

# INSPECTION REPORT

**West Craven High School**  
Colne

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique Reference Number: 119725

Headteacher: Mr. Arnold Kuchartschuk

Reporting inspector: Judy Jones  
T13000

Dates of inspection: 7<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> December 1998

Under OFSTED contract number: 700980

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	County
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Kelbrook Road Barnoldswick Colne Lancashire BB18 5TB
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. K. Whipp
Date of previous inspection:	April 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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J. M. Jones, Rgl		Attainment and progress
		Teaching
		Leadership and management
B. Eyre, Lay Inspector	Equality of opportunity	Attendance
		Support, guidance and pupils' welfare
		Partnership with parents and the community
		Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
M. Christian	Design and technology	
	Information and communication technology	
M. Dobson	English	
G. Griffin	Science	
F. J. G. Harris	Religious education	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
		The efficiency of the school
O. Harrison	Geography	
	History	
A. Holland	Mathematics	
D. Innes	Special educational needs	Curriculum and assessment
	Key Stage 4	
	Special educational needs assessment	
A. Lees	Music	
P. O'Neill	Art	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
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## MAIN FINDINGS

### What the school does well

- . Teaching in half the lessons is good or very good and has improved since the last inspection.
- . Pupils have a positive attitude to learning and relationships are good at all levels.
- . By the end of Key Stage 4, many pupils with special educational needs exceed expectations based on assessments made at the time of entry.
- . Links with the community are very good and pupils' moral and social education is good.
- . The headteacher has vision and the ethos for learning is good.
- . The governing body supports the school well, particularly in the very forward-looking policy for developing information and communication technology.
- . The school has good systems of pastoral care and teachers are very sensitive to pupils' individual circumstances. Out of school sporting activities are good.

### Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Pupils' attainment levels need to be raised further, and standards of literacy are too low.
- II. Pupils' spiritual education does not receive enough emphasis in the curriculum.
- III. Some staff in key positions do not use management techniques and processes effectively.
- IV. There is insufficient use of assessment information to set targets for pupils and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching.
- V. Higher attaining pupils are not being sufficiently challenged in a number of subjects.
- VI. There is no technician to enable the school to use its stock of computers efficiently.
- VII. Staff appraisal does not meet statutory requirements
- VIII. There is a severe shortage of books in the library and in a number of subjects.
- IX. Information and communication technology is not used sufficiently, and National Curriculum requirements are not being met for some pupils in Key Stage 4.

**The school has more strengths than weaknesses and provides satisfactory value for money. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.**

### How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, but a number of issues raised then have not been dealt with fully. Teaching has improved, largely as a result of effective monitoring and lesson observations by senior staff. Standards are rising, particularly at Key Stage 3, but have not risen as fast as the national rate of improvement at GCSE. Planning for pupils with special educational needs has improved. The school development plan has been fully revised, linking it closely to subject development plans. The new plan is clear and forward-looking, but has too many issues to be fully effective; there is a need to establish priorities. There is still a need to clarify the roles of key members of staff, particularly heads of departments, and provide them with suitable training to enable them to lead effectively, making use of assessment data and target setting to raise standards at all ages. The school still does not provide all pupils with a daily act of worship. The school has systems in place to maintain the improvement.



## Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds in national tests and GCSE examinations in 1998:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key
			<i>well above average</i> A
			<i>above average</i> B
			<i>average</i> C
			<i>below average</i> D
			<i>well below average</i> E
Key Stage 3	D	D	
GCSE examinations	D	E	

Results in Key Stage 3 tests are best in mathematics. Boy's performance is below that of girls.

The proportion of pupils gaining 5 grades A\* to C in GCSE is below average for all schools and well below for similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining 5 or more grades A\* to G is in line with the national average and below that of similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining 1 or more grades A\* to G is in line with the national average but below that of similar schools. The school's GCSE results are worse than similar schools. This is partly because the school contains fewer high attaining pupils than would be expected because a number choose to go to selective schools in the area.

At GCSE in 1999 attainment was highest in music and religious education for the small numbers of pupils taking each course. Highest results in the more popular subjects were in history, geography and science, and the lowest results were in French, German and sociology,

## Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Satisfactory	Drama, geography, history, physical education, information and communication technology, modern languages, religious education	Science, music
Years 10-11	Satisfactory	Mathematics, design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology, religious education	Sociology
English	Satisfactory		
Mathematics	Good		

The teaching is nearly always at least satisfactory, and in around half the lessons it is good or very good. Fewer than one in ten lessons are unsatisfactory or poor. Two thirds of these are in Key Stage 3. Where teaching is unsatisfactory or poor, the work is often too easy and pupils lose interest and waste time.

Teaching is never less than good at both key stages in history and information and communication technology, and is never less than good in geography at Key Stage 4. Teaching is never less than very good, and is sometimes excellent in drama.

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

## Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Generally satisfactory, and often good in lessons. Usually satisfactory round the school.
Attendance	Satisfactory but deteriorating. Both authorised and unauthorised attendance exceed the national average.
Ethos*	Good. The school is orderly and relationships are good.
Leadership and management	Clear educational direction from the head. Good support for curriculum changes from the senior management team and governors. Insufficient monitoring of departments. Some departments lack strong leadership.
Curriculum	Satisfactory at Key Stage 3. Unsatisfactory in Key Stage 4 because the National Curriculum is not being met in Key Stage 4 - Year 11 pupils are not taught information and communication technology. Very little work related study in Key Stage 4.
Pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory arrangements. Effective support but more is needed.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Good moral and social development. Unsatisfactory spiritual development.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Staffing satisfactory overall but some non-specialist teaching is adversely affecting standards. Shortages of support staff for information and communication technology and special needs. Good information and communication technology resources, but poor book supply in the library and in English, art, design and technology and German. Very good sports facilities.
Value for money	Satisfactory

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

## The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
<p>X. Standards are rising.</p> <p>XI. The school is easy to approach and parents are encouraged to play a part in their children's education.</p> <p>XII. The new headteacher has made a positive impact on resources, particularly information and communication technology, and on bullying.</p> <p>XIII. Children enjoy school.</p>	<p>XIV. Higher attaining pupils are not</p> <p>XV. Pupils do not get enough</p> <p>XVI. Some concerns about behaviour,</p> <p>XVII. Some parents do not think pupils'</p>

Inspectors' judgements support parents' views to a large extent. Standards are rising, but more at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4. The new headteacher has taken effective action to reduce bullying. Information and communication technology resources are improving and in some areas are exceptionally good. Inspectors agree that groups of pupils are not stretched in a number of subjects. Work is often unchallenging for high attainers. Inspectors found that homework is set in most subjects, but the homework timetable is too vague and parents are given too little information about what is expected of pupils at home. Pupils have homework diaries but they are not well used.

Behaviour is good in most lessons, but pupils are sometimes boisterous in the corridors and some pupils do smoke in the toilet areas.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

To improve attainment and the progress made by pupils, the governors and senior managers should:

- ◆. Raise attainment by:
  - . making effective use of assessment information to set targets for pupils and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching;  
(paragraphs: 68, 72, 104, 140, 142, 165, 210, 218)
  - . ensuring that all pupils, particularly high attainers, are given work that challenges them to think deeply and extend their knowledge in all subjects;  
(paragraphs: 27, 48, 53, 136, 153, 160, 207, 215, 223, 229)
  - . extending the teaching of literacy and ensuring that all subjects contribute to the development of pupils' reading and writing skills;  
(paragraphs: 15, 25, 59, 122, 136, 141, 145, 176)
  - . improving the provision of books in the library and in curriculum areas, particularly in English, art, modern languages, physical education and design and technology.  
(paragraphs: 54, 120, 121, 124, 136, 179, 211)
  
- ◆. Improve the quality of leadership of staff in key positions by:
  - . implementing appraisal fully;  
(paragraphs: 112, 114)
  - . providing training to enable all staff in management roles to use data effectively to set targets for pupils and colleagues, and to monitor progress towards those targets.  
(paragraphs: 68, 72, 83, 105, 106, 107, 142, 165, 171, 219)
  
- ◆. Ensure planned and effective provision for pupils' spiritual development across the teaching of all subjects in the school.  
(paragraphs: 75, 76, 80, 139, 169, 216)
  
- ◆. Meet the statutory requirement to provide information and communication technology for all pupils, in line with National Curriculum requirements.  
(paragraphs: 18, 57, 61, 64, 112)
  
- ◆. Review the provision of non-teaching staff, particularly with respect to support for information and communication technology  
(paragraphs: 117, 129, 202)

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

- make pupils more independent and self reliant, both in their school work and in time spent outside the classroom, by giving them more responsibility in the school and more research tasks in lessons;  
(paragraphs: 26, 37, 78, 110, 136, 149, 150, 152, 169, 208, 209, 221, 223)
- revise the school aims to make them more accurately reflect the school's current aspirations;  
(paragraph: 110)
- improve the implementation of the behaviour policy, to make it better used by teachers and better understood by pupils;  
(paragraphs: 34, 51, 85, 127, 162, 216)
- improve the use of the afternoon form session to make more effective use of the time.  
(paragraphs: 58, 108)

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Characteristics of the school**

1. West Craven High School is a mixed comprehensive school serving the small towns of Barnoldswick and Earby, and the surrounding villages. Although it is the only school in the town, a number of parents of high attaining pupils choose to send their sons and daughters to grammar schools in Skipton, so that there is a higher than average number of pupils who enter the school with average and below average attainment. This is confirmed by Key Stage 2 test results and by tests administered by the school in Year 7. However, there are some high attaining pupils in all years in the school.

2. There are 729 pupils on roll, approximately the same number of boys as girls. Only 3 per cent of pupils come from homes where English is not the first language.

3. There are 213 pupils on the school's register of special needs. This is above the national average. There are 110 (15.1 per cent) pupils eligible for free school meals. This is broadly in line with the national average.

4. The school's mission statement is to recognise the importance of every pupil, and the school's aims relate to developing the individual within the wider community.

5. The school has set a number of targets to enrich the quality of pupils' education. These include:

- further development of the Key Stage 4 option system and the introduction of vocational courses into Key Stage 4;
- increased access to electronic learning resources and continued development of the National Grid for Learning;
- increased use of assessment information to identify under achievement, recognise high achievement and set individual pupil learning targets;
- increased involvement of parents in achievement raising strategies;
- increased links with primary schools and the community, by shared use of sports and computer facilities;

The school's targets for GCSE in 1999 and 2000 are:

<b>Target</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>
Five A* to C grades	37%	43%
A* to C grades at GCSE	95%	96%

in one or more subject		
Average point score	30.5	32

## 1.Key Indicators

### Attainment at Key Stage 3<sup>1</sup>

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	65	82	147

<b>National Curriculum Test Results</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	34	42	41
	Girls	53	52	36
	Total	87	94	77
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	58 (54)	60 (62)	52 (46)
	National	64 (56)	64 (68)	56 (60)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	19 (13)	32 (30)	16 (14)
	National	34 (22)	36 (36)	27 (29)

<b>Teacher Assessments</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	31	40	33
	Girls	56	57	47
	Total	87	97	80
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	59 (--)	57 (--)	47 (--)
	National	-- (60)	-- (64)	-- (61)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	20 (--)	36 (--)	22 (--)
	National	-- (28)	-- (37)	-- (29)

<sup>1</sup>

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

## Attainment at Key Stage 4<sup>2</sup>

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	75	82	157

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	21	68	71
	Girls	30	76	77
	Total	51	144	148
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	32 (36)	91 (92)	94 (97)
	National	44.4 (43.3)	89.6 (88.5)	95.1 (94)

## Attendance

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

		%
Authorised Absence	School	8.2
	National comparative data	7.9
Unauthorised Absence	School	1.6
	National comparative data	1.1

## Exclusions

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

	Number
Fixed period	77
Permanent	1

## Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	16
Satisfactory or better	93
Less than satisfactory	7

<sup>2</sup>

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



## 6. PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

### EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

#### Attainment and progress

##### 6. *Attainment*

2.National Curriculum tests and tests given by the school at the beginning of Year 7 show that pupils' levels of attainment when they enter the school in Year 7 are below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is higher than in most schools, and there is a lower proportion of high attaining pupils.

3.The overall results in the 1998 Key Stage 3 tests were below average, nationally and for similar schools.

4.By the end of Key Stage 3 the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels for their ages in National Curriculum tests and teacher assessments is below the national average in English and science, and in line in mathematics. In 1998 test results for mathematics were average for similar schools and well below in English and science. Results are consistently better in mathematics than in English and science.

5.In English in the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 was below the national average for all schools and similar schools. The proportion reaching Level 6 was well below average by both measures.

6.In mathematics the proportion of pupils gaining Level 5 matched national figures for all schools and was above that for similar schools. The proportion reaching Level 6 was close to the national averages for all and similar schools.

7.In science the proportion reaching Level 5 was close to the national average and the average for similar schools, but the proportion reaching Level 6 was below the national average and well below average for similar schools.

8.Results in mathematics and science improved between 1997 and 1998, but deteriorated in English. There is little difference between the levels of attainment of boys and girls in mathematics or science, but girls' results are well above those of boys in English.

9.At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils gaining at least 5 grade A\* to C passes at GCSE in 1998 is below average, and well below average when compared with similar schools. The proportion has risen over the past three years, but at a slower rate than nationally. In 1997 results showed a significant improvement but they fell back in 1998. The school succeeds well with lower attaining pupils. The number of pupils achieving 5 or more A\* to G grades is in line with the national average, and the number of pupils not achieving any passes at GCSE is below the national average.

10.Overall attainment in English at the end of both key stages is below average. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are better developed than their written work. Most can communicate effectively in speech. They answer questions readily and can adapt their language for particular purposes. Drama lessons help to reinforce these skills. They listen well and respond thoughtfully to teachers and each other. Reading and writing skills are generally below average at both key stages. Spelling is often careless and pupils' reading experience is too limited. At GCSE girls do much better than boys.

11. Attainment in mathematics is average, and higher at the end of Key Stage 3 than in the other core subjects of English and science. Most pupils' numeracy is at least satisfactory. By the end of Key Stage 3 they have a good understanding of the basic rules of arithmetic and higher attainers are becoming good mathematicians, applying the rules of mathematics to a wide range of problems. By the end of Key Stage 4 most pupils are confident with the mathematics appropriate to their levels of attainment. They can explore the properties of number and shape and use statistics with assurance. They are able to use mathematics in other subjects of the curriculum, for example, science and geography. There is no pattern to differences in performance between boys and girls.

12. Attainment is below average in science at the end of Key Stage 3 and average at the end of Key Stage 4. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' factual knowledge is better than their ability to apply knowledge to practical investigations, in which they have to base predictions of the outcomes of experiments on their scientific knowledge. By the end of Key Stage 4 their practical skills have improved, and many can use models such as particle theory to explain scientific phenomena. The attainment in lessons of a significant minority of pupils is poor, and this is due to insufficient progress in lessons where teaching is ineffective, particularly in Years 10 and 11. In 1997 and 1998, a higher proportion of boys than girls achieved grades A\* to C.

13. Attainment in information and communication technology lessons by the end of Key Stage 3 is average. Most pupils can word process, use data bases for sorting, and carry out fundamental operations such as importing and editing text and pictures. Not all pupils have separate information and communication technology lessons in Key Stage 4. It has just been introduced as a GCSE option in Year 10. Those who choose to take it build on the standards achieved in Key Stage 3 and reach average levels by the end of Year 10.

14. Attainment is broadly in line with national averages by the end of both key stages in physical education, design and technology and religious education. In geography, attainment is average at Key Stage 3 and above average at Key Stage 4. In modern languages and art, attainment is in line with the national averages at Key Stage 3 but falls below for the small number of pupils who choose to study the subjects in Key Stage 4. In music the pattern is reversed, with most pupils below expectations by the end of Key Stage 3, while the few pupils who take GCSE music reach above average levels. In history, pupils do not reach expected levels by the end of Key Stage 3, but levels of attainment are better in Key Stage 4, where GCSE results are close to the national average and attainment in lessons is average.

15. In the last three years, most pupils taking French, German or sociology achieved lower grades in these than their other subjects.

16. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below average in drama and sociology, and average in media studies.

17. There is no evidence that pupils whose first language is not English achieve lower grades than others.

18. The average total GCSE points score has risen since the last inspection, though at a lower rate than the national trend. Since the last inspection the proportion of pupils gaining 5 A\* to C grades has risen from 84 per cent to 91 per cent.

### **Progress**

19. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in most subjects, but there is some variation, both in the progress of pupils in different subjects, and of different groups of pupils within the same subject.

20. Pupils make satisfactory progress in English over both key stages. Their speaking and listening improves steadily as their vocabulary grows, and their reading and writing develops. However, pupils do not make up sufficient ground to recover from their lower than average attainment when they enter; overall standards remain below average at all ages. Teaching is insufficiently incisive, and specific weaknesses are not identified and worked at. Most pupils' spelling remains inaccurate and they do not readily use books for research.

21. In mathematics, most pupils make good progress in Key Stage 3 because the course is well structured to enable pupils to build steadily on what they have learned before. Higher attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make the best progress. Some pupils in middle sets do not accept responsibility for their own learning and this slows their progress. At the time of the inspection a number of classes were being taught by non-specialists and this was also having a detrimental effect on progress. Progress in mathematics at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory, and would be improved further if teachers always explained to pupils how to improve their work and reach a higher level.

22. Progress in science is satisfactory overall during Key Stage 3. However, the heavy reliance on work sheets requiring short answers supports pupils of below or average levels of attainment but does not provide enough challenge for high attainers. Most pupils make good progress throughout Key Stage 4 because pupils are grouped by attainment and work is well matched to the needs of each group. There are, however, some classes where the work is too easy and pupils lose interest.

23. Most pupils of all levels of attainment make good progress over both key stages in design and technology, geography, history and religious education. In these lessons pupils are given varied and interesting activities that encourage them to think and work independently. In information and communication technology pupils make very good progress at Key Stage 3, because schemes of work are well planned, activities challenge pupils to think and take decisions, and teachers demonstrate and explain clearly. The small number of pupils taking the subject in Key Stage 4 also make very good progress.

24. Progress in physical education and modern languages is good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4, where pupils continue to develop practical skills well, but find theory more difficult. In music pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4, but in about half the lessons in Key Stage 3 pupils make unsatisfactory progress because the work is not sufficiently well planned.

25. Pupils make satisfactory progress in art at Key Stage 3 but not at Key Stage 4, although there is some satisfactory progress in individual lessons, and satisfactory teaching was seen. However, there is insufficient planned challenge to pupils of all levels of attainment in either written or practical work for pupils to make satisfactory progress over the whole course.

26. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs is sound and usually matches that of others. Work in most lessons is well suited to their needs, and there is effective planning by the special needs coordinator, making good use of support assistants, to ensure progress. In English and music, special needs pupils make better progress than others. At GCSE in 1998, most pupils on the special needs register gained at least five passes and none fewer than two. Many exceeded expectations based on assessments made at the time of entry.

27. Most parents are pleased with the standard of work and feel that the school is improving. A criticism that too much work is done on loose sheets of paper is endorsed by the inspection team. The work in pupils' folders is often done with care and pride, but the folders themselves

easily become damaged and do not do justice to pupils' work.

### **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

28. Pupils' attitudes to learning are usually good. Although they are not always prompt to arrive for lessons, pupils quickly get down to work and most, including pupils with special needs, are able to maintain concentration well. When given the opportunity, pupils are keen to contribute to lessons. Some subjects, particularly design and technology and humanities, are especially successful at getting pupils to think for themselves in preparing their own studies, but this is not widely evident. Some pupils use the computer rooms to complete work independently. Younger pupils appreciate the merits and certificates that they receive and hold their merit booklets in high regard. Homework planners are less valued and often not used effectively. Movement around the school is satisfactory, but sometimes boisterous. Classrooms and display areas are treated with respect.

29. The school has an agreed behaviour policy to help maintain an orderly community but its implementation is in need of review. Appropriate step by step plans are drawn up to encourage better behaviour. However, there are a number of occasions when initially trivial incidents become more serious because low level sanctions are not applied quickly enough. For those pupils with serious behavioural problems, parents are involved when necessary. After all sanctions have been applied, the school recognises that exclusions may be the only solution. However, overall behaviour is satisfactory.

30. Since the last report the number of permanent exclusions has fallen. Only one pupil was permanently excluded last year compared with 4 in the year preceding the previous inspection. The number of fixed term exclusions, however, has risen from 39 to 77. This is because the reasons for exclusion have been tightened up to match the school's new and very tough line on aggressive behaviour. Most exclusions are the result of verbal aggression towards staff or fellow pupils. The policy has the support of parents, who feel it is having a positive effect on behaviour. Incidents of bullying are few, and when they do occur they are dealt with quickly and effectively. Parents are very pleased with the standard of pupils' behaviour.

31. The school is a secure and orderly environment in which pupils can work and make progress in almost all lessons. Relationships between pupils and with staff are good. Pupils are usually polite and co-operate well with peers and staff, particularly during lessons. They are ready to listen to each other's views and respect each other's values. This is particularly noticeable in English, drama, information and communication technology, personal and social education and religious education. Pupils from ethnic minorities feel welcome and secure.

32. Provision for pupils' personal development is satisfactory and has not changed significantly since the last inspection. Personal development is supported by chances to take the initiative in some lessons, for example in improvising in drama, or in helping set up apparatus in physical education. Outside lessons, pupils can volunteer for activities, such as the school council, and Year 11 pupils can opt to become prefects. Older pupils undertake work experience and some participate in mini-enterprise companies. Some pupils also become involved in fund-raising for local charities, the Christmas Concert and annual party for senior citizens. Personal development is also enhanced through the Lake District Challenge weekends. However, all pupils, particularly younger ones, would benefit from being given the opportunity to assume responsibilities in school and for their own learning. The previous report also commented on the need to allow pupils to take on more responsibility.

## **Attendance**

33. Attendance is close to the national average, but has fallen slightly over the last three years and in 1998 gave the school concern. The school was without external support for some of this time, but a new educational welfare officer has recently taken up post. There has been a reduction in the amount of unauthorised absence in recent months. Attendance remains close to the level seen during the last inspection in 1995. Overall, attendance has a positive impact on progress, but in a number of lessons, especially in lower sets in Key Stage 4, the number of pupils present is below 80 per cent and this has a negative impact on progress.

34. Punctuality at the commencement of lessons also varies widely, and even in such subjects as mathematics where pupils have a good rapport with their teachers, there is an adverse effect on the progress made. A number of pupils are late returning after their mid-day break.

35. The registers are marked properly and in compliance with the regulations. Registers are marked at the end of the afternoon. The onus is on pupils arriving late at lunchtime to sign in at the office; this does not ensure that the school is fully aware of all pupils' whereabouts at the beginning of the afternoon. Admissions and contact data are efficiently managed with due regard to the sensitivity of personal details, and in compliance with the regulations. Data are very well linked to the pastoral and welfare work undertaken by the staff.

36. The minority of pupils who arrive late at the start of the day, or who are not punctual during the day are often the ones who have overall poor attendance records. The combined effect of this is having an adverse effect on their progress both academically and in the development of important life skills. The school has an effective monitoring system to check that pupils are not playing truant from individual lessons.

37. Attendance levels are reported to parents both in the annual reports they receive about their children's attainment, and in the governing body's report to parents. There is no additional commentary to reinforce the value to be attached to regular attendance and punctuality.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

### **Teaching**

38. Teaching is at least satisfactory in over nine out of ten lessons. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when eight out of ten lessons were satisfactory or better. Half of all lessons observed were good, and about one sixth were very good or excellent. Teaching is particularly good in history, geography, drama and information and communication technology where nearly all the teaching is good or very good at both key stages. The quality of teaching in mathematics is good overall. Teaching in art and English is satisfactory at both key stages. At both key stages, teaching is at least satisfactory and mainly good in religious education. Overall, there was a slightly higher proportion of satisfactory and good lessons seen in Key Stage 4.

39. The unsatisfactory lessons are mainly in music where half the Key Stage 3 lessons are unsatisfactory and in science where teaching in about a quarter of lessons is poor or unsatisfactory. There was, however, some satisfactory and good teaching in science, particularly in Key Stage 3. Where teaching is less than satisfactory, the pace is slow, and the work is too easy or too difficult for pupils to make appropriate progress. In the poor lessons, pupils make very little progress.

40. At Key Stage 3, teaching is at least satisfactory, and mainly good, in physical education

and modern languages. Teaching in design and technology is satisfactory. One unsatisfactory lesson was seen in mathematics and one in design and technology.

41. At Key Stage 4, teaching in most lessons in design and technology and mathematics is good, and never less than satisfactory. Teaching in music is satisfactory. Teaching in physical education is at least satisfactory. An unsatisfactory lesson was seen in modern languages but the remainder was satisfactory. Half the teaching in sociology is good; pupils are challenged to think deeply and argue constructively. In the other half the work is not well matched to pupils' attainment and is sometimes too difficult. Teaching in media studies is satisfactory. Teaching in science is satisfactory overall at Key Stage 4.

42. Teachers' knowledge of their subject matter is good when they teach within their own disciplines, but in English and mathematics some teaching is done by non-specialists. This has a negative effect on pupils' learning when they are given incorrect information, or, more commonly, the teacher does not have enough background knowledge to explain clearly or use pertinent examples. Many lessons in religious education are also taught by non-specialists but in this case it does not affect the quality of teaching.

43. In many lessons teachers have high expectations of pupils and set tasks that challenge them to think hard and deepen their knowledge. This is particularly evident in history and geography, where high, but realistic, demands are made of pupils of all levels of attainment. Consequently progress is good. In English, music, modern languages, physical education and religious education the high attainers are not always sufficiently challenged, and a feature of the poor lessons in science at both key stages is work that is too easy and therefore not taken seriously by pupils.

44. Teachers plan schemes of work well, but in art the result of this planning is not evident in the lessons where objectives are too vague. In all subjects teachers plan individual lessons carefully, but sometimes the plans do not provide for sufficient pace or variety. This leads to a number of lessons that are satisfactory, rather than good. For example, in some modern language lessons teachers talk for too long, allowing pupils too little time for speaking and practising new expressions. In English there are some missed opportunities for group work, and some mathematics lessons, though good in other respects, would be better still if they included more short tasks to break up long lessons.

45. In history, geography and drama the lessons are always well structured and the pace is reinforced by brisk but clear instructions and clear deadlines. This is particularly true of drama. Here pupils work intensely throughout the lesson, moving quickly through well sequenced activities, and progress is exceptionally good. Lessons in history and geography are also well paced, with good use of resources such as computers and video cameras. For example, a class of lower attaining Year 9 pupils made very good progress in their understanding of the slave trade by researching contemporary material and presenting their findings as a television news programme. Time is used purposefully in most lessons, but there is scope for improvement in music and English where lessons are sometimes too leisurely.

46. Discipline is good in most lessons. Teachers have established relationships with pupils based on mutual respect, and use humour and firm guidelines to develop a good ethos for study. In a minority of lessons teachers do not insist on pupils paying full attention during whole class discussions. In a small but significant number of lessons teachers do not impose firm order and pupils waste time and make little progress. In these lessons the teachers do not use the school's behaviour policy effectively.

47. In most lessons teachers are alert to the way pupils are dealing with tasks and move quickly to help when they falter or are puzzled. Work is usually marked, but the quality of marking is inconsistent. In history, geography, and information and communication technology the marking is regular and detailed, providing teachers with useful information about pupils' progress and pupils with guidance about what to do to improve. In religious education and science marking is often perfunctory, and in science a significant amount of work is unmarked.

48. Teachers share a concern for the progress of pupils with special educational needs and contribute useful information to review meetings. Subjects such as design and technology, geography, history and information and communication technology have responded to assessment data by developing some effective teaching strategies and resources to provide appropriate challenge for both the lowest and highest attaining pupils. Failure to recognise different needs prevents the highest attaining pupils from making satisfactory progress at all times, for example in science in Years 7 and 8 where classes are of mixed ability.

49. Teachers make effective use of resources in most subjects, and those who have begun to incorporate the new computer suite and interactive white board into lessons are becoming skilled and imaginative in its use. This is increasing pupils' rate of progress and is particularly effective in geography. Computers are also used effectively for design and drawing in the resistant materials element of design and technology. There is, however, a need to increase the use of books for research, for example, in science.

50. Since the last inspection, individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs have been more fully developed. These include the targets set for each pupil and are well used by specialist staff. Subject teachers are often unsure of how they can help individual pupils to achieve their targets. Clearer guidelines are needed. Specialist staff have good levels of expertise and learning support assistants are effective in assisting and monitoring pupils' progress. When they are not available in some lessons, for example, in mathematics, individuals' and the group's progress is noticeably reduced.

51. The school has a homework timetable but does not monitor the effectiveness of homework across the curriculum. Several parents expressed concern about homework. The evidence of the inspection indicates that in most subjects homework is set regularly, is relevant to work done in class and is well enough explained for pupils to understand what is required; mathematics homework is particularly effective. However, parents are not sufficiently informed about what is expected of pupils, and pupils comment that not all teachers adhere to the homework timetable.

## **The curriculum and assessment**

### ***Curriculum***

52. The curriculum is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 but unsatisfactory at Key Stage 4. It is being changed to meet the recommendations of the last report and to increase opportunities for pupils. It meets statutory requirements fully in Key Stage 3, but few Year 10 pupils and none in Year 11 have access to information and communication technology as required by the National Curriculum. The organisation of the school day is flexible enough to permit lessons of a suitable length in most subjects and has a positive impact on pupils' progress.

53. While the new timetable works well in most respects, the twenty minutes at the end of the day is not well used. Registration at this time means that form tutors are unable to monitor pupils' punctuality after lunch. Each pupil spends two of these sessions in assembly and three in unstructured form time. Assemblies are satisfactory but start noisily when pupils are registered, and much of form time is spent chattering and is not used purposefully. An exception is Year 7 when the time is used better, for example, for whole class discussions.

The previous report also commented unfavourably on the use of registration time and the school still needs to improve this.

54. At Key Stage 3, the curriculum has appropriate breadth and balance. Allocations of time are sufficient to teach the schemes of work of the subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and personal and social education. Time for English and mathematics has been increased to encourage raising levels of literacy and numeracy but specific strategies to achieve this have not been introduced, so that the extra time is not well used and pupils' progress in these areas is not being enhanced as intended.

55. Encouragement of pupils to take two modern languages in Key Stage 3 with additional time provided from physical education benefits neither subject and is unpopular with some pupils. GCSE results do not justify the arrangement.

56. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 ensures that all pupils follow courses in the required subjects and religious, personal and social education, except for information and communication technology which is not taught at all in Year 11 and is only taught to a limited number of pupils in Year 10. The school does not meet statutory requirements in this respect at Key Stage 4.

57. Pupils now in Year 10 also chose three subjects of the National Curriculum or drama, media studies or sociology. This represents a wider range than was offered to Year 11 but still lacks a vocational dimension. The school plans to introduce GNVQ courses next year when staff training has been completed. The current structure has the capacity to support this development.

58. There is equality of opportunity and access for all pupils in all areas, although boys have fewer opportunities than girls for dance and expressive activities after Year 7. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. It will be improved when whole school policies are introduced to improve literacy and numeracy. At Key Stage 4, the encouragement of these pupils to gain certificates at GCSE and certificate of achievement levels generally supports progress. The school is considering what additional provisions might be more relevant to the needs of some pupils for whom GCSE is not appropriate.

59. There is an effective programme of personal and social education that includes drugs, sex and careers education. Curriculum planning is sound in most subjects. However, at Key Stage 4 there is no planned contribution to the development of each pupil's capability in information and communication technology. There is inconsistency in the quality of departments' appropriately matching tasks to the needs of the highest or lowest attaining pupils within classes. There is also considerable variation in the abilities of departments to analyse assessment data to improve planning and teaching the curriculum.

60. There are satisfactory links with primary schools to support continuity of learning. Sound advice is given at times of movement between key stages or when preparing to move into post-16 education or employment.

61. The range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory. It is restricted by the lack of provision of a shared lunch-break and the early departure of school buses at the end of the day which prevents participation by some pupils. There are opportunities to join clubs and to take part in visits both within this country and abroad. There is a good range of sporting opportunities. About a third of all pupils take part in a wide range of team and individual sports, assisted by at least seven teachers. There are a number of trips and visits that enrich pupils' cultural experience. These include regular theatre visits involving over a hundred pupils each year, and science trips to the Natural History Museum in London.



62. At Key Stage 3, the school aims to ensure that pupils with special educational needs have full access to the National Curriculum and are withdrawn for specialist help only when necessary and not usually from the same lesson each week. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 offers appropriate courses for most pupils with learning difficulties but additional opportunities should be considered for some for whom formal methods of assessment present considerable problems.

### **Assessment**

63. The school's development plan includes a number of aspects of assessment requiring review and development to support the raising of attainment. Many of these were identified in the report of the last inspection. The school is now working towards an assessment system which identifies targets for each pupil and monitors and records progress towards their attainment. Most departments have not yet fully grasped the importance or process of effective assessment, but good practice is evident in geography, history, and modern languages. There is some good practice in design and technology where pupils are also encouraged to set meaningful targets for themselves. Assessment is also good in mathematics, particularly at Key Stage 3.

64. The collection of portfolios of pupils' work which exemplify different levels of attainment according to National Curriculum criteria and support consistency of assessment has not been sufficiently developed in all subjects. It is being considered by subjects such as information and communication technology. Although information from tests to measure progress is well used in geography and history, there is a need for better moderation of pupils' work in these subjects to establish ways of grading work accurately.

65. The school receives information about pupils' performance in national tests in the last year at primary school and also tests pupils using standardised tests. It makes good use of this data to identify pupils needing additional support, to organise teaching groups and to identify realistic targets for groups and individuals. For example, last year, the school identified pupils in Year 11 likely to achieve lower GCSE grades than earlier tests had predicted. The extra support provided had limited success. Reasons were identified and the provision for this year has been improved.

66. Analysis of data has been used by subject teachers to identify needs such as providing work more appropriate to different levels of attainment within classes in history, geography and design technology. It has led to changes of approach in mathematics and alterations in emphasis in religious studies. In history, changes have been made to course content and materials.

67. Despite these examples of effective practice, assessment is unsatisfactory because data are insufficiently used at departmental or whole school levels to identify strengths and weaknesses which affect learning or to contribute to curriculum planning. In English and science assessment is not used to set targets for pupils, and in modern languages assessment information is not used effectively to enable pupils to progress from one level of attainment to the next. Assessment in music is unsatisfactory and not used to raise attainment; pupils are not given targets or grades and do not know the criteria for assessment at the end of Key Stage 3. Assessment information is collected in art but not used to indicate action that needs to be taken to improve attainment.

68. The school's marking policy is not consistently practised by subject teachers and advice on how to improve is not always provided. Examples of unmarked work were noted in pupils' files for science and in pupils' art sketchbooks. There is insufficiently rigorous monitoring of assessment and marking by the senior management team and by heads of department.

69.The school has improved its strategies for the identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs. Teachers are provided with detailed information about these pupils. Most use it to improve the quality of pupils' learning. However, there is much uncertainty among subject teachers about how pupils may be helped to achieve targets identified in their individual education plans.

### **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

70.The school's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is satisfactory overall, but not consistent. The school conducts an annual audit of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across the curriculum but it is not clear what follows from this audit. Provision for moral and social development is good but provision for spiritual development of pupils is unsatisfactory. This was noted in the previous report and has not been successfully addressed.

71.Religious education, drama, and English make significant contributions to the spiritual development of pupils by offering them opportunities to study world religions, by engaging them in discussion of ideas of good and evil and encouraging them to reflect on their own and other people's beliefs. Despite this, provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory. In art and music opportunities are missed to explore feelings and emotions and to encourage self-expression and develop self-awareness. Assemblies held twice a week have provision for reflection on spiritual issues and offer opportunities for prayer but they are hurried and do not engage the pupils sufficiently. Although 'Thoughts for the Day' material is available to all tutors, few use this effectively and no acts of worship take place outside assemblies.

72.Throughout the school, provision for pupils' moral development is good. The school's values are promoted and re-inforced within the pastoral system and in lessons and pupils are encouraged with praise to behave well. The personal and social education programme and religious education both make a significant contribution to the moral development of pupils by engaging them in discussion of moral and social issues and offering opportunities to apply these to the practical day to day problems faced in everyday life. In a careers lesson the moral issues associated with employment were effectively introduced and discussed. Teaching staff and other adults working in the school provide good role models for pupils and there are good relationships between adults and pupils and between the pupils themselves. Parents are pleased with the positive effect that the school's values and attitudes have on their children.

73.The provision made by the school for pupils' social development is good. Physical education, history, geography, sociology and drama make good contributions to this development by offering pupils opportunities for working together in groups, developing good relationships between pupils and encouraging discussion of social issues relating to good citizenship. The extra-curricular sporting programme is good and there are school concerts and productions involving a number of pupils. The school successfully involves pupils in a number of fund-raising projects for charities. There are only limited opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and show initiative through the school council and prefect system.

74.The school's provision throughout the curriculum for the cultural development of pupils is satisfactory. Religious education makes a significant contribution through the study of religions from a number of different cultures and by encouraging discussion of cultural issues. Geography offers pupils opportunities to consider other cultures through the study of a number of different countries. There are links with Germany through the modern languages department and through the study of modern languages. The school has a valuable link involving exchange visits with a school in the USA. In art, opportunities are missed in lessons to develop pupils' awareness of other cultures and to make comparisons with their own. The

contribution made by music at the time of the last inspection, was substantially greater than it is now.

75.The school has now drawn its papers on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development into a coherent policy and carries out an annual audit. However, in the area of spiritual development this audit has not effectively brought about satisfactory provision. The school development plan addresses all the other issues raised.

### **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

76.As at the time of the previous inspection, procedures for monitoring progress and personal development are satisfactory.

77.Staff show a very caring attitude towards pupils. They strive hard, but not always effectively, to help them to develop academically. For example, homework diaries are checked to see that they are signed by parents, but not to ensure that pupils are making an accurate record of homework set. Most staff have a good approach to pupils' social and personal development but occasional inconsistencies give out conflicting messages which some pupils exploit. For example they do not always arrive promptly for their lessons and show unwillingness to work independently on occasions.

78.Practice in monitoring pupils' progress in their learning is limited by the current lack of clear targets for pupils in many subjects. Where good examples exist, for example in mathematics, pupils express appreciation for the efforts their teachers make in giving them individual attention.

79.Senior staff work hard to make the school a secure environment in which to learn; they are aware that the physical layout of the buildings creates difficulties in securing this. The recently conducted health and safety audit has sharpened the focus on this aspect of school life.

80.Provision for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour is satisfactory. A review of the behaviour policy and an increased emphasis on the importance of good behaviour in the school over the past year had a beneficial effect on the standards seen. Parents and pupils expressed appreciation for the improvements made. A lack of consistency in management of the policy prevents this good foundation from further improving standards of behaviour, punctuality and attendance. Teachers sometimes do not use the sanctions quickly enough to prevent silly or thoughtless behaviour from distracting other pupils in lessons.

81.Procedures for managing and promoting attendance are satisfactory. There is a good system in place to analyse patterns of absence, and to some extent their reasons, but follow-up enquiries do not always occur quickly and this detracts from its effectiveness. The appointment of a new education welfare officer is helping to remedy this. No improvement in overall attendance levels is evident, and attendance is just below the level reported in the 1995 inspection. The progress of a small but significant number of pupils is impeded by their poor and intermittent attendance.

82.Pupils who have special educational needs have good support from their teachers, and effective use is made of the external support services. There are fewer classroom assistants than is desirable, and the individual learning programmes do not have sufficient detail in some subjects for them to be fully effective.

83.Pupils are given effective guidance on the dangers of drugs and solvent abuse in the personal and social education programmes. An initiative organised by the parents' association

has informed them about the programmes of study their children are receiving. The pupils are also informed about the effect smoking can have upon their health, but a number of them ignore this, both girls and boys use the toilet areas for this purpose, to the annoyance of a number of other pupils.

84. Procedures for child protection are very good, and those for the promotion of well being, health and safety are satisfactory. The health and safety arrangements were criticised in the 1995 report, and the school has commenced a programme of improvements to address the issues raised. This has included training in risk assessments and an evaluation of the safety of the school by local authority advisers. Child protection procedures are managed by skilled and trained co-ordinators who have shared their expertise with all staff in the school. Pupils have been made aware of their entitlement to use a confidential help-line number.

85. First aid arrangements are good; a number of adults in the school have undergone training and the facilities for treatment include a discrete rest area for pupils who may become unwell. These facilities also enable the visiting school nurse to perform her tasks in an appropriate environment.

86. Some older pupils undertake positions of trust, for example as prefects. They are trained in the skills necessary for their duties, and they are able to clearly explain what is expected of them, although they are less sure about the levels of authority vested in them.

87. The personal and social education programme is well used to inform pupils about the standards to be expected in an ordered society. In these lessons pupils are encouraged to discuss, consider and debate other points of view, some of which test very well the moral and ethical dilemmas of modern scientific practice, for example genetic engineering. The careers work in the school provides a sound basis for pupils to become fully involved in plotting their future lives. The programme is enhanced by the range of work experience available to them which includes practical support from the governing body and careers service.

## 92. **Partnership with Parents and the Community**

88. The school has maintained the good links with parents and with the local community noted in the last report, and built effectively on these. The quality of information for parents is satisfactory. Opportunities for both informal and formal consultation are good, especially when matters of a pastoral or welfare nature arise.

89. The annual reports to parents inform them about their child's attendance record, but they do not emphasise the adverse effects poor attendance has on progress. Information regarding individual subjects is variable in quality. Some subjects are explained in detail, with clear information about what has been covered in the syllabus, and whether the expected progress of the pupil has been achieved. In some subjects, modern languages is an example, the comments provide insufficient detail for readers to form a clear understanding. Many relate more to pupils' attitudes and effort in the subject than to specific information about what they can and cannot do.

90. Parents' comments prior to the inspection suggest that there are varying practices in setting and marking homework. Inspection evidence shows that although homework is regularly set, it is not always recorded in diaries and parents are not fully informed of what is set. A number of parents do not endorse homework diaries, as they are requested to do. The newsletters the school sends home are satisfactory and improving in the quality of information they contain. The majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire distributed before the inspection feel that the information the school provides about their children meets their expectations.

91. Parents' involvement in children's learning is better than is generally seen in secondary schools. There is a very well run and highly successful parent-teacher association. Members' skill in organising fund-raising events has secured matched funding from the Rural Development Commission resulting in the purchase of a new mini bus. This is used for

community events and for school outings. Parents help in the classrooms with reading programmes and in the computer suite.

92.The school works in partnership with the local further education college to provide accredited information and communication technology courses for parents and for local primary schools. These are popular and enhance the school's standing in the community. Fund-raising initiatives are closely linked to the school's development planning processes, and are valued by the teaching staff. They are a strong contributory factor to the sense of community that is so evident in the school.

93.Enrichment through links with the community is very good. Teaching staff and the governing body have together developed a high profile for the school in the community. This has resulted in a number of benefits to the quality and breadth of educational experiences. For example, teachers work on assignments linked with industry away from school, thus widening their experiences which they then share with their pupils. A number of departments, particularly science and geography, make good use of the local environment for field studies. Good links with local industry have enabled teachers to develop their knowledge of information and communication technology systems and practice; this has a positive impact on pupils' progress. Primary schools are encouraged to use sports and other facilities, so that many pupils are already familiar with the school when they come in Year 7.

94.The personal and social education programme is enhanced by a number of guest speakers who bring their expertise into the school, and sessions, for example on drugs awareness, are run for parents.

95.The school works effectively with other community organisations to gain support for its development initiatives. Recent examples are the technology and learning centre and National Lottery support for a sports hall and the National Grid for Learning computer centre.

96.These facilities are used by parents and the pupils from local primary schools, as a community resource. This further enhances the reputation the school is gaining. This bond is evident in the regard which both primary schools and further education colleges have for the school, and in the willingness of local business people to align themselves with this community college.

## **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

### **Leadership and management**

97.Leadership and management is satisfactory overall. There are some weaknesses but these are outweighed by strengths. There have been changes in management since the last inspection. The new headteacher took up post twelve months ago, and the senior management team at present comprises a deputy head teacher and an acting deputy headteacher. Prior to the headteacher's appointment the school was led for a term by an acting deputy and an acting headteacher. The headteacher has established a close and effective working relationship with colleagues and with the governing body that has allowed him to make a number of important innovations quickly. For example, the school day has been restructured in order to lengthen the teaching day and provide greater flexibility for the curriculum. The long term absence of a senior member of staff with responsibility for examinations has placed an additional burden on the senior management team and in spite of this the changes have been very well managed and made smoothly.

98.The senior management team and the governing body recognise that raising achievement is the biggest issue facing the school. The headteacher has a clear strategic view of the way

in which this should be achieved. The basis of the strategy is better use of assessment, changes to the curriculum, and improving pupils' literacy. The school development plan includes these issues. The plan is logically structured and an effective tool for future planning and evaluating, but at present there are too many headings for the school to tackle at once and priorities are not defined. Subject development plans are closely linked to the school development plan and therefore share its strengths and weaknesses.

99. Day-to-day management by the senior management team is good. Administrative systems are well run and effective. However, the responsibilities of the deputy headteachers are not sufficiently explicit. The school development plan is not being driven hard enough and the importance of effective curriculum planning, monitoring and assessment to raising attainment is not being made clear enough to subject leaders.

100. Since the last inspection, when middle management was criticised, subject leaders have been given a bigger role in monitoring and evaluation. Some have responded well to this opportunity. Leadership in geography, history, mathematics, religious education, physical education, information and communication technology and modern languages is good overall. However, curriculum leaders in music, art and science do not constantly review the work of their departments and use the outcomes to plan changes. Leadership in English is satisfactory overall, but there is insufficient monitoring of the work of the department or planning to raise attainment, particularly in literacy. Some monitoring is taking place in science, but it is not clear what action is taken as a result of the monitoring.

101. Since the previous inspection the senior management team has undertaken a full programme of lesson observations, and this has contributed to the improvement overall in teaching. The monitoring has not, however, had enough effect where there is poor teaching. The school does not have a system to spread the good practice in the most effective subjects to those where teaching is satisfactory but lacks the pace and challenge of the best. Heads of departments and senior management do not monitor planning and marking sufficiently at present.

102. The school now has detailed information about pupils' attainment on entry and performance at Key Stage 2, but a number of heads of department are not using this information effectively to see how teaching in their departments needs to change, or to set individual targets for improvement. There is good practice in design and technology, information and communication technology, history and geography that needs to be shared more widely.

103. Heads of year play an important part in the pastoral well being of pupils in their year and support the implementation of the behaviour policy. Some heads of year are effective in seeing that the time with the tutor at the end of the day is well used, but for most year groups there is no planned activity and the session is wasted. There is no guidance or monitoring across each year about how the 'Thought for the Day' is used.

104. The governing body is a strength of the school. There is a wide range of expertise that includes, finance, industry and law. Governors are enthusiastic and keen to support the school and have made a significant contribution to the school's development, particularly in improving the school's provision for information and communication technology. Governors have had good recent training about curriculum planning. This has given them a sound understanding of the way the school functions, and an awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are deeply committed to improving the school and have the vision and practical skills to bring about change. Governors are becoming well-informed on curriculum issues and are establishing links with individual subjects.

105. There is a clear desire on the part of individual teachers to create an ethos where the aspirations of each pupil are both awakened and realised. However, the school does not state or use clear aims to provide a unified understanding of the school's ethos. The school aims were drawn up before the previous inspection and do not influence the current life of the school sufficiently. For example, the overall aim includes the statement that pupils should be able to participate responsibly in the school community and wider society, but inspectors found that pupils are not given enough opportunities for accepting responsibility. In the prospectus the aims have been replaced by a mission statement. It is commendable but too brief to provide the necessary guidance.

106. The governors are informed about attendance levels, but they have no established procedures in place to review attendance issues.

107. The length of the teaching week, criticised in the last report, now exceeds the required minimum but remains just below the recommended total of 25 hours. The school day is 4 hours 55 minutes. The legal requirements for registration and reporting to parents are now met. In the previous report a key issue was that the school fulfil the legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship. Consideration of this is included in the school development plan but the school currently does not comply with the legal requirement. The school is not meeting fully the statutory requirements for appraisal or to provide sufficient information and communication technology for all pupils in Key Stage 4.

#### **112. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

108. Overall the number, match and qualifications, experience and deployment of teaching staff is satisfactory. There is a good range of skills on the staff to cover the subjects taught. Most staff teach within their own specialisms but there is a mis-match in the use of teachers in English, and in mathematics at Key Stage 3, where non-specialist teachers are not able to provide sufficient challenge or clear explanations, and this is having a negative effect on the progress of a minority of pupils.

109. The staff development process is supported by a curriculum working party. There is a fully implemented system for observing lessons but this needs to be clearly linked to the review process in order for the appraisal system to meet statutory requirements fully. At present appraisal is not sufficiently thorough or sharply focused. Job descriptions are unnecessarily detailed. They also lack specific functions and do not set out the expectations required of the job-holder. Consequently it is difficult for the school to evaluate the effectiveness of staff development.

110. Staff development is not closely linked to targets for development arising out of appraisal, except in geography. Training for whole school or departmental issues is linked to development planning. Its effectiveness in subject areas depends on the ability of departments to recognise their needs. This is satisfactory in most subjects. In physical education, training is well linked to the department's development, but training in English needs to be more focused on raising attainment.

111. All the senior staff are male. The management is sensitive to this and gives consideration to the gender balance of the staff when appointing new staff. There is a need to consider how to raise the profile of women teachers in order to provide girls with a broader range of role models.

112. The match of numbers, qualifications and expertise of support staff to meet the demands of the curriculum is inadequate. Although the skill and expertise of support staff is of high quality there are insufficient to meet the needs of the curriculum in such subject areas as



information and communication technology or ensure that the library is always available. Support staff for pupils with special educational needs are effective and sensitive to the needs of these pupils, but there are not enough to ensure that all pupils get the help they need.

113.The accommodation is in good condition, well maintained, exceptionally clean and free from graffiti. Noise levels intrude into some lessons. For example, language lessons are disturbed by the movement of pupils in the classrooms above. The new sports centre, run in partnership with the local authority, is a significant asset. The school uses it well to enhance pupils' fitness and well being and improve progress in, for example, swimming. The girls' toilets are in poor condition; there are plans to rectify this in the near future.

114.The school is building up a good supply of modern computers and associated equipment. The newly installed interactive white board allows teachers to integrate electronic data and teachers' and pupils' own lesson notes. It is already having an impact on progress in some subjects, such as geography and science.

115.Overall the adequacy of resources is unsatisfactory because in spite of adequate specialist equipment in most practical subjects and some very good resources for information and communication technology, books are in short supply, both in the library and in many subjects. There are insufficient suitable textbooks in English, art, modern languages - particularly German, physical education and design and technology.

116.The books in the library do not have the range necessary to excite pupils to the wonders of the written word, or encourage them to extend their learning beyond that which is set by teachers. In German some textbooks are old and require considerable adaptation to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum, and in a sociology lesson the textbooks were old and pupils found it difficult to relate to the narrative. The shortage of books is also seen in the extensive use teachers make of photocopied material.

117.The learning support department has one computer but has further access to electronic equipment in the resource centre. The learning support department and the library have insufficient fiction or non-fiction texts to support improvements in literacy. Specialist help for pupils with difficulties in reading and writing is not linked to whole school strategies for improving these skills. This has a negative effect on these pupils' progress.

118.Since the last inspection the accommodation has improved significantly, through the addition of the sports hall and the computer centre. However, the library, described as 'poorly resourced' in the last inspection, is still inadequate. The lack of a good library, and a good book stock in all subjects is holding back pupils' progress.

### **The efficiency of the school**

119.The quality of financial planning is satisfactory. Expenditure patterns are monitored by the bursar, senior staff and the governing body. Long term financial planning is in place to ensure adequate resources for the future. The priorities of the school development plan are costed, and the governors, in setting the budget for the current year, agreed to maintain a surplus to be held against future developments in the school. This surplus has been prudently reduced, but the school needs to consider whether even the reduced figure is appropriate in view of the poor stock of books, particularly in the library.

120.The governors have a good understanding of the school and its needs and use their expertise effectively to manage the school's finances. They have been active in supporting the school in its successful bid for additional funds for improving the school's facilities. The very large number of targets in the current school development plans means that it is difficult to

manage and monitor. The previous report commented on the tenuous links between departmental development plans and the school development plan and these links have been strengthened by the introduction of a common planning document.

121.The school has a total income, including grants, of over £1.5 million. Areas of spending on teaching staff, learning resources and expenditure per pupil are in line with national patterns. Spending on support staff is below the national patterns. The use of teaching staff is unsatisfactory in that in mathematics, religious education and English, non-specialist teachers are being used to deliver these subjects. This is having a negative effect on pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics.

122.In the case of heads of year, their class teaching time is eroded by their pastoral duties taking precedence over their teaching commitment because pupils are referred to them during lessons. This is an inefficient use of their time, particularly as there is also a teacher permanently overseeing the 'Exit' room where pupils are sent when their behaviour is deemed to be unmanageable in lessons.

123.Within the total income for the school there is a specific budget for supporting pupils with special educational needs and this is carefully monitored and funds are effectively targeted to make satisfactory provision for these pupils. Satisfactory use is made of additional grants for professional development.

124.The use of learning resources and available accommodation is satisfactory. Since the last inspection the school has reallocated rooms to bring most curriculum areas together. There are weaknesses in religious education and modern foreign languages where rooms used are a considerable distance apart and in the case of religious education where six different rooms are used. The lack of a technician to support information and communication technology leads to inefficient use of teacher time and inhibits the efficient use of the computers.

125.Financial control within the school is effective and the day-to-day financial management is good. An area of weakness is in the administration of the photocopying budget where departments are not currently given responsibility for keeping within a prescribed budget. Spending is high for a school of this size.

126.The governors have responded well to the efficiency issues in the previous report and all areas are included in the current school development plan. For example, financial implications are clearly identified in the school development plan; budget and development plans are more closely linked; explicit criteria for the allocation of capitation funds or the acceptance of departmental bids for finances are now clearly identified and the governors have extended the length of the school teaching week. The last report of the governors to parents made appropriate reference to the provision made for pupils with special needs and the level of resources provided.

127.In relation to its level of income, the quality of education provided and the educational standards achieved, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

## **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

### **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

#### **English**

128. Attainment in English at both key stages is below average. The attainment of fourteen year olds in the 1997 National Curriculum test was below the national average. In 1998 the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 and Level 6 increased, but by less than the rise nationally and remained below average. Pupils' performance was well below that in similar schools. Teacher assessment levels match test levels. The proportion of A\* - C grades at GCSE is below the national average but shows a steady improvement over time, with particularly good results in 1997. The proportion of A\* - G grades is close to the national average. The proportion of higher grades is well below average. Girls' perform better than boys in both English language and English literature. Pupils' attainment is better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3 because teachers have accumulated experience in how to prepare pupils for examinations, particularly the course work elements. Pupils' attainment in class is better than in examination because in lessons they are constantly supported and coached by teachers and become over-reliant on this help. Pupils achieve broadly similar results in GCSE English compared to their other subjects.

129. By the end of Key Stage 3 high attainers can write clearly in well constructed sentences. Pupils in middle groups write with enthusiasm and confidence and use full stops and capital letters accurately. Lower attainers can produce lively writing, based closely on speech patterns but sentences are not well formed and handwriting is inconsistent; some pupils do not use cursive script. Their reading lacks colour or intonation.

130. By the end of Key Stage 4 high attaining pupils show a command of written styles but most have difficulty writing a reasoned argument. They can however, discuss texts with authority. Pupils in the middle band can write a satisfactory comparison of, for example, two novels, when they are constantly guided, but stray too easily into recounting the story if left to themselves. Lower attainers struggle to produce work of length.

131. In Key Stage 3, pupils make satisfactory progress, because teachers are anxious to give them individual support. Pupils who entered the school in 1995 were on average half a level below the national standard for eleven year olds; in 1998 the same pupils were on average a quarter level below the standard for fourteen year olds. High attainers are not challenged to speed up their progress by independent, personal study. Low and middle attainers make satisfactory rather than good progress because they encounter a restricted range of learning opportunities and a limited range of English texts. Pupils have insufficient teaching in how to comprehend and write information texts such as reports, instructions, explanations and arguments. They are not systematically taught how spelling and grammar systems operate in order that they learn how to spell and write more accurately or extend their vocabulary. Boys fail to make good progress because they have insufficient opportunities to study non-fiction or undertake practical activities of the kind they prefer. All pupils fail to accelerate progress as independent readers with an enthusiasm for books because the school lacks sufficient texts by which to entice reluctant readers.

132. At Key Stage 4 pupils make satisfactory progress because they are well tutored to meet examination requirements. Boys, however, make slower progress than girls because they do not cope well with a course that has a sizeable literature component. On occasion, however, high attainers show just what they can achieve. In a good lesson Year 11 pupils questioned fellow pupils in role as characters from 'Lord of the Flies' with enthusiasm and good humour, and thereby showed a detailed knowledge and understanding of the text and its themes.

133. At both key stages pupils with special educational needs make good progress because their needs are analysed and appropriate targets set them as individuals.

134. Pupils are interested in their work, and motivated to improve and this has a positive impact on their progress. Class behaviour is good. All, including low attaining pupils, sustain concentration on a book for up to half an hour. They treat books properly, even though some have been in use for a long time, but sometimes allow their folders to become scruffy. Pupils are almost always courteous to staff. They value each other's contribution to a lesson, often by a round of applause when other pupils have made a presentation. Through a study of literature they acquire a sympathetic understanding of other people's beliefs and dilemmas. Although English makes a contribution to pupils' spiritual development, this happens by chance and there is no planned provision. English does not help pupils to understand cultures other than their own.

135. Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is at least satisfactory in all lessons and good in about a third of these. Specialist teachers know their subject and how to present it; they manage pupils well and maintain sound discipline; they set homework regularly; their planning meets requirements. Pupils of differing attainment are given individual support to enable them to complete their tasks. There are, however, some weaknesses. Classroom methods lack variety. The pace of some lessons is too slow because pupils are not given enough variety of activities and not set clear targets. In whole class question and answer sessions teachers talk too much and pupils not enough. In some lessons, at both key stages, the highest attainers are not sufficiently challenged. A series of assessment tasks is in place, but performance is not linked to National Curriculum levels. Targets for improvement are not specific or followed through.

136. Teacher assessment for GCSE and Key Stage 3 tests is thorough and properly moderated. It is difficult to see value in the separate skills lessons because they only incidentally affect teaching of writing in other lessons. The separate private reading lessons are not good value because the teaching focus is unclear and the lessons often lack pace.

137. Leadership is sound overall but there are some weaknesses. The head of department is a respected source of support. However, he does not intervene regularly in order to comment on the quality of colleagues' planning, teaching or assessment. There is a recently adopted development plan which covers many issues but is too vague. The department has not completed sufficient analysis of Key Stage 3 tests or GCSE results in order to plan what has to be changed in the curriculum to raise pupils' attainment.

138. The department regularly enlarges pupils' experience by taking them to see plays at a number of theatres in the area.

139. Since the last report the department has increased the percentage of sound teaching. It has begun to set down in its units specific learning objectives and linked them to assessment, but has not until recently made clear in its development planning what the expected outcomes should be to show that planning has been successful.

### ***Literacy across the curriculum***

140. The school has not published any advice on literacy or oracy across the curriculum. Pupils speak clearly and coherently; the majority read with understanding and sometimes with expression; most pupils write legibly in order to complete a record of their learning, some take care with presentation, but many are careless with spelling. In some subjects pupils' progress as readers is impeded because they only read worksheets and do not research topics from a text book. An exception is the opportunity to study sources in history. In some subjects pupils'

progress as writers is impeded because they only complete worksheets or note what the teacher said. With the exception of history and geography, pupils do not complete extended writing as part of an investigation.

## Mathematics

141. At the end of Key Stage 3 standards of attainment are average. In 1997 the percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 and above in National Curriculum assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 was slightly above the national average. In 1998 the percentage had again risen slightly. The figures for higher attaining pupils at Level 6 and above are slightly below the national figure. The department compares better with similar schools: the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 or above is higher than in similar schools, and the proportion reaching Level 6 and above is in line. The average grade has risen gradually over the last three years although there are few pupils reaching the very highest levels. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 correspond closely to test results at all levels. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls and attainment in lessons largely supports the test results on levels of attainment.

142. By the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils have sound understanding of probability and simple statistics and basic numeracy. They have sound understanding of shape and space; higher attainers can apply the theorem of Pythagoras to problems and lower attainers can use simple translations and rotations correctly.

143. At the end of Key Stage 4 standards of attainment are average. There was a good rise in terms of A\* to C grades in the 1997 GCSE examinations with a slightly higher percentage than nationally gaining these grades. In 1998 however the figure at this level fell significantly although the percentage achieving grades A\* to G has continued to rise. Pupils achieve broadly similar results in GCSE mathematics compared to their other subjects. Achievement in lessons does not reflect the 1998 GCSE results as the higher attainers, particularly in Year 10, are achieving well. They are developing good problem solving skills in algebra and are well motivated. There has been little difference between the performance of boys and girls over the last three years with their average points score being almost identical. By the end of Key Stage 4 most pupils have a sound grasp of the idea of algebra and can describe expressions graphically. They can use trigonometry and have good knowledge of the geometry of plane figures. Their numeracy is sound and they can work confidently with decimal fractions and powers.

144. Progress in Key Stage 3 is good, because in spite of staff absences that affect the day-to-day quality of individual lessons, teaching overall is good and departmental planning is supportive. From an entry level of below average attainment as measured by national tests, the majority of pupils make better progress than could be expected. Particularly at upper levels of attainment, teachers have high expectations of their pupils, the pace of lessons is good and the pupils respond accordingly. A few pupils in the middle sets do not make progress as expected because of their unwillingness to take some responsibility for their own learning.

145. In Key Stage 4 progress is satisfactory. Good progress is made by higher attaining pupils in Year 10 but some in Year 11 could make better progress if they contributed more to lessons. They are over-dependent on the teacher and are slow in developing problem-solving skills. Pupils in average and lower attaining groups generally make the progress expected of them although non-specialist staff do not always demand the highest standards. In both key stages, pupils with special educational needs and those in some lower sets would make better progress if recent long term staff absences had not enforced the use of non-specialist staff.

146. The progress of pupils with statements of special educational need is satisfactory overall. They make good progress in lessons which are supported by learning assistants. When support is not available, in approximately one third of lessons, their progress is much less marked.

147. In both key stages the attitude of pupils is largely good. The majority show enthusiasm for the subject and sustain concentration in lessons of over an hour's duration. Most behaviour is good but there are small groups in both key stages, but particularly in Year 11, who are reluctant to work independently. There is little evidence of paired or group work in mathematics but most pupils are able to discuss their work with each other in a mature and sensible manner. There are generally good relationships between pupils and each other and between pupils and teachers. There is no planned attempt to provide spiritual or cultural development through mathematics, but the subject makes a contribution to pupils' wider cultural knowledge and to their understanding of the place of mathematics in such topics as Fibonacci series and the structure of sea shells.

148. Teaching overall is good. Most teaching is at least satisfactory, with about half being good or very good. The better teaching is seen in lessons taught by specialist teachers. Four fifths of lessons at Key Stage 4 are good; there is a wider spread at Key Stage 3. Teachers possess good subject knowledge and understanding, and lessons are well prepared. Specialist teachers have high expectations of pupils of all levels of attainment, but non-specialists do not demand enough, particularly of high attainers. Work for lower attainers is usually appropriate and enables them to make satisfactory progress.

149. The pace of most lessons is good but there are occasions when the introduction of a new activity would provide a welcome stimulus. All pupils need to be kept on task and the statement of lesson objectives during some part of the lesson would help pupils to keep their thoughts focused. Homework is a strength of the department. It is set and marked regularly and treated with appropriate rigour. Assessment procedures are also good with constant monitoring of pupils' progress contributing to their development. Teachers make effective use of a good range of new textbooks.

150. The curriculum is broad and balanced with good schemes of work, particularly at Key Stage 3. A review of the curriculum at Key Stage 4 is in hand. A significant weakness at present is the almost total lack of the use of information and communication technology. The quality of learning for all pupils is being adversely affected by this omission. The department is well led by an experienced teacher but staffing problems are a serious cause for concern for a department committed to raising standards. Monitoring and evaluation of the department are carried out effectively by the head of department, but there is little input from the senior management team.

151. There has been good progress since the last inspection with standards of attainment continuing to rise at both key stages. The teaching now places greater emphasis on giving pupils opportunities to use and apply what they learn in mathematics. There has also been a higher concentration on numeracy and mental arithmetic. More pupils, particularly at Key Stage 4, are now able to apply previous learning to new situations and there is a more structured process for checking the progress of pupils.

### ***Numeracy across the curriculum***

152. Basic numeracy across both key stages is satisfactory. Greater attention is now being paid through the 'numeracy across the curriculum' policy that is coming into operation. Within the mathematics department most staff are developing in pupils an awareness of the need for mental arithmetic although there is still work to be done. In other subjects there are encouraging signs that staff are fostering numeracy. Pupils draw and interpret graphs in religious education, science, physical education and geography. Particularly good graphical work is seen in design and technology where graphics are generated on a computer. These latter subjects also make contributions through accurate measurement, scale drawing and the use of spreadsheets and data base work. Humanities lessons include effective analysis of

primary and secondary statistical data while in physics pupils are able accurately to calculate wavelengths and measure lengths of springs.



## Science

153. Overall attainment in science is below the national average at the end of Key Stage 3 and well below the average for pupils in similar schools. This is confirmed by teacher assessments and national tests. Boys' results are better than those for girls. Results of Key Stage 3 tests have shown a steady rise over the last three years. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils recognise the need for a fair test in their practical work, are able to measure accurately and can transfer results to a graph. Pupils can also suggest ways to improve their experiments to give them greater accuracy. The ability to design and undertake their own experiments and to predict outcomes is less well developed. Pupils are gaining knowledge and an understanding of a wide range of science. For example they learn the parts of the human eye and how they help us see. By studying chemical pollution pupils understand how acid rain is formed and why it harms the environment. Pupils understand parallel and series circuits, switches, current flow and can use this information to plan electrical circuits.

154. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is average overall. The proportion of pupils gaining grade A\* to C at GCSE is just below national expectations. This has risen over the last few years although the 1998 results were behind those of 1997. Attainment is in line with national expectations in four-fifths of lessons and well below in the remainder. By the end of the key stage pupils' practical skills are further developed and they have a sound basic knowledge of what required in biology, chemistry and physics. For example pupils can explain how a cell's structure is related to its function. Pupils can identify different parts of a sound wave and can predict the wave length of different sounds. In chemistry pupils understand the different states of matter and how they are related to the energy level of particles. There is no difference overall in pupils' attainment in the different areas of the science curriculum. Boys outperform girls. Pupils achieve slightly better results in GCSE science compared to their other subjects.

155. Overall, progress in science is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. During Key Stage 3 low attaining pupils make good progress because work sheets are challenging. Average attaining pupils make satisfactory progress but work in many mixed ability classes does not stretch high attaining pupils who do not make as much progress as they should. The department has too few strategies to speed up progress during Key Stage 3. For example, pupils have too few opportunities to research scientific information in books or to compare their ideas with those of fellow pupils. During Key Stage 4 progress is good because work in ability sets is at a suitable level for all, including the high attaining pupils. Again there are too few opportunities for all pupils to research from books. Pupils with special educational needs make at least satisfactory, and often good, progress at both key stages.

156. Pupils' attitude to learning in science is satisfactory in four out of five lessons and good or very good in over half. Pupils are interested in science and behaviour is good. Pupils work well together, for example, in one practical lesson pupils ensured that everyone in the group took turns to take measurements from the experiment. Relationships with teachers are also good. Pupils are keen to answer questions and many are prepared to ask questions too, to clarify or develop a point. Noisy and inattentive behaviour was seen in the poor lessons where the teacher had not prepared enough suitable work. Pupils are given some opportunity to reflect on the wonders of science. For example they were asked to compare the length of a sperm with the distance it has to swim.

157. At the time of the inspection teaching was unsatisfactory overall at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. Teaching is satisfactory or better in three quarters of lessons. In half of lessons teaching is good or very good. In the remainder it is unsatisfactory or poor. This is in part due to temporary arrangements for staffing and a significant proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is not a regular feature of the department. There is a wider range of teaching quality in Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4. In Key Stage 3 there is more poor or

unsatisfactory teaching, but also more good and very good teaching. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is good and discussions are a feature of science teaching with questions skilfully phrased to reinforce and extend learning. In the best lessons at both key stages, teachers have high expectations of their pupils. Lessons include other activities: video, experiments, short tests and written work but in mixed ability classes separate tasks for pupils of different abilities are unusual and this hinders the progress of high attaining pupils. When work is set that allows pupils to work at an appropriate pace for their ability, and provides sufficient challenge for all, progress is good. However, teachers rely too much on work sheets that require answers too short or simple to stretch all but the lower attaining pupils. In poor or unsatisfactory lessons the work is too easy, pupils lose interest, and teachers do not make effective use of the school's behaviour policy. Science homework is regularly set and is used to reinforce and extend class work.

158.The requirements of the National Curriculum are met in science. The science scheme of work at Key Stage 3 is undergoing a review; the scheme of work has insufficient strategies to manage the learning of pupils of differing abilities and it does not sufficiently build on pupils' previous experience and skills in science to increase progress. At Key Stage 4 the scheme of work does meet every pupil's needs.

159.Useful links are being developed with local industry to broaden pupils' experience and teachers make good use of the local environment for field studies.

160.The department is led by the acting head of department who has been in post for a term. The organisation and administration of the department is good but some aspects of leadership are unsatisfactory. Although the use of assessment is developing and end of unit tests provide information on pupils' attainment, marks are not sufficiently analysed to follow pupils' progress and to show where teaching is having an impact on class progress. At Key Stage 4 pupils are aware of their individual attainment and progress through the innovative "Science News". However this news sheet is not sufficiently focused to show pupils how they can improve and meet their full potential. Pupils' folders contain much unmarked work. The head of department monitors the work of the department, but it is not clear what action follows the monitoring, to improve, for example, the quality of marking. Teachers' comments in folders are supportive but do not always show how a pupil can improve.

161.The science department has clear departmental policies. Health and safety are well managed. Laboratories are clean and tidy with many bright displays. There are sufficient books, apparatus and equipment for science teaching. The laboratory technician gives sterling support to the teaching staff, preparing materials and assisting with practical work. The department has acted on all the issues raised in the last report but there is still scope for providing more opportunities for extended writing.

## **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

### **Art**

162.At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is usually in line with national averages, although in one quarter of the lessons observed, it is below. The majority of pupils can draw from observation, an improvement since the last report, but skills in painting and printmaking are under-developed. Three-dimensional skills include papier-mâché and ceramic modelling. With support, pupils can modify their work. They have a basic knowledge of artistic vocabulary and of selected art movements; for example, pointillism and surrealism. Many can draw simple conclusions about their work. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is below national levels. Although pupils have a greater understanding of all the key elements, only a minority of high achievers become skilled at research and experimentation. There is an over emphasis on two-

dimensional work, usually pencil drawings. GCSE results in terms of A\* to C grades, have remained consistently below the national average since the last report. They peaked in 1997, at just below the national average, but they fell back in 1998. In 1997 all pupils achieved A\* to G grades. This is better than the national average. Pupils achieve broadly similar results in GCSE art compared to their other subjects.

163. Progress throughout Key Stage 3 is always satisfactory and occasionally good. Pupils of all levels of attainment improve their skills in observational drawing. They acquire skills in figure drawing and linear perspective and develop some insight into ceramic and papier-mâché model making. Pupils also develop some knowledge of art history. However, much of their practical work remains unfinished, and little information on art history is retained. At Key Stage 4 progress over time is unsatisfactory and depends too much on individual ability and self-motivation. Progress in individual lessons is satisfactory. Pupils consolidate practical skills in drawing and a minority develop individual style, sometimes reflecting influences from art history. Projects with modest objectives last for long periods of time, homework schedules fail to support learning, and extension work can sometimes become time filling exercises. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress at both key stages.

164. Behaviour is always satisfactory and sometimes good, particularly at Key Stage 4. Although there is a regular trickle of late comers to many lessons, pupils enjoy art. They are keen to answer questions and get involved in discussion. The majority of pupils remain involved with their work throughout the lesson. Pupils behave well in class. High attainers show initiative by developing their work outside classroom time. This is particularly noticeable at Key Stage 4 where, for example, projects in information and communication technology are explored on home computers. This is not widespread and the majority of all pupils remain heavily dependent on support from the teacher in lessons. The scheme of work outlines opportunities for spiritual and cultural development through art, but these are not put into effect and chances are frequently missed.

165. Teaching overall is sound but lacks rigour. Members of staff have a good understanding of the subject. They are skilled practitioners in class demonstrations and questioning sessions. Planning is usually sound, but lesson objectives are sometimes vague, and the pace of work lacks sufficient challenge to make best use of time. Even modest projects last half a term. Lesson content is only a pale reflection of the department's good scheme of work. Many of the most interesting activities are missing from classroom practice. All lessons run to the same format of telling pupils what to do and then visiting them individually to offer specific support. Instructions are occasionally supported by worksheets. Pupils are well managed. They know routines and adhere to them. Relationships are good, both between pupils and teachers. Standards of discipline are satisfactory and frequently good, especially with older pupils. Expectations of pupils, however, are inconsistent. Accuracy is asked for, but not always insisted upon. Opportunities to help pupils improve are missed because homework is irregularly set, and rarely marked. Sketchbooks are not well used and do not contribute to pupils' progress.

166. Leadership is unsatisfactory. The scheme of work is well written and presented, but it is not followed closely enough to achieve its potential. The absence of any formal meetings of the art staff means that structured planning is not apparent. This is having a negative effect on pupils' progress, particularly in Key Stage 4. There is no separate development plan distinct from the faculty plan, and this is not sufficiently closely related to practice in the art department. Much needs to be done to improve structure and practice.

167. There has been insufficient progress in addressing the weaknesses identified in the last report. There has been some improvement in developing observational skills in Key Stage 3, and three dimensional work, but information and communication technology is no longer a

feature of lessons. Art history is not making sufficient impact on pupils' learning, although the previous report commented favourably on this. The well presented documentation noted in the last report is still not having an impact on practice in the classroom.

## 172. Design and technology

168. Attainment in design and technology is average by the end of both key stages. The recent Key Stage 3 teacher assessment shows that most pupils attain between Levels 4 and 6, which broadly matches national figures, but no pupils at this school attain Level 7; this is lower than national averages. 1998 GCSE results showed significant differences between the various options and combined results are slightly lower than national results. In systems and control, the percentage of pupils gaining A\* to C grades was much higher than that expected nationally. Results in food and textiles were slightly above the national averages for grades A\* to C, but were significantly below in resistant materials. Boys usually perform worse than girls. The percentage of pupils gaining at least a G grade is similar to that expected nationally. Pupils achieve broadly similar results in GCSE design and technology compared to their other subjects.

169. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils analyse problems and most set about solving them sensibly. Research work is satisfactory but many pupils have difficulty in designing. They state what they intend making but not all can draw or explain clearly on paper. A few show inventiveness and ingenuity and produce good written work. Most pupils do their homework, but presentation is often poor, spoiled by folding the papers, scrappy drawings and untidy writing. In lessons, most pupils show good safe skills in handling tools and materials. Pupils mark and measure carefully. They show precision when soldering, accuracy using the jig saw and sander and awareness of line in machine sewing. In food, they know about consistency, temperature and time, but do not always work methodically.

170. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils have experienced the full range of materials and the tools to complete their projects. They spot where work needs improvement as most modules include making prototypes. Most keep themselves busy and interested. They work carefully and competently when handling equipment and materials. Many pupils' design drawings and writings are clear, but there are some who rush the theory and their portfolios are thin. Computer analysis of food and diet is weak, but many pupils are encouraged to use word processing for presentation of portfolios. Practical skills are sound to good; pupils in Year 11 are working well devising a variety of controlled circuits and casings, a range of timber products, food dishes to cater for dietary needs and clothing for various occasions.

171. Progress overall across both key stages is good. Pupils quickly move from learning about tools and how to hold and use them, to short practical tasks that build up skills, before moving to individual designing. Progress is rapid in Year 7 where pupils, who have few practical skills as they enter school, are now compiling a book about fabric printing and embellishment, making desk tidies, simple circuits and packaged fun foods. As they move to designing for themselves, many pupils are very dependent on the teacher as their basic knowledge is low. Throughout the school, most pupils, including the lower attaining pupils, make good progress in practical work but insufficient in theory. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall at both key stages. They make better progress with practical than written work. For all pupils, written work is undervalued: pupils do not have files or books, they do their class work and homework on single sheets that become lost or muddled, and their literacy skills are insufficient. Pupils make the greatest amount of progress in systems and control lessons. Year 7 pupils begin with making very simple circuits, such as traffic lights. By Year 11, pupils progress well to devising methods of controlling levers, temperature fluctuation and sounds, many with very sophisticated timed sequences. Most pupils gain good understanding of computer control.

172. The response to design and technology is mainly good at Key Stage 3 and mainly very good at Key Stage 4. A few pupils in Year 11 do not like the subject and make very little effort in lessons. Most pupils like making things, watching demonstrations and looking at examples,

but dislike theory. They listen to instruction, behave well in practical sessions and try hard. Most pupils work steadily throughout the lessons and store away their own work. Some pupils show good perseverance when working on their tasks, especially in control, even when the systems do not work as intended. Many pupils help each other willingly and show some interest in what others are doing. Pupils are confident when following specific instructions, but not always in making decisions. A few pupils become anxious when they have problems, but all are confident and polite when they ask for help.

173.The quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3 teaching is good or better in approximately two-thirds of lessons. In Key Stage 4 teaching in four out of five lessons is good. Teachers are enthusiastic about their specialisms and, by clear demonstrations, pass on good craft skills to the pupils. They have high expectations of all pupils and set challenging tasks, particularly in resistant materials. Planning is good, lessons usually begin with clear introductions and are conducted at a steady pace. One-to-one teaching is effective as pupils get specific help with their problems. Most teachers keep detailed notes about how each pupil is progressing and what level of attainment is expected. Teachers get on well with their pupils and treat them fairly. There is good support from the technician. There are weaknesses when teachers do not ensure all pupils understand what they have to do in the lessons, where pupils are kept waiting too long before they get individual attention and when there is insufficient challenge in the class work. Homework is given in most lessons, but some instructions are vague.

174.There is effective leadership and statutory requirements are met. There is equality of opportunity for all pupils. The scheme of work is in line with the requirements of the national curriculum, but the time allocation for the subject is low. As a result, there is insufficient time for theory and this is depressing standards. The department contributes well to the control element of information and communication technology. There are enough work rooms, but the workshops are dreary and lack colour and display. Dust extraction is inadequate. Some additional resources are necessary, such as good quality text books, work books and some wood-working tools.

175.The department has responded well to the comments made in the last inspection report. Teachers have attended training courses to bring them up to date with technological development. There is a new scheme of work, and modules are appropriate for the age and interest of the pupils. GCSE grades in design and technology fluctuate yearly, but now are better than in previous years in three out of the four material areas. There is now more modern equipment for computer control and information and communication technology . The textiles room is newly-refurbished and good displays make it a pleasant working environment.

## 180. **Drama**

176.Drama is provided for all pupils at Key Stage 3 and is offered as an option at Key Stage 4. Pupils quickly learn the essential disciplines of supportive listening and effective group work. They arrive at lessons with high expectations of enjoyment and are strongly motivated to learn. They make very good progress in the skills of planning, performance and evaluation. From the start, they begin to develop a strong awareness of audience and use technical language appropriately. In each year at Key Stage 3, standards of attainment are very good. At Key Stage 4, pupils build upon established strengths and reach good standards. They are capable of a high level of imaginative engagement in the situations they explore and become confident in improvisation. The quality of teaching is always at least very good and occasionally excellent. High levels of subject expertise and high expectations of pupils are evident. Results at GCSE were below national averages in 1998, mainly because good practical skills were not matched by satisfactory skills in written work. Drama makes an important contribution to pupils' spiritual development by enabling them to explore thoughts

and emotions in depth.

### 181. **Geography**

177. In Key Stage 3 pupils make good overall progress in relation to their attainment on entry to the school and attainment by the end of the key stage is average. By the end of Key Stage 3 many pupils know about location and make effective use of maps. They describe and give reasons for the similarities and differences between the places they are studying. Some understand how physical and human processes can change the features of these places. The teacher assessment shows attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 to be above the national average. To ensure accuracy in the end of Key Stage 3 assessment levels more work needs to be done to agree standards amongst the teachers.

178. In Key Stage 4 pupils continue their good rate of progress through rigorous coverage of the examination syllabus and achieve above average standards by the end of the key stage. The GCSE results for 1997 were above the national average for all schools with all candidates passing the examination. A good proportion of the pupils gained higher grades. The results for 1998 were not so good. Pupils achieve broadly similar results in GCSE geography compared to their other subjects. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils carry out detailed studies of places using information they have collected themselves. They know and understand how the lives of people are influenced by their surroundings and many have a good knowledge of geographical language. In both key stages pupils with special educational needs can usually explain their work orally but their written work is below the standard of other pupils.

179. In Key Stage 3 progress is good overall. There is satisfactory progress in mapping skills and in the effective use of an atlas to locate places studied. Pupils increase their skills in the use of evidence to answer geographical questions. Since the previous inspection resources are now well chosen to provide an appropriate level of challenge for all pupils. Those with learning difficulties make good progress with effective support from the teacher, and work well matched to their levels of attainment. In Key Stage 4 pupils continue their good rate of progress. Field work has helped them to take more responsibility for their learning and they appropriately extend their skills of analysing data to test geographical ideas. All pupils develop their range of technical language and this is helped by the key words that are on display in the geography class room. Pupils of all ages make good progress in the skills of numeracy, data handling and the processing of data with computers. At both key stages, in response to appropriate support, pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

180. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good in many lessons in both key stages. They are keen to answer questions and respond readily to the challenge of the work, often co-operating with others to share their ideas. They are confident when tackling new areas of work particularly when faced with the challenge of enquiry. Pupils with special educational needs respond well when they receive individual support and are set work well matched to their levels of attainment. Occasionally some pupils find it hard to concentrate but they rarely distract others. Pupils enjoy geography lessons and this is reflected in the number who continue their studies in the subject. Pupils develop their sense of wonder through the study of such physical phenomena as volcanoes and earthquakes. They also increase their knowledge of other cultures through the study of human geography.

181. Teaching is always at least good, and sometimes very good, at both key stages. Teachers have good subject knowledge, lessons are well planned and routines quickly established with high but realistic expectations for work and behaviour. Teachers have a good rapport with their pupils and in most lessons engage their interest with stimulating resources and well directed questioning. Clear instructions are given while at the same time pupils are encouraged to pursue their own ideas independently. In a few lessons pupils are not

sufficiently involved in their learning and a more imaginative teaching style is needed to engage their thoughts. In response to an issue in the previous report teachers have produced some excellent resources which are suitable for the needs of every pupil. There is still a need for the department to make more use of the library as a centre for independent learning. Assessment has improved since the last inspection: individual progress is more carefully monitored and pupils are involved in the evaluation of their own work to set targets for improvement.

182. Members of the department form a close knit team which is committed to continue to raise standards in geography.

#### 187. **History**

183. At the end of Key Stage 3 overall attainment is below average although pupils generally make good progress in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. The attainment is reflected by the National Curriculum teacher assessment. By the end of the key stage pupils know about the events, people and developments in the periods they have studied. They use sources of historical information to obtain this knowledge. They are less skilled in evaluating and analysing these sources and many explain their ideas better orally than in writing.

184. GCSE results for 1997 were below, but close to, the average for all schools. The results in 1998 were lower. Pupils achieve slightly better results in GCSE history compared to their other subjects. Attainment in lessons by the end of Key Stage 4 is average. Those who choose to study history to GCSE level continue to make good progress in lessons through regular practice in applying their knowledge in a variety of analytical tasks. The department has introduced a more suitable examination syllabus and better results are expected in the future.

185. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress throughout both key stages. The well planned schemes of work, which contain a good variety of teaching and learning styles such as role play and group discussion, ensure an increasing depth of knowledge and understanding. Since the previous inspection good work has been done to enable pupils to write about history with greater accuracy and confidence. Some pupils in Key Stage 4 still have difficulty expressing clear arguments in writing. The teachers have designed booklets and work sheets that are suitable for all pupils' needs and which help those with special educational needs to make good progress. The regular setting of homework and the helpful marking of written work also contribute to the good progress pupils make, as does the chance they have to set targets for improvement. The teachers have attended training courses in the use of information and communication technology. This is now increasingly being used in history to enhance pupils' learning. The department is aware that this is an area for further improvement.

186. Pupils are well behaved and willing to learn. They find the subject interesting and are actively involved with the historical information on which they are working. They are keen to answer questions and listen attentively to their teachers and to one another in class discussions. Pupils work well together and many handle opportunities for independent work effectively. They settle down to written work promptly and this allows teachers to support those who have learning difficulties or special educational needs. Although there has been low uptake for GCSE history in recent years most pupils enjoy their lessons and this year the figure has improved. History lessons provide pupils with well used opportunities to consider other faiths and cultures and to discuss moral issues, such as the treatment of Native Americans and slavery. Pupils' understanding and enjoyment of history is enhanced by field work and outside visits.

187. Teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. The two teachers are



experienced and have good subject knowledge. They work well together as a team and regularly share good practice. However, to ensure accuracy in the Key Stage 3 assessments, more work needs to be done to agree standards. The quality of teaching is underpinned by good lesson planning, an imaginative variety of teaching strategies and brisk use of time so that pupils are moved on quickly from one activity to another. Clear targets are set at the beginning of each lesson and work is very effectively marked so that pupils know to what extent a target is met. There are high but realistic expectations for pupils of different levels of attainment. Assessment has improved since the previous inspection. There is now a monitoring system which identifies and sets targets for each pupil. Appropriate individual support, a good range of resources and successful strategies challenge the higher attainers yet support the lower attainers and those with special educational needs.

188. Although levels of attainment still require improvement, the dedication and hard work of the teacher with responsibility for history is having a positive impact on standards.

### **193. Information and communication technology**

189. Attainment in information and communication technology is average at the end of Key Stage 3. The recent teacher assessments at this school show that, at the end of the key stage, more pupils attained levels 5 and 6 than in similar schools. No pupils gained Level 7 although some pupils attain Level 7 in other schools. External examination courses in the subject have just begun in Year 10 and therefore there is no assessment of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 this year.

190. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils can switch on the computers, enter passwords and call up programs. They know how to select files and recall previously stored work. They edit, save and print their work with the minimum of assistance. Many pupils are slow in typing as they search for the right keys and some only use one or two fingers. Most pupils can control, move and click the mouse satisfactorily. Many pupils are competent at word processing and use desk top publishing programs to present words and pictures in different forms such as newsletters and posters. They use programs that draw pictures or graphs and insert information from compact discs into their working files. Work is particularly good on handling data: pupils use existing databases, add to them and conduct simple sorting and selecting exercises. Pupils in Year 9 worked well on a leisure time survey and discovered much information about teenage activities and the relationship between inactivity, boredom, and eating habits.

191. The attainment of pupils currently in Year 10 who have opted to take the GCSE course in information and communication technology is average. They know how to use most of the programs in school and are confident in using the menus and short cuts. Most pupils have sound skills in word processing as they mix text and graphics effectively. Higher attaining pupils can see how to edit their work to present it better. They understand what spreadsheets can do, but are less sure when analysing results. Database work is particularly well understood. Many pupils discover how to do complex searching. The higher attaining pupils create their own data files, name records and fields and test the systems for success. Pupils' work files are tidy, showing a good amount of work. Many pupils who take the systems and control option of the design and technology course attain highly. They understand the workings of the control boxes and can sequence movements successfully.

192. Most pupils who do not have formal lessons in information and communication technology at Key Stage 4 have some experiences in using the computer for writing. Lack of formal teaching prevents most of these pupils attaining highly and their attainment by the end of the key stage is below average.

193. In lessons, progress in this subject is very good at both key stages. Pupils have all had to learn very quickly how to use the new machines, access programs and manage the filing system. Pupils have transferred their skills on the old system and have built on to these by working with the new one. From a very limited knowledge base of working with words, pupils now use a wide range of programs that handle text, picture and number. They use more sophisticated programs as they move through the school. Different tasks are available in lessons, which suit the full range of ability found in each group. The lower attaining pupils work at their own speed and depth and the higher attainers select more demanding tasks that allow them to gain higher levels. By stepping the work in this way, the lower attaining pupils gain confidence and the higher attainers remain interested and challenged. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress at both key stages but their keyboarding skills are slower so they cover less work.

194. Most pupils have very good attitudes to information and communication technology. They listen to instructions, settle to work quickly and try hard. Pupils enjoy working with the support sheets and rise to the challenge offered. Behaviour is good. Pupils are pleased to work with new equipment and are careful with it. Pupils know not to tamper with passwords and files and know about the possible problems with computer corruption. Most pupils work alone at their own machine, but show interest in what others are doing. A few of the more confident and capable pupils help each other willingly. Pupils often check results with each other for reassurance. Most pupils are keen to finish work in class and they accept homework cheerfully. Some pupils, especially the higher attainers, are creating good work files.

195. The quality of teaching is very good at both key stages. The teacher is competent, sets high standards, plans well and ensures that the modules of work are suitably challenging for pupils' full ability range. Lessons start well with clear introductions and explanations. Pupils have sufficient time to complete their tasks and lessons end with a thorough evaluation of results. During lessons, most pupils gain good one-to-one instruction. Relationships are good, teaching is sensitive to the needs of all pupils and all pupils are treated equally. Marking is very good, as all pieces of work have comments and suggestions for improvement, leaving the pupils in no doubt about effort and attainment.

196. Leadership is very good. The new subject coordinator has begun a series of training sessions to help colleagues become familiar with the equipment. There has been an attempt to find out staff competence and confidence and where and to what extent subject teachers use information and communication technology. Currently, information and communication technology is not planned well enough across the whole curriculum. As a result, many pupils in Key Stage 4 are not receiving their entitlement. Many pupils have computers at home and develop skills outside school, but there are not enough opportunities in all subjects for all pupils to get similar competence. There is good use of the equipment in design and technology and careers departments.

197. There has been a good response to the issues raised in the last inspection report. The new leader is effective and has devised a purposeful development plan. The new exciting scheme of work ensures appropriate challenge for the pupils and Key Stage 4 pupils can now take GCSE. A pleasant computer room with modern equipment and a video conferencing suite are available to all departments. There has been generous funding for accommodation and equipment, but the lack of a technician remains a serious drawback.

## 202. **Media studies**

198. The subject is offered as an option at Key Stage 4 and attainment is average. In 1998, almost half the pupils gained grades A\* to C at GCSE. In lessons observed, pupils demonstrated interest in advertising and science fiction films and had good recall of earlier

work. In Year 11 a minority of pupils make perceptive observations and speak confidently using appropriate technical language. In both years, pupils are making sound progress in understanding the key concepts of the main medium. Frequent errors reduce the effectiveness of written work of some Year 10 pupils. Lessons are well prepared and conducted at a brisk pace.

### **203. Modern foreign languages**

199. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils achieve standards below national averages in German and French. The percentage of pupils gaining A\* to C grades in the full GCSE courses is well below national averages in both languages. The percentage of pupils gaining A\* to G grades is below national averages. However the percentage of the cohort entered for examination is very high for German. In German girls achieve better than boys. There has been a steady improvement in GCSE results in German since the last inspection.

200. By the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is average in both languages. Teacher assessments support this judgement. Most pupils can participate in short dialogues asking for and giving information about themselves and others, express simple opinions and describe events in the present, using set phrases and substituting words to change meaning. Pupils are confident in speaking and listening and most use the language effectively in real situations. They identify the main points from extracts of speech containing familiar language with some repetition. Higher attaining pupils identify detail with little need for repetition, responding to questions with little hesitation and many deduce the meaning of unfamiliar language in context. These pupils have a good understanding of the way the languages work and are beginning to adapt it to suit their own needs. Most write fairly accurately and construct simple sentences, many writing at length on a variety of topics. Most pick out detail from written texts containing familiar language. Lower and average attaining pupils label accurately and match print with meaning. Higher and average attaining pupils are beginning to identify and apply patterns in the language successfully.

201. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils achieve standards below national averages in French and German. Pupils achieve lower results in GCSE French and German compared to their other subjects. They participate in dialogues but average and lower attaining pupils are dependent upon written prompts to achieve this. They identify detail from speech at near normal speed but many need much repetition and guidance. Most identify the main points from texts containing familiar language and higher attaining pupils write at length describing events in the past, present and future. However the majority of pupils achieve only standards in line with grades D-G in GCSE in both languages.

202. Pupils make good progress overall in lessons during Key Stage 3, consolidating previously learned language, acquiring new vocabulary and structures and gaining in confidence and competence in listening. The progress of higher attaining pupils is good because of the high expectations of their teachers and the opportunities they are given to put their skills to the test particularly in speaking and listening. Progress in lessons Key Stage 4 is satisfactory overall but pupils are not encouraged to develop the independence needed to perform well in examinations. Listening skills are well developed but progress slows where the needs of groups of differing ability are not adequately addressed or where lower attaining pupils are not given an appropriate challenge in speaking and listening tasks. Average and higher attaining pupils make good progress in developing their understanding of the way the languages work because they are frequently encouraged to identify and apply patterns in the languages. At both key stages, pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress in speaking and listening but their progress is slow in reading and writing since resources and activities provided are often not sufficiently adapted to meet their needs.

203. Pupils are usually well behaved and co-operative, they listen attentively and when asked to work in pairs and small groups they do so productively and concentrate on tasks set. They have good relationships with their teachers but a small number lose interest and concentration during lengthy teacher-led activities or where there is insufficient challenge. There is little evidence of independent learning or of pupils taking responsibility for their own learning and progress.

204. The quality of teaching overall is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. Teachers' command of the languages they teach is good and its use is well matched to pupils' capabilities: this is effective in developing listening skills. Control and discipline are good and teachers have good relationships with their pupils. They monitor pupils' progress during lessons and frequently give encouraging and helpful feedback and support to individuals. They make good use of resources, particularly flashcards and the overhead projector, to clarify meaning, focus attention and elicit oral contributions. Pupils are encouraged to practise informally in small groups and to use the language in real situations to give or receive information, for example in conducting surveys and reporting back findings. However, the dominance of teacher-led activities in some lessons slows the pace and decreases opportunities for pupils to participate. Pupils are not always given sufficient opportunity to use their initiative or put their skills to the test. Opportunities are missed to allow pupils to put the language they have learned to the test in real situations. There is some inappropriate emphasis on reading and writing for lower attainers and inadequate adaptation of resources for these skills to meet the needs of lower attainers and pupils with special needs.

205. Schemes of work for French and German give content but lack detail as to how content is to be approached by pupils of differing ability within teaching groups. Assessment methods are very good but data are not used effectively to meet the needs of all pupils or to enable pupils to progress from one level of attainment to the next.

206. Reports to parents fail to provide sufficient detailed information about pupils' achievement or progress in the subject. The department works well as a team sharing ideas and planning together but long term absence is having an adverse effect upon standards achieved by some pupils. One room is at a distance from the languages area making communication, monitoring and consistency difficult. Noise from rooms above affects the quality of speaking and listening activities provided. There are insufficient text books and some course materials need considerable adaptation and supplementation to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. This is having a negative effect on progress and attainment.

207. Since the last report there has been a steady improvement in examination results in German at GCSE but this has been hampered by long term absence of staff. Speaking and listening skills have improved because of the nature of activities provided in lessons. Some activities still lack appropriate challenge and the department still needs to give close attention to how teachers can ensure that all pupils make progress through the levels of attainment.

## 212. **Music**

208. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below average. In the composing and performing elements of the curriculum, attainment by the majority of pupils is of variable quality, lacking refinement and imagination. Their playing and singing, although quite confident, lack sensitivity. Music that they have listened to has failed to make a lasting impression in terms of their culture and as a stimulus for their own compositions. These attainment levels represent a fall in standards since the last inspection and from the teacher assessments for 1998, which compare favourably with national figures. Two thirds of pupils were judged to be achieving or were above the expectations compared; this is slightly higher than the national figure. These inconsistencies in attainment may be attributable to the differing experiences of the present

Year 9 pupils, including a change in teaching personnel and style. The picture through the rest of the key stage is better. Year 8 pupils compose variations, which exploit an interesting range of compositional techniques, and perform them on keyboards and the piano, with some confidence and control. They make a good effort to listen to each other when they play together.

209. At Key Stage 4, all pupils continue to achieve GCSE passes with grades A\* to G. The percentage of pupils attaining grades A\* to C is well above the national average for two out of the last three years, but low numbers taking the examination (average of 10) make comparisons unreliable. Pupils achieve better results in GCSE music compared to their other subjects. Levels of attainment in the present Years 10 and 11 are above average for the majority, and suggest that this level of success will continue. Compositions are imaginative and interesting and performances secure and stylish. Listening skills however are less well developed through lack of consistent practice. Low numbers, and the most able musicians opting for the subject, account for the differences in attainment between GCSE and Key Stage 3.

210. At Key Stage 3 progress is unsatisfactory overall. Pupils of average ability in Year 8 make satisfactory and good progress with the acquisition and consolidation of musical skills. Some pupils of lower ability also make determined progress, persevering to perfect their pieces within a lesson. However the majority of Year 9 pupils make very little progress within the lesson, and lack of challenge at this stage means that compositional skills particularly are deteriorating. Those with special educational needs make good progress with performance skills within a lesson, but find this more difficult to sustain over a period of time. High achievers at both key stages make good progress only when they are well motivated and challenged by the standard of work given.

211. Most pupils show some interest in aspects of their work, particularly when they are playing keyboards. However many Year 9 pupils are too willing to accept second rate standards particularly in composition, and will use existing tunes rather than persevere with compositions of their own. Many find it difficult to sustain concentration throughout a lesson. They behave well in class in Years 7 and 8 generally, though behaviour is less than satisfactory in Year 9 classes, and the school's behaviour policy is not used to correct this. The majority of pupils are courteous to and show respect for each other, and they collaborate well in small groups. They use equipment carefully. Music makes a contribution to pupils' knowledge of other cultures, but very little to their spiritual development. Progress in GCSE classes at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory overall, but would be better if listening skills were practised more regularly.

212. At Key Stage 3 half the teaching is unsatisfactory, particularly in Year 9, where little worthwhile is achieved when the classes are taught as a whole. More is achieved when they work in small groups, but even so these pupils lack challenges and clear time targets for completing their work. In Years 7 and 8, teaching is better, and sometimes good, particularly when the lesson has a sharp focus and pupils are presented with clear objectives. The teachers have good knowledge and skills in their subject and use all equipment well, including the computers. They use a range of teaching styles and set homework when it is appropriate to do so. A strength is that they know and support individual pupils well, particularly those with special educational needs. Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 4.

213. The written music curriculum is good, and includes exciting opportunities for Year 9 pupils to devise their own projects at the end of Key Stage 3. Some revision of the curriculum is in progress at present, which will result in a beneficial approach. Written procedures for assessment are also good. However, in practice, pupils are not made aware of their strengths and weaknesses. There is little opportunity for them to assess themselves, except in Year 10, and they are unfamiliar with what is necessary to achieve a good standard particularly at Key Stage 3. Discussions of this in class are missing, and useful written feedback is rare. Staff and small numbers of pupils show commitment to the choir and orchestra, both of which perform regularly in the school and in the wider community.

214. Leadership is unsatisfactory. There is no clear direction or cohesion in the subject. Overall there has been a deterioration in music since the last inspection. Enthusiasm has waned and

music no longer makes a strong contribution to pupils' cultural life.

219.

### **Physical education**

215. Pupils' attainment at the end of both key stages is average. This is a similar picture to the last inspection. However a significant minority of pupils, around one in ten, achieve more highly than this and benefit from the opportunities the school provides for extra-curricular sporting competition. Teachers' assessments of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 for 1998 match the overall judgement on attainment. There are no significant differences between the attainment of girls and boys. The percentage of pupils gaining A\* - C grades in the 1998 GCSE examination has gone down since the previous year when it was above the national average. Over the past three years the percentage of pupils gaining A\* - C grades has fluctuated between below and above average and the difference between girls' and boys' attainment shows no overall pattern. Over the past two years all pupils entered for the examination gained a grade and this achievement is better than average. Pupils achieve broadly similar results in GCSE physical education compared to their other subjects.

216. At the end of Key Stage 3 pupils have sufficiently well developed skills, knowledge of rules and understanding of tactics to enable them to take part in full or modified games of basketball, volleyball, hockey and badminton. Achievement in badminton for many pupils is above average. Pupils know how to warm up but seldom take responsibility for this part of the lesson. Pupils are less confident evaluating each others' performance and talking about their work. At the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' achievements in basketball and soccer are average and in badminton they achieve more highly. Coaching, officiating and evaluation skills are weaker and not all pupils have a secure knowledge of the principles used to prepare an exercise programme. Pupils' attainment in GCSE lessons overall is average. Around half of pupils achieve more highly in practical work, but attainment in theory is not as good and this depresses the overall results at GCSE.

217. The progress made by all pupils, regardless of gender, ability or ethnicity, in Key Stage 3 is good. The overall progress of all pupils in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory and in nearly half of the lessons progress is good. In Key Stage 3 pupils respond well to the high expectations of teachers, challenging activities and a good pace to lessons and consequently they improve their performance across a range of games. The way the curriculum is planned allows plenty of time for each game and opportunity for pupils to make good progress. There are good examples of teachers planning specific targets to help pupils with special educational needs make good progress at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils make less progress in improving evaluation skills because there are few opportunities to do this planned by teachers. Pupils who are unable to take an active part in lessons make slower progress because teachers do not involve them fully.

218. Progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 4. In response to challenging activities and the high expectations of teachers, pupils make steady improvements to practical performance in National Curriculum lessons. They make less progress in improving coaching, officiating and evaluation skills because these activities are not specifically planned into the programme. Also there is less than average time in which to teach physical education to all pupils in Key Stage 4. Lower attaining pupils make progress when they are supported directly by the teacher. Sometimes higher attaining pupils are held back when teachers fail to set them more challenging activities. Overall pupils make good progress in GCSE physical education. In 1998 nearly half of the pupils achieved more highly than their predicted grades based on tests taken earlier in the school. Pupils make good progress in practical activities. Progress in theory is more erratic. Useful handout material, regular homework and clear explanations in lessons generally support pupils' progress. However lower attaining pupils make slower progress

where written resources do not match their needs. Higher attaining pupils are seldom challenged by extension tasks or independent learning.

219. The attitudes of pupils to learning are good in both Key Stages 3 and 4. GCSE physical education is a popular option and is taken by more boys than girls. The vast majority of pupils enjoy lessons and want to improve. There are few non-participant pupils except for groups of boys in Year 11. Pupils concentrate well, work hard and sustain good levels of physical activity. Pupils show plenty of interest in extra-curricular activities and around a third take part regularly. Behaviour is good and pupils are courteous and friendly to teachers and other adults. Girls and boys, including pupils of different ethnic backgrounds, get on well with each other. They work collaboratively in pairs and groups during practices and in teams although pupils are less confident in talking to each other about performance. Pupils look after equipment and are quick to help to set it out and put it away.

220. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 is good and occasionally very good. In Key Stage 4 the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and good in nearly half the lessons. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. The high quality of teaching has been maintained since the last inspection. Features of teaching not referred to earlier include teachers' secure knowledge of the activities that enables them to give useful guidance. Clear planning is most effective when pupils know what the objectives for a lesson are and targets are set both by the teacher and sometimes by the pupils. Teachers give clear demonstrations and explanations and ask probing questions to help pupils work out correct techniques or strategies. Teachers match activities and equipment to suit the needs of most pupils in practical work. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Assessment of pupils is good. Teachers watch individuals and the class carefully and intervene where necessary to give guidance on how to improve. Marking of GCSE theory is regular and supportive. Where teaching could be better, teachers do not share assessment in GCSE practical work with pupils so they are not always clear what they need to do to improve.

221. The head of department manages the subject well and a committed staff offers a good range of extra-curricular activities despite the restrictions of the school day. The accommodation is extensive and provides good surroundings in which to work. In Years 8 and 9 those pupils who opt to take a second language, mainly girls, lose half their physical education lessons and have a less well balanced programme of games activities. As was noted in the previous inspection, games activities continue to dominate the curriculum. Although some dance is taught to boys in Year 7, girls continue to have more opportunities for creative and aesthetic experiences than boys.

## 226. **Religious education**

222. Attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is average as identified by the locally agreed syllabus. Most pupils are aware that for many people there is more to life than what can be seen and measured and that many people believe in the existence of a divine being. Pupils can communicate their own thoughts, actions and feelings, and channel these through class discussions and written answers to questions. Pupils' knowledge of the main features of Christianity is above average but their knowledge of the main features of other faiths is below average. Pupils know the connection between beliefs, values and actions and can reflect on the beliefs and values that shape their own lives and can compare them with others. Pupils' evaluative and investigative skills are underdeveloped.

223. Attainment of pupils at Key Stage 4 is in line with the expectations of the average as identified by the locally agreed syllabus. The small group of pupils that took the GCSE short course in 1998 achieved results that were significantly above the national average at A\* to C grades. Pupils achieve much better results in GCSE religious education compared to their



other subjects. Pupils knowledge of the main features of Christianity is average but their understanding of what it means to be a Muslim or a Sikh is below average. Pupils are able to reflect on their own beliefs and values and effectively compare them with those of others. They have a well-developed respect for the beliefs and values of others and a clear understanding of how beliefs affect actions. Pupils' evaluative skills are well-developed but their investigative skills remain below average.

224. Pupils make good progress in both key stages. They enter the school with knowledge and understanding of the main features of Christianity that is below average and well-below average knowledge of other faiths. During the course of Key Stage 3 and 4 both in lessons observed and in the scrutiny of work, the majority make good progress. However, a small number of high attaining pupils in Key Stage 3 are not making progress as quickly as they could because they are not given work to extend them sufficiently.

225. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory at both key stages because teachers are sensitive to their needs. There are a few classes, in Year 9 in particular, where the numbers and mixed-ability nature of the classes, combined with the complex language involved in the study of world faiths, means that a small number of pupils with special educational needs are making less progress than they should.

226. Pupils consistently add to their knowledge of Christianity and, to a lesser degree, of other major world faiths. Schemes of work are devised and focused so that pupils of all levels of attainment make equal progress. The keenness of pupils, their positive attitudes to the subject and the well-planned courses encourage pupils to increase their knowledge and understanding. They increasingly become aware of how beliefs affect actions and become more and more willing to listen to others and to evaluate their own beliefs and values and compare them with others. Progress is steady across all years for all except a very small number of high attainers for whom opportunities to be stretched in their thinking are limited by the nature of the courses which rely heavily on class discussion and collaborative learning. The use of drama, group work, video and artefacts ensures that pupils' attention is kept and that progress is sustained.

227. Pupils are highly motivated, keen to do well and very well-behaved. There are very good relationships between pupils and they work together well in group drama and when working on projects. They listen well to each other showing a high level of respect towards one another. They co-operate well and, when given the opportunity, show initiative and take responsibility.

228. Teaching at both key stages is good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. Teachers are sensitive to pupils' needs and lessons are well planned. Management of pupils is good. Assessment is used well and homework set is relevant to pupils and clearly explained. Teachers expect and receive good behaviour from pupils in both key stages. Expectations of attainment are higher at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. Clear values are conveyed to pupils and plenty of encouragement and praise is given. There is a lack of depth in subject knowledge with some non-specialist teachers and this leads to some misinformation being given to pupils. All teachers ensure that a significant contribution is made to the spiritual development of pupils.

229. The curriculum is well planned at Key Stage 3. The combination of religious education and personal and social education at Key Stage 4 leads to some confusion over how much religious education is being taught and the curriculum offered is not sufficiently identified with the agreed syllabus criteria to resolve this. About one third of lessons are taken by seven non-specialist teachers who use six different rooms. This leads to teachers being very reliant on pre-prepared booklets and makes resources difficult to use efficiently. The library provision for religious education is unsatisfactory. Despite this, the department is highly effective and this is

mainly due to the enthusiastic, dedicated and sensitive leadership.

230. All the issues from the previous inspection have been addressed by the school and hard work has ensured that the attainment of pupils is satisfactory and their progress good. The opportunity for pupils to do GCSE examinations now exists and a head of department has been appointed. Books and learning materials are now adequate but the use of seven non-specialist teachers taking around two thirds of lessons still needs to be reviewed.

### 235. **Sociology**

231. The subject is a popular option at Key Stage 4 but attainment is well below average. In 1998, all pupils gained grades A\* to G at GCSE, but the proportion gaining grades A\* to C was well below the national figure. In Year 10, most pupils find the work too difficult, particularly those with limited language skills, and only a minority are able to sustain their concentration throughout lessons so that progress is slow. Good progress was observed in a Year 11 class considering cultural differences. Pupils were interested in the basic concepts and some were able to present their ideas strongly and clearly. Half the teaching is good, but the remainder is unsatisfactory. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, lessons are well prepared but a significant number of pupils find the texts used too difficult to read. The teaching style is largely directive but also includes some skilful use of questions which encourage active participation.

## **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

### **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

232. The team comprised 13 inspectors who spent a total of 47 days in school. Inspectors observed a total of 164 lessons or parts of lessons. All teachers were seen teaching at least once and most were seen a number of times. In addition:

- Inspectors studied relevant documentation from the school before, during and after the inspection.
- Inspectors visited a number of registration periods and all assemblies in the inspection week.
- Inspectors looked in depth at the work of a representative sample of pupils in each year group and held discussions with these pupils about their work and experience of school life.
- Inspectors held a comprehensive range of discussions with teachers, governors and members of the wider community.
- A registered inspector and a member of the inspection team visited the school before the inspection and held a meeting attended by 18 parents. The registered inspector leading the inspection visited the school before the inspection and talked to teachers and governors.
- The governors distributed 718 questionnaires to parents; 173 were returned to the registered inspector. Of these, 24 contained additional comments. About one third expressed satisfaction with aspects of the school, the remainder raised a number of matters. Two parents felt that the way the school deals with bullying has improved but that some bullying still exists. Several were complimentary about the changes made by the new headteacher. A number of parents thought that pupils get insufficient homework, and several thought that their children were not being sufficiently challenged in their school work.
- Parents at the meeting were pleased with the standard of behaviour demanded by the school and by the standards achieved by their children in their work. They felt that the support and care the school gives to all pupils is very good, and they find the school very responsive to problems and suggestions.
- Views expressed by parents in the questionnaires, in additional written comments, and raised at the meeting were noted and fully considered during the inspection.

## 1. DATA AND INDICATORS

### Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y11	729	28	213	94

### Teachers and classes

#### Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y11)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	41.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.69

#### Education support staff (Y7 – Y11)

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked each week	185

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	77
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	25
	KS4	20

### Financial data

Financial year:	1997/1998
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	£
Total Income	1 575 603
Total Expenditure	1 619 136
Expenditure per pupil	2 118
Balance brought forward from previous year	78 702
Balance carried forward to next year	35 169

## PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	718
Number of questionnaires returned:	173

### Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	18	66	12	2	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	34	53	8	3	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	16	45	24	3	2
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	13	63	13	8	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	18	49	16	11	1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	20	64	11	3	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	25	60	9	3	1
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	18	55	7	16	3
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	18	54	18	6	1
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	14	50	23	8	1
My child(ren) like(s) school	28	52	13	3	2

N.B. Not all parents responded to all questions