in Year 10 through pupils' full engagement as characters facing up to poverty in Brazil or volunteers duped into spending time at a medical research centre seeking a controversial vaccine. In science, also in Year 10, skilful and probing questioning by the teacher led pupils to think hard, draw inferences and conclusions and then apply their understanding to real circumstances.

19. Good teaching in an English lesson with lower attainers in Year 9 centred on the novel 'All Quiet on the Western Front', appropriate at the time of Remembrance that was so well respected in the week's assemblies. Pupils listened intently to the teacher's effective reading and offered their own thoughts about the sufferings of fighting men. The growth of Christianity in Guisborough was the subject of a religious education lesson. The teacher's subject expertise and local knowledge ensured effective learning about pupils' own cultural background. In mathematics with Year 7 in a lesson about fractions, very good questioning was again used to allow pupils to show their understanding of the relationship of vulgar fractions, decimals and percentages. This lesson went at a demanding pace as pupils compared fractions and wrote down their equivalent in related forms. Mental arithmetic games led to effective learning with pupils with special educational needs. In the best lessons pupils face challenges. In geography, for example, pupils had to think and use what they know in order to consider major world issues such as poverty and population growth and to match these with their own developing attitudes and values. Challenge is important too in art and design. With such challenge pupils were inspired by the teacher cultivating an element of surprise and giving pupils a sense of discovery in the use of media and techniques new to them. In a lesson with Year 7 a teacher made very good use of song and mime to reinforce learning in French. Such imaginative teaching usually leads to effective learning. In a very good introduction to pulse and rhythm in a music lesson, pupils were asked to clap and guess the rhythm of nursery rhymes, perform action songs and hand-jive while listening to music with a strong beat. The energy that these activities released led to effective learning and pupils being able to distinguish between pulse and rhythm. When activities are matched to meet the differing learning needs of pupils, learning is most effective. In a rugby lesson, for example, with lower-attaining pupils in Year 10, very good relationships led pupils to take responsibility for parts of the lesson; this led to good learning and progress.

20. These essential strengths of energy, enthusiasm for the subject, high expectations, perception of learning need and opportunity based on a teacher's confidence in the subject account for the success of much of the learning and teaching in the school. By sharing good practice the overall teaching profile of the school could be even better, since whilst mainly good, not all teaching is as consistently good as the very best in the school. Teaching currently allows pupils to make good progress and achieve well in relation to their starting point. Even better teaching should lift pupils' achievement well clear of national averages to positions where overall results in GCSE examinations are all well above average. A reason why this is not currently being achieved lies in the inconsistency of some teachers to rise above satisfactory teaching and consistently teach at a good level. As a result pupils experience the same approaches lesson after lesson, teachers not adequately bringing variety to the methods they use. Boys switch off easily unless special efforts are made to motivate them such as those seen in the very good teaching.

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

21. The school covers all subjects of the National Curriculum and generally provides a broad range of opportunities for all pupils. However, although all pupils study ICT as a discrete subject, the provision of ICT in subject areas across the curriculum, an area for improvement in the last inspection report, still remains inadequate. In consequence, the requirements of the National Curriculum are not being fully met in ICT.

22. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good overall in Years 7 to 9. All subjects provide a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum and receive sufficient time for the programmes of study to be taught. The curriculum is well planned in all subject areas and is very good in drama, science and history. In drama it is enriching and demanding, in modern foreign languages almost fifty per cent of Year 8 and 9 pupils have the opportunity to study an additional language, and in history pupils have the opportunity to engage in investigations and field work. However, in art and design, although there is a broad range of activities in these year groups, there is not an effective structure in place to ensure that all pupils experience the full range of activities. Provision for pupils with special educational needs in all subjects is good; liaison teachers, materials and activities designed to match differing learning needs, and individual education plans are used effectively by all departments.

23. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum is broad and balanced for most pupils. A wide range of options is offered to pupils at the end of Year 9 in addition to the compulsory subjects. Guidance to pupils and parents in the Year 9 Options Booklet is good and emphasises the need for all pupils to take at least one modern foreign language and one design and technology subject. The school also points out how the curriculum in these subjects might be disapplied. Consequently, however, in Year 10, too many pupils have been allowed to opt out of studying design and technology and this limits the breadth and balance of the curriculum that is offered. The process was carried out with appropriate consultation and is monitored well but the number of pupils disapplied needs to be reviewed, especially in relation to the curriculum currently offered in design and technology.

24. The provision made for pupils with special educational needs is very good and a strength of the school. All pupils are integrated into normal lessons and have access to the support base in the learning support department. In ordinary lessons, for example in English and mathematics, and in the small groups withdrawn for special support, members of staff know pupils well and give them opportunities to succeed in their work. The curriculum is accessible to all pupils on the register of special needs and the special programmes in literacy offer good learning opportunities to pupils who enter the school with low levels of basic skills. For older pupils with special educational needs, the social science course

provides good opportunities for problem-solving and teamwork; it also enables pupils to extend their knowledge of places of geographical and historical importance in the locality. Good individual education plans are in place for pupils who need them. They include clear targets for improvements in basic skills, organisation and behaviour and recommendations for resources, teaching techniques and strategies for support in the classroom.

25. Overall the school operates a curriculum with equality of access to it by all pupils. Equality of opportunity policies, based on a whole school policy, are explicit in departmental handbooks. The school operates a sensitive charging policy, made explicit in the prospectus, that ensures that no pupil need be denied access to any visits or extra-curricular activities. The under-performance of boys in a number of subjects identified by the school as a priority is currently being tackled through a range of strategies. Provision for gifted and talented pupils has improved since the previous inspection, additional classes are offered in Latin and mathematics and extra-curricular activities provide gifted and talented pupils with a range of opportunities for developing their skills further. The school will expand this range of experiences when they implement fully the opportunities for pupils deemed to be gifted and talented, using the resources made available through the Excellence in Cities initiative.

26. The school provides an extensive range of extra-curricular clubs and activities that enhance and extend the time-tabled curriculum. All pupils have the opportunity to attend and benefit from this very good provision. Extra-curricular provision in drama and music is excellent and the quality of productions reflects the dramatic and theatrical expertise of the music and drama staff. A wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities are made available within physical education and the extent and quality of both curricular and extra-curricular provision were recognised through the Sportsmark Award given to the school. Visits and fieldwork are firmly embedded as part of history, geography and religious education, and the school organises a number of educational visits abroad.

27. The provision for personal, health and social education [PHSE] throughout the school is good. Comprehensive guidance is available for staff and a coordinated and coherent programme is taught well and pays particular attention to drugs misuse, sex education and citizenship. Provision for careers education and guidance is good. Pupils benefit from a range of activities including careers conventions for pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11. These events provide pupils with appropriate guidance, enabling them to make informed choices as they prepare for the next stage of their education and for when they leave the school.

28. The school enjoys very good links with the local community and the business community and effective contributions are made to pupils' learning and to their personal development through an enrichment of the curriculum; work-experience placements are particularly well planned and monitored. Year 10 pupils also benefit from a two-day conference that involves representatives from industry, commerce and the public sector who offer support in improving skills of communication, completing job applications and interview techniques. Greater use should be made of ICT, however, in supporting the careers education and guidance programme.

29. The school has established constructive links with its partner institutions in both the primary and tertiary sectors. A range of initiatives across most subjects, although not currently English, and by pastoral staff, provides good support for curricular continuity. It includes also the transition and induction of pupils, the development of staff, sports activities for primary school pupils, GCE A-level taster courses for Year 10 pupils at a local college, links between primary staff and subject teachers. Support is given to primary schools for health and sex education by the school's nurse.

30. The school's provision for pupils' personal development is good and, since the previous inspection, the range and quality of opportunities for pupils' spiritual development have improved and are now good. Religious education still continues to make a major contribution to spiritual development because of the extent to which pupils are able to reflect on their own beliefs and values. They also deal with difficult questions such as the existence of God and the nature of miracles. The quality of performance in almost all drama lessons also provides a strong spiritual experience for pupils. For example, in a lesson based on the work of Amnesty International, they explored what it felt like to be denied basic freedoms. Opportunities also occur in most other subjects and are particularly good where the quality of teaching inspires pupils, for example in science. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all its pupils, which was also the case at the time of the previous inspection. However, assemblies, though lacking formal worship, are well planned to include opportunities for spiritual development. Those taking place during the inspection, were particularly effective in dealing with the topical theme of "Remembrance " This was made relevant to the life of the school through a sensitive account of the life and death of a past pupil. Ministers, representing the local Christian churches, contribute to assemblies on a regular basis and were involved in the dedication of a memorial garden created after the recent death of a member of staff.

31. Arrangements for pupils' moral development are good. Teachers are good role models in promoting the principle of right and wrong in the classroom and the school's expectations of behaviour are clearly set out in its code of conduct, which is well understood by pupils. The programmes of study in many subjects provide good opportunities for lessons to contribute to pupils' moral development. There is a considerable emphasis on the exploration of moral issues in Years 10 and 11 in religious education, for example, which not only acquaints pupils with the stand taken on issues such as abortion by different faith communities, but also encourages them to express personal views based on sound understanding. Science deals with highly topical relevant issues such as cloning and the ownership of genes, and geography raises pupils' awareness of a range of environmental issues. In history, teachers deal with moral issues as they arise and English enriches pupils' moral awareness through the evaluation of the actions of characters in texts. Opportunities also occur through the themes which form the focus of drama lessons, and good levels of sporting behaviour are encouraged in physical education. The effective PHSE course also provides good opportunities for moral development through its programmes of drugs education and sex education.

32. The provision for pupils' social education is also very good. There are extensive opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility, for example on a whole school basis through membership of the School Council or in particular subject areas. Girls in Year 10 volunteer to assist their teachers in netball practices for younger pupils. Pupils assist in the library and help younger pupils with their reading. Opportunities exist in most subjects for pupils to learn to work collaboratively with each other in a variety of ways; sharing research in religious education, negotiating roles in group work in drama or responding to the discipline of team play in games. Pupils of Laurence Jackson School raise considerable sums of money each year for a wide range of charities in the local area, nationally and further afield. Some local initiatives are entirely dependent on the support which they receive in this way, and this is highly appreciated by them. There is a commitment to community service in the locality through pupils' involvement with playgroups, the local hospital and homes for the elderly. Pupils provide the catering for road safety events organised by the local police in the town. Pupils' awareness of the way that social structures have developed in the past and are currently evolving in parts of the world, receive attention in history, religious education and geography. Provision for pupils' education in citizenship is developing well, for example through history and the PHSE programme.

33. Pupils with special educational needs have very good opportunities for personal development. They develop self-confidence through taking part in practical activities that are aimed at improving their social skills in subjects that include drama, physical education and social studies. Pupils also make gains in social confidence through discussion in the classroom and in the friendly, informal atmosphere of the lunchtime clubs that are run by the learning support department.

34. Arrangements for pupils' cultural development are also very good. Pupils visit museums and galleries, and have had the opportunity of working with artists in residence in the production of stained glass windows. Good collaboration with other local schools is reflected in the millennium banners displayed in the school hall. Pupils receive cultural enrichment from their involvement in professional theatre as audience and participants; for example, through taking part in a National Theatre workshop and performance of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. In drama lessons, pupils engage in issues such as those surrounding prisoners of conscience, street children in Rio de Janeiro, imagining life after a nuclear explosion or feeling the intensity of being misled in the interests of medical research. These experiences touch not only their sense of right and wrong but also their realisation that working in art and design helps them to feel for and reflect upon lives beyond their own. Extra-curricular sporting activity is strong and involves a good proportion of boys and girls. Educational visits abroad give pupils direct experience of the languages they study. A recent visit to the Oberammergau Passion Play proved to be a moving experience for many pupils. Religious education provides pupils with a good understanding of what it means to belong to world faiths other than Christianity and both history and geography provide good insights into cultural diversity.

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

35. The arrangements for pupils' health, safety and welfare are very good. Good behaviour and attendance are effectively promoted and pupils receive considerable help and opportunities for personal development. Overall, the good standard of care described in the previous inspection's report has been sustained. Parents are generally pleased with the quality of care, support and guidance.

36. All matters regarding health, safety and security are extremely well managed. High levels of efficiency and effectiveness are achieved by the regular and thorough checks that are conducted. Security is good and all members of staff are vigilant. The school goes to considerable lengths to maintain the site in a safe, clean and attractive condition. Arrangements for first aid are very good. Supervision throughout the day is very good. The school is well served by external specialists who contribute effectively to pupils' welfare. Child protection procedures are in place. The pastoral system provides very effective care and support. Relationships between pupils and adults are constructive and mutually respectful. Overall, the effect is an environment that is conducive to learning and in which pupils feel valued and secure.

37. Good behaviour is effectively promoted by the system of recognition and reward and most particularly by teachers' high expectations. The school annually undertakes an audit of behaviour in order to identify problems and needs and uses a range of strategies to positively influence pupils whose behaviour is unacceptable. The student support service provides effective specialised support.

38. Some attendance registers are left open too long and this has a safety implication should evacuation of the premises be necessary. Otherwise, records are satisfactorily kept. Attendance is effectively promoted, particularly by the first day contact arrangements.

39. Good procedures are in place to track and report pupils' personal development. The programme for personal, social and health education contributes well to many aspects of pupils' personal development.

40. Extra help is available to pupils, for example through further tuition, a homework club and advice regarding careers and their choice of subjects to be taken in Years 10 and 11. Parents and older pupils help younger pupils in paired reading. Mentoring arrangements are in place but are not yet sufficiently developed throughout the school.

41. The systems for identifying pupils in need of extra help and the arrangements for reviewing the progress of pupils with individual education plans and statements of special educational need are very good. The monitoring and assessment of pupils' progress in small withdrawal groups is also very good and target-setting for individual pupils is well established. There is good support for pupils who have specific learning difficulties, dyslexia, and emotional and behavioural difficulties. Members of the support staff work together well and their support in classes is effective. The team of adults other than teachers working in the school provides good support for pupils with reading difficulties in Year 7 and for older pupils at the time of examinations. The school's well-established links with its partner institutions enable pupils with special needs to make a smooth transition from one phase of their school life to another. There is also effective liaison with external agencies and specialist centres.

42. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are very good. National test results and reading tests are used to build an accurate picture of pupils' attainment when they arrive at the school and to identify pupils in need of extra help in literacy and numeracy. The assessment policy gives clear principles for departments to follow. The annual review prepared by each department and discussed with a member of the senior management team provides an effective way of assessing whether goals have been achieved by individual pupils, departments and teachers. These reviews usefully plot performance over recent years and compare performance between subjects. Most subjects are now using levels of the National Curriculum when assessing pupils' attainment. Under-achievement is logged. Programmes of target-setting are effectively working in science; other departments, for example English, make effective use of the information available by setting individual targets for pupils. However, in mathematics, there are too few opportunities taken to monitor pupils' progress through the use of formal tests. In some subjects pupils do not have enough information on how well they are performing; this applies, for example, to the GCSE course in religious education.

43. The use of assessment to guide curricular planning is satisfactory. The information is used well to determine the grouping of pupils. In some subjects, for example geography and religious education, the information provided is not yet used as well as it might be to plan teaching approaches; in others such as English, science and mathematics such information is well used.

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

44. Almost all parents are either pleased or very pleased with the school. The school has an effective partnership with its parents. Parental involvement, in many aspects of the school's work and pupils' learning, is good. These findings are generally similar to the previous inspection.

45. Some parents say that this is a good school and others that it is a very good school. They believe it is trying to improve and that it also tells pupils how they can improve. Pupils are cared for, teaching is good and there are many opportunities for pupils to have a wide range of experiences. Inspectors found this provision to be very good. Parents are pleased with the progress that pupils make; however, the school needs to work harder to get parents of boys to cooperate with measures taken to improve boys' engagement and will to be successful. However, a few say that although there is generally good support and guidance for pupils, the school does not push them sufficiently to achieve higher grades. Parents are very enthusiastic about the quality of sport, drama and music.

46. The school works well with parents of children with special educational needs. Parents are well informed through an introductory booklet when their child starts school so that they can help at home. Parents make contributions to the annual review of their children's progress and are mostly happy with the information given and arrangements made when their children move from one phase of education to another.

47. A substantial number of parents say that information about pupils' progress is insufficient. The planners that are provided for pupils are not used well enough to promote pupils' self-organisation and are undeveloped as a means of communication with parents. Whilst information of a general nature through the prospectus, governors' annual report, newsletters and a recently introduced newspaper is very good, annual school reports lack consistency and detail about academic strengths and weaknesses, although they inform well about pupils' attitudes and effort. The school does not produce termly or half-yearly formal progress indicators and, therefore, pupils and parents do not have a sharp focus on improvement needs at an early time in the school year so that there is opportunity to do something about them.

48. The school consults well with its parents and has recently introduced parental contact on the first day of a pupil's absence if an explanation has not been received. This has not only been valued by parents; it has improved relationships in many instances and significantly reduced authorised and unauthorised absence.

49. The school seeks to consult parents at parents' evenings, through the use of questionnaires and specially arranged events. Parents are invited into school to discuss concerns about pupils and to review the progress of those who have difficulties. In a few instances, despite its best intentions, the school has not been able to answer the concerns of parents. The very small number of parents to whom this applies felt that the school was not working closely enough with them.

50. Whilst most parents are pleased with the standard of behaviour in school some feel that the behaviour of those who go into the town at lunchtime is not always good enough. The

school has responded to this and diligently applies a system of control that effectively monitors the whereabouts of pupils at lunchtime and should ensure that only those pupils who have parental consent are allowed off the premises. Parents have signed up to the home/school agreement and turn out in good numbers to encourage their children when they perform in public. Parents help the school in numerous ways. They raise substantial funds to increase and improve resources. They donate materials to the Textiles Department and the gardening group. Some help in the library and others assist in a reading scheme.

51. Whilst almost all parents work with the school to support their children's education and personal development a significant but increasing minority of parents arrange family holidays in term time and this adversely affects the progress of the pupils concerned.

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

52. The headteacher has maintained successfully the long-standing good reputation of the school and continually sustains a climate in which effective learning occurs. He places appropriate importance in ensuring that pupils enjoy their learning and are positive about school. Over many years the school's popularity has reflected his success in achieving such goals. Pupils are happy to attend and parents and the community rightly appreciate the school. The headteacher and governors have been keen to establish a caring school community; in this they have been successful. The headteacher and key members of staff see this as a pre-requisite of the school's motto and aim – 'Excellence Through Opportunity' – is to underpin the lifeblood of the school. The headteacher has a clear sense of direction for the school, based on raising standards of attainment and personal development further, through a continuing ethos of self-evaluation and improvement.

53. The senior management team brings a range of skills, enthusiasm and energy to its work. The headteacher is able to rely fully on the excellent organisational skills of the deputy headteacher. His efficiency and long-term commitment to the wellbeing of the school and its pupils is known in the town; the school's success and reputation owes much to the devotion he has brought to his work. Four senior teachers have specific tasks that are managed effectively, but they are also a useful sounding board in leadership meetings for they have much to contribute themselves to the further development of the school. This is important as they form a bridge with the rest of the staff, many of whom have been in the school for a long time. The work of the senior teachers helps to ensure a freshness and willingness to develop new ideas whilst sustaining proven practices.

54. The governing body shows commitment and perception. Governors are well informed about the day-to-day life of the school and give good support whilst holding the school stringently to account. Committees of the governing body meet regularly and respond thoughtfully to issues brought to them by the headteacher; in several instances governors take initiatives that generate responses from the staff of the school. Governors have regular contact with developments in the school and share their expertise in an appropriate way that teachers value. There are a number of statutory requirements that were not being met at the time of the inspection, including not providing a daily collective act of worship; governors are now aware of these and where possible are committed to satisfy legislation.

55. The school has identified a number of curricular priorities in the school development plan and these are reflected in the departmental development plans. The governing body, through its curriculum committee, is involved and informed of developments within the school. It has representation on the school curriculum committee that is the forum for curriculum review, change and development.

56. The learning support department has a high status within the school and is well supported by the school's management and governors. The coordinator for special educational needs, the SENCO, gives good leadership and direction and ensures that arrangements for monitoring and assessment of pupils' progress are carried out efficiently and then well used for future development. The number of staff has increased since the previous inspection and teachers and support staff are well qualified and experienced. Accommodation has improved and the two classrooms offer an attractive and stimulating working area that has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Resources and learning materials are good, but there are too few up-to-date computers for the effective use of ICT. Statutory requirements in respect of pupils with statements of special educational need are met. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection in improving the quality of individual education plans and in developing effective learning resources. The establishment of link teachers in subject departments has been instrumental in ensuring that departments are fully informed about the needs of individual pupils.

57. Heads of department and of year form a strong and effective layer of middle management. In many ways their innovative approach to their work drives much of the change and development that are features of the school. The most successful subjects, for example, are led by very effective heads of department, forever seeking to improve on the department's previous best, not just in examinations but in the quality of learning that pupils experience. The nature of learning is important to teachers in the better departments and is reflected by pupils' enthusiasm for subjects such as art and design, drama, English, history and science. Pupils' very positive attitudes to their learning are an important feature of the school; this has been achieved by effective work in personal and social education and that of form tutors effectively led by heads of year. This pastoral team is beginning to combine appropriately a concern for pupils' guidance and welfare that includes the progress they are making in subjects.

58. There is much that is good to celebrate in the school. The headteacher and senior managers are now aware that systematic ways must be found to share this. They recognise that an analysis of why some approaches to learning yield success can lead to support that will allow all teaching to aspire to this very best teaching. There are plans for supportive classroom observation; taken side-by-side with the excellent analysis of the performance of pupils, teachers and departments in examinations, this close look at what leads to successful learning is a useful step in the school's intention to raise standards further and to have learning of the richest and highest quality.

59. The school's planning includes very careful consideration of the best use of the finances available to it. Provision of good quality resources and facilities and an environment that is conducive to learning and in which pupils feel safe ranks high in the school's priorities. Best value is always sought when purchasing and specific grants are used for their designated purposes. Expenditure is very effectively controlled.

60. Staffing and accommodation are good. Despite a number of classes taught by different teachers, especially in mathematics, that can make continuity difficult to achieve, teachers' experience and qualifications match the demands of the National Curriculum except in ICT, where, for some, staff development programmes are necessary. Pupils with special educational needs receive effective learning support. Non-teaching staff helps to ensure the school enjoys a pleasant and enriching learning environment.

61. Resources in the school are satisfactory. They are very good in English and drama, and in all other subject good except in so far as computers are concerned. The school has just installed a new computer room in addition to the three rooms already in use for the teaching of ICT, but there are still subjects where there is insufficient computer access or inadequate software to meet the demands of the National Curriculum, notably in mathematics. At 10 to 1 the provision of computers is still below the national average. The library is a very good, well-managed resource, available throughout the working day for pupils to undertake research either with books or electronic media. The book stock is regularly updated with advice and support from the local education authority. Basic textbooks are provided in all subjects, geography in particular having improved in this respect since the previous inspection.

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

62. In order to build on steps already taken to ensure that the school is self-evaluating and improving, the headteacher, governors and staff should focus on:

- (1) improving the consistency of performance in GCSE examinations between subjects and raising the overall performance of boys to more satisfactory levels by:
  - matching work more accurately to pupils' prior attainment,
  - seeking opportunities for pupils to apply skills learned in one subject to the demands of other subjects,
  - using form tutor time to discuss pupils' strengths and weaknesses across subjects and how weaknesses can be improved,
  - insisting that lessons have clear learning objectives and sharing these with pupils,
  - develop further target-setting and mentoring of boys through the school, seeking to match tasks to boys' interests in a way that lays stress on striving for the best possible performance rather than the most quickly completed,
  - developing a strong culture of achievement in the school and rewarding success in ways appropriate to the social lives of boys and girls,
  - giving more opportunities for independent learning and research;  
*See paragraphs : 1-3, 25, 42, 45, 64, 65, 75, 82, 89, 97, 104, 108, 113, 114, 125, 140*

- (2) developing the use of ICT to support learning in all subjects by:
- making sure that the coordinator has sufficient status and time allocated to effect development,
  - ensuring that the best practice in ICT supporting subjects is shared by all teachers,
  - making full use of the New Opportunity Funded training to develop the skills of teachers in the use of ICT,
  - creating effective monitoring and evaluating of the use of ICT across subjects, ensuring that statutory requirements are met,
  - keeping records of pupils' capability in ICT and informing parents through reports of the progress their children are making;  
*See paragraphs : 21, 28, 60, 61, 69, 85, 95, 96, 99, 101, 103, 105, 117, 124, 128, 132, 134, 136, 141, 149*
- (3) extending current good provision for self-evaluation and improvement to include the sharing of good practice through classroom observation designed to help all teaching be of the same quality as the very best seen in the school by:
- having a more systematic approach to monitoring and support and acting on information gained,
  - improving teachers' expertise across a wider variety of teaching methods,
  - developing and agreeing with individual teachers clearly identified areas of focus designed to improve aspects of their teaching, even when it is currently deemed to be good;  
*See paragraphs: 15, 17-20, 58, 69, 78, 85, 87, 94, 110, 116, 118, 126*
- (4) improving the effectiveness and frequency of reporting to ensure that parents are better informed of the progress their children are making by:
- distinguishing more clearly in full reports the standards pupils are achieving in relation to levels of the national Curriculum or requirements of GCSE examinations and the effort and application they are putting into their work,
  - seeking ways of informing parents more regularly of the progress their children are making, for example by issuing very brief interim reports through computer programmes.  
*See paragraphs : 42, 47, 79, 120, 134, 162*

Although not amongst the main areas for improvement, governors should include in their action plan steps to meet statutory requirements regarding:

- ensuring that only in exceptional circumstances are pupils able to opt out of taking a strand of design and technology in Years 10 and 11.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	166
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	53

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6.0	28.5	50.9	13.9	0.6	0.0	0.0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1454
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	219

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	20
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	214

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	19
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	25

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.3
National comparative data	7.9

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	1.1

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	156	148	304

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	110	116	121
	Girls	130	113	101
	Total	240	229	222
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	79 (67)	75 (73)	73 (66)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	45 (24)	54 (48)	39 (31)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	73	119	108
	Girls	101	104	101
	Total	174	223	209
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	57 (63)	73 (73)	69 (76)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	22 (21)	35 (44)	37 (33)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	30 (28)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	139	163	302

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	63	133	137
	Girls	105	159	160
	Total	168	292	297
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	55.3 (60)	96.7 (93)	98.3 (98)
	National	49.0 (46.6)	88.8 (90.9)	94.4 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	School	42.3 (42)

per pupil	National	38.7 (38.0)
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*Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.*

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	1450
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	95	2
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	82.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.58

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	400

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.8
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	24.2
Key Stage 4	20.7

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	3 411 674
Total expenditure	3 423 952
Expenditure per pupil	2 310
Balance brought forward from previous year	148 657
Balance carried forward to next year	136 379

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1454
Number of questionnaires returned	387

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	36	55	5	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	39	55	3	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	50	10	4	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	58	14	5	1
The teaching is good.	27	63	4	1	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	21	44	21	7	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	43	45	6	4	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	41	3	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	22	51	15	5	7
The school is well led and managed.	33	52	5	3	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	32	55	8	1	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	46	9	3	10

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

### **ENGLISH**

63. Standards in English are well above average throughout the school. This is the result of the quality of teaching that is generally very good. Pupils' responsive attitudes also cause the quality of learning to be very good. They make good progress as they move through the school.

64. From 1997 to 1999 the performance of pupils in the National Curriculum tests, taken at the age of fourteen years, declined from well above the national average to broadly in line with it. In the National Curriculum tests taken in 2000 pupils again attained results which were well above the national average. The number achieving higher levels also rose significantly. In general, both boys and girls aged fourteen years are between one and two terms ahead of what is expected.

65. Over the last three years results in the GCSE examination have fluctuated in both English and English literature. In 1999 the percentage of pupils achieving A\*-C grades in English was well above the national average for each gender and for all pupils. In 2000 the percentage of pupils attaining A\*-C grades in English was in line with the national average and showed a small improvement over the figures for 1998. In 2000 the performance of pupils in the GCSE examination in English literature was in line with the national average for each gender and for all pupils. Both boys and girls had improved their standard in line with the national trend. This was the first year when all pupils were entered for the examinations in both English and English literature yet there was an improvement in the average grades achieved in both subjects. The number of pupils attaining the highest grades also rose, especially in English literature. The higher attainment of girls in all English examinations reflects the gender difference that pertains nationally.

66. During the inspection, pupils of all levels of attainment are seen to achieve well in all aspects of English. They speak clearly and listen attentively to the teachers and to one another. On entry to the school most pupils have a reading age which is at or higher than their chronological age. In a significant minority of pupils where this is not the case, teachers provide appropriate personal attention so that all pupils may be enabled to make good progress. The commendable results in the 2000 GCSE examinations of these pupils indicate the success of this endeavour. Pupils generally read aloud clearly and expressively. The standard of writing is good and, by means of drafting, often becomes very good. Conscientious marking by the teachers is an effective agent in this process, showing constructive comment and indicating achievable targets for improvement. On rare occasions marking is less helpful because comments are too general or imprecise. As they proceed through the school pupils attempt an increasing range of tasks so that, by the time they leave, they can write in a wide variety of styles and have a good understanding of how to use these appropriately. Even in the younger year groups higher and middle attainers produce some very good short stories, obviously written with pleasure. A particularly atmospheric example, with a twist at the end, concerned a visit to a forbidden basement. Originality is encouraged by the teachers and many pupils show a talent for amusing description, often choosing surprising topics such as an aunt's foot protruding from bedclothes, a group of children waiting for a teacher or the rejection of seafood in a Chinese restaurant. Some show a talent for simile as was seen in a short memoir where a boy recalled making his first friend and said he felt 'not alone but like a bird that had just learnt to fly'. Higher-attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 enjoy researching extended projects on topics such as 'Island Adventure' and produce beautifully presented work, showing thought and competence. By the time they are 14 lower-attaining pupils still spell inaccurately and write in short sentences but they can show good

understanding of characters in 'Macbeth' and make sensible observations. Older pupils show very good knowledge and appreciation of texts, both poetry and prose. The highest attainers analyse ideas logically and also empathise with writers and their characters. Many appreciate nuances and enjoy choosing words precisely from their expanding vocabulary. Pupils of all levels of attainment make progress in understanding what makes language effective both in fact and fiction. By the time they leave the school most pupils have learnt about sentence structure and language use though some remain unreliable spellers.

67. The quality of teaching overall is very good. Teachers are very enthusiastic and committed to the progress and well-being of their classes and their relationships with pupils are good. Expectations are high and targets are carefully set. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their subject. They give clear instructions and explain well, often using questions skilfully to imprint information and to provoke thought. Careful planning was evident in all lessons seen, with good attention and encouragement directed to all pupils. Teaching strategies are varied and pace is mostly well maintained. As a result the quality of learning is very good and pupils' achievement reflects this; they also make good progress. Their learning is epitomised by their enthusiasm to make contact with new texts, especially fiction. Except for Year 7, pupils are arranged in sets so that all may proceed at an appropriate pace. There is movement between sets when this is needed and after consultation with parents. All teachers are aware of the requirements of their pupils with special educational needs and cooperate with the special needs coordinator in planning for these. Good use is made of classroom assistants in this regard. Some parents too give help in lessons. As a result, pupils with special educational needs achieve well and make good progress. Homework is regularly set and marked. Records of progress are kept and assessment is used to inform planning.

68. Pupils have a good attitude to English and to their teachers. They are rarely late for class and behave well. They listen discriminately and enjoy working in pairs or groups when they speak freely and with good humour, discussing issues in a civilised, sensible manner. Evidence of this was seen in a Year 7 class who were appraising one another's homework and also in a Year 10 class who were discussing questions posed in 'The Stronger' by August Strindberg. Good study habits are acquired as they keep notebooks to help revision of their texts. Most pay attention to the comments teachers have put on their homework as is shown by the quality of their corrections. Targets for improvement are set both by teachers and pupils. The subject makes a good contribution to the personal development of all pupils as the texts studied frequently raise moral issues for discussion. Spiritual and cultural awareness is enhanced by exposure to books, plays, poetry and films that provide pupils with a larger view of human existence. This was well exemplified in a Year 9 class where pupils were considering the sufferings of soldiers and the aspects of war depicted in 'All Quiet on the Western Front' by Erich Maria Remarque. Some older pupils take the opportunity to exercise responsibility by helping younger pupils to improve their reading and by supervising in the library.

69. The department is very well managed and led. Its members meet regularly and frequently, both formally and informally, to co-ordinate activities and to formulate policy. Teachers cross-reference levels each give when marking. The department lays emphasis on the importance of sharing best practice as a result of observing each other's lessons. This helps to ensure that good standards are always the goal of the department. Last year more focused examination practice was instigated in preparation for the National Curriculum tests and this may account for the recent improvement in results. Resources are of good quality and are well used although there is a need for more access to word processors. Accommodation is very good and encourages good practice. Rooms are large, pleasant and full of interesting displays of new work. With the exception of matters concerning ICT, the department has successfully tackled all relevant issues raised in the previous inspection

report. An area for further development is the teachers' writing of reports that give parents a clear understanding of their child's attainment and rate of progress. The problems of lower attainers have been addressed by intensifying emphasis on literacy.

***Key skills: the application of skills of literacy across the curriculum***

70. A literacy policy for the school has been developing during the last two years under the direction of a member of the senior management team. All departments have been involved in its making and some are already putting into practice the decisions that have so far been made.

71. The standard of speaking is good throughout the school. Pupils of all ages express their thoughts clearly and seem to have no difficulties in using or understanding standard English. They are articulate and also listen well. In media lessons they show that they can discriminate between shades of meaning. This ability is due to the emphasis laid by all their teachers on the importance of language. Opportunities to learn by role play are valued by pupils as was seen in an English lesson where they were being introduced to the language of Shakespeare by enacting the rival gangs of Capulets and Montagues.

72. The standard of reading is generally good in all subjects. Throughout the school pupils are made aware of how to read carefully for accuracy and depth and how to skim for speedy location of information. In Year 7 pupils are tested in reading and spelling at the start and end of the school year. Where their reading age is significantly below their chronological age they are given help as a matter of priority. This help is directed at their individual needs by various teaching strategies and involves withdrawal, classroom support or extra reading practice. Soon after they join the school pupils are given an induction course in library use. Members of staff make a visit to the library attractive and interesting and have devised ingenious material. Research skills are fostered by most subjects but especially in science where very good examples were observed of pupils accessing a whole range of reference resources during a lesson.

73. The standard of writing is generally good. Higher attainers are able to analyse or synthesise ideas, make their own notes and write cogent letters. A good example of this was seen in a science lesson when pupils wrote to the editor of a newspaper about the effects of acid rain. Lower attainers write to a slightly higher standard than is generally seen as was observed in religious education, physical education and English. To help with spelling all teachers were invited to contribute from their subject areas a list of frequently used technical terms. These are printed in the back of the school planner which all pupils use to record their homework. Lists of key words are also prominently displayed on the walls of most classrooms and studios and were observed in use in English, geography and drama lessons. The study of Latin is very helpful to those who take the subject as it enables pupils to expand their vocabulary. Modern foreign languages reinforce knowledge of simple grammatical forms and provide opportunities to practise accuracy in writing. Pupils of all ages take care to write correctly in science lessons and homework as staff marking often focuses on how to correct language errors.

## MATHEMATICS

74. Standards are above average. This is the result of teaching that is generally good. Pupils' attitudes and the good relationship that teachers have with pupils also cause pupils' learning in mathematics to be good. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school

75. In the 2000 national tests at the age of 14, attainment was above the national average when compared with all schools and well above average when compared with similar schools. Over the last four years results have improved in line with national trends. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was above the national average. These results are as high as they should be taking into account pupils' prior attainment. Girl's results were better than those of boys. The proportion gaining A\*-G was above results nationally. Pupils' regularly perform well in mathematics when compared with their performance in other subjects. The results have been maintained at this level for the last six years. In 1999, 30 of the most gifted pupils were entered for GCSE Statistics. Of those entered, 97.2 per cent achieved A\*-C grades, well above the national average.

76. In the work seen standards are above those expected at the age of 14. By the end of Year 9 number skills are sound for the majority of pupils; higher-attaining pupils handle squares and square roots of numbers confidently and apply them to Pythagoras' theorem and average-attaining pupils convert fractions, decimals and percentages. Algebraic skills are being developed well. Year 8 pupils use trial and improvement methods to solve a range of equations and Year 9 higher-attaining pupils can solve simultaneous equations. Most pupils have a satisfactory understanding of shape and space and measuring skills are good. Problem-solving skills are satisfactory; by the end of Year 9 most pupils are able to identify patterns and establish rules.

77. Standards in the work seen are above those expected at the age of 16. Number skills are generally good for most pupils. Algebraic skills are again sound for the majority of pupils and good for the highest attaining pupils. Year 10 higher-attaining pupils factorise algebraic expressions confidently and apply their knowledge well to simplifying algebraic fractions. The concepts of shape and space are well developed and data handling skills are good. Problem-solving skills are good and most pupils identify patterns and rules, predict and test hypotheses.

78. The overall quality of teaching is good; in three out of four lessons the teaching is good or better. This is an improvement on the previous inspection. As a result of this good teaching the quality of learning has improved and is also good. Pupils at all levels, including pupils with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well. Average attainment levels on entry are improved to above average by the age of 14 and are maintained at this level at the age of 16. All teachers have good subject knowledge and explain concepts clearly, which helps pupils to develop their skills and understand technical language. Lesson planning is good; good links are made between lessons. Teachers manage and organise pupils well resulting in pupils listening attentively when teachers are talking, concentrating on their tasks and working well together during group activities. Lessons are usually conducted at a good pace. This ensures that pupils make good progress with their learning during lessons. Teachers set clear expectations for the pupils that produce well-presented work and usually good behaviour from pupils. Questioning of pupils is good and explores well pupil's prior knowledge and understanding of the topic covered. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, the teacher questioned the pupils well so that all pupils increased their understanding of the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages. Appropriate methods and levels of tasks are used to help pupils learn. In a very good lesson, in Year 10, the pupils devised board games that required the substituting of

numbers, from throwing dice, into algebraic expressions in order to progress around the board. The quality of homework has improved and is used effectively to consolidate and extend learning. Marking of pupils' work is good though comments about what pupils should do to improve their work are not used often enough. The available time is well used with good attention given in Year 7 lessons to improving pupils' number skills through regular mental activities. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils that result in pupils appearing interested in what they are doing. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good due to good teaching provided by support teachers. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, good resources and teaching methods were used well and suited the learning needs of pupils, ensuring that pupils increased their understanding of decimal numbers.

79. Leadership and management are sound. The head of department is providing a clear direction for the development of the subject and there is a commitment to raising standards by all teachers. The subject provides a broad and balanced curriculum although insufficient opportunities are provided to teach the ICT requirements of the National Curriculum due to very limited access to computers to support learning. Schemes of work are good although the use of ICT to support learning is not included. Arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment are satisfactory and contribute to teachers matching work to pupils' learning needs. There is, however, insufficient testing of pupils in Years 7 to 9 and a lack of effective tracking of how well pupils are doing. There are no central records to help with this process. The quality of the reports is unsatisfactory. They do not inform parents well enough of what pupils can and can't do in relation to National Curriculum attainment targets. There is a good match of teaching staff to the curriculum although there are an unusually high number of classes taught by different teachers. There is no formal process for the monitoring of teaching, so that there is little opportunity for members of the department to share good practice.

***Key skills: the application of skills of numeracy across the curriculum***

80. Standards of numeracy are generally above average. These are reflected in, for example, science where pupils measure accurately, use fractions and percentages confidently and can draw and interpret graphs well. In food technology pupils weigh and measure accurately and in graphics show a good understanding of enlargement. Data handling is good; pupils are able to draw accurately a range of graphs in many subjects. In history and geography pupils demonstrate good data handling skills. Good graphical skills are evident in most subjects. Although some attention has been given to introducing the numeracy strategy in Year 7, there is no written policy for improving numeracy standards throughout the school.

**SCIENCE**

81. By the time pupils are 14, attainment is above average; by the age of 16, when they leave school, pupils are achieving well above average levels of attainment. This is the result of teaching that is good, and where high expectations are the norm. Pupils' positive attitudes, the very good assessment and monitoring of standards, and very strong leadership also contribute to the quality of learning in science. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school.

82. By 14, pupils are about two terms ahead of what is expected, and science results compare well with those in English and mathematics. Pupils' performance in tests is well above average in comparison with similar schools. By the age of 16, GCSE results in double and single award science examinations are well above average. Some 75 per cent of grades are A\*-C in double award science, and over 33 per cent of grades are A\*-C in single award science. In addition, 27 per cent of grades awarded in double award science are A\*/A. This is a very high level. Moreover, close to 100 per cent gain A\*-G grades. Results in 2000 indicate a consistent trend in high attainment levels. The department is rightly proud, but not complacent, about these achievements. Results compare very well with English and mathematics.

83. Standards seen during the inspection compare well with test results at 14, and examination results at 16. Pupils achieve well during Years 7 to 9 and very well during Years 10 and 11. Teaching is more effective with older pupils. During the first three years pupils' standards of work show a good grasp of scientific concepts and processes. These are well used and applied. For example, when studying transfer of heat, pupils successfully compare heat lost from different types of houses and flats. Their work clearly shows how they gain and develop understanding and can use this to solve problems. They puzzle out effects of streamlining on air resistance for a kestrel hovering and diving, and then, more trickily, a rocket and a satellite. Pupils develop effective approaches to making predictions and carrying out fair tests; they carry out practical work with enthusiasm and increasing skill. Pupils make careful observations, working well together to obtain evidence before coming to conclusions. In Year 7 classes, pupils make good attempts at making microscope slides, showing confidence in their handling of equipment and accuracy in observations. Expectations of lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are maintained at suitably demanding levels. They receive appropriate support; well-matched materials and tasks are used. In a Year 9 lesson, many who were initially reluctant to work were captivated by the interest generated through the teacher devising an excellent rotating programme of experiments exploring energy changes. Such pupils not only make good progress in practical work and in appropriate levels of writing, but they make advances in grasping more difficult ideas by the use of, for example, scientific models illustrating the three different states of matter. In Years 10 and 11, pupils demonstrate a continuing improvement in grasping underlying conceptual aspects of science, as well as being able to develop particular themes, and to apply their understanding; for example, many use chemical symbols to work out formulae and balanced equations. They also draw generalisations from such work, and a substantial proportion can go on to calculate formula mass. This sets very good theoretical groundwork before embarking on extended investigations into, for example, rates of reactions, energy changes, or the effects of osmosis. Work is often related to everyday situations and applications.

84. Emphasis on correct vocabulary and understanding scientific terms, as well as on speaking and listening, enhances interesting and coherent accounts of what pupils have discovered. Pupils read confidently and can access information from their own records, texts or revision guides, as well as a wide range of book and resources for ICT. Writing skills develop well overall. In Years 7 to 9 there are good opportunities for extended writing as well as experimental notes and answers to questions; for example, vivid letters to a smoker, letters to a newspaper editor about acid rain and its effects. Older pupils generate extended accounts of their investigations. All of them can clearly describe technical matters such as the variables to be controlled and those to be tested in an investigation. A substantial proportion goes on to draw careful conclusions, to write critical evaluations of their investigations, and to suggest how they might be improved. Most pupils are confident in their use of number, measure accurately, tabulate results, and present them graphically. A significant number of older pupils demonstrate considerable expertise in constructing lines of best fit, in identifying anomalous results, and in drawing valid inferences from their

conclusions and evaluations.

85. The key to these standards of learning and achievement lies in the high expectations of teachers. They expect appropriately high standards of the pupils, pushing pace and demands throughout the lessons. The quality of questioning, the nature and organisation of demonstrations and investigations, along with a thoroughly scientific approach to all aspects of work, is rooted in their own secure knowledge and judicious planning. From Year 7 onwards, pupils are not spoon fed, they have to learn to think hard, for example, when investigating how to purify a local supply of rock salt from a nearby mine, or when identifying the way in which magnetic fields occur and vary. They gain first-hand experience of assessing evidence and coming to conclusions. Conceptual understanding, scientific skills and increasing independence are pushed even further in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are given no easy answers. Teachers skilfully pose questions and point where clues may be found. Connections are teased out and research skills are developed. In learning about the basis of the chemical periodical table, pupils received a rich variety of inputs through, for example, literature, reference books, video clips and CD-ROMs. This very well devised sequence of activities provides stimulus, and the means of gathering and weighing evidence. In a lesson on respiratory membranes in the lungs, highly- skilled questioning made pupils think hard about the relationships between structure and function, the reasons for inhaled and exhaled air having a different composition, and how they might experiment to show this. Even if a phenomenon seems rather academic, such as a topic on static electricity, opportunities are sought to think about applications, for example of how a photocopier works. The department has made appreciable gains in the last year in the use of ICT, sensors and data logging. They have already adopted the new science curriculum, partly to support this aspect. However, further development is being impeded by lack of hardware.

86. Pupils respond positively to science lessons. They enjoy the busy activity and the stretching of intellectual efforts and practical skills. From Year 7 onwards they come to realise that experiments do not always go to plan, and develop a very good awareness of issues relating to honesty and accuracy. The majority behave very well and very responsibly; those who show signs of being difficult respond well to skilful and caring teacher interventions. Pupils are curious, they ask questions, they want to get on.

87. The new curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is broad and balanced, and the GCSE courses provide a good range of opportunities in the three sciences, as well as being a good foundation for further study. Within the schemes of work there are many occasions when teachers are able to develop aspects, which touch on pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Lessons catch the imagination and pupils are confronted with key questions such as how the universe and life began, and how Galileo's discoveries about our solar system were treated. They consider moral and social implications of cloning, test-tube babies, farming practice, the causes and effects of pollution. Science clubs enlarge the opportunities open to pupils in terms of practical investigations. The very good assessment and monitoring of pupils' standards and progress is key in providing information for target-setting, tracking of sets and individuals, and changes to teaching strategies. It plays a very important role in improving standards, and should be used to sharpen targets in reports to parents. Insufficient opportunities are available, through classroom observation on a regular basis, to exchange good practice and issues affecting the department. The very strong leadership of the department, coupled with extremely effective teamwork by science teachers and technicians ensures that high expectations and standards are maintained, and that ways of improving further are sought. The blend of experienced and younger staff is a particular strength. The department has made significant progress since the previous inspection.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

88. Standards in art and design are above average overall. This is the result of the quality of teaching, which is good in the Years 7 to 9 and predominantly very good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' positive attitudes and sensible behaviour cause the quality of learning to be good. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school.

89. The number of pupils gaining grades A\*-C has been consistently above the national average since the previous inspection. In 1999 it was well above, with 78 per cent of pupils gaining these grades. The results in 2000 dropped slightly to 71 per cent but when compared nationally are still above the national average. Girls are performing significantly better in art and design than in other subjects within the school and are achieving at well above the national average. Boys were performing at well above the national average in 1999 but this has dropped in 2000. Their performance is still slightly better in art and design than in other subjects within the school.

90. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above the national level of expectation by the age of 14. Pupils enter the school with a wide range of attainments in art and design and are taught in mixed ability classes where they are given the opportunity to work from direct observation, express ideas and feelings and use art terms appropriately. They understand processes and apply technical skills very competently in art and design activities. Observational and analytical drawing skills are well developed across all abilities. Year 9 pupils demonstrate a clear understanding the elements of line and proportion when producing good quality drawings of dried oranges to develop into mixed media compositions. They confidently discuss the work of Picasso and describe his use of geometric shapes, giving informed opinions of why they like or dislike his work. Levels of achievement are good during Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11; all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress and producing work that is often above expectations; progress is especially good during Years 10 and 11.

91. By the age of 16 pupils are achieving standards above the national average. At this level pupils interpret whole class themes and show a clear ability to explore, analyse and develop with confidence, a range of investigations and making processes. For example, pupils researching areas of Renaissance art took photographs of themselves in similar expressive positions and clothing and used them to develop good quality work using traditional painting techniques. Higher attainers developed this further using modern day emotive issues such as lost children as a stimulus. Most pupils show a clear understanding and confident application of the formal elements of drawing and painting.

92. The overall quality of teaching is good and in a fifth of the lessons observed very good. In one outstanding lesson in Year 10 the teaching was excellent. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is consistently very good. The teacher challenged and inspired pupils by cultivating an element of surprise and giving pupils a sense of discovery in the use of media and techniques. Pupils responded with a real sense of enthusiasm and by the end of lesson were using the textile technique very competently. Teachers have a good relationship with pupils and the high expectations demanded across the age range creates a good learning ethos. This is reflected in the good progress made over time made by pupils in Year 7 to 9. On entry to the school technical skills are slightly below average but by the age of 14 most pupils are producing work that is above national standards. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, the teacher gave very clear direction by using a range of techniques such as discussion and demonstration in an observational drawing lesson. Pupils were encouraged to determine the spatial relationships and relate their findings to the position of shells they were to draw. Higher-attaining pupils referred back to previous work on composition, gave informed definitions of what it meant and applied the principles to their work. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs positioned their shells well and produced drawings showing improved observational skills. Where teachers plan and structure units of work to

ensure continuity and progression, achievement is high. For example in Year 10, pupils completing their first project in the GCSE course, showed a good understanding of the ability to review and modify work and sustain a chosen study from conception to realisation. Pupils working on a self-portrait modified their work after their research into artists and produced high quality projects. A pupil's research into the artist Kirchner culminated in a vibrant final piece of work showing the dramatic intensity and angular outlines of Expressionism.

93. The teaching within the department positively encourages good behaviour and attitudes and pupils respond well. They arrive promptly at lessons and most settle quickly and listen attentively. Specialised vocabulary is built into projects and teachers enforce it when introducing lessons and recapping over previous work. Higher-attaining pupils respond well to challenging questions and those of lower attainment are given good support and encouragement to answer confidently. In examination classes attitudes and behaviour are very good. Emphasis is put on good working relationships and pupils organise themselves effectively, work collaboratively and show respect for each other's work. This was evident in a lesson on aboriginal art where pupils analysed each other's work, offering support with constructive and positive criticism. Teachers encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own work and a high level of pride is shown, with folders reflecting independent study skills. A pupil in Year 11 produced a very high standard of research from a visit to the Tate Gallery in St Ives. Pupils are well motivated and art and design classes, held by staff every lunch-time, are attended by a substantial number of pupils who build on the standards achieved in the classroom. Teachers put a lot of emphasis on individual support and encouragement and give good evaluation and assessment whilst talking with pupils during lessons. A marking policy is in place but pupils would have a clearer understanding of the level they were working at, if an effort grade was given separately to that for attainment.

94. Teachers have a good command of their subject and the well-planned timetable of the curricular time allows their specialism to be put to good use. Pupils work in a wide range of media, such as photography, textiles and ceramics; with the school's positive support of the subject, pupils make good progress in investigating and making, during their time in the school. This leads to attainment at the age of 14 and 16 that is above average. In Years 7 to 9, planning should now ensure that all pupils in these years also cover the same breadth of work.

95. Frequent reference in lessons is made to cultural influences and a project on shrines gives pupils a good opportunity to explore spiritual awareness and the diversity and richness of other traditions. The curriculum is enriched by visits to art galleries, which supports the GCSE course and raises standards. Resources for ICT, within the department are limited and its use to support learning has not met statutory requirements. This is in the process of being tackled and each art and design area will have its own computer and scanner. A full range of ICT is not currently built into schemes of work. There is some very good practice in the department in the areas of project planning and assessment. This is not coordinated, however, or used throughout the department. Art and design contributes positively to the life

of the school in a number of areas but particularly in the quality of art and design exhibited around the building.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

96. Standards overall are above average in design and technology: by the age of 14 and by the age of 16, when they leave the school, pupils are achieving standards that are above average. This is the result of the quality of good teaching. Pupils' attitudes and the quality of available resources also cause the quality of pupils' learning in design and technology to be good. Pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and their achievement is satisfactory, but more limited as they move through Years 10 and 11 owing to aspects of the course, such as computer-aided design, being insufficiently covered.

97. The results of assessments by teachers at the end of Year 9 in 2000 show that a significant number of pupils are achieving above the national average. The results show that almost half of the year group are attaining higher levels. The GCSE results for grades A\* - C in 1999 were in line with the national average. When the pass rate is compared to other compulsory subjects in the school design and technology is average. The schools analysis of results in 2000 show that the level of GCSE results are average. Girls perform better than boys and better than the national average at GCSE; this is owing to their greater application to the demands of the course.

98. Standards seen during the inspection show that pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 is above the standard expected nationally and this is reflected in the assessments. The department's concentration on developing skills in designing and making has ensured good outcomes in textiles, graphics and food technology. Pupils have an understanding of designing and ways of presenting their work to communicate their ideas for designs. Standards of technical skills are good. Pupils understand the working characteristics of a range of materials and how to use tools safely and accurately. The quality of finished products demonstrates an attention to detail, accuracy and precision. When making a logo for a bean bag in a textiles lesson, pupils fit their design to very specific criteria, select suitable materials and use construction techniques confidently and with some accuracy. They are familiar with the use of stencils and know how to set up a sewing machine to embroider their designs. In graphics, pupils' demonstrate good technical skills that contribute to high quality products, as seen, for example, in a project making containers. In food technology lessons, pupils write a specification for pastry cakes and produce a product to a very high standard. Pupils make decisions about suitable ingredients and understand what constitutes a healthy balanced diet.

99. From the evidence of pupils' design work and practical projects, their attainment by the end of Year 11 is above the national average in food technology and textiles and is reflected in the examination results. Current work with resistant materials and graphic design is average, also reflecting results in 2000. Pupils pay particular attention to accuracy, quality of finish and the selection of ingredients. In their design work, they develop an understanding of construction techniques and the presentation of work in food technology and textiles is of a high quality. Pupils have too little experience of control technology and computer-aided design.

100. In motor vehicle engineering and GNVQ engineering courses in Year 10 pupils' work is of an average quality. Their projects provide sufficient detail and they make informed decisions on the choice of ideas. They give consideration to form, function and style. Their project work shows attention to accuracy and they work to a rigorous specification.

101. Pupils' knowledge of design and technology increases steadily because they have opportunities to solve problems and work independently or in groups to develop their practical and design skills and their skills of investigation and research. Their skills in designing and making develop through a range of activities in resistant materials, textiles, electronics, graphics and food technology. In a textiles lesson on making a carrier-bag, pupils made good progress because they were briefed about what they had to do in detail, listened to instructions carefully and worked to specific time limits. They are making good progress in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills. Pupils enter in Year 7 with levels of attainment that are average overall. In their early lessons, pupils make good progress in learning practical skills and the underlying theory on tasks that are precisely structured with clear learning objectives for each week. The department emphasises good standards of graphical skills and presentation of work. By the end of Year 9, all pupils have experienced a range of activities in resistant materials, textiles, graphics and food technology but have too few opportunities to develop ICT skills. By the end of Year 11 their knowledge of designing and making improves steadily because pupils consolidate their learning satisfactorily and build on their skills of designing, their practical competence to solve more complex problems of design and their knowledge of food preparation. They know how their work is assessed and quickly learn how to judge their standards and how to improve. Throughout all year groups, pupils with special educational needs make good progress, especially when extra support is provided in class.

102. The behaviour of pupils and their attitude to learning are always good. Pupils show an interest in their work and maintain good levels of concentration to work to their best standards. They listen attentively and watch carefully to understand what they must do and show pride in their achievements. They respond well to teachers and they work without close supervision. They take responsibility for their areas of work and in organising their tasks.

103. Teaching throughout the department is good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and plan well to ensure that lessons have suitable pace. Practical activities are well organised and the supervision of lessons effective, with appropriate interventions to support and sustain individual pupils' learning and maintain appropriate expectations. Work is sufficiently linked to the requirements of the National Curriculum, although inadequate provision is made for control technology and computer-aided design. Teachers' expectations of pupils' performance and behaviour are high. Learning objectives are clearly stated and work is flexibly planned to provide for pupils' different levels of attainment and interests. Pupils' work is assessed regularly and teachers give helpful oral and written comments. In examination courses assessment concentrates upon tracking experiences and outcomes and individual targets are used to inform pupils what they need to do to improve their work. Homework is set to reinforce the content of lessons. A lack of resources restricts teaching in computer-aided design and control. The department is involved in a project with a local training company to provide a GNVQ engineering course and this is proving to be successful.

104. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. However there needs to be a clear vision and direction leading to effective strategies to promote curricular improvement in the areas identified, especially its links with ICT. There is a good scheme of work and the department handbook outlines clearly the policies, aims and objectives of the department. Systems for raising achievement including assessment, target-setting and monitoring are not consistent across the department. At present there are no strategies to monitor teaching and set objectives for improvement. There is the potential to improve. However there needs to be more of a shared commitment and the delegation of responsibility for key areas of development. Curricular time in Years 7 to 9 is just below what might be expected. The school is not fulfilling the statutory obligation to provide design and technology for all pupils in Years 10 and 11, in accordance with the National Curriculum requirements. A significant number of pupils in the present Year 10 are not taking a design and technology

subject.

105. Accommodation is generous and there is a good level of tools, resources and equipment available. The lack of resources for newer technologies and ICT limits coverage of the programmes of study and the standards that pupils can attain in these aspects of the course. The technicians make a significant contribution to the organisation of the department and on occasion work with specific groups of pupils to support practical work, providing advice and guidance. The design and technology technician does not have the necessary wood-cutting machinery operating certificates at present. The department has carried out a safety audit to ensure the safe organisation of resources and accommodation; staff awareness of health and safety requirements, including risk assessment are in place.

## **DRAMA**

106. Standards by the end of Year 9 are average and by the end of Year 11 are well above average. The teaching of drama is consistently good, frequently very good and often excellent. As a result pupils achieve well and make good progress during Years 7 to 9 and very good progress in Years 10 and 11. The quality of learning is enriching for pupils' personal development but most notable for the steady development of their understanding of the nature of drama, their skills in expressing their thoughts and feelings within drama and their knowledge of the part drama plays in the culture of communities.

107. A key strength of the drama teaching in the school and evidence of the progress made by pupils is seen in the increasing responsibility pupils take for fashioning their drama. This process starts very early in Year 7. For example, a group studying claustrophobia and relating it to coal-mining was helped in structuring their drama through skilful and well-paced teaching. However, at a key point once the dramatic tension had been established, it was the responsibility of pupils to find the means of expressing what it might be like to be trapped at the bottom of an enclosed pit. In Year 8, the response of pupils to a powerful stimulus about prisoners of conscience embraced their own thoughts and feelings as they answered probing questions by the teacher or reacted to her taking a role. The outcome of this build-up towards a realisation of the loss of a person's own rights as they face up to 'You belong to us now' was stark, quiet and reflective. Similar feelings were then transferred to a development of a previous lesson with the establishment of a whole class grouping on a sinister railway platform, speaking their thoughts in a controlled way and as one said 'I thought I was being watched all the time'. Such drama makes demands on the imagination and conscience of pupils who respond well to the high expectations teaching has of them. In these Years 7 to 9, not typical of many subjects in the school, the quality of the work of boys is not significantly different to that of girls. This was also seen in a challenging Year 9 class working on Peter Porter's 'Your Attention Please!'. Boys and girls, and those of higher and lower attainment levels achieved the high expectations the teacher had of them. This drama was tightly structured to give the group security. They responded well to very good teaching, the teacher using the poem as narration, and built belief in the anxiety of the characters listening to shocking news on the radio. When finally the command was given 'Now, go, quickly to your shelters', all were able to take control of the drama, heightened by the teacher's introduction of appropriate lighting and the use of a smoke machine, and give individuality to the imagined horror of a nuclear explosion. When later the characters left their shelters, the pupils' imagination took in the devastation that faced their community. For most pupils, at the end of Year 9 their drama education ends; this class, early in the year, already show a keen understanding of the power of the subject as a means of expressing thoughts and feelings about a range of human circumstances.

108. The GCSE course in Years 10 and 11 is popular, with three Year 10 groups currently following it. Results in the examination in recent years have always been above the national

average and amongst the best compared with results in other subjects in the school. In 2000, 77.59 per cent of those taking the examination achieved the higher A\*-C grades where the national average was 70.5 per cent. In this examination girls performed significantly better than boys but both achieved results above the national average for their gender. The difference is less noticeable in lessons.

109. During the inspection, work seen by pupils at the start of Year 10 was already beginning to show the promise that five terms' later achieves success in the examination. In one lesson about street children in Brazil, a long period of preparation was taken by the teacher, followed by some detailed use of the convention of her in the hot-seat as pupils sought to discover how a mother copes with her children stealing, begging and living at constant risk. As a result of this meticulous preparation, pupils developed moving and sensitive images of this social and human dilemma under a loose title of 'Death on the Streets of Rio'. Their drama was reflective of their developing understanding of the complexities of right and wrong in a culture so diverse from their own. It was the result of excellent teaching. Consistently good or better teaching accounts for the quality of learning in drama achieved by pupils. Teaching was good or better in 85.7 per cent of lessons, the remaining one lesson being satisfactory. Teaching was very good in 28.6 per cent of lessons and excellent in a further similar percentage of lessons. The learning needs of all pupils are being met well and those with special educational needs are fully involved in the evolving drama. The quality of work apparent at the previous inspection has been sustained and improved even further. Drama in the school contributes significantly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development owing to the topics used and the sensitive demands made of pupils expressing their thoughts and feelings in dramatic form.

110. For example, in another lesson with Year 10, pupils were asked to develop characters of volunteers to attend a medical research centre, a small group and the teacher being staff at the centre. This lesson aimed for pupils to sustain roles for an extended length of time, allowing sufficient time at the end of a double period for evaluation of the quality of their work. Pupils adopted their characters with sensitivity and a depth of concentration. They found that they had been duped, for demands were made of them as volunteers that had little to do with finding a cure for the common cold. This understanding led to the creation of the dramatic tension; pupils knew how to increase this whilst staying within the drama. They were able to do this owing to their understanding of the nature of improvisation. For example, whilst waiting for attention or treatment they probed within their character to find the truth of the situation, such as 'Why have you put on those surgical gloves?' Pupils accepted and used the conventions brought to this drama for they were built on effective previous learning. The level at which characters were sustained was especially good; the teacher's intervention was sufficient to make demands upon pupils' dramatic expertise without it taking the responsibility for the drama from them. This, too was excellent teaching.

111. The drama department is also responsible for an adventurous programme of school productions. In 2000 large audiences enjoyed 'Sweet Charity' and during this school year will have an opportunity to attend a cabaret in the festooned drama studio for a studio performance of the show, 'Cabaret'. Evidence on video-tape indicates this work is of a high quality, the drama staff being very skilled in transferring effective classroom drama into sophisticated theatrical pieces. These productions play an important part in the cultural life of the school and are spoken of highly by parents and members of the community. Drama in the school is very well led and managed. The quality of the teaching means that the subject is very popular with pupils.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

112. Standards seen in geography classes during the inspection are good both by the end

of Year 9 and in the examination courses. Attainment by the age of 14 is above the national average and GCSE results have been well above average over the last four years though they dropped to the national average in 2000. Pupils make good progress in class throughout their school career as a consequence of generally good teaching, their very good attitudes to learning and their good behaviour.

113. Attainment at GCSE over that last four years has been well above the national average at grades A\*-C and in 1999, the last year for which validated data is available, attainment is significantly above the standard expected nationally at A\*-C. There is no gap between boys and girls and whilst girls attainment is no better than in their other subjects, boys do significantly better in geography than in most of their other subjects. This slipped in 2000, and whilst girls' performance remains fairly steady, that of boys drops. The immediate task for the department is to reverse this trend: the raising of standards of course work is an important early target for improvement.

114. Standards seen during the inspection by the age of 14 are above average. Girls of average and high prior attainment achieve better than most boys of the same standard, though some boys of average and high prior attainment achieve very well. Those of low prior attainment and those with special educational needs attain better than might be expected. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is increasingly accurately measured using the levels of the National Curriculum and very good assessment procedures. Basic geographical skills of map-making and map reading, and of using Ordnance Survey maps are quickly absorbed and consolidated; success is praised and rewarded. A minority of pupils, mostly boys, learn less of these skills by the end of Year 9, but the great majority become competent learners of geography.

115. By the time pupils leave the school they achieve in class at above the national average in case studies of the growth of world population and its affects on cities like Cairo and Mexico City. Pupils gain from the visual stimulation of effective video clips and learn to empathise with those struggling to exist in a city shantytown by playing a house-building game.

116. Teaching is good in two-thirds of lessons and is s very good in one lesson in twelve; it is satisfactory in the rest. Teaching amongst the younger pupils is mostly good; teaching for the examination course is rather more varied: the best teaching observed is seen in Years 10 and 11 but there is a higher proportion of satisfactory teaching than in Years 7 to 9. Lesson planning is a solid strength of the department; materials are well prepared in advance and are freely available. The best planning is firmly rooted in the programmes of study of the National Curriculum; lessons flow smoothly and without interruption. In most lessons teachers state their learning objectives so that pupils know what they have to do and why and have a secure focus for the whole lesson.

117. The teaching of basic skills is less secure: the use of ICT is irregular because not all teachers have the necessary skills and confidence even though there is a computer in each classroom. The department has completed an audit of its development of literacy skills that does not always comply with work seen during the inspection and geography teachers have not yet drawn up their own policy on literacy. Most writing in books is in short sentences and paragraphs. Only one completed example of extended writing, on the benefits and disadvantages of tourism in Kenya in Year 8, was seen. Much use is made of work sheets of good and often very good quality: those for the local study of industrial development are particularly good. Unless carefully planned their use tends to limit the amount of writing required. However, despite these areas for improvement, standards are mostly above average.

118. In a well-supported lesson about industry in Japan, lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs in Year 9 expressed their good understanding through a variety of well-constructed word frames. They maintained their concentration well with the help of very good support which kept the whole class on task by helping them work through difficulty to a successful completion of a series of short exercises that they understand and can do. The use of numeracy is habitual in geography lessons and a number of good examples were seen in Year 7 lessons on map-making as pupils worked out scale: one Year 7 boy triumphantly transferred basic knowledge of his metric ruler into measuring distance on his map. Others are familiar with coordinates, vertical intervals, spot heights and trigonometrical stations. There is no policy to plan this effective teaching so that it is even more effective.

119. Teachers' expectations of pupils are high and most lessons contain strong elements of challenge. Good behaviour and positive attitudes to their learning are reinforced and praised at every opportunity and the consequence is that pupils respond positively. Where a few lessons lack this challenge and excitement then they are noticeably flat in comparison.

120. The geography department is developing a good set of procedures for assessing and monitoring the work of pupils but all teachers do not yet use it fully. There is a strong contrast between the marking of work up to the age of 14 and that of the examination course. For younger pupils a tick, a mark out of ten and an encouraging comment is normal, whereas for the older pupils there is an examination grade with sharp analytical comment that tells pupils how to improve their work. Reports to parents lack a clear indication of the levels pupils are attaining.

121. Most homework set is to finish rather than develop class work, so that an opportunity is missed to allow pupils to research at home by setting homework with a longer time target for finishing. Similarly, whilst some teachers use planners well, others do not, so that a first point of contact with parents is under-developed.

122. Even though the head of department was absent for some time before and during the inspection, leadership is plainly good: there is established a strong ethos for learning. About the school, display is never less than very good and the best is excellent. Pupils work in a suite of geography rooms where they are surrounded by a range of good geographical artefacts.

## HISTORY

123. Standards overall in history are above average at the ages of 14 and 16. With the exception of 2000, where results were in line with the national average, this is reflected in GCSE results over recent years that are usually well above the national average. These standards are a result of teaching that is usually very good. Pupils' attitudes to their work, an extremely good learning environment with many stimulating historical artefacts and good displays and the effective use of these resources cause the quality of pupils' learning to be very good. Pupils make very good progress in history as they move through the school.

124. In Years 7 to 9, pupils become increasingly confident and competent as they improve their skills in history and their knowledge and understanding grows. They become adept at assessing and describing the past in a variety of ways, for example one Year 8 class creatively used effective and appropriate charts and graphs to organise and communicate the many causes of the Civil War in England. There is good use of historical language and a range of styles of writing, however lower-attaining pupils should be given more opportunities to use extended narrative as a way of communicating history. Many pupils make good use of ICT in their study of history but this is not extended to involve pupils in all classes. A wider range of applications, for example, of the use of spreadsheets and data bases for handling historical data is infrequently seen.

125. With the exception of 2000, GCSE results in history for the past five years have usually been well above the national average for the subject. By the end of Year 11 many pupils have developed the skills and confidence to present sound historical argument and opinion and this is evident in their books, in classroom activities and discussions. The completion and presentation of GCSE coursework is a particularly strong feature of the subject. For example, some Year 11 pupils' independent research on World War I topics are imaginative, thoroughly researched and of the highest standard. In the latest GCSE examination, girls performed much better than boys in the subject. They apply themselves more studiously to project work and are less easily satisfied with their finished work than boys. Girls generally strive more assiduously to achieve their best. The department has identified a number of strategies to improve the under-performance of boys; these have not been in place long enough to evaluate their effectiveness. The work seen during the inspection indicates how the performance of boys depresses the overall success of the subject in examinations.

126. Teaching within the department is of a high quality; 80 per cent of the lessons observed were good or better and all teachers in the department have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Teachers plan their lessons well and through careful preparation ensure that pupils in all year groups are given a rich experience of history that goes beyond mere knowledge and comprehension. For example in Year 10 classes, pupils were given the opportunity to study the role of women in World War I and using some well chosen source material, they become actively and imaginatively engaged with some controversial issues of the past. Fieldwork, visits to museums and historical sites are all well planned and prepared; they enhance and extend work done in class and add to the richness of the historical experience presented to pupils. Pupils respond well to their learning and have a very positive attitude to the subject; they demonstrate a capacity for personal study and display an interest and enjoyment for history. Behaviour in all classes is good, levels of concentration are sustained and pupils remain on task, working to tight deadlines and switching readily between different teaching and learning activities.

127. The strengths and successes identified in the previous inspection report have been maintained and the department is developing the subject well in response to changes in staff and curriculum. Good leadership, management and commitment from teachers of the subject have established high expectations and created constructive working relationships. History is taught within an ethos of achievement, enthusiasm and enjoyment and this has ensured that standards are good and the subject remains a popular choice at GCSE.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

128. Standards are above average in ICT when taught as a discrete subject. This is the result of teaching that is generally good. Pupils' attitudes and the quality of available resources also cause pupils' learning to be good. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school. The shortcoming is in the lack of consistent successful use of ICT to support learning in other subjects.

129. Assessments by teachers at the end of Year 9 for 2000 show that the attainment of the majority of pupils is above average and show an improvement over the previous years. The results in 1999 for the GCSE examination in information technology show the A\*-C grades to be above average. Analysis of GCSE results in 2000 show that standards were a little lower than those in 1999.

130. By the age of 14 attainment in ICT lessons is above average and this was reflected in the sample of pupils' work analysed during the inspection. Pupils demonstrate good skills in word-processing and these help them to improve their spelling and presentation of their work. They understand how to create, alter and combine text and images using desk-top-publishing, for example. Pupils know about the use of a data-base and how these are constructed to store and retrieve information. They are familiar with spreadsheets to organise information and the simple use of formulae to make calculations. Pupils attain good standards of performance in handling information and data. They use computers for writing simple procedures to construct geometrical shapes.

131. By the end of Year 11 attainment in ICT lessons is currently above average, despite the dip in the 2000 examination results. Pupils are confident enough to work independently, using a range of software. They apply their skills to solve more complex problems, mainly in handling information and data. Pupils understand and use applications to organise, refine and present information for different purposes and produce quality results. For example, in Year 10 pupils have the opportunity to develop their projects using images and desk-top publishing. They discuss their work with confidence, solve problems and come to reasonable conclusions when given a task to complete. The presentation of work is of a good standard

132. As they move through the school, pupils make good progress in their knowledge of, and application of skills in, ICT. However, significantly, there are too few opportunities for pupils to use computers and practise these skills in other subjects which hinders their overall progress. Teachers of other subjects are insufficiently ready to develop skills in ICT as a means of enhancing learning in their subjects. The pupils make good progress through a range of opportunities to develop the higher aspects of information handling, modelling, desk-top-publishing and the use of a data base. The use of computer-control systems and computer-aided design is not developed in design and technology as specified in the National Curriculum programmes of study. There are no opportunities for pupils to develop skills in image-processing using digital cameras and scanners. There is access to the

Internet and a CD-ROM library for pupils. Pupils with special educational needs have access to computers which helps to develop their communication skills.

133. Pupils have good attitudes to the subject and behave very well in lessons. They treat equipment with care and work hard to master new skills. All lessons include much independent work, which pupils enjoy as their confidence grows. Pupils turn up promptly for lessons and are prepared to use their own time to complete work. They are cooperative and responsive, listen carefully to teachers' instructions, read the guidance material thoroughly and try to work accurately. They enjoy discussions about their work, set themselves suitable targets to achieve and try to meet them.

134. Teaching is good and contributes significantly to pupils' acquisition of subject knowledge and skills. Lessons are planned to a high standard and have suitable challenge. The management of classes is good. Clear targets are set for pupils of similar levels of attainment. This careful matching of work motivates pupils and maintains their interest. This aspect has improved since the previous inspection. Relationships are very good and the skilled support given to pupils in their work quickly builds their confidence. National levels of attainment are not reported at the end of Year 11 for those pupils not taking a GCSE. This is a breach of statutory requirements.

135. The department has responded well to the previous inspection and improvements made include an increased challenge in work set for pupils. Pupils' achievements in Years 10 and 11 are assessed and fully recognised. Training has been provided for staff so that they can use particular application and access the network.

***Key skills: the application of ICT to support learning across the curriculum***

136. Opportunities for the consistent application and development of information technology are not sufficiently planned and coordinated across the curriculum to achieve full coherence and progression. This provision is inadequate and fails to meet statutory requirements. Technical support is good and there is good management of the network. The number of computers available is below what might be expected nationally. Subject teachers do not at present take advantage of the school network and the computers available in the library. Pupils have opportunities to use computers at lunchtime and after school, including access to the Internet and staff are available to support them. There is a school strategy group to plan and monitor developments across the school. At present, this cannot be deemed to be achieving sufficient success. A manual to support the development of teacher expertise has been produced. The subject is well-managed and organised but the role of the coordinator to support the use of computers across the curriculum is not fully developed. Subjects areas including English, science, music and special education needs have some access to computers either in teaching areas or the computer rooms. In English and science pupils are seen to use computers to support their learning, for example in a Year 9 science class where pupils use spreadsheets to compile data and produce graphs. This is enabling the use of computers to enhance the teaching of science. At present pupils have too few opportunities to use computers, partly because there are not enough computers and partly because teachers are not planning for the use of computers in their teaching. There has been little improvement in school-wide use of computers since the previous inspection. There are still too few computers to give pupils good access to ICT. An audit of the use of computers across the curriculum has been carried but there are few opportunities for the coordinator to monitor and review developments throughout the school. There has been some training of staff and further training needs have been identified.

**MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

## French, German and Spanish

137. Standards in French are now broadly average throughout the school, and above average in German and Spanish. Taking all in all, across all subjects standards are above average. They are improving in response to good teaching and good leadership. Pupils achieve well and make good progress. Pupils are coming to terms with the expectation that they should all continue a modern language course through to GCSE.

138. In the large majority of lessons teaching is good, sometimes very good, and pupils respond well. Where teaching is especially imaginative, for example in the use of song and mime to support learning, there is a buzz of excitement from the pupils, which leads to a sense of enjoyment of learning and positive attitudes to the subject. Teachers manage their pupils well and are generally rewarded by good behaviour. Sometimes behaviour is very good, where pupils cooperate actively with the teacher and each other. Lessons are well planned, with close reference to National Curriculum objectives, with the result that all skills are developed, often in a single lesson. A particular strength is pupils' breadth of vocabulary. The setting arrangements ensure that tasks are well matched to pupils' level of attainment. However there are times when some pupils have finished and need to be given additional work to sustain the momentum of learning. This is true of low-attaining as well as high-attaining groups and is a potential key to raising attainment through higher expectations. Good achievement was seen by pupils with special educational needs, some of whom have the benefit of support in class. However, when support staff are not present for whatever reason, pupils find learning more difficult. Assessment of pupils' work by teachers at the end of Year 9 confirms the view that standards in French are average.

139. Because of adverse weather conditions and the absence of Year 11 on work experience few lessons were seen with older pupils. However their written work and the teaching observed show that standards again are broadly average, with above average standards in German and Spanish. Year 10 higher-attaining pupils are familiar with verbs in the perfect tense, which allows them to write accounts in French of where they have been and what they have been doing. Higher attainers in all three languages are working towards higher grades at GCSE. In Spanish, there are particularly rigorous expectations as regards verb forms, at which a few pupils flinch because, for them, language work is no longer the fun it used to be. It is nevertheless a good learning experience. The department has now succeeded in bringing all its pupils including those with special needs at least up to the minimum requirement for GCSE.

140. There is a history of high attainment from a restricted number of pupils taking GCSE in French, German or Spanish with the possibility that some might take two languages. However in response to changed national requirements, all pupils were entered for GCSE in 1999 and 2000, contributing to an apparent decline in French in percentage terms to well below the national average, as well as below the average for the school. This occurred at a time of unsettled staffing and departmental leadership which also had an adverse effect on attainment, although some pupils continued to obtain the highest grades in all languages. GCSE results in German and Spanish were above average in 1999. In 2000, results in German were above average and Spanish in line with national averages. Almost all pupils obtained a grade G or better in both years. The department has with some success targeted the achievement gap between boys and girls, but there is still a greater difference than is the case nationally. Boys retain previous learning less effectively than girls and take less

care in pronunciation and written work. When a task is 'finished' boys rarely return to it in order to seek its improvement.

141. Good departmental leadership has in a short time established a strong team spirit and given scope for very good teaching. Very good display work, much of it by pupils, contributes to learning and helps set modern languages study in its cultural context. There is a real contribution to pupils' literacy skills through, for example, training in the use of dictionaries. Best practice needs to be further shared, and teachers need to develop their ICT skills further. The department is set to return to the high standards which were being achieved at the time of the previous inspection.

## **Latin**

142. Standards of attainment are very high both in Year 10 and in Year 11. Very high standards result from excellent and committed teaching and a close match of work expected with the requirements of GCSE. Pupils' determination to succeed leads to very good, even excellent learning

143. The Year 11 group has had the benefit of two years' ordinary lessons, and two years with extra-curricular input, whereas the group of beginners in Year 10 is working outside normal lesson times at eight o'clock in the morning, twice a week. These latter, by their strong sense of commitment, have ensured the survival of the subject. In a lesson observed, pupils' concentration was total when they responded as a group to a Latin story presented to them on the overhead projector. They had already encountered verbs in the perfect, imperfect and future tenses, they had acquired a range of vocabulary consistent with the requirements of GCSE, and they had grasped the relationships of subject, verb and object. All this is set against the background of life in the Roman world and its parallels with the modern world. Pupils were asked for example to apply principles of market forces to rank certain types of slave in order of value. Both boys and girls made worthwhile contributions to the lesson. Very good progress had been made in half a term, contributing strongly to their level of literacy through their understanding of the derivation of certain English words and their knowledge of sentence structure.

144. In GCSE in 1999 some two thirds of pupils gained a grade in the range A\*-C, and in 2000 from a slightly larger group four fifths did so. Each year there were several pupils with A\* or A grades, while the lowest grade in 1999 was E and in 2000 D. It is anticipated that all current Year 11 students will take higher level examinations for which the lowest available grade is D. The figure for 2000 represents very good achievement for the pupils concerned. Latin is one of the three highest achieving subjects in the school. It is not possible to make valid comparisons with a national average.

145. High standards have been sustained since the previous inspection. In collaboration with other Cleveland teachers the school has regularly offered trips in alternate years to classical sites in the Mediterranean, and display materials on school corridors share something of the excitement of these experiences with the general school population. Classical learning is a special characteristic which contributes to the overall linguistic and cultural life of the school.

## MUSIC

146. Standards in music are average by the age of 14 and above average when pupils leave the school at 16. This is as a result of the quality of teaching, which is good. Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour also leads to learning in music that is good. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school and achieve well.

147. Pupils enter the school with a mixed experience of music, but generally attainment at this stage is below average. Pupils in Year 7 make good progress. In a well-planned lesson they quickly develop a good understanding of pulse and rhythm. This is due to the exciting variety of activities and games designed by the teacher to achieve this. These include 'guess the nursery rhyme' after hearing only a clapped rhythm and a hand jiving activity in which pupils have the opportunity to lead the class, while maintaining a regular pulse by tapping their feet. Strongly rhythmic songs also provide opportunities to move in time to the music. These activities are energetically led by the enthusiastic teacher, who inspires considerable effort, interest and enthusiasm in the pupils. In Year 8 pupils can read simple rhythmic notation. They can improvise short ostinato rhythms, which they build into ensemble pieces. Some pupils not only create interesting and quite complex rhythms, but can fit them together with others' rhythms, by maintaining a steady beat while listening carefully to each other. Many pupils, however, find this complex task quite difficult, and the beat is sometimes lost.

148. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 learn to play the keyboard. By Year 9 most pupils can play melodies using a good five finger technique. Many pupils practise hard to accompany these with left-hand rhythms or chords, and some develop this by varying the whole style and character of the song. These different activities are well designed by the teachers to allow pupils at different stages to be challenged appropriately. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 listen to and comment on a wide range of music. In a Year 8 lesson they listen to African Sanctus and African drumming. In a Year 9 lesson on ostinato they listen to Tubular Bells, a South African piece using tin whistles and medieval and African music. When talking about music, they know and use many musical terms with confidence. In conversation, they can recall what they have learned and listened to in the past. Pupils' knowledge and understanding, and their skills in music reflect the very good knowledge which the teachers have of the subject. As performing musicians the teachers are good role models. They demonstrate by playing a variety of instruments and help focus pupils' attention when listening, by actively singing or clapping at the required moment. Most pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are at present working between levels 3 and 5.

149. Those pupils in Years 10 and 11 who are taking the GCSE course are achieving an above average standard. Standards of performance in Year 10 are generally well above average for this stage of the course. Here teachers encourage them to assess themselves and each other using the examination marking scheme. In Year 10 they also compose music. Some pupils are successfully learning to do this by using computers and music software. With more computer workstations in the department compositions would be more sophisticated, allowing pupils to hear and amend what they compose, so enabling quicker progress. More computer workstations would also allow opportunity to develop the use of ICT more widely for this purpose in Years 7, 8 and 9. Standards of attainment in Year 11 are well above average for this stage in the course. Sampled tapes of some of Year 11 pupils' compositions and performances show maturity and style. These high standards are reflected in the GCSE examination results. In recent years all those taking the examination have been successful and achieved well. The majority of pupils achieve grades A\*-C and a commendable percentage achieve the highest grades. The small numbers taking the examination create a unique cohort each year and make comparison with national averages unreliable.

150. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well in this practical subject. Several pupils with various disabilities learn to play instruments very successfully. High achievers in music are challenged by complex tasks in class and in high quality instrumental lessons and extra-curricular activities such as the orchestra, bands and choirs. Pupils are justly proud of these groups, particularly when they perform in the regular and very popular concerts and school productions. These activities, as in lessons, provide the pupils with very good opportunities to work together collaboratively and socially and develop great respect for each other. Through these and in class they get to know a very wide range of music of their own and others' cultures.

151. Since the previous inspection there has been steady progress. Standards have been maintained despite changes in staffing. The schemes of work include greater variety of content but a pleasing integration of the activities. There is now a good formal assessment procedure in place. The essential musical skills of performing, composing and appraising would be better developed now by allowing time in lessons to perfect and refine these. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 would also develop a greater understanding of their learning by being required to reflect on what they have learned and, sometimes, use self-assessment in their lessons.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

152. By the age of 14 attainment is above average. The written work and test results of pupils in GCSE classes indicate above average levels of attainment. This is the result of teaching that is usually good or better. Pupils' positive attitudes and the high quality of resources and teaching accommodation also cause the quality of learning in physical education to be good. It was not possible to form a judgement on pupils' attainment in compulsory physical education by the time they leave school because pupils in Year 11 were on work experience placements during the inspection. Attainment in the GCSE course is above average. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school.

153. Pupils are taught in groups of similar attainment which helps the teachers to ensure that all pupils are appropriately challenged in lessons. This enables the teachers to capitalise effectively on the positive attitudes that the vast majority of pupils have towards physical education from Year 7 onwards, exemplified by high participation rates and very good standards of kit. In dance and gymnastics, pupils are keen to respond to their teachers as basic skills and thoughtful approaches to learning are well established so that, for example, pupils understand what is needed for quality as they build a vocabulary of movement. Girls develop a sound understanding and application of netball skills and good teaching ensures that they can talk about their work so that they understand what is needed for success and can adapt their own performance accordingly. In outdoor pursuits, they can set high levels of challenge for themselves when using the climbing wall, confident in the support that they get from each other because basic belaying techniques have been well taught with a very good regard for their safety. Progress in Year 8 continues to be good. In a boys' basketball lesson, they learned basic shooting and passing techniques very well because the teacher's explanations and demonstrations are very clear. Sharp questioning ensures that pupils' understanding of correct technique is sure before placing them under increasing pressure in practice drills. By Year 9 they have achieved well. Higher-attaining boys, among whom are some outstanding performers, played a full version of rugby with good team discipline. They adapted well to changes in the pattern of play and the brief but pertinent interventions of the teacher helped individuals and teams to focus on ways of improving performance. Higher-attaining girls reach above average levels of skill and control in hockey. In a Year 9 hockey lesson forced indoors because of poor weather, the teacher adapted her planning well to make the most of the very restricted space, focussing on control and tactical awareness in small sided games which ensured that pupils were still able to improve despite the

circumstances. Good progress is not confined to higher attainers. A rugby lesson in Year 10 resulted in very good progress for lower-attaining boys, including some with special educational needs, because of the high quality of the teaching. Activities were very carefully matched to pupils' capabilities, taking into account the extent to which they could cope with the physical aspect of the game, and the teacher was sensitive to particular individual needs. As a result, despite very heavy conditions, the pupils took part wholeheartedly and learned very well with evident enjoyment.

154. Teachers make good use of the longer than usual lesson times which minimises the disadvantage of the slightly below average proportion of total time that is provided for the subject. Preparation for physical activity at the beginning of lessons is thorough and includes extended running, which contributes to general fitness. As well as continuing with the development of traditional games, the curriculum provided in Years 10 and 11 enables pupils to extend their interests. It makes the most of the very good facilities, for example, the fitness suite, because of the shared use of the Laurence Jackson Sports Centre with the local community. However, there are some differences in the range of activities presently offered girls compared to boys, who spend a greater proportion of their time learning traditional team games. For example, dance is taught to girls in Years 7 and 8 and aerobics in Year 9. Older girls have the opportunity of following the Junior Sports Leaders Award course. The very good provision of extra-curricular sporting activities contributes well to the overall standards which pupils achieve. A good measure of success is achieved by teams and individuals at local, area and sometimes, national level. The overall quality of the provision has been recently acknowledged by the school's achievement of the prestigious "Sports Mark" award.

155. The previous academic year, 1999-2000, was the first in which the school entered pupils for the GCSE examination in physical education. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher A\*-C grades was close to the national average. Girls' results were better than boys' by a greater margin than found nationally. Creditably, all pupils achieved at least an F grade, which is better than the national picture. Teachers have learnt much from this first experience. Good strategies for improvement have been devised and implemented for pupils currently in Year 11 and boys in particular, have benefited. The scrutiny of pupils' written work reveals average levels of attainment in theoretical aspects which, together with above average test scores in practical activities, indicates that their overall achievement is now good. Pupils in Year 10 examination groups make good progress because they are well motivated and the teachers' explanations and demonstrations ensure that they make rapid progress in learning new activities. For example girls quickly attain average standards in basketball and together with boys, understand correct techniques when analysing each other's performance in shooting.

156. Lessons are characterised by the good relationships that exist between teachers and pupils, and, although there is an underlying discipline, pupils are encouraged at an early stage to accept responsibility, for example in leading each other in warm-up activities. By Year 9, they have a good understanding of the effects of exercise on the body and older pupils are aware of the important contribution which regular exercise makes towards a healthy lifestyle. Standards of sporting behaviour are high and enjoyment of activities is evident. Pupils work hard and persevere, even in the difficult weather conditions which

prevailed during the inspection. Some older pupils help their teachers with extra-curricular practices, for example, netball.

157. The high standards reported at the previous inspection have been maintained and the proportion of good and very good teaching has increased. Three-quarters of the lessons observed were good or very good. The quality could improve further with the introduction of measures to identify and share the good and very good practice, which exists. The quality of information provided for parents in reports is inconsistent. Good assessment procedures have been introduced for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and the overall balance of the curriculum, particularly for girls, has improved. However, continued improvement is constrained by the division of management responsibilities into separate girls and boys departments. Levels of cooperation between the two hard-working heads of department are good and there is a shared commitment to improvement. However, the lack of a single overall strategy for improvement and the duplication of many administrative functions is inefficient and hinders the rate at which improvement can take place.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

158. By the age of 14, pupils' standards in religious education are above average. This is the result of teaching, which is generally good or very good. Pupils' positive attitudes also cause the quality of learning to be good and pupils make good progress as they move through Years 7 to 9. By the time that they leave school, pupils are achieving standards that are average. The lack of time available for compulsory religious education in Years 10 and 11 and the constraints imposed by the curricular organisation in these years, restricts the rates of progress which can be made despite good teaching and the positive attitudes of pupils.

159. Pupils build up a sound knowledge and understanding of the key features of Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam, which they study in Years 7 to 9. Their capacity to respond to religious issues is good and sometimes very good. This is due to this aspect of the locally agreed syllabus being a key concern of the teaching, although the ephemeral nature of much of the work, for example in discussion, means that there is a limited amount of recorded evidence by which to judge pupils' attainment. Nevertheless, the evidence available from lesson observations, a scrutiny of a representative sample of pupils' work, discussion with pupils and examples of individual and collaborative work displayed in classrooms and corridors, indicates that achievement is good. Pupils can make informed judgements on the relative importance of things that they value and begin to appreciate what this tells them about themselves. Higher attainers can write at length when describing their feelings which some explore in depth, using relatively sophisticated concepts such as "anticipation". Teachers make good use of pupils' previous experience and use this to challenge them progressively through Years 7 to 9. For example, in a very good lesson in Year 7, the teacher capitalised on pupils' interest in their local environment, to lead them to an appreciation of the impact that Christianity has had on their cultural heritage. Year 8 pupils know about differences in belief within the Christian tradition and begin to understand forms of commitment to faith communities, for example through the Hindu Sacred Thread ceremony or Confirmation in Christianity. Some pupils express very perceptive views on their own experience of Confirmation. Pupils in Year 9 have a good understanding of the way in which religions use symbol to express meanings. They empathise with the experiences of members of other world faiths, for example, the problems which young Sikhs may experience because of the requirement to wear a turban. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because teachers know their requirements and give individual attention, often with some sensitivity, in class. There is a good cross-curricular link with work in history in Year 9 in investigating the Holocaust. Their good understanding of this event is reflected in their creation of designs for memorials in which their feelings are also sometimes

eloquently expressed.

160. Insufficient numbers of pupils have chosen to follow the optional full examination course in religious education in some recent years to make it viable. Pupils, currently in Year 11, who have chosen the full GCSE course, make satisfactory progress. Their work is regularly marked and teachers' comments are encouraging, but do not always show pupils how to improve. Pupils have a sound understanding of the nature of evidence for the gospel stories and understand key aspects of the teaching of Jesus, for example in the Sermon on the Mount. They use technical language appropriately and can explain differences between Christian denominations in some detail. The work of lower attainers is more limited in length but is sometimes supported by adapted learning materials such as the use of writing frames. However, other than end of unit tests, pupils are not given sufficient indication of their attainment in relation to examination criteria and are they are not set demanding targets for improvement. This affects their overall rates of progress. It was not possible to observe any lessons in compulsory religious education in Year 11 because the pupils were on work experience placements. The work provided for scrutiny was very limited in range and so it was not possible to form a judgement on the attainment of these pupils in relation to the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. The work of pupils in Year 10 meets the expectations of the nationally accredited units which they follow and, to this extent, their attainment is average. They have a reasonable knowledge and understanding of Christian and Muslim beliefs on moral issues such as euthanasia. The attainment of those who follow the short examination course is average for their age and represents satisfactory achievement. They understand the impact that belief has on lifestyle and higher attainers write at length on the ways in which a religious upbringing can affect future attitudes towards organised religion.

161. The overall quality of teaching is good and has improved since the previous inspection. Of the lessons observed, four out of five were good or very good. Weaknesses in otherwise satisfactory teaching were related to lack of detailed subject knowledge which slowed the pace of learning resulting in some loss of interest and inattentiveness from pupils and boys in particular. Specialist teachers use their detailed subject knowledge and own personal experiences well in discussion to interest pupils and encourage full involvement. Open-ended questions in discussion or written tasks provide good levels of challenge of all pupils including higher attainers which represents an improvement since the previous inspection. There are good opportunities for collaborative work, for example in sharing tasks when researching information from texts. However, as yet, there are insufficient opportunities to use computers in their learning. Assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9 are good. Pupils are given a clear understanding of what they are expected to learn from each unit of work. They know how they are to be assessed and have the opportunity to set targets for improvement for themselves. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development. The contribution to spiritual development is particularly good. Pupils are challenged to reflect on their own beliefs and values as well as those of people whose life experiences are different from their own, and teachers deal positively with the idea of prayer. Teachers are receptive of pupils' ideas and create a climate in the classroom where pupils feel confident to express opinions and ideas and ask questions that often are perceptive and based on good understanding. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on religious experiences, the teacher's very good subject knowledge and evident commitment gave her an authority that the pupils respected, and they, unselfconsciously, were able to describe relevant personal experiences.

162. The school's current arrangements for the provision of religious education in Years 10 and 11 restrict the amount of progress that is made. Pupils who have chosen an examination course in ICT follow a short GCSE course in religious education whether they wish to or not. This is unsatisfactory. Insufficient time is made available to teach the locally

agreed syllabus to the remainder of pupils in sufficient depth. Nationally accredited units of study are taught as an alternative and, although the work of the vast majority of pupils meets the course expectations, many could cope with a greater challenge than these units provide. The good procedures for assessing attainment now being implemented in Years 7 to 9 need to be extended into Years 10 and 11 and the progress of these pupils more closely monitored. The quality of information provided for parents in reports is inconsistent.

## **BUSINESS STUDIES**

163. This is a good department with some strong features. Results at GCSE in 1999 where 48 per cent of students gained A\* - C grades, were in line with the average when compared with schools throughout the country. In 2000, 37 per cent of pupils gained A\* - C grades, compared with the national average of 52 per cent.

164. At GCSE pupils have appropriate levels of skills and confidence when discussing concepts involved in their work. Pupils have good skills in ICT and have a good understanding of their use in business. Pupils cover the key skills adequately. They are now developing the art and design of writing evaluations and this continues to be a strength of their work. The standard of pupils' portfolios is good. They are well organised, well structured and well presented.

165. Standards of work produced by pupils on the current course are above average, despite the poor results in the 2000 GCSE examination. It is a more promising year group. Pupils develop their analytical thinking and have opportunities to explore the more abstract concepts of the subject. Progress through modules and projects is good overall, and lower-attaining pupils are actively supported. Pupils' progress is especially good where they are actively involved in learning that encourages them to explore themes and make decisions for themselves.

166. The department has clear marking and assessment policies which involve a range of day-to-day and longer-term assessment strategies. Teachers use the assessment of pupils' work well to inform future planning and teaching. The department uses its own internal system to verify its assessments effectively.

167. The department is efficiently and effectively managed and this has resulted in a commitment to high standards. The qualifications and experience of the staff match the demands of the curriculum and the needs of the students. Pupils make good use of the computers in the department to extend their capabilities in using ICT.

## **SOCIAL STUDIES**

168. At the age of 14, a number of pupils with special educational needs are guided to an option of a modular studies course. Only the residential module of the course is externally validated; pupils gain internal certificates for the completion of other sections of the course, consequently pupils do not have the same access to external examination courses as others. Organisers are wisely considering the forging of links with colleges and training providers to give pupils a passport to extended education and training.

169. Teaching is good: the apparently casual and relaxed ethos of the resource-rich base room disguises a well-organised course set up to match the needs of the pupils for short exercises which they can do and immediate rewards in the form of certificates for the successful completion of work. The organisation of lessons matches this over-all plan: work is provided in a series of short pieces, varying writing with activity, supported by regular visits outside of school to give immediate relevance to what is learned in the classroom. There is a

strong bond between teacher and pupils that furthers teaching and learning. Pupils enjoy their work, consequently they attend well and give of their best; they make appropriate progress. The progress made in social skills is well exemplified in the way they welcome visitors, offer and give refreshment and engage them in interesting conversation.