

INSPECTION REPORT

CHERRY WILLINGHAM COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Lincoln

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Unique reference number: 120654

Head teacher: Mr D S Mills

Reporting inspector: Mrs J M Brookes
21416

Dates of inspection: 20-24 March 2000

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Croft Lane Cherry Willingham Lincoln Lincolnshire
Postcode:	LN3 4JP
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Gareth Jones
Date of previous inspection:	January 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
J M Brookes	Registered inspector	Equality of Opportunity	How well is the school led and managed; what should the school do to improve further
		Special Educational Needs	
J Lovell	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; how well the school cares for its pupils; how well the school works in partnership with its parents
V Elliott	Team inspector	Religious Education	How well are pupils taught; How well are the curriculum and other opportunities offered to pupils
J Marshall	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages	School's results and achievements
D MacIldowie	Team inspector	English	
C Elliott	Team inspector	Science	
		Information Technology	
J Woodrow	Team inspector	Art	
		Design and Technology	
J Godwood	Team inspector	Mathematics	
H Boyle	Team inspector	History	
M Merchant	Team inspector	Geography	
R Frostick	Team inspector	Music	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Cherry Willingham is a mixed comprehensive community school in the Lincoln area. It is a growing school with 532 pupils on roll, aged 11 to 16. The intake of the school represents a comprehensive range of ability, with variance from year to year in the proportion of pupils with well above average and well below average prior attainment. Overall the attainment of pupils on entry is average. Over the years, the school has built up a good reputation for providing well for pupils with special educational needs. Included in the school's population, therefore, is a well above average number of pupils with statements of special educational needs who attend one of the two local education authority attached units for pupils with general learning difficulties and hearing impairment. The school also receives a relatively high proportion of pupils who have transferred from other schools. Very few of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups. Overall, the socio-economic circumstances of the pupils are below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an increasingly effective school committed to raising standards. The governing body provides strong leadership in this direction. Standards of attainment have risen at Key Stage 4 since the last inspection. The quality of teaching and the standard of support and care for pupils, particularly those with special educational needs, are good. Overall the school provides good value for money. The level of improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The capacity to make further improvement is satisfactory overall now that the school has appointed a senior management team and middle managers of better quality.

What the school does well

- Standards of attainment by the time pupils leave school are above the national average.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
- Much teaching is of good quality.
- Staff and governors show great commitment and their desire to improve standards is very strong.
- The governing body has a very good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and gives strong direction to the development of the school.
- The school cares well for its pupils and there is a strong sense of community.
- The range of extra-curricular activities is good.
- There are very good links with partner institutions.
- The school supports pupils' physical and creative development very well through good provision in art, music and physical education.
- The school provides good value for money.

What could be improved

- Standards of attainment in modern languages
- Aspects of leadership and management: communication of the school's aims and priorities and how they will be achieved through focussed planning
- The monitoring of teaching
- Systems of assessing pupils' attainment, tracking their progress and setting them realistically high targets
- The breadth and balance of the curriculum at Key Stage 4
- Pupils' spiritual development

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in January 1995. The school's leadership has responded to the majority of the issues from the previous inspection. Strategies to improve or maintain standards have not been very well co-ordinated but the level of improvement has been satisfactory overall. There has been a steady improvement in attainment overall, and a marked improvement in the GCSE results in 1999 and in the standards achieved throughout the school in subjects such as design and technology and information and communications technology. The gap between the attainment of boys and girls has narrowed. The quality of teaching has improved and there is better provision for the more able pupils. The management of most departments is more effective. Great strides have been made recently in the development of information and communications technology. Form tutors play a more significant role. Statutory requirements for religious education and history are now met and there are no major health and safety concerns. A curriculum policy is in place but the curriculum at Key Stage 4 does not offer appropriate breadth, balance and relevance. A coherent system of assessment has not been developed satisfactorily. Statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not fully met. The school development plan is still not a useful working document.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
Key Stage 3 Tests	B	C	C	C	Average C
GCSE examinations	C	C	A	A	well above average A above average B Average C below average D well below average E

Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is close to the national average in most subjects. At the end of Key Stage 3 the 1999 National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science when taken together were in line with the national average and with those of similar schools. The performance of boys is in line with the national average, that of girls is a little above and has shown a significant improvement since the last inspection. Standards seen in Year 9 during the inspection were in line with national averages in most subjects. In art and physical education they were above average but below in geography and well below in modern foreign languages. Attainment in religious education met the expectations of the Lincolnshire Agreed Syllabus. Between the last inspection and 1998, performance in the GCSE examinations remained close to the national average. In 1999 the school exceeded its targets for GCSE, achieving results that were well above national averages for all maintained schools and for schools with a similar intake. The increase in the GCSE average points score, to well above the national average, reflects the significant improvement in the proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades. The attainment of girls improved significantly and was better than that of boys, though the attainment of boys was also better than the national average. The results for science were significantly above the national average, while those for English and mathematics were in line. This picture is confirmed by the standards being achieved in the core subjects in Year 11. Among other subjects, results were well above average in design and technology and physical education, and well below average in modern foreign languages.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory overall. Strong identification with the school community. Motivated, interested and responsive to good teaching. Uninterested when they lack basic skills.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall, though a minority behave in an unacceptable manner.
Personal development and relationships	Good relationships, collaboration and mutual support. Respectful and sensitive to the needs of others.
Attendance	Satisfactory and in line with the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching has significantly improved since the last inspection. Teaching was good or better in 52 per cent of the lessons seen during the inspection. In five per cent it was excellent and in 15 per cent it was very good. It was unsatisfactory in nine per cent. There was one poor lesson. Teaching was of similar quality across both key stages. Teaching was highest in quality in art, design and technology and physical education. Of the core subjects, teaching was satisfactory overall in English and mathematics and good in science. Of the other subjects, a substantial amount of good and some very good teaching was found in music and religious education. Teaching was of weakest quality in modern languages where 50 per cent was unsatisfactory and there was one poor lesson. Teaching has many strengths. Teachers generally use their expertise well to plan lessons. Time and resources are used effectively to interest and motivate pupils. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from good support.

Planning for the more able pupils has improved since the last inspection. There is some inconsistency in the effectiveness of teaching methods. Pupils' learning, progress and achievements are satisfactory at both key stages except in modern languages. The substantial number of pupils with special educational needs learn well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall at Key Stage 3. Unsatisfactory at Key Stage 4; weaknesses in breadth, balance and choice. Unsatisfactory provision for personal and social education and modern foreign languages throughout the school. Good range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Code of Practice is fully implemented. The clear focus on the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills is well matched to targets in individual education plans.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good provision for pupils' moral and social development and satisfactory provision for cultural development. Pupils' spiritual development, though improved, remains unsatisfactory. Some, but not all subjects help pupils to develop an insight into values and beliefs. The school does not meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory systems to assess pupils' attainment and progress but assessment information is not yet used effectively to help raise pupils' expectations and the standards they achieve. Good procedures for monitoring behaviour and attendance and for ensuring the health and well-being of all pupils.
Partnership with parents	Satisfactory information and communication, except in the clarity of how well pupils are attaining in some subjects and what they need to do to improve. Majority of parents are supportive of pupils in their work at home and at school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Visible support for staff and pupils by the head teacher. Aims and educational direction not clearly communicated. Insufficiently co-ordinated strategies for raising attainment. Unsatisfactory school development plan. Satisfactory contribution by the senior management team to school improvement. Improved and largely effective leadership by middle managers.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very effective governing body. Very well informed of strengths and weaknesses of the school. Make a strong contribution to shaping the direction of the school. Good working relations with the head teacher. Fulfil statutory responsibilities except for collective worship.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Improved systems of monitoring but outcomes of assessment are not yet sufficiently well analysed to identify clearly the school's strengths and weaknesses and the specific actions needed to improve standards. The evaluation of the impact of teaching on pupils' progress is unsatisfactory. No clear strategies for monitoring the effectiveness of the curriculum.
The strategic use of resources	Appropriate use of its adequate accommodation and learning resources. Qualifications and experience of teachers match the curriculum satisfactorily. A shortage of teachers in modern languages and geography has adversely affected standards in these subjects. Good financial management and a tight control over spending. Specific grants and funds are used appropriately for designated purposes. The principle of best value for money is pursued well. Overall the school provides good value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pupils like school. ▪ Pupils make good progress at school. ▪ The good quality of the teaching. ▪ Parents would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. ▪ The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best. ▪ The school is well led and managed. ▪ The school helps pupils to become mature and responsible. ▪ The school provides an interesting wide range of activities outside lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Behaviour in the school. ▪ The amount of work which pupils are expected to do at home. ▪ Information that is provided on the progress which pupils are making. ▪ The closeness with which the school works with parents.

Most parents are pleased with the school and the education it provides. Inspectors' judgements supported most of the positive views expressed by parents. The inspection team found that the behaviour of the majority of pupils is satisfactory or better but that a minority of pupils display poor behaviour and may seek to disrupt the learning of others. The use of homework is satisfactory and generally supports learning in the classroom well. Information provided to parents on the progress pupils are making is satisfactory overall, although there are some inconsistencies in the reports which are provided, and frequently targets are not sufficiently specific. The school seeks to involve parents in the work of the school and in supporting their children's learning and is successful in informing parents, at an early stage, of any specific concerns and involving them closely in seeking a resolution.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is close to the national average apart from in art, design and technology, geography, information and communications technology and music where it is below average. This is confirmed either by tests administered shortly after entry or by work seen in Year 7. After a good year in 1997, performance at the end of Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics and science National Curriculum tests has declined slightly and is now average when compared with all schools nationally and with similar schools. This reflects the lower prior attainment on entry to the school of pupils in these year groups. Teacher assessments in 1999 were in line with national expectations in all subjects apart from art, geography, history, information and communication technology and physical education, which were above, and in modern foreign languages, which were below. Work seen during the inspection confirmed this picture of attainment except for history and information and communications technology where attainment was found to be in line with the national expectation and in geography where it was close to, but just below the national average. The Key Stage 3 National Curriculum teachers' assessments in these subjects were found to be insufficiently secure, resulting in an over-estimation of pupils' attainment. Attainment in religious education met the expectations of the Lincolnshire Agreed Syllabus. The performance of girls has improved in relation to that of boys and is now higher, particularly in English, mathematics and religious education.

2. Between 1995, when the proportion of pupils achieving five or more grades A* to C was slightly above the national average, and 1998, GCSE results varied little, whereas nationally they improved steadily. Consequently the school fell behind the national expectations. During the same period, however, the GCSE average points score increased steadily and at a faster rate than nationally, reflecting an increase in the highest grades. In 1999, results improved sharply and were significantly above the national average, as was the GCSE average points score. In relation to similar schools, the results were well above average. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more grades A* to G was well above average, both in relation to national averages and those of similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades, criticised at the last inspection, increased considerably and was above the national average in science, design and technology, English, English literature and physical education. The performance of girls, which was a subject for concern in 1995, has improved every year and is now significantly above the national average, as is that of boys, which has improved less rapidly. The average points score was above the national average in science and equal to it in English and mathematics, and this picture is confirmed by the work seen during the inspection. Among other subjects, results were above average in design and technology and physical education, and well below average in modern foreign languages.

3. Considerable attention is given to the improvement of performance at the end of Key Stage 4 and a base line is established from the results at Key Stage 3 and standardised scores taken from tests administered at the beginning of Year 10. The current Year 11 cohort has a significantly better profile of ability than the cohort which produced the good results in 1999. There is an above average number of higher attaining pupils but the target for the higher grades A* to C for the year 2000 is in line with the national average of 1999. A parallel system for measuring performance is being set up in Key Stage 3, based on Key Stage 2 results and those of standardised tests administered in the first term of Year 7. Once the system is complete the school will be able to track the progress of, and set targets for, all pupils from Years 7 to 11. Overall, a considerable amount of information is available to the school but the school does not yet make the best use of it.

4. The levels of literacy observed in subjects other than English were satisfactory. The pupils organise their information and ideas well in design and technology, and they are fluent and confident in class discussions in art lessons. In both these subjects, books and other sources such as CD ROMs are frequently used successfully to find out information. In many subjects, speaking and listening are actively encouraged. Skills of speaking and listening in modern foreign languages are limited, however, and pupils show reluctance to take part in pair work.

5. Pupils' number skills and their ability to apply them in other subjects are satisfactory. Pupils handle climate data in geography, and in Key Stage 4 they analyse statistical information, using averages and simple correlation. In information and communications technology they make sense of information presented numerically and graphically, handle statistical information competently and learn to appreciate the power of computers by comparing the speed of their own mental calculation with that of a computer. They also use statistics in history and interpret information in the form of timelines and population pyramids. In science pupils calculate averages and in Key Stage 4 they rearrange simple formulae.

6. Pupils' progress and the standards they achieve are good in both key stages, though slightly better in Key Stage 4. In science, art, design and technology, music, physical education and religious education, pupils' good progress reflects the good teaching and results in standards, which are above national averages. In modern languages, on the other hand, progress is unsatisfactory because of poor teaching and planning and low expectations. In mathematics pupils of average attainment make less progress through a lack of motivation and stimulating teaching.

7. Where teaching for the gifted is good, they make good progress, expressing themselves with greater sensitivity, responding perceptively to literature, and making acute historical judgements. In art and design and technology, in particular, gifted pupils develop their creative and technical skills. In mathematics and geography, on the other hand, the most capable under-achieve in comparison with their performance in other subjects due to some indifferent planning and teaching, which does not challenge.

8. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress especially when they receive individual help or additional support in small groups. A high proportion of pupils with special educational needs achieve five or more GCSE grades A* to G at 16 years of age. The high quality of support they receive enables them to understand, for example, some difficult themes in literature as in *An Inspector Calls*. They make good progress in science as a result of the strong working ethos, skilled class management and the good knowledge that teachers have of their pupils. Progress in mathematics results from tasks being broken down into simple stages. In some subjects where pupils are taught in lower sets or in large groups without additional support, their progress is limited. In a Year 8 religious education lesson in a lower set pupils did not understand the deeper underlying meaning behind ideas religious ideas and practices such as why some people eat kosher foods.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Pupils' attitudes to work are generally satisfactory and often good or better. These, combined with satisfactory standards of behaviour, make a positive contribution to learning. This was apparent, for example, in lively exchanges and discussions in a lesson in Year 8 examining issues on Judaism. Pupils strongly identify with the community of the school. Where the teaching is effective, pupils are motivated, interested and responsive. At best they show a positive attitude to their work and set their own ambitious targets, such as in a Year 8 art lesson in which pupils were designing and making a papier-mâché animal head based on a study of the ancient Egyptians. In lessons that lack pace and challenge for all pupils, or where objectives are unclear, the attitudes of a minority of pupils are sometimes unsatisfactory or poor. Pupils usually maintain concentration and persevere when faced with challenging tasks, although, where they lack basic skills, they can become uninterested. Collaborative work is usually good and pupils are mutually supportive and encouraging, often discussing and developing ideas such as in a Year 10 personal and social education lesson in which pupils were considering how to manage on a fixed budget. They listened with care and sensitivity to one another, valuing each other's contributions, offering constructive criticism and encouragement, and working with a shared sense of purpose. When oral contributions are called for some pupils lack confidence and need to be encouraged to contribute. Many pupils show initiative in organising their work, and their ability to work independently improves as they progress through the school.

10. Good relationships exist throughout the school, and pupils and staff know each other well. Pupils respond well to the opportunities for personal development. They generally treat each other and adults with respect and consideration, usually working effectively in groups. For example, Year 7 pupils when playing in a half court badminton 'competition' during a physical education lesson showed understanding of the impact of their actions and displayed consideration for each other. Pupils work together through the house system and identify and support a range of local, national and international charities such as Nomad, a local charity for the homeless, the National Meningitis Trust and Goodwill Village in India. Their understanding of the needs of others is reflected in their active involvement in supporting charities such as an orphanage in Romania, which five pupils and a member of staff are to visit next year. Pupils respond well to opportunities to take responsibilities which increase as they move through the school and include undertaking duties such as receptionist or as library assistants and in Year 11 acting as prefects. They involve themselves in a wide range of extra-curricular activities provided directly by the school and in conjunction with partners such as the community youth programme. A small number of pupils also participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

11. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is usually satisfactory although, on occasions, a minority of pupils behave in an unacceptable manner, which has an adverse effect on the learning and progress of other pupils. Pupils are trustworthy, and treat property and equipment with care. There is no evidence of vandalism or graffiti. Pupils respond well to the school's expectations, which seek to make them responsible for their own behaviour and actions. There are few reported incidents of bullying, but little evidence of other forms of oppressive behaviour. During the previous year, there have been 22 fixed period exclusions and five permanent exclusions of which more than half have involved those pupils who have joined the school after the start of Year 7.

12. Overall attendance of 91.57 per cent in 1998/9 is broadly in line with the national average and has improved against national figures since 1996/7 when it was below the national average. In 1998/9, 33 pupils achieved an excellent 100 per cent attendance record. Attendance patterns do not show any significant variation between year groups, although there are minor variations between individual classes. However, attendance levels are affected by the poor attendance of a small group of pupils who are frequently those who transferred to the school after the start of Year 7 with a poor record of attendance. Unauthorised attendance is 0.7 per cent, which is broadly in line with the national average. Punctuality is generally satisfactory although a small number of pupils are frequently late at the start of the day and punctuality is adversely affected, on occasions, by the late arrival of the school buses. During the day, pupils move in an orderly manner between lessons although a minority of pupils arrives after the start of lessons. The levels of attendance of the majority of pupils are having a positive effect upon their achievements and their learning.

13. Attendance is similar to that reported at the time of the previous inspection when attendance was reported as generally satisfactory, although there were persistent absentees, who were referred to the education welfare officer.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

14. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teaching was good or better in 52 per cent of the lessons seen during the inspection. In five per cent it was excellent and in 15 per cent it was very good. It was unsatisfactory in nine per cent. There was one poor lesson. Teaching was of similar quality across both key stages. There was a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. Almost all of this occurred in modern foreign languages. Additionally, there was one unsatisfactory lesson in mathematics, one in history and one in religious education. The only poor lesson occurred in modern languages. In all other subjects, teaching was satisfactory or better.

15. Teaching was highest in quality in art and design and technology. There was also a high proportion of excellent or very good teaching in physical education. Of the core subjects, teaching was satisfactory overall in English and mathematics, and good in science. The highest proportion of good and very good teaching in the core subjects occurred in science and English. Of the other subjects, a substantial amount of good and some very good teaching was found in music and religious education. Teaching was least effective in modern languages, where there was none better than satisfactory.

16. As a result of good teaching, pupils' learning is enhanced at least satisfactorily in all subjects except modern languages. The quality of learning is good in English, science, music, physical education and religious education and very good in art and design and technology. Pupils are satisfactorily enabled to acquire more skill, knowledge and understanding and the extent to which they use their own intellectual, creative and physical efforts is good.

17. Most teachers use their subject knowledge well to enhance pupils' learning. In art and design and technology, the excellent, up to date expertise is used consistently to inspire pupils to try new skills and take intellectual risks with their work. Some teachers use their expertise particularly effectively to start lessons well, as in a science lesson where pupils' attention was captured by the visual illustration of a large Valentine-type card heart, to introduce work on a concept map of the human heart. Subject knowledge is also used well in science to help pupils to think about applications in the world around them, thus creating more interest. In information and communications technology lessons the good knowledge of the software and its application is used to give pupils clear instructions and quick support so that they are helped to access the programs and work on the material. In the good history lessons, especially at Key Stage 4, very good command of the subject is used to help pupils to make very clear and accurate notes, thereby boosting their confidence. However, there are some occasions in English, history and religious education, where subject knowledge is used less effectively. In a religious education lesson, for example, only basic statements were made about religious food laws, leaving lower ability pupils with shallow knowledge only and some confusion. In English and in history, at times, over-long introductions led to pupils becoming bored and this inhibited their formation of new ideas. Modern foreign languages teachers have satisfactory subject knowledge but do not use this well enough, for example, to promote pupils' use of French or German in the classroom.

18. A good feature of some of the lessons in English, geography and religious education is the way in which teachers give clear explanations and often prod pupils' understanding with persistent questioning, enabling pupils to think more deeply. In other lessons in English and geography, pupils' first answers are too easily accepted and on occasions in mathematics, pupils' mistakes are not explored enough as a means to deepen their understanding.

19. In most subjects, lesson planning is good. A feature of outstandingly good planning in art and design and technology lessons is the way in which teachers respond to pupils' zest to try out and acquire new skills. In these lessons, teachers plan for each individual pupil's specific needs, taking account of current progress and thus inspiring pupils to advance in their mastering of new techniques. Good planning and teachers' expertise in physical education always spur on pupils by making the learning points clear. In information and communications technology lessons the good planning of activities and resources stimulates pupils' interest and thinking skills. In many English lessons the stating and reviewing of key features for learning enables pupils to understand the purpose of the lesson and to measure their own progress. Good planning in some mathematics lessons succeeds in actively involving pupils and capturing their interests, for example, through the use of varied activities. However, in some weaker lessons in mathematics, pupils are not sufficiently prepared for the exercises they are set and they become confused. In many science lessons, planning takes clear account of the prior attainment of particular groups of pupils and thereby provides activities focussed to move pupils on. On the other hand, at times geography and history lessons lack effective planning for the needs of different pupils. For instance, in history, there is not enough planning of opportunity for independent learning for the higher attaining pupils. Nor is there enough planning at Key Stage 3 of carefully sequenced and structured activities to support the learning of lower ability pupils.

20. The extent to which teachers expect pupils to achieve and think for themselves is satisfactory overall. In music lessons, pupils are effectively challenged to be adventurous and many find their learning exciting, for example, in trying out different compositions. The high expectations placed upon pupils to develop skills in physical education lessons is reflected in the way in which teachers feed back specific comments, helping pupils to hone their techniques, for example, in trampolining and rugby. In art, learning that fosters depth of thought always challenges pupils. Mathematics teachers sometimes use puzzles to set challenges in class and homework and this is particularly effective in harnessing intellectual faculties of the more able pupils who are very interested in solving these. However, in some other mathematics lessons, where expectations are not high enough, pupils are not always given enough opportunity to explain their ideas to the rest of the class and their learning is less secure. Where work is challenging in geography, pupils become engrossed in their learning. In less effective geography lessons in Key Stage 3, where there is too much teacher-talk and not enough chance for pupils to think out and contribute their own ideas higher attaining pupils especially lose interest. In the unsatisfactory modern foreign languages lessons, learning is pitched at the level of average ability pupils and so higher ability pupils are not challenged enough and development of language and listening skills is held up. The quality of teaching of the personal and social education programme is usually satisfactory, but on occasions it fails to promote pupils' thinking sufficiently to develop a sense of understanding of the issues.

21. Teaching methods vary in effectiveness across the subjects. Methods are good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. In English, particularly in Key Stage 3, the good quality of reading to classes often secures pupils' appreciation of the written word. In mathematics lessons where teachers employ some effective visual aids and real data and at times when pupils are asked to demonstrate at the board, their motivation to learn is enhanced significantly. Pupils are less interested in mathematics, however, when methods are narrowly limited to a brief explanation of the topic, followed by textbook exercises. Methods are less well used to promote learning at times in history where there is over reliance on teacher-led approaches involving pupils only in listening instead of being more actively engaging in learning tasks. This hinders pupils' own intellectual effort. In modern foreign languages lessons, methods are not suitably varied to match different needs and learning methods are too narrow. Pupils' development of language skills is not fully supported, for instance, by the use of good visual material to help them understand the meaning of new vocabulary, without having to resort to speaking English. Conversely, at times in religious education lessons, the learning needs of lower ability pupils in Key Stage 3 are well met when illustrations are drawn from their own experience and where their understanding of different religious customs is stimulated by varied visual resources.

22. In most lessons teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. In most subjects, teachers succeed in creating and sustaining a quiet orderly atmosphere in which pupils can learn. In many English, science and religious education lessons, for instance, teachers use friendly, calm but firm approaches to settle pupils at the start of lessons and then maintain their interest in learning with varied activity and brisk pace. All this helps pupils to work productively. On the other hand, in some mathematics lessons, behaviour is managed less well, especially where pupils' interests wane because of too little challenge and lack of variety in methods.

23. Learning resources, time and support staff are all used well to help to interest and motivate pupils' efforts. In English, for instance, very good displays of relevant and attractive work are used to enliven pupils' learning. Pupils' appreciation of literature and the power of language are also well stimulated by the wide range of fiction, non-fiction and multi media resources, which is used in many English lessons. However, at other times in English, and drama, too much reliance is placed on commercially produced worksheets that are not suited to the lesson and make it difficult for pupils to follow. Similarly in mathematics, where there is at times too much use of exercises that are not sufficiently matched to pupils' prior knowledge, pupils' learning is hindered. In design and technology lessons varied resources are used well to stimulate pupils' creativity, although limitations on resources for the study of design hamper teachers and pupils at times.

24. Most teachers provide effective help to pupils in understanding how well they are doing. There is excellent day-to-day marking and critical evaluation of work in art and design and technology. In science, mathematics, English, information and communications technology and religious education lessons, many teachers give pupils a clear picture of how well they are doing, by the use of correction, helpful hints and clear evaluation. However, marking is unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages and at times in geography during Key Stage 3, because pupils are not given enough clear and constructive advice as to how they can improve and thus their learning is hindered.

25. All departments use homework at least satisfactorily. It is used most effectively in English, religious education and design and technology, where varied, challenging and imaginative tasks are regularly set, to extend pupils' learning. For example, in English, pupils were asked to draw up a poster written by "The Pied Piper", advertising his services. Geography lessons also use homework effectively, often to support pupils' development of research and investigation skills. Homework is almost always planned effectively in art lessons to extend pupils' studio work although not all pupils are sufficiently encouraged to use their personal sketchbooks to pursue and develop their own imagery and ideas.

26. Since the last inspection, teaching has improved. There is a greater proportion of good, very good and excellent teaching; more good teaching in a wider range of subjects; planning for different needs is more consistent and expectations on the more able to make progress are higher in some subjects. Weaknesses in subject knowledge and in the requirements of the National Curriculum have been greatly reduced. However, there is still some inconsistency in the use of questioning techniques to probe pupils' understanding and stimulate their critical thinking, for example, in some English lessons.

27. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs by specialist staff from the hearing and general learning difficulties unit staff is always good and sometimes very good. On the rare occasions that pupils are withdrawn from lessons the good planning enables pupils to make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. Through unobtrusive observation and assistance in practical subjects such as art and design and technology, pupils feel well integrated into the group and are able to work independently for much of the time. The encouragement in a science lesson in Year 7 gave pupils the confidence to respond to teacher's invitation to label a diagram. Other good features of teaching include the clarity of teachers' explanations and the way in which teachers give prompts to pupils from which they can devise simple sentences. In a Year 10 mathematics lesson the interpretation of questions was the key to pupils making good progress. Pupils with severe hearing impairment gain access to the curriculum through the skills of signing of the staff. The most effective lessons are those in which there is joint planning between the class teacher and the special educational needs staff. The advance notice enables the learning support assistant to draw on or prepare additional resources, which aid pupils' understanding. In lessons in design and technology, English and mathematics good partnership teaching helped to sustain the interest of all pupils in the class. The preparation of a range of materials and varied teaching methods to meet the different needs of pupils within classes is a developing feature of the work in departments such as English and science. Teaching strategies, which enable pupils with comprehension difficulties to understand difficult concepts in history and geography, for example need further consideration. Over complex instruction of the class teacher and wordy texts in geography do not enable pupils with special educational needs to make good progress.

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

28. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is satisfactory overall. Its strengths lie in its coverage of all the National Curriculum requirements and the opportunity to broaden pupils' experiences through drama, a second modern language and study skills. Provision of information and communications technology has improved since the last inspection in that now pupils are taught the skills throughout the key stage. Further opportunities in other lessons for them to use skills learned are provided in English and mathematics. Other subjects give only limited opportunities. The shortage of time given to the first modern foreign language limits the development of pupils' listening and reading skills. In drama, the concentration of pupils with low ability and special educational needs in small sets does not give them access to good quality learning experiences.

29. At Key Stage 4 pupils can take a good number of GCSE examinations in the subjects of the National Curriculum. However the overall breadth, balance and choice within the curriculum is weakened by a number of important shortcomings. These include the lack of provision for vocational education, no opportunity for pupils to continue with the study of drama begun in Key Stage 3 and insufficient time for lower attaining pupils to make progress in modern foreign languages. The way in which the curriculum is organised allows pupils to take two design and technology subjects, two courses in religious education and two courses in physical education. Those who choose to do so do not have a balanced curriculum. As at Key Stage 3, there is no systematic approach to the development of numeracy across the curriculum, there are few planned opportunities in the majority of subjects to contribute to pupils' spiritual development and personal and social education is not well co-ordinated.

30. Since the last inspection, provision for information and communications technology has improved significantly throughout the school and includes the opportunity for pupils to take a short GCSE course at Key Stage 4. Statutory requirements for religious education and history are now met. There has been insufficient improvement in the balance between academic and vocational choices.

31. The school has established a satisfactory policy for the development of pupils' language skills in every subject. The co-ordinator for literacy provides helpful guidelines to departments, and pupils are encouraged to use writing frames to improve their work. All subject teachers share the responsibility for developing pupils' accuracy in using language. Displays of words in most classrooms provide useful prompts that enable pupils to use the correct terminology and spelling of specialist words in different subjects. Through the recording of new words in their literacy diaries pupils build up their personal dictionaries. Younger pupils have a weekly lesson devoted to literacy. In addition, the policy is that they should be encouraged to use the skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing in all lessons.

32. The mathematics department has analysed the mathematical needs of other subjects and it is planned to develop this into a numeracy policy.

33. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The Code of Practice is fully in place and the needs of pupils with a statement of special educational need are very well met. As a result of good liaison between subject departments, special needs teachers and learning support assistants, pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. Pupils are withdrawn occasionally for individual tutorials or extra literacy support. The clear focus on the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills is well matched to targets in individual education plans, which are drawn up by the specialist staff in these departments. Individual support for the five pupils with hearing impairment gives them good access to the curriculum.

34. Pupils benefit from the provision of good extra-curricular opportunities which complement and extend the curriculum. Almost all staff are involved and pupils express appreciation of the variety offered. The provision for sporting activities is very good. Other opportunities are provided in art, music, drama, and clubs in many subjects for pupils to pursue their interests. Pupils with special educational needs have good access to extra activities and are very well supported in homework, class work and coursework through extra sessions at lunchtime and after school. The signing club is popular and supports the way in which pupils are well integrated into the school community. The availability of a youth club at lunchtimes provides a range of activities, which provide opportunities for personal and social development. These include baby-sitting training and the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, in which about eight pupils are currently involved. The school also offers specific subject support and homework support sessions. Pupils' learning in information and communications technology is also promoted by regular access to facilities. Overall, this good provision meets varying needs of different ages and abilities.

35. Careers education is satisfactory and pupils receive good guidance and preparation for future education or employment. The Lincolnshire careers advisory service works closely and effectively with the school, providing independent advice for groups and individual students. The school's close links with a number of schools and colleges offering sixth form provision provides a good range of choices suitable to pupils' particular needs. An 'industry morning' for pupils in Year 10 enables them to look at post-16 options. Careers conventions further increase the information available to pupils in Years 10 and 11, to inform their choices. An effective programme offers all pupils the opportunity to have a mock interview with an independent person from the local business community and all pupils in Year 11 undertake work experience with local employers. Resources are satisfactory and will be further enhanced with computer programs during the next term. Many of the resources within the careers library are within the small careers office and are not always available to pupils.

36. The school has recognized that its provision for pupils' personal and social education is unsatisfactory and has appointed a co-ordinator to lead developments. The programme is insufficiently developed and structured, particularly at Key Stage 3. The programme addresses health, sex, drugs, environmental issues, citizenship and careers guidance and is well supported by professionals such as the school nurse, the police and the local magistracy. The school seeks to involve parents in elements of the programme such as a presentation to 40 parents of Year 7 pupils and members of the local community regarding drugs issues, which was held during the week of the inspection. Elements of the sex education programme are also appropriately taught in science.

37. Provision for pupils' social development is good. Adults in the school generally provide positive role models. In most subjects constructive relationships are encouraged and regular opportunities are provided for pupils to learn skills of co-operation in groups. Emphasis on the care of equipment and paying due attention to safe working in practical subjects such as art, design and technology and music lessons develops pupils' increasing awareness of social responsibility. Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility have improved since the last inspection. These include, for example, acting as head boy and girl, senior prefects and older pupils helping younger pupils who need support, for example, in developing their reading skills. Through the school council pupils have a chance to represent their views and have been instrumental in writing the school charter of expectations. The pursuit of the School Curriculum Award provided other opportunities for pupils' social development through links in outdoor pursuits with the De Montfort University and running mini enterprises, such as a bank and vending machines. The good range of extra school activities also encourages pupils' social skills.

38. Pupils' moral development is also promoted well. There are high expectations of behaviour and a clear positive behaviour code and pupils learn to consider the consequences of their actions on others. Physical education gives many opportunities for them to learn about the importance of rules and fair play. Pupils have good opportunities to discuss moral questions. In English lessons, for example, pupils discuss issues arising from literature and in geography environmental issues are well covered. Science contributes effectively by raising awareness of current debate on genetically modified foods and discussing issues of truthfulness in reporting. In religious education, complex questions to do with human life are dealt with well. In personal and social education a visit to a magistrate court had a significant impact on all pupils, including the disaffected.

39. Pupils receive satisfactory provision for cultural development. Opportunities for them to gain appreciation of their own cultural heritage have been strengthened since the last inspection and are well developed in subjects such as art and music. English provides opportunities for open and constructive discussion of racial prejudice arising from reading texts such as *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. However, the programme of theatre visits and visiting writers has not happened this year. There are good opportunities in religious education for pupils to understand more of the different cultures of religious communities in Britain. Pupils encounter diverse cultures in a number of subjects including design and technology and geography. However, inadequacies with the modern foreign languages provision limit the opportunity for many pupils to gain good understanding of European influences.

40. Provision for pupils to develop insight into values and beliefs is unsatisfactory. There has been some improvement since the last inspection but not sufficient. Pupils have several assemblies a week. Themes for the week are well planned and broadly reflect Christian traditions. The thought for the week in tutor time is not consistently provided and not fully monitored. Generally, pupils do not have enough opportunity to pause for quiet reflection and the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not yet fully met. The religious education department makes a strong contribution to spiritual development by enabling pupils to understand what faith means in the lives of believers. The high quality of art and music lessons enhances pupils' aesthetic awareness and supports their creative development. In subjects of the curriculum not enough attention is given at school or department level to plan and provide for this aspect of pupils' development. The majority of subjects make only a limited contribution to the development of pupils' capacity to empathize with human experiences.

41. Very good links with primary schools, the pupil referral unit, local sixth forms, and with educational support specialists make a significant contribution to continuity in pupils' learning and to a smooth transition between institutions. A programme of visits and familiarisation opportunities occur for pupils. Very good curricular links in a number of areas such as science, information and communications technology, dance and drama have provided a range of good learning opportunities for pupils and have deepened the understanding of some teachers of issues which affect achievement. For example, in primary schools pupils have used facilities at Cherry Willingham to develop research skills, using the Internet. Prior to pupils' transfer a comparison by teachers of work in Years 6 and 7 has revealed issues for development such as redrafting and punctuation, which are being addressed collaboratively. Through discussing the potential use of documentation provided at the time of transfer from Key Stage 2 to establish attainment on entry to secondary school, the partner primary schools have become aware of how they can present information in a more useful format and have adopted standardized assessment procedures and documents. Links with local sixth form providers have enabled the school to support individual pupils in selecting the best place of learning and course to meet their particular needs and this provides great flexibility for pupils in considering options for post-16 education.

42. The school has good links with teacher training establishments and these have benefited the school by providing opportunities for staff to evaluate and develop good practice.

43. The school's good links with the local community enhance and enrich the curriculum and provide work experience in Year 11. These links include those with the local magistracy, which has supported the school's citizenship programme. Representatives of Christian and non-Christian faiths support assemblies and the teaching of religious education. Links with a local drug support agency have provided support to the school in addressing problems such as eating disorders. Links with local groups such as drama and dance groups, who use the school's facilities, provide pupils with opportunities to participate in performances. The community education programme provides youth club and sports facilities enjoyed by pupils. These provide good opportunities for pupils' personal and social development and include activities such as football, dance and drama and a youth club.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

44. The school makes good provision for ensuring pupils' welfare and supporting their personal development. Procedures for monitoring and supporting their academic progress are satisfactory overall.

45. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Pupils appreciate the good pastoral support that is available from staff and other adults who work in the school such as the school nurse. Guidance for pupils in the selection of Key Stage 4 options is helpful and opportunities are provided outside lessons for support with homework and further study sessions in many subjects. The previous report identified concerns about the time available in registration for tutors to fulfil their pastoral role. The allocation of time has been addressed satisfactorily and registration sessions are used to present the 'thought for the week' and attend to administrative matters such as checking planners.

46. The systems used by departments to assess pupils' academic work and progress are satisfactory overall. There has been some improvement since the last inspection with the development of a whole school policy. Assessment practice has improved in most departments. Effective assessment systems have been developed in English, mathematics, science, design and technology and art at both key stages and in geography at Key Stage 4. In these subjects, results are analysed and used to monitor progress of individuals and groups. Clear criteria and a system of target setting enable teachers to assess pupils' progress regularly. Systems are also thorough for pupils with special educational needs. But practice is poor in modern languages where systems are non-existent and unsatisfactory in geography at Key Stage 3 where teacher assessment does not provide a wide enough evidence base to give clear indication of attainment and progress at National Curriculum levels.

47. At whole-school level, systems have been partially developed for regular interim progress checks. At Key Stage 4, systems are in place for departments to identify pupils who are expected to do well in GCSE and those who will do less well. A similar system of evaluating pupils' performance against prior attainment is being established in Key Stage 3. More needs to be done especially in ensuring rigorous and consistent monitoring arrangements, and that the value added to pupils' attainment is more systematically measured through their time in school. Overall insufficient use is made of the performance data available to track pupils' progress and attainment and to set targets. Overall, insufficient progress has been made in addressing this issue since the last inspection.

48. The use of assessment to influence curriculum planning and set targets for pupils is satisfactory overall with some departments making good use of information and others not doing so. In the science department assessment information is used to inform review and revision of the schemes of work. Very good use is made by art and design and technology departments to plan individual work based on each pupil's prior attainment and current progress. Information and communications technology results of pupils' prior attainment are used to help plan future work and target particular skills. In history at Key Stage 4, results of assessment are used well to identify specific topics and skills for GCSE revision. However, in subjects including modern foreign languages, English, geography and religious education, the results of assessment are not regularly scrutinised to enable conclusions to be drawn about pupils' progress or required amendments to the curriculum, lesson planning or teaching methods.

49. Procedures for identifying pupils with special educational needs are good. Initial assessment through testing all Year 7 pupils in reading and spelling on entry to the school enables early identification of learning difficulties. Pupils whose results are below a particular standard are entered onto the register of special educational needs and re-tested termly to monitor progress. Diagnostic and screening tests are used to measure specific difficulties. The subsequent tracking their progress is very good. Weekly half hour tutorials for the hearing impaired provide opportunities for monitoring how well pupils are progressing. Regular assessments take place, both within lessons and at appropriate times throughout the year. The results of assessments, however, are recorded by hand, which does not support the easy analysis of information. Statutory requirements for pupils with statements of special educational need are well met.

50. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good and staff work closely with pupils and parents to encourage good attendance. Parents are fully involved in cases of concern and are contacted on the first day in the case of unexplained absences. Detailed analysis is made of attendance and this is being supported by the use of new technology. The education welfare officer is involved when necessary and, through a proactive joint working arrangement, the school has, in some cases, managed to have a significant impact on the attendance levels of individual pupils. Registers are marked accurately and in accordance with requirements, at the start of sessions, and attendance is recorded in each lesson.

51. Throughout the school, staff have high expectations of standards of behaviour. The behaviour policy is well understood by pupils and is applied consistently by staff. The effectiveness of this policy, which includes sanctions such as the use of a withdrawal room and detentions, and rewards such as merit marks, certificates and incentives cards, and the response of pupils, combined with the good relationships within the school, has a positive effect on both learning and pupils' achievements. Exclusion is used effectively as part of an overall strategy to promote good standards of behaviour. Pupils do not identify bullying or other oppressive behaviour as a significant problem. Pupils are, however, confident that they may speak to staff about any incidents or concerns and that the school is rigorous in resolving problems and mediating in the case of difficulties that arise in relationships.

52. Child protection arrangements are good and the school uses the local area protection committee's procedures, which comply with requirements. The assistant headteacher who is responsible for child protection has received appropriate training and kept up to date with changes in practice. There are good liaison arrangements with outside agencies. Staff are aware of the procedures to be followed in the case of any concerns and the school exercises its responsibilities with care.

53. Procedures for promoting and monitoring health and safety are good and the school has recently revised its policy, which is awaiting approval by the governing body. The policy meets requirements and is supported by departmental policies and one which covers visits.

54. The previous inspection report highlighted that the temperature in the sports hall was often unacceptable and pupils' bags left across corridors were a health and safety risk. The addressing of health and safety issues was noted as a key issue. Heaters have been installed in the sports hall, which have improved the environment and performance. Bags are still left in corridors and spaces where they present a risk, particularly in the event of the need to evacuate the buildings in an emergency.

55. Three staff have full first aid qualifications and an additional 15 have basic qualifications. First aiders are dispersed throughout the school and appropriately stocked first aid boxes are readily accessible throughout the blocks and in practical areas as well as being available for visits off-site. Accidents are properly recorded.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

56. The school's partnership with parents is good, especially in those cases where additional support is required. Communication with parents is satisfactory and the regular information provided to parents about the progress of pupils, combined with the accessibility of staff, helps to promote an effective partnership. Most parents are pleased with the school and the education it provides and generally have positive views of the school. A significant minority express concerns about standards of behaviour, the amount of work which pupils are expected to do at home, the information that is provided on the progress which pupils are making and the closeness with which the school works with parents. Inspectors' judgements supported the positive views expressed by parents. The inspection team found that the behaviour of the majority of pupils is satisfactory or better but that a minority of pupils display poor behaviour and may seek to disrupt the learning of others. The use of homework is satisfactory and supports learning in the classroom. The school is successfully seeking to involve parents in the work of the school and in supporting their children's learning and is successful in informing parents, at an early stage, of any specific concerns and involving them closely in seeking a resolution.

57. The school seeks parents' views on their perception of the school, by means of an annual questionnaire, and meets with a representative group of parents to seek their views on specific issues. These views are carefully analysed and taken into account. The partnership between the school, home and pupils is reinforced by the home-school agreement. Information about pupils' progress is provided through consultation meetings, a 'profile', which provides grades for attainment, effort and task results, which are compared with the group average, and a full report at the end of the summer term. There are some inconsistencies between subjects in the full reports and, although targets are generally clear, they are sometimes insufficiently clear to help parents understand what pupils need to do to improve. Attendance at consultation meetings is closely monitored and averages around 60 per cent across the school. Those parents who cannot attend are offered alternative dates and tutors often make contact with those parents who fail to attend, particularly if there is any cause for concern.

58. The significant majority of parents are supportive of pupils in their work at school and at home, and in their wider activities. Information is provided to allow parents who wish to attend events to make the necessary arrangements. A small but hardworking group runs the parent teacher association which organises events such as quiz nights, a 'super stars challenge' and a Christmas fayre to raise funds, which are used to improve the learning environment and resources. The association has recently bought new curtains for the stage, display boards and supported the upgrading of furniture for the science laboratories. Currently, the association is committed to raising £6000 to support the development of the computer suite. The support of parents is valued by the school and staff, and makes a good contribution to pupils' learning.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

59. The commitment of the governing body and staff to bring about school improvement is strong and the school's capacity to do so is satisfactory. Improved quality of management, particularly of subject departments, is an important contributory factor in the increased effectiveness of the school. A noteworthy example of the overall improvement is the higher proportion of good teaching and higher achievement of pupils particularly in art, design and technology, information and communications technology, physical education and geography. Overall the management of subjects of the curriculum and of support for pupils' special needs is good. Most departments have clear aims and an agenda for further improvement. The management of modern languages has remained an issue since the last inspection and no progress has been made in improving standards of teaching and attainment. A new head of department was in post during the week of the inspection. Since the last inspection, a senior management team has been formed. Within the constraints of a heavy teaching commitment initially its members have worked hard with the headteacher to bring about improvements in the quality of provision.

60. The headteacher provides visible support for staff. His high profile around the school enables him to be well informed of day-to-day issues and to play an active role in disciplinary matters. His ability to recognize good ideas and encourage staff to make best use of their skills and his energetic approach to supporting the development of good ideas reflects his commitment to improving the school. However, the lack of clear direction and insufficiently co-ordinated strategies to raise attainment limit the effectiveness of the contribution that staff can make to school improvement. The educational vision for the school is not clearly articulated. The school's commitment to equality of opportunity and the aim for pupils to achieve high standards are not communicated effectively to staff, parents or pupils. The aims stated in the school prospectus to educate pupils to become self motivated and self disciplined, to be sensitive to the needs of others and to try their hardest are, however, largely reflected in the work of the school. For example, enabling pupils to be independent and confident is a strong feature of the work of the staff supporting pupils with special educational needs.

61. The open and frank relationship between the headteacher and the governing body enables the headteacher to feel well supported and the governing body to be very well informed about the work of the school. The governors also discover the strengths and weaknesses of the school very well through close contact with departments. Where there are weaknesses, for example, in the provision for modern foreign languages, they monitor progress closely. Governors have played a leading role in raising awareness of the need to change the culture of the school by bringing into focus the achievement of high academic standards alongside a high quality of care for its pupils. The strong commitment of the governing body to improvement is reflected in the setting up of a quality assurance committee and an evaluative function being included in the remit of other committees. Overall the governing body is fulfilling its role effectively. All statutory requirements are met except for collective worship.

62. Development planning is a useful, inclusive process in which staff and governors are fully involved. Appropriate priorities for development in literacy, information technology, differentiation and monitoring have been identified. There are, however, too many subsidiary targets embedded in a school development plan which contains 51 vision statements and other unnecessary detail. A useful summary of department and pastoral achievements and priorities is listed though some are trivial. Though the plan is more detailed, the criticism of the last inspection that the plan is not a useful working document still remains. The plan is too lengthy and unfocussed on raising attainment. Success criteria are insufficiently precise and some are no more than summative statements about progress towards the completion of a task.

63. The school development plan brings together and establishes priorities for budget allocation. A less favoured budget than in most other local secondary schools has required the school to manage its budget prudently. Educational grants and additional income from other sources are well targeted to the benefit of pupils. Financial savings have been made through reduction in staffing. The small amount of money available to departments is used very prudently to support learning. The governing body has a very clear understanding of the principles of best value and apply them well to ensure effective use of limited funds. Assessments of the cost implications of proposed expenditure by the senior management team and the governing body give appropriate emphasis to evaluating the subsequent impact of the expenditure they have approved and its effects on the policies they have agreed. For example, prior to committing resources to the National Grid for Learning, the governing body carefully evaluated the options available in terms of computer hardware and support, as well as the implications and cost of financing.

64. The good systems of financial control, which provide timely and accurate management information, assist the school to monitor its budget carefully. The school uses technology effectively to reconcile accounts and provide regular financial information and regular reports, which are analysed and presented to governors for their consideration. Well-established financial procedures ensure efficient control of expenditure. The recommendations from the most recent auditors' report have been addressed.

65. Satisfactory use of technology resources is made in supporting the schools' administration and improving efficiency, although the benefits of new technology are not applied to improving the school's collection and use of assessment data. Following careful consideration of the financial implications, the school has significantly enhanced the information and communications technology opportunities for pupils through its involvement in the National Grid for Learning initiative and is actively involved in promoting use of the Internet to support learning and independent research. This is being promoted through the learning support groups such as pupils in Year 9 who used the Internet to research countries and find information about their population, climate and location. The use of technology in transferring data from the registers has assisted the school in collecting and analysing attendance data and identifying potential problems at an early stage, to enable action to be taken, involving external support where appropriate.

66. The school monitors its performance in a number of ways. The monitoring of all policies has led to greater consistency in their implementation. Monitoring in departments and year teams by the senior management team is a valued opportunity for discussion on developments. The school now matches pupils' attainment on entry against predicted and actual grades at the end of Key Stage 4 but not yet at the end of Key Stage 3. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching is not well developed. The system for monitoring by the senior management team is now much improved, in that written evaluative comments on lesson planning, teaching objectives and pupils' responses are discussed. Emergent issues on assessment, the efficient use of time and the clarity of purpose of lessons have been shared more generally as points for development. As yet there is insufficient evaluation and analysis of the impact of teaching on pupils' attainment and progress and no systematic way of sharing good practice. It is planned that heads of department will evaluate teaching and learning in their departments but the success of this will depend on training in the skills to do so.

67. The school's target for the year 2000 of 100 per cent of pupils achieving A* to G in one or more subjects in the GCSE examinations is high. However, the prediction of 47 per cent of pupils achieving A* to C in five or more subjects is modest in relation to the achievement at the higher grades when compared with the results of standardized tests of this cohort, their Key Stage 3 average points score in 1997 and the school's performance in the GCSE examinations of 1999. In 1999, the school achieved 52 per cent A* to C from a group of Year 11 pupils whose results of standardized tests indicated that the overall ability of the pupils was lower than the present Year 11. The average points score of the pupils currently in Year 11 was 33.7. This indicates a prediction of 57 per cent gaining five or more grades A* to C at GCSE.

68. A satisfactory system of staff development contributes effectively to the integration of staff new to the school or to posts of responsibility. Newly qualified teachers benefit from mentoring by experienced staff and discussing how their lessons might be improved. Courses for middle managers new in post have given them ideas and strategies, for example, of how to manage pupils' behaviour. Recent attention in the training programme to information and communications technology has contributed wider use of information and communications technology to assist learning. The record of in-service training over the last few years indicates a willingness of staff to seek training outside school, often paid for by themselves and the improved quality of teaching is indicative of its effectiveness.

69. The system of appraisal of the performance of teachers has been revised recently to meet requirements. The system that is now in place and the knowledge and understanding of the senior management team enable the school to be well placed to introduce a system of performance management.

70. The qualifications, experience and expertise of staff well match the mainstream curriculum in most subjects and the specialist provision in the hearing and general learning units attached to the school. Difficulties in recruiting successful modern foreign languages teachers have adversely affected the standards pupils achieve in this subject and a succession of heads of the geography department has limited curriculum development. A number of staff teach outside their specialisms. In some but not all cases, this is reflected in teaching of poorer quality. The majority of staff have been at the school for a long time and this brings the advantage of knowing pupils and their families well. Ten well-qualified learning support assistants provide guidance and help of high quality, which helps pupils with special educational needs to make good progress. The quality of technician support is excellent but there is insufficient to support all the practical areas.

71. Accommodation is adequate for the delivery of the curriculum. Two of the four specialist classrooms for mathematics are congested and limit the arrangement of desks. This affects pupils' learning, as they are tempted to talk too much.

72. The amount and use of resources are satisfactory. Resources for pupils with special educational needs are good and include electronic notebooks for some pupils. The school's resourcing for information and communications technology is now very good. The Internet is used to support independent learning. The library is a well-managed resource, which contains a broad based collection of books to support research in a number of subjects.

73. The school receives a low level of funding and makes appropriate use of its accommodation and resources. Overall pupils make satisfactory progress, entering the school at just below average standards and attaining just above the national average at the end of Key Stage 4. The quality of teaching and the standard of support and care for pupils are good. Overall the school provides good value for money.

74. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall. All the key issues have been addressed though the quality of response has been variable. The schools' capacity to improve further is dependent on focussed leadership. A succinct plan, clearly setting out future developments is also essential to take full advantage of the high commitment and expertise of staff.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

75. The head teacher, senior management team and governing body need to attend to the following:

- raising standards of attainment in modern languages by:
improving the quality of teaching and marking and assessment of pupils' work; (paragraphs 6, 15, 16, 46, 48, 145-151)
reviewing the allocation of time and arrangements for a second language; (paragraphs 30, 152)
supporting the leadership and management of the department (paragraphs 59, 153)
- strengthening leadership and management by:
establishing and communicating clear educational aims to staff, pupils and parents; (paragraph 60)
developing focussed strategies to raise attainment and achieve the school's wider aims and objectives; (paragraph 60)
refining the school development plan so that it becomes a useful working document with a manageable number of aims and precise details of how the school will evaluate and quantify its success (paragraph 62)
- developing further the monitoring and evaluation of teaching by:
evaluating the impact of teaching on pupils' attainment and progress; (paragraphs 66, 93)
enabling middle managers to monitor the work of their teams; (paragraph 66)
sharing good practice (paragraph 66)

- improving the effectiveness of the school's systems of assessment of academic performance by:
using assessment data systematically to track and monitor individual pupils' progress; (paragraphs 46, 48)
setting individual targets for all pupils (paragraph 49)
- improving the curriculum at Key Stage 4 by:
broadening the range of subjects to include vocational options; (paragraphs 29, 30)
ensuring that pupils study a balanced choice of subjects relevant to their needs; (paragraphs 29, 30)
- strengthening the provision for spiritual development by:
planning opportunities within the curriculum to reflect on their own and other people's lives and beliefs; (paragraph 40)
moving further towards meeting the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship. (paragraph 40)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	122
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	42

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	15	32	38	8	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	532	-
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	99	-

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	35	-
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	171	-

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	28
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	30

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.7
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	51	31	82

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	31	32	25
	Girls	24	22	18
	Total	55	54	43
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	68 (65)	67 (60)	52 (56)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24 (35)	32 (36)	20 (27)
	National	28 (36)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	26	33	41
	Girls	25	19	24
	Total	51	52	65
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	73 (77)	61 (63)	79 (56)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	25 (42)	29(34)	48(26)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	50	33	83

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	24	50	50
	Girls	19	33	33
	Total	43	83	83
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	52.0 (51.8)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	46.3 (44.0)	90.7 (87.5)	95.7 (93.4)

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

GCSE results	GCSE point score
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Average point score per pupil	School	43.8 (44.5)
	National	37.8 (35.3)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	-
Black – other	-
Indian	1
Pakistani	-
Bangladeshi	-
Chinese	2
White	528
Any other minority ethnic group	-

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	38	5
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y 11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	30.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	334

Deployment of teachers: Y7-Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	80.4
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Financial information

Financial year	1998/9
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	£
Total income	1214284
Total expenditure	1205704
Expenditure per pupil	2406
Balance brought forward from previous year	14400
Balance carried forward to next year	22980

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23.4
Key Stage 4	22.4

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	532
Number of questionnaires returned	129

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	33.3	52.7	10.1	3.9	0.0
My child is making good progress in school.	40.3	46.5	11.6	0.8	0.8
Behaviour in the school is good.	20.9	57.4	14.0	3.1	4.7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20.2	52.7	19.4	2.3	5.4
The teaching is good.	31.8	58.1	3.9	0.8	5.4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34.9	45.7	14.7	3.9	0.8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	43.4	45.7	7.8	1.6	1.6
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55.8	39.5	0.8	2.3	1.6
The school works closely with parents.	27.9	49.6	13.2	3.9	5.4
The school is well led and managed.	28.7	54.3	7.8	1.6	7.8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31.8	54.3	7.0	3.9	3.1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37.2	45.0	8.5	2.3	7.0

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

ENGLISH

76. Over the past three years, towards the end of Key Stage 3 both boys and girls have achieved slightly above the national average in English. In 1999 the standards were broadly in line with the national average and with those achieved by pupils in similar schools. At GCSE, there has been a steady improvement in English language over the past three years, and in 1999 the girls were in line with the national average and the boys slightly below. In GCSE literature, standards have declined slightly and dropped further away from the national average. In 1999, the girls achieved the average but boys were well below it. Unlike some others, however, the school has maintained its inclusive policy and entered virtually all pupils for both subjects, so the comparison with national figures for literature is somewhat to its disadvantage. Pupils currently in Year 11 are performing at a level in line with the national average in both subjects.

77. In lessons, pupils at both key stages were seen to be achieving standards that were in line with national expectations. The most able pupils in Key Stage 3 show a good grasp of plot and character in the books they have read, and they write perceptive and detailed essays on them. Several pupils in a Year 7 class showed a very good understanding of different styles of writing, producing very convincing social workers' reports on a family with problems. Both boys and girls discuss their reading with enthusiasm, and listen well both to the teacher and to each other. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve good standards in some of their written work. Their needs are well known to the teachers and the learning support assistants in the classroom, who give them unobtrusive but effective support. Many of these pupils make a useful contribution to class discussions. By Year 11, the more able students are capable of detailed analysis and lively discussions of the poetry and plays they study. Even in a heated argument about the morals of the character in a poem by Simon Armitage, Year 11 pupils were able to consider each other's viewpoint and reflect on their own views. Their written commentaries on the work of Shakespeare, J B Priestley and John Steinbeck show excellent organisation and a good command of critical vocabulary. Pupils with special educational needs continue to make good progress and produce thoughtful written work in which the meaning is usually clear. Some pupils during both key stages continue to find accurate spelling and punctuation difficult. The response of a minority of pupils is limited to telling the story and describing the characters, but most still enjoy their reading and talk about it with enthusiasm. Some differences help to explain the gap in performance between the girls and the boys in public examinations. For example, boys respond more readily to oral than to written tasks, and in general the girls write more neatly and at greater length in more accurate sentences.

78. The levels of literacy observed in subjects other than English were generally satisfactory. The pupils organised their information and ideas well in design and technology, and they were fluent and confident in class discussions of art. In both these subjects, books and other sources such as CD ROMs were frequently used successfully to find out information. In many subjects, speaking and listening were actively encouraged. Opportunities in modern foreign languages to speak and listen were limited, however, and pupils showed reluctance to take part in pair work. There were opportunities to develop their skills in a variety of styles, from note taking to reports, in science and history in particular.

79. The quality of teaching seen was never less than satisfactory and mostly good, especially at Key Stage 3. In 15 per cent of lessons it was very good. Lessons start purposefully, which helps pupils to focus on the subject and secures their interest and commitment. There is usually a clear statement from the teacher about the aims of the lesson, so that pupils can understand why they are doing the tasks and they can measure their progress. In the many well-planned lessons, pupils followed a sequence of learning experiences that enabled them to make good progress. In the less effective lessons there was too much talking by the teacher, making pupils lose concentration and preventing them from making their own enquiries and forming their own ideas. When questioning the class, teachers in a few lessons accepted first answers and so the pupils lost the opportunity to develop and refine their own thinking. In other lessons, however, questioning was used to challenge and stimulate the pupils to become independent thinkers. All the English teachers have established good homework habits. Work at home is always a preparation for the next lesson or a logical development of the work done in class, so that pupils' time is well spent reinforcing what they have learnt. Teachers choose tasks carefully so that pupils of all abilities can succeed. In every classroom there are very attractive displays of pupils' work that encourage and stimulate further good work. Although speaking, listening and reading aloud are encouraged in class, there are few opportunities for pupils to develop their skills further in more formal tasks such as presentations, prepared readings and listening exercises. The assessment of their speaking and listening skills during the first two years in the school would help pupils to be more aware of their own development in these important areas.

80. Drama provides the opportunity for many pupils in Key Stage 3 to build up their confidence and their experience of working together in a co-operative way. The current arrangement of teaching drama in sets, however, does not give the pupils in some groups the benefit of working with an equal balance of boys and girls of differing abilities. Given the excellent facilities and the enthusiasm of the pupils in the auditions for the school production, the addition of drama to the options in Years 10 and 11 would enrich the curriculum.

81. The pupils enjoy their English lessons, and their behaviour in class is generally good or better. A Year 9 class discovered the powerful language in Martin Luther King's speeches through reading them aloud, and after studying some authentic charity leaflets the students in Year 11 used word-processing to produce some persuasive posters of their own.

82. In most aspects of its work, the English department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. There is a more systematic approach to teaching spelling and punctuation, and the department makes a significant contribution to the teaching of study skills. Pupils with special educational needs are more consistently provided with tasks in which they can succeed. Standards have been maintained or improved at both key stages in English language; nevertheless, a significant number of boys continue to underachieve, particularly in literature. Facilities for drama are much improved, and this area has the potential for further development.

83. Points for further action include:

- the adoption of further teaching strategies to enable boys to raise their achievement, especially in literature.
- the development of more structured opportunities to develop all pupils' skills in speaking and listening.
- the introduction of consistent procedures for the assessment of speaking and listening in Years 7 and 8.
- the development of teachers' questioning techniques to enable pupils to develop their powers of expression and the depth of their thinking.
- A review of the present setting structure for the teaching of drama at Key Stage 3, to give all pupils equal opportunity to flourish in this subject.
- the inclusion of drama as an option at Key Stage 4 to enrich the curriculum.

MATHEMATICS

84. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards in national tests are close to the national average and the average for similar schools. Key Stage 3 results have improved since the last inspection in 1995, but declined very slightly, relative to national averages, from 1997 to 1999. In both 1998 and 1999, girls' results were slightly higher than those of boys. In GCSE the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C in 1999 was also close to the national average but was above the average for similar schools. The GCSE results in 1999 were similar to those at the time of the last inspection but were a marked improvement over those in 1997 and 1998. While a higher proportion of girls achieved grades A* to C, boys achieved a higher average points score, as fewer boys received very low grades.

85. In lessons and work seen, standards were broadly average at both key stages. By the end of Key Stage 3, the highest attaining pupils are achieving well above the expected level in all aspects of mathematics. They use algebra, they know Pythagoras's theorem and they reach a good standard in using and applying mathematics. Average attainers gain a satisfactory knowledge of mathematical techniques but do not always understand the methods or apply them to unfamiliar problems. Many lower attainers still have some difficulty with arithmetic processes, such as division, subtraction and negative numbers, but they can add simple decimals and read tables and graphs.

86. By the end of Key Stage 4, some of the highest attainers have developed excellent investigational skills: they work systematically, use algebra to express their findings and explain their work well. They also understand irrational numbers, but have some difficulty rearranging formulae. Average attainers can use percentages and decimals, and can draw scale drawings, but have difficulty with algebra. The lowest attaining pupils can find mathematical patterns in sequences of numbers, and use simple co-ordinates.

87. In both key stages, girls' attainment is slightly better than boys. Most pupils achieve at a satisfactory level in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress when they have additional support in lessons and satisfactory progress in general. Some pupils of average ability underachieve due to a lack of motivation, particularly in Key Stage 4. In both key stages, the proportion of pupils attaining at the highest level is lower than the national average, and at GCSE the highest attaining pupils underachieve relative to their performance in some other subjects. This is due to their being insufficiently challenged in some of their lessons.

88. Pupils have opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in several other subjects, notably science, geography, information and communications technology and design and technology. Of these, only design and technology has a planned approach to the teaching of numeracy and teachers give very good support in the handling of number and measurement. In other subjects teachers give informal support as needed. Additionally in art there are many opportunities to apply spatial concepts in two- and three-dimensional work. Pupils' ability to cope with the mathematical needs of other subjects is satisfactory.

89. Teaching was satisfactory overall, and good or better in nearly half the lessons seen. It was very good in one lesson and unsatisfactory in another. Teaching was slightly better in Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject. Lesson planning is generally satisfactory or good, and is occasionally very good. In one GCSE lesson, for example, low attaining pupils made good progress working individually at their own pace because of careful planning of work and resources. In a small number of lessons inadequate planning led to pupils being confused when they were required to apply concepts that had not been made clear enough in the introduction. Teachers manage pupils well, with good expectations of behaviour, and in the best lessons the management of pupils is aided through meaningful activities and a good pace.

90. Good teaching methods include the effective use of visual aids and real-life data and the use of puzzles as challenges. Occasionally pupils were invited to demonstrate at the board, and this increased their motivation. Too often, however, methods are limited to the teacher giving a brief explanation and example, followed by pupils doing exercises from the textbook. In some lessons this leads to insufficient development of pupils' understanding as the standard methods and exercises do not take enough account of their prior knowledge. Pupils are given regular practice in mental arithmetic and teachers have begun to introduce ideas from the National Numeracy Strategy. Work is marked regularly, with encouraging and occasionally constructive comments. In some lessons, pupils' progress was carefully monitored within the lesson.

91. In well-planned lessons, with high expectations, pupils are keen and interested. They are interested when they are actively involved, for example, when working on computers. In some lessons, which were otherwise satisfactory, pupils' interest flagged because of the limited range of teaching methods. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to explain their understanding to the class, and teachers' questioning is often too brief to probe deeply and help pupils to develop their understanding. When pupils make errors, these are rarely explored and used to deepen learning.

92. Since the last inspection, Key Stage 3 results have improved in terms of the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 or better. GCSE results are similar to the standard at the time of last inspection and, in general, attainment continues to be at the national average. The proportion of satisfactory teaching has improved. In response to the issues for improvement in the last report, the department's policy is now implemented more consistently and some progress has been made in sharing good practice to raise standards of achievement, though this remains an area for further development. The range of teaching and learning strategies, which was criticised in the last report, remains too narrow.

93. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The department is well administered and well organised. The curriculum is appropriate, and investigational work and information and communications technology are integrated into schemes of work. The formal assessment of pupils' achievements is well organised and is used diagnostically to monitor progress. Resources for lessons are adequate but there is a lack of mathematical books in the library. There are procedures in place for the regular monitoring of teachers' work, though these are not sufficiently focussed on teaching and learning. There is good communication within the department and teachers feel well supported. The departmental development plan contains appropriate targets but lacks a clear strategy to ensure progress towards the targets.

94. In order to raise standards further from their current satisfactory standard, the department should:

- develop teaching methods which provide a better match between the curriculum and pupils' prior knowledge, and rely less on textbooks;
- improve pupils' motivation through higher aspirations and more varied teaching methods;
- build on the National Numeracy Strategy to include a greater range of numeracy activities and clear objectives for pupils in each year.

SCIENCE

95. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' performance in the standard assessment tests was close to the national average and broadly in line with the average for similar schools, having fallen over the past two years. This trend reflects changes in the intake to the school. Teacher assessments, which take into account experimental and investigative work, were well above national levels and above the average for similar schools. The good attention the department pays to investigations and the standard of pupils' investigations accounts for this higher achievement. There is now no significant difference between standards of boys and girls.

96. At the end of Key Stage 4, in double science GCSE, which all pupils take, the percentage of pupils achieving grade C or above was well above the national average. All pupils gained grade A* to G. Boys and girls achieved similar levels overall with girls attaining more higher grades A* and A. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection, attributable to making science interesting and relevant, and thus encouraging pupils to make good progress, which leads to success. Paying appropriate attention to the requirements of the examination board and encouraging pupils to use good revision techniques are additional factors.

97. Pupils in Key Stage 3 achieve satisfactorily and show attainment in line with the national average. They plan investigations and carry them out carefully and safely, and most draw conclusions that are consistent with their data and can explain these. They present their data using graphs and some use lines of best fit to draw conclusions, as for instance in a Year 9 investigation into the depth of the crater caused when a ball falls into a sand tray. Pupils in Year 9 have good knowledge and understanding of food webs, and their relationship to food chains. One group used information and communications technology effectively to display a variety of food webs. Pupils' generally good attitudes contribute to effective learning. They pay careful attention to instructions and explanations; they are keen to answer questions and they show pride in their work. In one lesson at the end of the day pupils took some time to settle and there was some silliness. When they became interested in the lesson and began to achieve well most pupils showed some responsibility.

98. Pupils in Key Stage 4 achieve well and make good progress. They have, for instance, good knowledge and understanding of the factors affecting the rate of a chemical reaction; they can recall the structure and function of the major body organs. They keep detailed and careful notes of their work, which are helpful when revising. A lower attaining group had good knowledge of the names of the parts of animal and plant cells, and some understood the function of the parts. In this group, pupils with special education needs made good progress because the material was appropriate and several learning support assistants helped them. Higher attaining pupils achieve well through individual attention and the use of extension materials in the scheme of work.

99. Teaching was good in both key stages, with some very good teaching in Key Stage 4. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of most of the National Curriculum, although there is less secure knowledge of physical processes since no permanent member of the department has a qualification in physics. Teachers, building on well-developed schemes of work, bring out the relevance of the science, thus ensuring that pupils are interested and keen to acquire new skills and knowledge. Teachers most often plan lessons to include a variety of activities so that pupils maintain their interest and concentration. This is an improvement since the time of the last inspection. They plan for particular groups, taking into account the group's prior knowledge and their level of attainment. When teaching in Key Stage 4 they also plan appropriately for single sex groups. They make good use of the one-hour lessons, ensuring a brisk pace so that, for instance, a class practical can be completed in one period. Lessons start well. Pupils are greeted outside the laboratory and go to their places in an orderly manner. There are, however, no universal procedures for ensuring that bags and coats do not obstruct circulation and cause a potential hazard. Pupils' work is well marked often with helpful comments indicating how the work might be improved. Good records are kept and this data is used to set targets for pupils and to inform revisions of the schemes of work.

100. The leadership of the department is very good. There is a clear direction to the work of the department and a determination to maintain high standards at Key Stage 4, and to improve attainment at Key Stage 4. Opportunities for pupils to further their scientific knowledge and skills through extra-curricular activities are limited. Teaching is monitored and staff receive helpful feedback on their lessons. There are sufficient teachers to ensure that the National Curriculum is well delivered and they are well supported by the technician.

101. Since the last inspection there has been improvement in that there is now no significant difference between standards reached by boys and girls. There is good work in co-operation in practical groups. There are more opportunities to use information and communications technology and lesson planning from the scheme of work through to individual lessons is now much more detailed.

102. In order to increase attainment at Key Stage 3 the department should:

- ensure that pupils have appropriately high targets;
- develop further the use of information and communications technology;
- increase opportunities for extra curricular activities .

ART

103. It is clear from pupils' work early in Year 7 that on entry to the school standards are below the national average. Most pupils have experienced the use of some media or processes, but use has been limited. Pupils make good progress through Key Stage 3, supported by the high-quality teaching and scheme of work. At the end of the key stage pupils' standards of attainment are above national average. They develop particular strengths in their understanding of how the creative imagination can be harnessed in the making of art in an organised way, in the context of their extensive understanding of the work of artists of various periods and cultural backgrounds. Individualised learning enables talented and highest achieving pupils and those of lower prior attainment or with special educational needs to achieve impressively. The end of key stage National Curriculum statements set out a similar picture. This is a significant improvement on the standards achieved at the time of the 1995 inspection.

104. Very good progress is made through Key Stage 4. Both the highest achievers and pupils of lower prior attainment progress very well. The individuality becoming discernable in pupils' work at the earlier stage becomes much more pronounced. Pupils undertake extensive study in real depth and are able to use their increasing knowledge of art in practical studio work. Standards of attainment are above average overall. The highest standards achieved are notable. Knowledge and understanding of the work of artists is a particular strength and pupils use their knowledge of methods in two and three-dimensional work. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. As at the time of the last inspection, GCSE examination results are broadly in line with the national average, but more pupils now gain the highest grades. Many pupils taking the examination have special educational needs or have achieved very modestly in the past. Many of these pupils are enabled to achieve high grades and the D or E grades of others represent very significant individual achievements.

105. In Key Stage 3 pupils show good motivation in art lessons, work hard and take a pride in their achievements. Behaviour is mostly very good and sometimes excellent. Very good relationships between pupils and with the teachers are based on mutual respect, and often shared enthusiasm. In lessons, pupils listen attentively, respond to questions, join in discussion readily and concentrate closely on the work in hand. They discuss work with each other helpfully, using their well-developed critical skills to good effect. These strong features develop further in Key Stage 4, when the pace and intensity of pupils' working is exceptional. Pupils make very good use of the opportunities provided for studio work each lunchtime and the long twilight sessions twice per week. The benefits derived from visits to galleries and museums are clear from pupils' work.

106. The teaching of art is of very good quality and features some excellence. All teaching is underpinned by the fine scheme of work and supported by very good planning and preparation of all lessons. Pupils' eagerness to acquire new skills and knowledge is responded to in challenging and exciting ways. The excellent, up-to-date expertise of teachers is used to foster depth of thought and understanding in all aspects of the work. The most impressive characteristic of the teaching is the way in which the teaching of individuals and small groups is carefully matched to the precise current needs of every individual pupil. This is allied to the full and efficient assessment of pupils' attainment and progress, in which pupils themselves have a major role, the use of data for prediction, and the setting of appropriately challenging targets.

107. Homework is very well used to explore further and extend the scope of studio work. In almost all cases the tasks set out in the scheme of work are clearly set out and entirely appropriate. In contrast, in one lesson seen, in which the teaching was otherwise of good quality, focus was lost and time wasted over the setting of homework. This was due to the over-complex way this work was set by a teacher clearly not comfortable with the task prescribed. Homework is often of a kind, which makes good use of the sketchbooks, which are used well in all years. Although the quality of use is good, they are underused by pupils for the personal recording of imagery and ideas not directly related to schoolwork.

108. The art curriculum is well balanced and broad. Three-dimensional work is well represented and pupils make good creative use of printmaking and ceramic processes. The study of art and the work of artists have a major part in the study of the subject at all stages. The elements of the National Curriculum Programme of Study are fully in place, but facilities restrict the development of the very good work in information and communications technology as a working tool in the studios.

109. The department has made good progress since the last inspection and continues to improve. There are no weaknesses, but the following aspects of the work would benefit from further development:

- identify the learning objectives in homework tasks in the work scheme more precisely and enable individual teachers to select their own strategies for meeting these objectives within their own areas of maximum expertise;
- improving facilities for information and communications technology in the artwork areas to enable its routine use in pupils' work;
- extending the use of sketchbooks to include pupils' own choice of recorded and collected images and ideas and development work.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

110. On entry to Year 7 pupils' standards of attainment in the subject are below national average and the range of their experience in the subject is limited. On the rotational course in Key Stage 3 they cover a broad, full and coherent programme, making good progress and acquiring an extensive repertoire of skills and knowledge as they are introduced to many new experiences. Pupils are enabled to develop a particularly clear understanding of designing as a process within all elements of the subject. The good progress made is clear at the end of the key stage, when pupils fully reach the national average standard right across the subject, and often achieve higher standards. The needs of the highest performers and those of lower attainment are fully met, enabling them to reach appropriately high standards. The end of key stage National Curriculum assessments reflect this pattern of attainment. This is an improvement on the standards achieved at the time of the 1995 inspection.

111. In Key Stage 4 pupils make very good progress in one aspect of the subject, and build on the foundation established in Key Stage 3. The overall standard reached is well above the national average. The highest achieving pupils are enabled to reach the highest standards and those of more modest attainment enjoy the satisfaction of achieving their full potential. Each area of specialism within the subject promotes excellence and achievement for all pupils. The standards now achieved are well above those reported on in the 1995 inspection. Similarly, the examination results now being obtained have greatly improved. There are now no aspects of the subject obtaining poor results. Current examination results are very good, with many pupils obtaining the highest grades. Pupils of modest prior attainment, including those with special educational needs, often obtain passes within the A* to C range, but D and E grades too, often celebrate impressive individual effort.

112. During Key Stage 3 pupils are well motivated, approach work with energy and enthusiasm and enjoy mastering skills and acquiring new knowledge. Behaviour is usually very good and can be excellent. Pupils get on well with one another and are mutually supportive. Relationships between pupils and teachers are cordial and productive. In lessons, pupils listen carefully, answer questions well, discuss readily and in an informed way, and work with concentration and thought. In workshop and studio they discuss the work in hand sensibly and helpfully, providing mutual support. In Key Stage 4 attitudes and learning behaviours develop further and confidence increases.

113. The teaching of design technology is very good, with some excellence at Key Stage 4. Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. All the teachers have excellent expertise in their own specialisms and a very good grasp of the totality of the subject. Together they comprise and operate as a cohesive and effective team. The new scheme of work is of high quality and provides a firm foundation for the very good lesson planning and preparation. Teachers challenge pupils and often their commitment, enthusiasm and originality clearly inspire pupils. They routinely communicate their own enjoyment of the work. Lessons are very well managed and complex facilities are used with maximum economy of time. Teaching is carefully individualised, addressing the particular needs of each individual pupil, and supporting and recognising each increment of progress made. Pupils have agreed work targets and seek to meet them in a focussed way. Assessment and recording is in tune with this individualised approach and underpins curricular planning. Resources are well used, but poor or limited information and communications technology facilities in the department and limited resources for the study of design hamper teacher and learner.

114. The design and technology curriculum is of high quality and has good breadth. It meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, but is restricted in the coverage of the information and communications technology element of the subject and specific technological elements, such as electronics and pneumatics, by the limitations of existing facilities.

115. There are no weaknesses, but as the department continues to develop, it should take account of the following areas requiring some attention:

- placing greater emphasis upon the study of design, in relation to its history, movements and styles. Similarly, pay more attention to the history of the development of technologies within the context of their study. The development of this desirable underpinning of pupils' learning by the subject's body of knowledge needs to be supported by improved study facilities and resources.
- improving the facilities for the use of information and communications technology in the work within workshops and studios, to enable the working practices to take full account of best current practice in education and industry.
- reviewing the use of accommodation in the light of the changing curricular demands, especially in relation to information and communications technology and study facilities, and the development of specific technologies.

GEOGRAPHY

116. On entry to the school the prior attainment of pupils in geography is below the national average. The standard attained by pupils towards the end of Key Stage 3 is close to but below the national average, and below the standard indicated by the 1999 National Curriculum teacher assessments, which are unreliable. Results at GCSE have improved steadily over the past four years, and in 1998 were well above the national average for similar schools. In 1999 attainment fell to below the national average, largely due to staff changes. The performance of pupils currently in Year 11 indicates above average attainment. The difference between the attainment of boys and girls is in line with that seen nationally.

117. Pupils' progress and achievement is satisfactory in both key stages. Higher attaining pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of geographic processes and have well-developed skills of interpreting and analysing data. They make good use of these skills in class discussion and group work and are proficient at analysing trends and making predictions. This was well illustrated in a Year 8 class who were able to analyse and interpret the changes in location of industry in a region. However, the poor knowledge of geographic information of lower and middle attaining pupils limits their contribution to discussion. This was evident in a Year 10 lesson on industrial location in South Wales, where the quality of pupils' analysis and interpretation was poor because of their weak understanding of the locational factors of industry. Most pupils' sense of place, however, is very good, largely as a result of the department's good practice of making use of atlases during every lesson.

118. The poorly planned curriculum at Key Stage 3 limits pupils' progress. A better match of classroom tasks could accelerate progress of pupils with special education needs and of higher attaining pupils. For instance, in Year 8, pupils in the top set completed an identical exercise on industrial location to those in the lower set. In Year 10, the progress of higher attaining pupils is slowed because of tasks which are undemanding and lack challenge.

119. The vast majority of pupils respond well in lessons, even when the level of demand is low. In Year 9, pupils sustained concentration very well during a long lesson, where there was little challenge for them in terms of being actively involved. They concentrate well and work hard, best when the tasks are varied and capture their interest. In lessons where teacher exposition is over long and exercises lack variety pupils sometimes become restless and inattentive, which sometimes leads to a small amount of inappropriate behaviour. In many lessons, good relationships and behaviour contribute strongly to the positive attitude to learning.

120. Teaching was satisfactory overall; 30 per cent was good and ten per cent very good. The skilful management of pupils through high expectations for behaviour and a brisk pace of work very well support learning in all lessons. In many lessons, the secure subject knowledge of teachers is skilfully transmitted to pupils, especially in Key Stage 4, where it promotes confidence in pupils and prompts good progress. In the best lessons, good levels of concentration and interest are well fostered by a good pace and variety of work. Time is used to the full, and pupils are kept busy with brisk and purposeful teaching. At best questioning is used effectively to challenge and develop pupils' understanding. On other occasions, it is insufficiently probing to challenge pupils to develop and to substantiate their replies. Group work is not frequently used to enable pupils to challenge and support one another in their learning.

121. Pupils are not always inspired to share the teachers' enthusiasm for the subject. Often, progress is slowed by over control by the teacher, inhibiting their opportunity to work at full stretch. Inadequate lesson planning also slows progress. Although the aims of the lesson are always made clear to pupils, tasks are not always well sequenced, nor are they matched to the learning requirements of individual pupils.

122. Where the teacher expects much of the pupils, as in a Year 8 lesson on industrial change, they put a great deal of effort into their work, persevere when faced with difficulty and become engrossed in the task. Where the work is less challenging, pupils become passive and over reliant on the teacher. For instance, in a Year 10 lesson on industry, because of over domination by the teacher pupils could not contribute their ideas and knowledge. In this lesson, higher attaining pupils especially did not achieve the standards of which they were capable.

123. Pupils' interest, involvement and understanding of their work is strongly supported by homework, which often extends work in lessons. It is especially valuable in facilitating the development of research and personal study skills. Most pupils are keen to do well and most understand how well they are achieving, especially at Key Stage 4, where they are involved in target setting. Most work is regularly and accurately marked, although the written comments in pupils' books vary in the extent to which they provide useful guidance for improvement, especially for the higher attaining pupils.

124. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. A new head of department has set clear aims and objectives for the subject, and made considerable improvements to departmental management. The team of geographers works well together, sharing ideas and good practice and participating in a system of mutual lesson observation. Resources and accommodation are used well. The head of department has yet to redress problems with the curriculum and assessment at Key Stage 3. Here, the curriculum is poorly planned, as it does not enable pupils to acquire progressively geographic knowledge, understanding and skills, which are matched to their individual needs. There are few opportunities for fieldwork and for the use of information and communications technology to enhance geographic competence. Good progress has been made since the last inspection.

125. It now remains for the department to:

- improve curriculum planning at Key Stage 3
- develop systems of assessment at Key Stage 3
- ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching.

HISTORY

126. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with the national average. Inspection evidence points to a consistent improvement in standards since the previous inspection. Pupils recollect and make appropriate use of data, vocabulary and convention that describe historical periods. They have a generally a sound knowledge and understanding of the characters of specific periods, for example, pupils wrote about evidence found to support the heroic and villainous character of Oliver Cromwell. All pupils are able to consider the ethnic, social, cultural and religious nature of British societies. Their knowledge and understanding of public health and medicine is particularly strong, for instance, their ability to analyse the cause and consequences of the Black Death within medieval society. Pupils' interpretation of history is less well developed. An understanding of how and why history is represented is limited particularly amongst those pupils with special educational needs and lower attaining groups. All pupils have a very good understanding of chronology.

127. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 in the GCSE examination in 1999 showed standards in line with the national average in terms of the proportion of pupils achieving A* to C and A to G grades. The difference between the attainment of boys and girls is broadly in line with that seen nationally. Results compare favorably with those of similar schools and pupils perform significantly better in GCSE history than in some other subjects. Results have seen an upward trend since the last inspection and are a result of a general push to raise attainment through appropriate examination skills and techniques. By the end of the key stage pupils demonstrate good understanding and knowledge of the past and the process of change within history, particularly when studying the context of change and innovations within medicine. Skills of investigation and analysis are good and factual knowledge is used well to support answers to historical questions. Communication skills are less well developed particularly in the case of lower attainers where it affects their ability to judge, argue and debate on available evidence.

128. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' levels of achievement are satisfactory in relation to prior attainment. Sound progress is made over time by reinforcing previously acquired skills and knowledge. Average and higher attaining pupils develop their writing skills through diaries, essays and research projects and develop a good understanding of history through the strong emphasis on skills of investigation and analysis. Although progress is satisfactory overall there is evidence of inconsistency both across teaching groups and ability sets. Lower attainers are not achieving as well as they might because the learning materials are not adapted to their limited reading and comprehension skills. During Key Stage 4 levels of attainment rise and achievement is good. Pupils build on and apply prior skills and knowledge from Key Stage 3 and apply themselves readily to independent learning. Good progress is also attributable to thorough examination preparation.

129. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour were good in the majority of lessons seen. Pupils settle quickly to work and are well motivated when sufficiently challenged. There is however some evidence of unsatisfactory behaviour in lower attaining groups where methods and organisation are not suited to the needs and abilities of pupils. Standards of behaviour are good within Key Stage 4. Pupils have strong listening and concentration skills and have a mature approach to learning. Teacher pupil relationships are excellent and promote sound learning. Pupils appreciate the care, guidance and support given by their teachers.

130. The quality of teaching across the age range was satisfactory. It was good in 25 per cent of lessons. Within Key Stage 3, good lessons were characterised by variety and range of tasks and high expectations emphasising the quantity and quality of work produced and strong literary emphasis, all of which provide challenge and motivation. In less successful lessons, an over emphasis on teacher led approaches to learning and lengthy introductions and explanations limited the progress of pupils and affected their concentration levels. In lower attaining groups, progress is adversely affected when methods and organisation are not suited to pupils' needs and abilities. The quality of teaching within Key Stage 4 is always at least satisfactory and sometimes good. Teachers' very good command of subject knowledge gives depth and accuracy to pupils' meticulous note taking and excellent examination preparation. There is still some over-reliance on formal teaching methods and opportunities for independent learning and research remain limited particularly in the case of higher attainers. Provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural experience are restricted by the absence of links with the local community and enrichment opportunities outside the classroom. Although resources have improved since the last inspection, the quality and range of additional sources of information are insufficient to meet the demands of the curriculum and needs of all pupils.

131. The department benefits from strong leadership, which has addressed with success the priorities identified in the previous report, namely, raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching. Appropriate and effective systems are in place for monitoring the standards achieved and work covered by pupils. Since the last report there have been great improvements in the review and delivery of the history curriculum to suit the needs and abilities of all pupils though there is room for further development.

132. There are no weaknesses, but as the department continues to develop, it should take account of the following areas requiring attention:

- further review of teaching and learning methods within Key Stage 3 by considering the needs and abilities of pupils with lower attaining groups and those pupils with special educational needs.
- place greater emphasis on the range and use of literacy programs within Key Stage 3. In particular, the opportunity for pupils to develop their written and oral communication skills.
- improve the provision of suitable materials and resources to support both classroom learning and extended opportunities for independent study for all pupils.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

133. At the end of Key Stage 3, teacher assessments were very high, nearly 90 per cent of pupils being assessed at level 5 or better and more than half being at level 6 or better. This represents attainment above national expectations. However, there were no moderation procedures, and there are no annotated portfolios of pupils' work. Work of pupils in Year 9 and 10 suggest that some of these assessments were over optimistic. Inspection evidence reveals that attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 matches the national average. The GCSE short course was offered for the first time in 1999. Here, one third of the pupils who took the GCSE short course obtained a grade in the range A* to C, below the national figure. The pass rate at A* to G was above the national figure. Most of the pupils who did not take GCSE obtained a certificated qualification. There is insufficient reliable evidence from which to judge trends or differences in the performance of boys and girls.

134. Pupils now achieve well in Key Stage 3, having entered the school with below average levels of prior attainment. Pupils gain skills in the use of most information and communications technology tools. They learn to use a word processor, a spreadsheet, a database and drawing programs. Year 7 pupils used a spreadsheet to construct an invoice and modify it to include more items. They understand the component parts of a computer system and have some understanding of the limitations of information and communications technology tools and are able to discuss some of the social, economic and moral issues raised by the use of information and communications technology. In mathematics they learn how to control a screen turtle by writing instructions. In science they have some experience of measuring variables using data logging equipment. Some pupils had investigated the insulating properties of a number of materials by measuring how they affected the cooling of a hot object. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 have similar skills and knowledge. These pupils had little effective teaching in their earlier years and are only now beginning to acquire information and communications technology expertise. Pupils in Year 9 use spreadsheets, but are not familiar with ways of filling a range of cells with the same formula. They can use a word-processor to create and edit text, but are not confident in changing the size of a font. Nor do they know about the range of fonts available and the purposes for which they might be used.

135. Pupils in Key Stage 4 taking the GCSE short course achieve well. They have carried out some very good projects, which are well researched, well documented and very well presented. They have a good understanding of some of the implications of the use of information and communications technology. For instance, they learn about the data protection legislation and the social implications of the introduction of computers in the work place. Those doing the skills based course acquire satisfactory information and communications technology skills but do not progress in their understanding of some of the implications of the use of information and communications technology.

136. In both key stages pupils use their information and communications technology skills well in many subjects of the curriculum including English, mathematics, science, art, and music and design technology. In science, for instance, pupils were using a word processor with drawing facilities to construct a food web with arrows indicating the flow of energy from producers to consumers. Pupils use computer-assisted design programmes for design and modelling, for example, in work on surface patterns. Skills in word processing and desktop publishing are used effectively in English, for essays, posters and advertisements. In mathematics, they use logo for geometry and also use databases and spreadsheets. In history, word processing and the Internet are used well, the latter for research and resources, as in a Year 7 group working on 1066 "Who should be King?"

137. Teaching was good in both key stages. Teachers generally have good knowledge of the software and its application. They give clear instructions and are able to help individuals and small groups when working at computers. This helps pupils to access the programs and supports their progress towards autonomous use of computers as an aid to learning. Teachers plan lessons well, using excellent recently produced schemes of work together with an impressive amount of resource material.

138. Pupils are generally well behaved and enthusiastic. They show due respect for the software and hardware. Their positive attitudes to learning are further enhanced because their work is well marked with useful hints as to how to improve. Good records are now kept and the data used to attribute National Curriculum levels in Key Stage 3. The data is also used to modify teaching approaches and to inform curriculum development. Appropriate and effective methods are used in teaching, helping to support pupils' efforts and interest in acquiring new skills. For instance, lessons, which do not need the use of computers, may be held in ordinary classrooms, which provide a better environment for group discussions and co-operative working. Much of the work involves pupils working at their own pace, enabling both those with special education needs and the more able to achieve appropriately high levels.

139. The provision for information and communications technology has been radically improved recently and enables good teaching of information and communications technology in both key stages. There is, however, insufficient ease of access for other subjects. Although much progress has been made there is still a need for all information and communications technology rooms to be brought up to the standard of the best, together with the development of Internet access and access to CD-ROMs.

140. The management of the department by the recently appointed head of department is excellent. He has quickly set up systems and written schemes of work and resource materials that enable all teachers to teach well, leading to good progress. He has provided professional development for teachers in all subjects and their enthusiasm for the use of information and communications technology is growing rapidly.

141. Since the last inspection information technology skills have much improved; teachers have higher expectations of pupils' skill development; information technology is now being used by more subjects, but not all. There is now no unsatisfactory teaching; professional development is provided for subject teachers and now 85 per cent have appropriate information and communications technology skills.

142. Points for further action:

- Apply the very good schemes of work throughout both key stages
- Continue to improve the provision of hardware and software.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

143. Overall, standards are low, particularly in French, and have not improved since the last inspection. At the end of Key Stage 3, teacher assessment indicates that, whereas the proportion of pupils reaching National Curriculum level 4 is in line with national expectations, the proportion reaching level 5 is very much lower than national expectations. Performance in GCSE examinations is similar to that at the end of Key Stage 3; the proportion gaining grades A* to G is in line with national expectations but the proportion gaining grades A* to C is less than half the national figure. Results in German are slightly better but the pupils taking the subject are those who are in the top sets for French. Performance by girls is ahead of that by boys but no more than is found nationally.

144. This picture of low attainment is more than confirmed by classroom observation and the scrutiny of written work. In Key Stage 3, pupils are able to understand and respond to simple classroom language, and understand vocabulary and expressions to do with personal information, the home and other common topics. Some pupils did not progress beyond this point. In Key Stage 4, most pupils are unable to handle more complex language, to do with explanations about the work in hand, for example, largely because such language in French and German is almost invariably accompanied by a translation into English, which is what pupils listen to. The ability to understand the foreign language spoken by a native speaker on tape is poor, partly through a lack of opportunity and partly through poor technique in using the cassette recorder. Standards in speaking are poor in both key stages. In Key Stage 3, only in the exchange of personal information can pupils make a complete utterance. For the most part, speaking is limited to part sentences in a narrow context. Pronunciation is poor and there are many inaccuracies. Very few can make utterances containing several elements, nor can they, from memory, use modal verbs or tenses other than the present. In Key Stage 4, pupils have a wider vocabulary but they are still not able to use different tenses spontaneously, or add explanations using subordination. Pupils have few opportunities to read and there is no planned provision, with the result that standards are low. Pupils do not readily associate the spoken and written word and reading aloud is hesitant and inaccurate. A foundation level reading exercise about health, for a Year 11 group, was badly prepared and pupils were unable to understand the text sufficiently well to do the simple task set. In Key Stage 3, writing consists mainly of illustrating and copying vocabulary, simple dialogues and grammar exercises. Opportunities to write a few connected sentences on topics such as themselves and the school, for example, are limited and the standard is below that expected at the end of the key stage. The range of structures that pupils can use is limited, only one tense and a narrow range of verbs. For higher attainers there is some progress and by the end of Key Stage 4 there were a few examples of extended writing on topics such as holidays, tourism and health which were of a good standard, using several tenses, subordinate clauses and specific vocabulary. There is evidence of redrafting. For most pupils in Key Stage 4, however, writing is limited to copying and grammar exercises, with some dialogues. The range of vocabulary and structure is limited and presentation is often poor.

145. Teaching is unsatisfactory in most respects and in both key stages. Lesson objectives are couched in general terms and are insufficiently specific about what pupils will know by the end of the lesson, with the result that they are not able to focus their effort. Expectations are too low. A Year 7 class had to match animal noises with pictures and captions and a Year 11 class using interesting material about healthy living had merely to translate the headings and opportunities were missed to exploit the material. The first of the activities was trivial and the second lacked challenge; neither motivated the pupils.

146. The development of the lesson is not always in the most logical order. In a Year 10 German class, pupils were presented with the dialogue before they had had the chance to meet and practise the vocabulary. A pair-work exercise about holidays depended on pupils being familiar with the symbols being used; this was not included in the planning and progress was held up.

147. Teaching does not meet the needs of all pupils; it is aimed at the middle range of attainment. The needs of pupils with special educational needs are not considered in the planning; and whilst extension work for higher-attaining pupils is mentioned in some lesson plans, there is no specific material and often insufficient time. In a lesson on tourism, higher-attainers had to produce 'more ambitious answers', without it being made clear what this entailed. In another lesson in Year 10, more able pupils were asked to provide reasons for their choice of hotel, without adequate information or preparation.

148. Classroom organisation is inconsistent. Beginnings are often slow; they do not begin with a reminder of material covered in a previous lesson, so that pupils are in a position to make further progress. Objectives are not stated clearly, so that pupils know what they have to achieve; and lessons sometimes end untidily, when the teacher runs out of time and there is no opportunity to measure the progress made, which might serve to motivate them for the next lesson. Class control is satisfactory but pupils are slow to react; and there is calling out, particularly in Key Stage 4 classes and classes with low attaining pupils. In one class, there was considerable disruption. In two classes taught by non-specialists, teachers had high expectations and secured co-operation. The pace of lessons is never brisk and is slowed by activities being continued too long, or by the attitudes of pupils.

149. The use of French or German in the classroom remains unsatisfactory. A reasonable amount is used in Key Stage 3 but without sufficient expectation that it will be understood and acted upon. By Year 11, lessons were conducted largely in English with only an occasional sentence in the foreign language. Even where the target language was used, it was accompanied by a translation into English, with the result that pupils listened to the English rather than the French and motivation and concentration diminished. Occasionally French was used inappropriately, as in a complicated pair-work exercise about holiday activities where it was essential the pupils understood clearly what was expected of them, and where two or three sentences in English would have enabled them to make progress with the language task more effectively.

150. Methodology is limited and not conducive to increasing pupils' learning. Insufficient use is made of the visual image to convey meaning without the use of English. There is little department-produced material to help pupils to learn and to provide tasks for pupils of different attainment levels. Infrequent use is made of audiotapes, and then inexpertly. The use of information and communications technology has only just begun, and in the one lesson seen, the amount of French taught was limited by the time spent setting up the computers.

151. The marking of exercise books is irregular and sketchy with little in the way of analytical or constructive marking. Assessment is not related to National Curriculum or GCSE criteria. If pupils knew where they stood in relation to these, they would be better motivated to pursue challenging targets. The results of assessment are not used to inform short and long term planning.

152. The curriculum arrangements for French are unsatisfactory; in both key stages the amount of time allocated is significantly less than is recommended nationally. The arrangements for the second foreign language are satisfactory. Pupil grouping in Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory, being based on criteria other than pupils' attainment in languages; the concentration of low-attaining pupils in one class makes teaching difficult. In Key Stage 4, the option arrangements do not permit grouping by attainment in French.

153. The modern languages department has experienced considerable difficulties since the last inspection, not least the lack of a head of department for 18 months. The newly appointed post holder faces a considerable task.

154. Improvements are needed in all aspects: teaching, curriculum planning, classroom organisation and management, monitoring and assessment.

MUSIC

155. Pupils achieve well and make good progress in music. Pupils' attainment is below national standards on entry to the school. It is in line with national standards by the end of Key Stage 3 and above them at the end of Key Stage 4. GCSE examination results have improved steadily over the past four years and are now above average. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

156. In Key Stage 3 pupils are competent in practical rhythm work and understand aspects of traditional notation. The more able use their knowledge and understanding of notation imaginatively to produce compositions of good quality. Technical terms such as "syncopation" and "texture" are well understood. In practical lessons classroom percussion instruments are played sensitively; pupils use a range of dynamics. In Key Stage 4 pupils understand many of the characteristics of style and can place individual pieces of music in context. In one lesson pupils selected cards with stylistic features written on them and matched them with the correct historical period thoughtfully and with a high degree of accuracy. Compositions are of good quality; they show an understanding of structural, formal and harmonic elements and are notated well. Performing on recorders in the Year 10 GCSE group helps pupils to acquire a working knowledge of notation. In both key stages folders are maintained carefully and presented neatly.

157. Pupils' response to music is good overall in both key stages. Pupils come to music lessons keen to learn and anticipating enjoyment. They show a lively interest in their work, ask pertinent questions and give well-considered responses to the teacher. Concentration is generally good although some pupils lose their focus towards the end of the hour-long periods. Relationships between pupils and teacher are cordial and constructive. Behaviour is very good; their willingness to listen to each other is a positive feature of the pupils' learning.

158. The teaching is good overall at both key stages, with some very good lessons. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Planning is a strength of the department and of very good quality. The curriculum covers a wide variety of activities and topics and pupils undertake a good balance of the practical and theoretical aspects of the subject. Documentation is exemplary; it shows clearly the progression of the units of work and is reviewed frequently. Assessment is meticulous and informs planning at all levels. Relevant homework is set regularly and marked rigorously with detailed comment and targets for improvement.

159. The teacher's subject knowledge is very good; her own musical expertise brings skill and vitality to the classroom. There is a bracing sense of challenge in the teaching and the pace is lively; the pupils respond to this with added purpose and a will to succeed. The approach is one of adventure. Pupils are invited to share the journey and do so with a sense of excitement. The teacher's style of questioning is skilful; questions and activities are carefully framed and selected to help her ascertain the quality and depth of the pupils' learning. This searching questioning encourages pupils to think and to make links between areas of learning. An appropriate, and sometimes inspired, use of analogy and anecdote helps to sustain interest; as a result pupils listen carefully and can recall detail. Occasionally the pace of change in lessons is too rapid and leads to some confusion.

160. Pupils of all abilities are supported well in their learning. There is good support for pupils with special educational needs; learning support teachers are knowledgeable and well informed about their pupils. One hearing-impaired pupil received particularly good support in a Year 10 GCSE lesson.

161. The department is very well managed. A team of instrumental teachers provides a good service to the school; this provision complements classroom work, particularly for pupils in Key Stage 4. Professional musicians visit the school regularly and provide curriculum enrichment. In a recent project the school commissioned children's songs from distinguished composers and formed a Cherry Willingham Songbook. These songs were performed at a concert in Lincoln Cathedral. The school also has a full programme of annual performances. The school band is well organised and tutored and there are smaller ensembles and groups.

162. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. In order to raise standards further the department should now build on the recent progress it has made with classroom singing by continuing to broaden its range of approaches and techniques.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

163. The standards in physical education achieved by pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 are above the national average. There is evidence of this both from observation of lessons and from end of unit assessments near the end of Year 9. Recent GCSE results show that, at the end of Key Stage 4, pupils are also more than meeting national average standards. Boys, with very good results at top grades, have significantly outperformed girls in GCSE over the last three years. In those years, girls mainly met or slightly bettered national averages for top grades, so the girls were not under performing. This has been the pattern of results since the last inspection. Present Year 11 pupils' GCSE written and practical work suggests that there is not now such a divide between boys' and girls' standards.

164. Pupils progress and achieve well at both key stages. A Year 10 rugby lesson showed achievement of standards of passing, planning line strategies and tackling well beyond levels seen normally at that age and experience. This meant that almost all pupils were moving to understand more complex tactics and thinking; most were achieving understanding more expected at the end of Year 11. A Year 9 basketball group was demonstrating defensive plays making the work of attackers very difficult. The standard of tactical thinking was very high from experienced boys and also from girls much newer to the activity.

165. Throughout physical education pupils' attitudes to their work and their behaviour are always good. Every lesson observation shows pupils changing quickly, anxious to learn and concentrating hard. This plays a key part in improving standards and skills. In a Year 10 trampoline lesson, significant in the high standards of complex individual programmes from relative beginners were the positive comments made by pupils to help each other. Concentration in long hockey practices in Year 9 enabled teams to plan strategies with notable improvements shown.

166. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, often good. Their learning is helped by learning support assistants and also by highly observant teachers who have strong skills at supporting individuals. This enables those with difficulties to meet their own challenges. The most able pupils relish the challenge set by teachers, the opportunities for extra-curricular activities and the specialist coaching offered.

167. Teaching was good overall in both key stages and in a significant minority of lessons excellent. No lesson seen was unsatisfactory. Teachers' good knowledge of subject matter and teaching techniques supports the pupils' levels of motivated concentration, so achieving gains in understanding of how to improve. There is a successful concentration on standards of literacy in GCSE written work supported by satisfactory homework.

168. Teachers have high expectations of themselves and their pupils. This means that in all lessons, pupils expect there to be learning and progress as well as enjoyment. In all lessons, teachers observe and assess well, feeding comments to help individuals. This contributes to easily observable improvement. In Year 8 hockey, those with less skill to begin with were passing accurately and understanding positioning by the end.

169. There is no use at present of information and communications technology to assist record keeping and to enable pupils and teachers together to set individual targets for improvement in specific activities. Written work is regularly marked but pupils would benefit from more diagnostic comments to aid future improvement.

170. Since the last inspection, physical education has maintained the high standards then noted. Consolidation means that good standards noted then are now being reached throughout. There is also now a strong sense of challenge to all, in particular to the most able. Within the curriculum, schemes of work have improved in detail and their planned purpose of supporting learning. The sports hall now has an effective heating system. Lessons now take place in comfortable temperatures for activity. Equipment and other resources for learning are sufficient for the present curriculum and numbers.

171. The good quality of management strongly supports the present standards and recent improvements. Well-qualified teachers support the head of physical education. All use a wide range of teaching methods to motivate pupils and assist specific activities.

172. Very strongly supporting learning and progress, involving at some point in the year over 40 per cent of pupils, is the school's range of extra-curricular activities. School teams and individuals have a successful history of performance in county, regional and national events. Standards of achievement in activities seen are high. Individuals and clubs from outside the school provide additional coaching and assist the achievement of higher standards for individuals and teams.

173. This is a good department which enables pupils to reach high standards. In order to sustain or improve its effectiveness, the department should:

- improve the systems for recording the performance of individual pupils.
- set clear targets for pupils.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

174. Many pupils reach levels expected by the Lincolnshire Agreed Syllabus at the end of Key Stage 3. They have good religious knowledge and understand some of the special beliefs held by Christians, Jews and Muslims. Pupils appreciate some of the ways in which different believers express their faith, for example, through festivals and pilgrimage. Higher attaining pupils are beginning to develop skills to interpret the meaning behind religious ideas, but generally, skills to interpret and evaluate are less well developed because there is less planning for these. Some lower attaining pupils do not reach expected levels and have limited factual knowledge only, most particularly where teaching is not sufficiently motivating and does not provide tasks best matched to needs.

175. At Key Stage 4, in the short course GCSE in 1999, attainment matched the national average. Those who took the optional full GCSE achieved above average results. Girls did better than boys, especially in the higher grades. Pupils currently studying both courses are attaining at similar levels. They have good understanding, of religious beliefs and teachings. Higher attaining pupils can examine complex questions and can apply, for example, Muslim teaching on justice, to issues of human suffering, as well as explaining and justifying their own views. These good standards are the result of good, challenging teaching, which succeeds in grasping pupils' interest.

176. In both key stages, most pupils, including the higher attainers and those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily and many achieve well. Good curriculum and well-structured lessons, together with expectations that pupils of all abilities will think for themselves, support this effective learning. Pupils build steadily on prior learning, successfully extending their knowledge of different religions and how these are expressed in every day life. Many pupils show interest, and are keen to take part. Year 11 pupils engaged in lively debate on the meaning of God, raising many complex questions and thereby developed their skills of critical argument. Lower and average attaining pupils, especially in Key Stage 3, achieve especially well in lessons that provide a series of short, varied and challenging tasks in which they succeed. For instance, a Year 7 class enjoyed rapidly recalling their work on a Hindu festival and went on to think about the idea of celebration through several different activities, which sustained their interest and enabled them to understand the meaning. However, there is occasional under achievement for lower attaining pupils in isolated lessons at Key Stage 3 where planning is not of this very good standard and where, as a result, pupils lose interest, do not concentrate and do not understand.

177. Overall, the teaching is good, in both key stages. At times it is very good, with minor instances where it is unsatisfactory. Teachers mostly use their subject expertise to explain the work in a clear and lively style so that pupils are enabled to understand. Relationships are very good; pupils are known well and are given much individual support and encouragement in their learning. Planning is mostly good, so that activities are matched to different needs. All of these good features were seen, for instance, in a lesson where Year 8 pupils, many of whom had special educational needs, thoroughly deepened their understanding of Jewish food and food preparation rules. Here, pupils' learning was enhanced by clear explanation, illustrated with examples drawn from their own experience and lots of visual stimulus, choosing suitable dishes from colourful cookery books. In the very small minority of lessons where non-specialist knowledge is less confident and explanations are less clear, pupils grasp some of the basic facts only. Work is mostly marked clearly, with praise and useful guidance for further improvement, especially in Key Stage 4. In these ways, pupils know that their efforts are valued and high achievement is encouraged. Homework is used very well to extend and support pupils' learning, often through imaginative tasks, which succeed in sustaining pupils' interest.

178. Since the last inspection, provision has improved with the introduction of the GCSE short course for all. Departmental leadership and management are sound. The result is shared commitment to high standards. Systems to assess and track pupils' progress are being developed but results of assessment are not yet fully used to help guide planning of future work for different pupils. There is on going informal review of teaching and learning activities but not full systems of formal monitoring of the work of the department. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Most pupils gain positive attitudes of respect for different faiths and an understanding of how religion affects life. Standards of attainment and quality of teaching have been sustained since the last inspection.

179. Points for further development include:

- planning and implementing the imminent new Agreed Syllabus, especially planning for pupils' skill development, and taking account in planning of some of the different ways boys and girls learn.
- developing rigorous systems of assessment to reflect closely the standards expected by the Agreed Syllabus for both key stages and systematically use results of assessment to guide planning of future work to match pupils' different needs.
- formally monitoring the work of the department including teaching and its impact on learning.