

INSPECTION REPORT

COURT MOOR SCHOOL

FLEET

LEA area: Hampshire

Unique reference number:116412

Headteacher: Mr K J Shorey

Reporting inspector: Mr D Pittman
16976

Dates of inspection: 17-21 January 2000

Inspection number: 186665

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Spring Woods Fleet Hampshire
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr A Mitchell
Date of previous inspection:	22 January 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Denis Pittman	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?
			The school's results and achievements
			How well are pupils taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
			What should the school do to improve further?
Rona Orme	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Jan Boulton	Team inspector	Physical education	
Malcolm Burley	Team inspector	Science	
Anthony Fiddian-Green	Team inspector	Religious education	
		Special educational needs	
Roger Freeman	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Ged Gast	Team inspector	Art	
Barbara Johnstone	Team inspector	Music	
Richard Patterson	Team inspector	Design and technology	
		ICT	
Joyce Sanderson	Team inspector	English	
Barry Smith	Team inspector	Geography	
David Wasp	Team inspector	History	
Ian Waters	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Court Moor is an above average sized comprehensive school of 1045 boys and girls, aged 11 to 16. The overall attainment of pupils upon entry to the school, at age 11, is above average. The school has identified twenty-four pupils having special educational needs requiring specific specialist support, of whom seven pupils have statements – a proportion below the national average. There are thirteen pupils who are from minority ethnic backgrounds, and two pupils have English as an additional language - these figures are fewer than in most schools. The socio-economic background of pupils is more favourable than average. Twenty-three pupils are entitled to free school meals, well below the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school, which is significantly over-subscribed. It is both caring and effective. There is a purposeful and strong leadership, with a vision that has led a general commitment to improvement. The quality of teaching is very good. The staff create an enthusiastic, supportive climate for learning, which promotes high standards of achievement. The school provides very good value for money. A significant feature is the welcoming ethos of the school.

What the school does well

- Teaching is good in over three-quarters of lessons. It is very good or excellent in one lesson in three.
- There are high standards of attainment at both key stages, particularly in art, geography and business studies, and in English literature at Key Stage 4.
- There is very good leadership, and all staff work as a committed and supportive team.
- Pupils have enthusiastic attitudes towards school, and behave very well.
- An extensive range of extra-curricular activities successfully promotes the personal development of pupils.
- Pupils and staff work well together, and have a mutual respect and purpose.

What could be improved

- The standards of attainment in ICT at both key stages; to satisfy the statutory requirements for the provision of ICT. There is also a need to update and extend equipment and improve leadership for the subject.
- To raise the performance of boys in English, history and modern foreign languages.
- The quality of reports, to provide a clearer indication of how children are progressing.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good overall progress since the previous inspection. Teaching has significantly improved, and achievement is uniformly good at both key stages. Attainment in art, design and technology, geography, history and physical education has risen. Achievement in information technology has not been sustained at the same level and is now below average. The provision for teaching ICT across the curriculum has not been improved. Overall attainment in GCSE has improved since the last inspection; standards are well above national averages.

The school has successfully addressed the issues raised in the previous report. The practice of monitoring and evaluation is now firmly established. The quality of teaching is a strength of the school. A very effective strategy for target setting, coupled with a consistent assessment policy, is helping to raise pupils' expectations and levels of attainment. The provision for information technology has not improved and does not meet statutory requirements. A tight financial budget has been managed well, although there are resource deficiencies in design and technology, art, science

and religious education. The curriculum has improved, through the provision for design and technology at Key Stage 4, but there is insufficient provision for religious education in Years 10 and 11. There are high standards of department documentation and good quality display around the school.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds based on average point scores in Key Stage 3 and GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
Key Stage 3	A	A	A	C
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	C

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

Results in national tests for 14 year olds have been consistently well above average in English, mathematics and science, although there was a dip in the attainment of boys in mathematics in 1999. Girls do better than boys in tests; the difference is in line with that seen nationally. The overall trend in performance in the core subjects is in line with the national pattern. In their work in lessons, there is little difference in the achievements of boys and girls. Pupils in Year 9 are on course to achieve the same high standards of previous years and sustain a trend of improvement.

GCSE results are well above the national average, and show a rising trend over the past five years. In 1999 the school target for pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades was 70%; it achieved 71% - the school has proved to be effective in marrying its predictions of results to subsequent examination performance.

The standards of pupils' work, seen at this point in their courses, are above average for both Years 9 and 11. In both year groups standards are likely to be maintained at least at the level of previous years. GCSE results in art, geography, business studies, drama, physical education and English literature are better than those in other subjects. Standards in information technology are below average. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their previous learning, and all leave the school with appropriate qualifications; some achieve above average results. Standards of attainment are in line with those of similar schools, at both key stages.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes at both key stages are very positive. They show an enthusiastic response in many lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons is very good; pupils respect the teachers, and try hard. Pupils are orderly and considerate of others outside of lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships at all levels are very good; pupils are encouraged to take responsibility, and gain confidence.
Attendance	Attendance is good.

The good involvement of pupils with form and year councils effectively supports working relationships and the ethos of shared participation in the life of the school. The school actively encourages pupils to take greater responsibility for their own learning and pupils respond well to

these opportunities.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years
Lessons seen overall - 159	Good	Good

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

Teaching was satisfactory or better in 98% of lessons. It was excellent or very good in 36%, and good in a further 40%. Teachers' enthusiasm for their subject is conveyed through lively, challenging activities, and the expectation that all pupils want to achieve the highest possible standards. Teaching is very good in English, art, history and religious education and good in most of the other subjects.

Literacy is well taught in English, and through other lessons. Numeracy is developing and helping to raise the overall standard. There is insufficient teaching of ICT related topics in subject areas. The school works hard and effectively to meet the needs of all pupils, including those who attain highly. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs, including those with specific learning difficulties, is good. The very small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language are also well catered for.

The quality of pupils' learning is very good. Most pupils apply themselves conscientiously to learning new skills. They sustain an interest in their work and generally work hard. When given the opportunity pupils work well as independent learners.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Overall provision is satisfactory, with extra-curricular work having particular strengths eg sport, music, drama. Statutory requirements are not met in ICT. General provision for vocational education is limited.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is very good, and enables all pupils including those with special specific learning difficulties, to make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good (numbers are small).
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The social development of pupils is excellent. They are encouraged to develop in confidence, assume responsibilities, and become good citizens. They show honesty, and a mutual respect for one another and for adults in the school community. They are able to appreciate cultures beyond their own.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils are supported and well cared for, in a secure and orderly environment.

Provision for special needs overall is very good and pupils make good progress. Statutory requirements are fully met for special educational needs and the Code of Practice is complied with.

Partnership with parents is good. There is an effective working relationship, and parents are well informed about the life and work of the school. However, pupils' reports do not provide sufficient information about pupils' academic attainment and progress.

The curriculum generally meets statutory requirements, with the following exceptions: insufficient information technology at Key Stages 3 and 4, and limited opportunities to study religious education beyond Year 9. The range and level of pupil participation in extra-curricular activities are very good. Productive and helpful links with 'feeder' schools promote good continuity.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is very well led by the headteacher and senior management team – they work effectively as a team. Middle managers are highly effective, making a strong contribution to the aims and values of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors take a keen and informed interest in the school's work. They take a full part in forward planning and generally fulfil their responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has effective systems for evaluating its performance in the areas of teaching and overall quality of work in departments.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are generally used well but lack of ICT equipment impacts upon standards. There are some textbook shortages. Community provision raises the profile of the school.

There is a good match of teachers' qualifications and experience to the needs of the curriculum. A high level of staff expertise sustains pupils' progress and attainment. There are effective programmes for staff development.

Resources are inadequate for the delivery of the National Curriculum within some curriculum areas, particularly in the use of information technology to support teaching and learning. The lack of appropriate ICT hardware and software has affected standards - access to the Internet is limited. There is a lack of equipment and consumable resources in only a small number of subjects, but this does affect their breadth of provision. The library is well resourced and has a book stock of good quality, although a small number of subjects have particular needs for additional resource and textbooks.

Accommodation is adequate but there is an increasing 'strain' on facilities because of increased numbers – there are limitations in provision for drama, science, languages and design and technology.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school expects pupils to work hard and achieve their best.• They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or queries.• The school is well led and managed.• The school provides an interesting range of extra-curricular activities.• The school helps pupils become mature and responsible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Better information about their child's progress.

The findings of the inspection support the views of the parents. The need to provide better information about the progress of individual pupils is an important issue for the school to deal with.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The school takes pupils with the full range of ability and in general standards of attainment are above national expectations on entry. This is evident from pupils' test results in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2 when they leave their primary schools.

2. In the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science was well above the national average. Higher attaining pupils performed well, gaining appropriate success at the higher levels. Over the last four years there has been a continuing trend of improvement in test results. In general, girls perform better than boys; this difference in attainment is similar to the national trend.

3. Pupils' attainment in the 1999 GCSE examinations was well above the national average in gaining five or more A*-C grades. The number of pupils achieving five or more A*-G grades was very high in comparison with the national average. Both boys' and girls' results were well above the national norm. In recent years there has been a rising GCSE point score. The rate of improvement has not been as great as that nationally, which is as expected given the already above average standards of performance.

4. The test and examination results show a number of strengths:

- Girls attained twice the national average for A* grades in geography.
- All pupils achieved graded passes in English, mathematics and science, and no pupil left with fewer than five GCSE passes at A*-G.

5. The school sets appropriate targets, and makes good progress towards meeting them. The data collected about the attainment of pupils and their subsequent examination performance shows good evidence of added value. In 1999 the school set a target of 46 for the average GCSE point score. This was based on teachers' knowledge of pupils' achievements, and an analysis of Key Stage 3 results. The school successfully met that target. GCSE results in art, geography, business studies, drama, physical education and English literature are better than those of other subjects

6. Standards of attainment in the core subjects at Key Stage 3, and for overall GCSE attainment are in line with those of similar schools.

Standards seen during the inspection

7. The standards seen in lessons during the inspection match test and examination results. Standards are above average in all subjects at both key stages, apart from religious education, and information and communication technology (ICT). The standards in religious education are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus, at Key Stages 3 and 4. The standard of work in ICT is below average at both key stages. Pupils have insufficient access or planned opportunities to use ICT, and so do not make sufficient progress to achieve the expected levels of attainment.

8. The regular review procedure of target setting for improvement is effective in raising pupils' attainment.

9. Attainment in English at Key Stage 3 is above expectations. Orally, pupils express themselves well, and when reading aloud, they do so with fluency and expression. Pupils are well able to understand a wide variety of texts. Most write accurately, with some variation in sentence patterns, although a small minority has difficulty with spelling. At Key Stage 4, pupils are articulate, and confident in group presentations. Their writing is well structured, and they make good use of their extensive vocabulary.

10. Attainment in mathematics at both key stages is above national expectations. Pupils are able to apply their number skills effectively, although mental arithmetic is not quite so strong. Pupils can interpret graphs and other statistics well. Generally, good progress is made in mathematical understanding.

11. Science shows a similar pattern of above average attainment. There is good understanding of scientific processes and how data is used to support conclusions. Pupils are confident in conducting experiments. Higher attaining pupils have the opportunity to take three science subjects, and generally do well - last year all achieved a grade in the range A*-C.

12. Pupils learn well in most lessons and make good progress in nearly all subjects, through the successive key stages. At Key Stage 3, achievement is particularly good in design and technology where pupils show a developing awareness of all aspects of the design process. At Key Stage 4 in art, there is very good development of pupils' drawing and painting skills. Pupils are acquiring a breadth of technique, which is impressive. The development of ICT skills is unsatisfactory. At both key stages insufficient progress has been made in using computers confidently to control and sense data and to access data handling programmes.

13. In most subjects girls achieve better than boys. This difference is more evident in examination results than in lessons, but is similar to the national trend. The school is addressing the issue of boys' attainment through an improvement initiative.

14. Standards of literacy are good. Teachers pay attention to the correct use of specialist language; this is a strong feature in all subjects. Good comprehension skills support pupils in all their learning. Pupils take pride in their work, and the presentation of written work is good. It is consistently well set out, organised, and carefully completed. The importance of drafting is emphasised in English, but is less generally used in other subjects. Pupils take notes well and effectively develop their ideas in writing through subjects, like geography. Standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar are good, and improve throughout the school. Oral skills are very well developed through activities, such as role play in history. By the end of Year 11, pupils are good listeners and able to explain and argue a point of view fluently and persuasively.

15. Standards of numeracy are above average overall and these skills are also used well in other subjects. However, although fluency in mental calculation is not strong, pupils use a range of strategies when calculating to gain the correct answer. For example, they apply methods of calculation they have been taught in mathematics when measuring lines and angles during map work in geography. Year 11 science pupils correctly estimate and judge the accuracy of their solutions when analysing the relationship between the current and strength of an electromagnet. Pupils show good understanding in their interpretation of

graphs and tables, particularly in history when calculating the changes in rates of iron production during set periods of time in the 19th century. The school recognises the need to develop a numeracy policy, but is awaiting government guidelines before doing so.

16. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in most lessons and many achieve higher grades in GCSE than predicted by tests when they enter the school. This is due to teachers' accurate knowledge of pupils' particular difficulties and to effective additional help in lessons, given by efficient learning support assistants. There is a policy on how subjects should support pupils identified as gifted and talented. This has led to a structured provision in some subjects, and appropriate opportunities for developmental work are given. There are very few pupils for whom English is an additional language, however good appropriate support is provided to enable them to integrate quickly, and achieve success in all subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. Pupils make the most of every opportunity offered to them at the school. They work hard in lessons, respect the feelings and needs of others and are confident when talking about their own feelings and abstract ideas. For example in a religious education lesson, Year 9 pupils suggested that the wilderness outside the Garden of Eden might represent a person's 'state of mind.' Most pupils are able to work well with others in a range of different groupings, take initiative and display high levels of responsibility. Pupils generally take pride in the presentation of their work, but occasionally they lack the confidence to ask for clarification of points they do not understand.

18. Pupils are very keen to take part in the wide range of extra-curricular activities and to undertake positions of responsibility in the life of the school. The form, year and school councils are run entirely by pupils, displaying good personal development. Those who have special learning needs show good interest in their work and are keen to learn. Very good relationships exist between the learning support staff and these pupils.

19. Pupils behave very well around the school and few pupils are excluded. Relationships are very good at all levels. Pupils say that there is very little bullying in the school and if any does occur it is dealt with quickly and effectively by the senior managers. This was confirmed by inspectors during the week of the inspection.

20. There are high levels of attendance, although pupils are sometimes slow to arrive at lessons after breaktimes.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

Teaching

21. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Teaching is satisfactory or better in 98% of lessons and in more than one in three lessons teaching is very good or excellent.

22. Teaching has improved since the last inspection; it is now a strength of the school. Staff training has focused effectively on raising standards of teaching and learning. In over one third of lessons, teaching is at least very good, with some outstanding lessons in religious education and history. There is a negligible amount of unsatisfactory teaching, and no poor teaching. In the very few lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, it is mainly due to inadequate methods for controlling behaviour and insufficient challenge in the lesson. These were features of some lessons in modern foreign languages and information

technology. On balance however, the very high proportion of good teaching makes a significant contribution to pupils' progress and attainment.

23. At both Key Stages 3 and 4, teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subjects, and they share their enthusiasm with pupils. For example in a Year 11 science lesson, the teacher's effective questioning and planned discussion led pupils to a clear understanding of how natural and manmade systems regulate themselves. In geography, questions are well directed to the individual pupil's level of attainment. In physical education, the good awareness of techniques allows appropriate skills to be taught well. Teachers' specialist expertise promotes effective learning. In a Year 8 art lesson, pupils learned how to read an image, and showed high levels of understanding and awareness of the particular features of portraiture, for example eyes and mouth. Pupils showed good progress in their own subsequent drawings.

24. At Key Stage 4, teachers use their specialist knowledge to provide a broad range of contexts to help pupils recall and consolidate their previous learning. In geography for example, encouraging pupils to produce evidence before any conclusions are made effectively develops learning skills. Pupils are keen to be independent learners, for example, in a Year 10 history lesson on coal mining, pupils showed very good skills of research and a good analysis of pictorial evidence.

25. In general, teachers have high expectations of achievement for pupils. Lesson aims and objectives are clearly explained, and pupils are set targets. This leads to efficient use of time, in which lessons move at a quick, yet appropriate pace, and pupils remain focused on their tasks. In a Year 9 English lesson on the use of the most emotive language, pupils were challenged to examine their own prejudices in relation to their own specific areas of interest, in sport and media. In history, pupils are expected to work hard, and take a pride in the presentation of their work, which they achieve with a good measure of success. In a minority of lessons, the limited range of activities leads to insufficient challenge for pupils. For example, in a Year 7 French lesson, progress was slow due to inappropriate activities of copying, pasting and cutting out of animals, and insufficient insistence on the use of the target language. Generally, however, pupils respond well to the high expectations and demands made upon them.

26. Since the last inspection, subject departments and individual teachers have continued to improve the quality of documentation. Most departments have well conceived schemes of work, which are used effectively to plan lessons. Business studies, for example, produces working documentation of a high standard. Overall, teachers' planning is good at both key stages.

27. Teaching methods and organisational strategies are good. For example, the science department effectively organises its work around improvements to classrooms, during specified periods of the week. Similarly, a Year 8 science lesson on the solar system was very effectively organised in terms of the transportation of materials. This arrangement had no adverse effect on the quality of the pupils' education. Pupils were interested and animated in their discussion of the solar system. A very effective technique of a learning rhyme enabled pupils to establish a good understanding of the planetary arrangement. In most lessons, teaching methods effectively address the different ways in which pupils learn. Teachers share good practice both within and across departments. These improved strategies serve to capture the interest, stimulate enthusiasm and increase the motivation of pupils. Teachers in science and design and technology use investigatory and exploratory methods to good advantage. Most teachers effectively use revision, repetition and review to promote pupils' learning.

28. The good relationships between teachers and pupils are a strength. Teachers are keen to encourage pupils and raise self-esteem. This sensitivity to pupils' needs was shown in a Year 10 mathematics lesson, when "shy" pupils were given cards to prepare an answer to be included in the discussion at the end of the lesson. In this way, all pupils are actively encouraged to take a formal part in the lessons. This type of encouragement is a feature of many lessons. Teachers value pupils' ideas, and establish an atmosphere in which pupils feel comfortable to volunteer ideas, and ask as well as answer questions. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by teachers who have good awareness of their specific requirements.

29. Teachers use time and resources well, apart from the implementation of information and communication technology in some subjects. The pace of work in most lessons is appropriate, and sustains pupils' interest. For example in science and physical education, teachers change the pace of the lesson well to maintain attention and create momentum. Teaching materials, such as worksheets, over-head projectors and video display, are used imaginatively and successfully.

30. Teachers usually assess pupils' work appropriately. They effectively use these assessments to help pupils to think about their own learning, and set targets for improvement. The school has a very effective system for target setting. Work is usually marked, and pupils are given helpful advice as to how they might improve. There is some good practice in assessment in art, English and mathematics. However, the work in information and communication technology is inadequately assessed and does not provide a clear picture of pupils' progress. Although systems for assessment within departments are usually very effective, some pupils do not have a clear picture on how successfully they are developing their understanding and knowledge.

31. Homework is carefully planned, and increases pupils' ability to work independently. It usually extends the work done in class, often by setting research tasks on a relevant topic.

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

32. The quality and range of opportunities for learning provided by the school for all pupils are satisfactory overall. They are good at Key Stage 3. Statutory requirements are not met however, for information and communication technology at either key stage.

33. The school provides a broad range of worthwhile opportunities in the majority of subjects of the National Curriculum at both key stages. Design and technology, which was a key issue at the last inspection, has been introduced for all pupils at Key Stage 4. The provision for religious education at Key Stage 3 now meets requirements. Cultural education in art is good, providing pupils with the opportunity to study the work of artists of different cultures, but provision for the study of three-dimensional work is weak. In modern foreign languages, all pupils learn either French or German, and higher attaining pupils have the opportunity to learn Spanish as well. The curriculum is appropriately broad at Key Stage 4. Mathematics offers three different modules at three different levels. The majority of pupils take the double award science course, higher attainers are able to study three sciences separately and lower attainers have the opportunity to follow the Certificate of Achievement. The Youth Award Scheme is taken at Key Stage 4 by lower attaining pupils and all pupils follow Project Trident. However the curricular provision for the vocational elements is limited. History at Key Stage 4 is set against a large number of other subjects,

which has a detrimental effect on take-up, especially of higher attaining boys. The provision for pupils in physical education is very good; the system of grouping by gender in every year encourages the participation of all and allows for pupils of all abilities to progress at their own pace and level. However, there is little interaction between boys and girls; even GCSE groups in physical education are taught in single gender classes.

34. All pupils who have special educational needs have full access to the whole curriculum. The timing of withdrawal for extra help is varied as much as possible, so those pupils do not miss work from the same subject or lesson too often.

35. Enrichment of the curriculum through extra-curricular opportunities is very good and a strength of the school. In Year 8, all pupils attend an annual camp in the New Forest, which provides a rich and challenging programme of curriculum-related topics. The event is enthusiastically supported by pupils and staff. In school, the majority of subjects make a contribution to extra-curricular work; opportunities are very varied and are well attended. Provision for sport is very good and most sports are available every day of the week. Dance and drama are very popular. Many pupils are involved in extra-curricular activities in music, and over two hundred attend instrumental lessons. In Years 10 and 11, pupils attend an innovative residential course for writing and literature. There are good opportunities throughout the school in geography for pupils to actively participate in fieldwork and the modern languages department arranges popular exchanges and visits abroad.

36. The school's provision for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good. Topics such as bullying, substance abuse, relationships and sex education are appropriately covered. In Year 7 pupils are provided with a good induction programme. Similarly there is a well co-ordinated programme focussing on citizenship, work experience and careers in Years 10 and 11. Outside speakers supplement the course well, for example, the contribution from the Drugs Advisory Service. The teaching of PSHE lessons is generally good and makes an effective contribution to pupils' development. Careers provision is very good. Year 9 pupils complete a job study in the summer term, and Year 10 pupils have good opportunities take part in work experience. The ICT provision for careers is unsatisfactory.

37. Links with partner institutions at both key stages are very good. Parents recognise the high quality of liaison with feeder schools. Year 7 pupils distribute the leaflets that they have produced in English lessons to the pupils in primary schools. Year 6 pupils are invited to special performances of the school production.

38. Curriculum links with businesses are good. Two groups in Year 10 are participating in Young Enterprise and are well supported from outside the school. Year 9 pupils produced a well designed Millennium Clock in a cross-curricular project.

39. Provision for the spiritual development of pupils is satisfactory. The school has made efforts to address the issue highlighted in the previous report concerning the need for a more consistent approach to assemblies. There is a full programme of assemblies and a school policy on collective worship. However, although most assemblies are used well to promote the spiritual and moral development of pupils, form tutor times rarely provide opportunities for reflection and are used mainly for social and administrative purposes. In this respect, the school still fails to comply with the statutory requirements for daily collective worship. Within the curriculum, religious education makes a good contribution to the spiritual

dimension of the school, with a strong focus on allegories and symbolism. There are also opportunities for reflection in personal, social and health education, history, geography, English, drama and modern foreign languages.

40. The provision for moral education is very good. A clear code of conduct is displayed in classrooms and the concept of the school as a moral community is stressed both in school documentation and in practice. Pupils are helped to distinguish right from wrong through a strong, but fair disciplinary procedure, and there is an effective system of rewards and commendations. The personal, social and health education programme is particularly impressive in its moral dimension and an effective year group session was observed on the dangers of drug abuse. Teachers provide very good role models throughout the school and the moral development of pupils is sustained very well in history, where topics on slavery and nineteenth century working conditions promote moral debate, and in other subjects such as drama and religious education.

41. The social development of pupils is excellent. Pupils are involved in a number of schemes which provide them with opportunities for personal development, such as charity work, the Youth Award Scheme, and Project Trident. There is a system of form, year and school councils and prefects which encourages pupils to take responsibility. An impressive range of after-school activities enhances their social development in physical education, music, drama and design and technology. Pupils are very positive about their opportunities for personal development within the school. Relationships between teachers and pupils are among the many strengths of the school, and create an harmonious atmosphere throughout. Within the curriculum, there are numerous opportunities for social development and there is an emphasis on group work and pupil participation in most subjects: notably in English, physical education, history, design and technology, drama, music and science.

42. The cultural development of pupils is good. There is very good extra-curricular provision to enrich pupils' knowledge and experience. There is a residential literary trip for upper school pupils in English and Year 7 pupils visit York in history. There are also frequent extracurricular opportunities provided for pupils in geography, drama and music. Cultural development is also stressed in the mainstream curriculum, for example in English, modern foreign languages, art, music and drama. There are also opportunities for pupils to reflect on and celebrate the cultural diversity of British society, and that of the wider world in geography, English, religious education and art, but elsewhere in the curriculum this area of school life needs further development.

43. Overall, the school has maintained and built on the achievements outlined in the previous report. The provision for the personal development of pupils is very good. All pupils take a full part in the life of the school and there is an overarching sense of community based on mutual respect and harmony. The very good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is testimony to this impressive ethos.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

44. The warm, caring atmosphere that the school displays at all levels is a tribute to its strong ethos of pastoral concern. The school cares very well for all its pupils, including those with special educational needs, and parents acknowledge this. Teachers know individual pupils very well and work effectively to meet their pastoral and academic needs. The arrangements for monitoring and promoting regular attendance, good behaviour and personal development are very effective. Heads of year play an extremely competent and caring role in this. The school has very effective ways of eliminating oppressive behaviour,

so that pupils report that there is almost no bullying. Child protection procedures are well documented and are known by the staff.

45. The issues arising from the last inspection have been addressed purposefully. The underlying school and departmental structures are good, as are the procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. Initial data is provided from the feeder primary schools and a good working relationship has been established. Pupils are placed accurately into mathematics sets from their first term using all the initial data. The school is effectively using the data collected from initial tests to make comparisons with subsequent examination results, at each key stage, to give a measure of added value.

46. Good use is made of assessment information to guide curriculum planning. More appropriate schemes of work, for example in English and music, have been developed following the analysis of examination results. As a result, more pupils are studying GCSE music and boys' underachievement in history is being addressed. Pupils now benefit from better assessment and clearer learning objectives for each module of work as a result of the improvements made in the school's assessment policies. The good practice in English of combining learning objectives with National Curriculum levels, and sharing these with pupils at regular intervals is not always reflected elsewhere in the core subjects. In the annual reports to parents, learning objectives are not sufficiently linked to National Curriculum levels so as to give parents a clear understanding of the progress made by their children in relation to national norms. Similar weaknesses are present in some non-core subjects, for example in geography where pupils are not aware of the level they are achieving, and in ICT where teacher assessments are too high. However, there are good practices in art and drama; for example, as pupils make gains in knowledge and skills, they colour in appropriate sections on a record sheet providing them and the teacher with a clear picture of the progress made.

47. Good procedures have been put in place for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress. Heads of department are now more accountable and gaining expertise in the handling of data to set targets for both their departments and individual pupils. Target setting is in its early stages of development, and departments are still in the process of developing effective monitoring procedures. Departments use meeting time effectively to monitor progress of individuals or, in the case of modern foreign languages, to determine the targets for classes and individual pupils. Senior managers ensure that underachieving pupils receive the necessary support following regular monitoring of homework diaries and exercise books. Pupils are given further valuable support during one-to-one interviews with their form tutors.

48. There are thorough systems for identification and assessment of pupils who have special educational needs. These include re-testing when necessary, and very good records are kept showing pupils' progress. Teachers know the pupils well and provide good opportunities to achieve specific targets. This high quality support helps pupils to feel good about themselves and their achievements.

49. Procedures for managing the behaviour of pupils are very effective. This helps them to make good progress in lessons. Good discipline in classrooms and effective rewards for good behaviour encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and develop personal integrity.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

50. The school continues to promote effective links with parents, which support pupils' attainment. There is strong parental satisfaction with the school, particularly with the standards achieved, and a high level of involvement by parents.

51. The school provides good general information through the prospectus, regular newsletters and homework diaries, which are well-used and provide an effective channel of communication. However, reports to parents do not provide sufficient information about pupils' attainment and progress in each subject. In particular, reporting on skills and progress in information and communication technology is unsatisfactory. A minority of parents do not feel well informed about how their children are progressing in their knowledge and understanding of certain subjects. The liaison with parents by the special needs department is very good. Parents are contacted frequently and a record is kept of all such contacts.

52. Parents support the work of the school well by ensuring their children attend regularly in correct uniform, by encouraging the completion of homework and joining in the activities arranged by the Court Moor School Society. A number of parents provide practical assistance with field trips and educational visits.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

53. The headteacher provides very good and effective leadership, with a clear vision of how the school should develop. Teachers, pupils, and parents share that vision, which is clearly expressed in the school's aims, of valuing all pupils, and encouraging them to realise their potential. The senior management team and governors work well together, in promoting these shared objectives. There is a strong sense of team spirit amongst staff, which produces a commitment to improvement and a positive working relationship at all levels.

54. The senior management has adopted an effective, open collaborative style of working. Middle managers are highly effective, and respond positively to the responsibilities delegated to them. Heads of year co-ordinate the work of their colleagues efficiently, and deal well with the transition into and from the school. The successful review and target setting procedures for pupils rely on the co-operation of all staff. The good relationships and open communication between the staff assist the school's smooth running. The school fulfils all the statutory requirements with regards to equal opportunities.

55. The governors make a valued and purposeful commitment to the life of the school. They are proud of the status of the school in its local community. Formal meetings and a committee structure keep them well informed about the school's activities - they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The governing body has been fully involved in the strategic planning for improving the classroom provision at the school. Financial monitoring is very good. The chair of the finance committee has an effective and central role in the formation of the draft budget. The governors meet most of their statutory requirements, apart from an inadequate provision of ICT at Key Stages 3 and 4 and for a daily Act of Collective Worship.

56. Teaching is monitored well by senior staff. Heads of department have begun a productive training exercise, with senior management, on shared observations of lessons. This process is improving evaluation skills and the standard of teaching. Departments have

been working towards giving a 'guarantee' for the quality of their work which, allied to target setting, provides a positive base for improvement. Most departments have made good progress in developing their range of teaching and learning styles. Effective teaching procedures are shared within and between departments. Good teamwork is a significant feature of most departments, as for example in mathematics and science. The monitoring of work in information and communication technology however, is unsatisfactory.

57. The school's development plan is a detailed document, clearly mapping out priorities and staff responsibilities to effect change. Governors and key staff are appropriately involved in the production of the development plan. Planning by subjects is generally good, with a clear indication of objectives and what resources are needed.

58. The management and organisation of provision for special educational needs are a significant strength of the school. The governing body is closely involved in the management and financial support of the special needs department. Regular reports are produced, and parents are fully informed about the special needs policy, its practice and effectiveness through the school prospectus and governors' annual report. The special needs provision, which also appropriately recognises the needs of gifted children, is seen as part of a continuum that is the responsibility of the whole school. The department is very well led, with the co-ordinator giving a strong, clear lead, training and encouragement. Deployment of staff is very well managed, and relevant files and documents are of a very high quality.

59. Heads of department are given appropriate responsibility for the management of their subject. Most subject leaders have managed their areas well, and have addressed such issues as the underachievement of boys. There is particularly good practice in English and art on this aspect. However, the management of ICT is unsatisfactory; there is insufficient direction and co-ordination of this aspect of the school's work. A strong team ethos is a feature of most departments. The senior management team gives effective guidance to new staff, particularly to newly qualified teachers.

60. The leadership has responded well and successfully to the issues raised in the previous report. The response to the need to involve middle management in school decision making has been dealt with creatively through the minimum quality standards initiative. Departments fix a minimum level of provision, which they guarantee to deliver for the benefit of pupils. The practice of monitoring and evaluation is now part of the normal cycle of departmental work. The school has shown sound evidence that it has a good capacity, and effective management procedures in place, to sustain and improve its standards still further.

61. The school applies the principles of best value to its financial management decisions. It provides good opportunities to work with the community through lettings and adult education and these give financial benefit to the school. The bursar is effective and efficient, and financial control is good.

62. The match of number, qualifications and experience of teaching staff to the demands of the curriculum is good. There is a high level of staff expertise, which has a positive effect on pupils' attainment and progress. Many departments, such as geography and physical education, have a good balance between new and experienced members of staff. There are some non-specialist staff teaching religious education, but this does not have an adverse effect upon standards. The level of support staff for pupils with special educational needs and for gifted pupils is good. Arrangements for the induction and professional development of staff are good and contribute to the effectiveness of their

teaching. The level of technical support in design and technology and science is good, and they make a positive contribution to the efficiency of departmental work. Administrative staff support the work of the school well, but there is insufficient help in the library.

63. The school has been successfully re-accredited with "Investors in People" status, and uses this profile for staff development purposes. There is no formal appraisal system, but the performance of staff is monitored through lesson observations. This process has had a positive impact in improving the quality of work in modern foreign languages. The effectiveness and commitment of the teaching staff have been maintained since the last inspection.

64. Staffing levels for special educational needs are good. This enables the department to provide effectively for the pupils in its care. Support assistants receive good training from the special needs co-ordinator, who also gives advice and help to teachers about support for pupils.

65. Overall, accommodation is adequate, and allows the curriculum to be taught effectively in most areas. English and music have good accommodation. However, the small classrooms for mathematics, art, geography and design and technology inhibit learning. The size of the mathematics classrooms limits group work, and there is insufficient space for three-dimensional work in art. In geography, there is also insufficient room for group work and the deployment of ICT hardware. In design and technology, there is a danger of overcrowding in old and worn accommodation. There are plans for improving the quantity of classrooms to ease the pressures of an expanding school.

66. There are good facilities for displaying pupils' work and enhancing the general atmosphere of the school. Accommodation for physical education is sufficient, but is of poor quality. The redgra pitch needs resurfacing. The school makes a great effort to use its available accommodation well, in a time of continuing expansion. The deficiencies in drama, as reported in the last inspection, have not as yet been improved, but plans are now in place to address this issue.

67. There are inadequacies in the provision for learning resources, particularly in the use of information and communication technology in most areas of the curriculum. The pastoral care programme is adequately resourced and there are sufficient student planners. The library provision and book stock are of a good quality. Resources are well managed and good use is made of the computer facilities and Internet access in the library base,

68. The number of computers and availability of suitable software for use within subject areas are insufficient for pupils to make satisfactory progress. Access to the Internet is limited, although arrangements are in place to provide full access through the school network. At present, there is an absence of new technology in mathematics, design and technology, history, modern foreign languages, geography, religious education, art and design and in learning support. In design and technology, there is insufficient equipment and a lack of resources for all areas of activity, and in art and design there is a lack of equipment and insufficient media for three-dimensional study. Overall, the provision of textbooks in subject areas is adequate, and the few exceptions relate to specific subject needs. In religious education additional books are needed to support the new GCSE course; in science, additional textbooks are needed in Years 7 and 8; and within art and design there is a lack of visual resource books.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

69. In order to raise standards the school should:

(1) Raise standards of attainment in ICT by:

- identifying the subject contributions to ICT skills;
- devising assessment guidelines, checking pupils' progress;
- monitoring and evaluating the work of departments;
- make changes to the curriculum to give pupils their statutory entitlement for ICT;
- improve the standard of management in information technology.

(See paragraphs 7, 12, 29, 30,, 32, 36, 46, 55, 59, 103, 122, 123, 126, 128, 137, 149)

(2) Identify boys who are underachieving through review procedures, amend teaching strategies and methods to motivate boys and establish targets for improvement. Establish greater consistency in the performance of boys, particularly in English, history and modern languages.

(See paragraphs 2, 13, 59, 71, 79, 87, 104, 116, 129, 145)

(3) Improve the quality of reporting to parents on progress and attainment by:

- reviewing the quality of assessment and recording information in departments;
- giving a clearer focus as to what pupils can do and understand and where appropriate relate attainment to national benchmarks.

(See paragraphs 30, 46, 51)

Other issues for consideration

- Review the balance of the curriculum to consider the introduction of vocational courses.
(See paragraph 33)
- Make better and more meaningful use of form tutor time.
(See paragraph 39)
- Improve the level of resources in subjects - in particular equipment in ICT and design and technology and textbooks for science, art and RE.
(See paragraphs 67, 68, 84, 91, 100, 113, 127)
- Improve the quality of accommodation in science, design and technology, drama and the provision for three-dimensional artwork.
(See paragraphs 65, 66, 100, 103, 108, 115, 127)
- Satisfy the statutory requirements for a daily Act of Collective Worship.
(See paragraphs 39, 55)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	159
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	35

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1.5	34	42.5	20	1.5	0.5	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	1999-2000	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1045	n/a
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	23	n/a

Special educational needs	1999-2000	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	7	n/a
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	243	n/a

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	32
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	34

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	4.7
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.4
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	111	102	213

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	78	86	89
	Girls	90	80	81
	Total	168	166	170
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	79 (78)	78 (81)	80 (86)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	40 (56)	49 (55)	35 (52)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	85	81	87
	Girls	92	80	84
	Total	177	161	171
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	83 (79)	76 (88)	81 (86)
	National	64 (61)	64 (63)	60 (63)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	49 (52)	47 (61)	41 (52)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (30)

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	82	87	169

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	53	81	81
	Girls	67	87	87
	Total	120	168	168
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	71 (61)	99 (99)	99 (98.7)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	90.7 (89.8)	95.7

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	46 (45)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	n/a
	National	n/a

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	
Indian	3
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	3
White	1025
Any other minority ethnic group	12

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	23	2
Other minority ethnic groups	2	-

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	60.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	30
Total aggregate hours worked per week	460

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.9
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 2	N/a
Key Stage 3	23
Key Stage 4	22

Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	2372200
Total expenditure	2400660
Expenditure per pupil	2150
Balance brought forward from previous year	103291
Balance carried forward to next year	139629

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1000
Number of questionnaires returned	278

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35.6	57.9	3.6	1.4	1.4
My child is making good progress in school.	39.2	54.0	5.4	0.4	1.1
Behaviour in the school is good.	29.9	62.2	4.0	0.7	3.2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18.0	63.7	14.0	4.0	0.4
The teaching is good.	34.2	57.9	2.2	0.7	5.0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	26.3	56.5	14.0	2.2	1.1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49.6	45.3	2.5	1.1	1.4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59.0	37.8	1.8	0.7	0.7
The school works closely with parents.	31.7	52.5	11.5	1.4	2.9
The school is well led and managed.	52.5	42.1	2.2	0.0	3.2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	44.2	48.9	3.6	1.4	1.8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	44.2	48.9	3.6	1.4	1.8

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

ENGLISH

70. At the end of Year 9, pupils achieve levels in national tests which are well above average, and are in line with those of similar schools. Though both boys' and girls' results are much better than average, fewer boys reach the highest levels.

71. The proportion of pupils obtaining A*-C grades in GCSE English is above average and has been consistently so since 1997. The percentage of A*-A grades is also higher than average. For the last three years all pupils have gained a grade. In the 1999 English literature GCSE, pupils obtained a proportion of A*-C grades that was well above average, and that of A*-A grades was nearly double. Pupils achieved better results in English literature than in other subjects. In both aspects of the subject, the difference in boys' and girls' performance broadly reflects the national trend, except that boys do not obtain as many A*-A grades.

72. In lessons, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are above average expectations. Orally pupils express themselves very well. Their comprehension skills are good, whether the text is Shakespeare or modern media articles. When reading aloud, both boys and girls do so with fluency and expression. Pupils read widely, guided by year reading lists and teacher advice, thus ensuring pupils are appropriately challenged. There are many opportunities for writing creatively and factually. Pupils use a very good vocabulary and higher attainers are beginning to use stylistic features well, for example, to create suspense. Most write accurately and with some variation in sentence patterns, though spelling is a difficulty for a small minority of pupils

73. Above average standards are also evident at the end of Key Stage 4. Pupils are articulate and confident when making individual and group presentations. When studying difficult texts, including poetry or Shakespearean drama, they show an understanding, not just of plot and character, but of the theme and extra meaning conveyed through simile and metaphor. Pupils of all abilities respond positively to plays such as *Macbeth* and to poetry, showing interest and understanding of the issues involved. Pupils' writing is well structured and makes good use of their extensive vocabulary. Accuracy is good.

74. Throughout both key stages, pupils with special educational needs attain standards at least in line with their abilities and sometimes beyond their perceived level, as suggested by earlier assessment. For example a lower Year 8 set reading *The Tempest* understood the language and plot well. Gifted pupils achieve high examination grades and are individually challenged through personal reading. Pupils whose first language is not English progress well.

75. Since the last inspection, standards have continued to be well above average at both key stages in tests and examinations.

76. Teaching is good or very good in about three-quarters of the lessons seen, and satisfactory in the remainder. Teachers' good subject knowledge and expertise enable them to focus on significant features of the topic and stimulate pupils' interest. As a result, pupils grasp important points well and want to pursue them further. In the best lessons at both key stages, teachers challenge pupils effectively by the choice of activities in a well-planned sequence. For example, in Year 8, pupils explored bias in articles on hunting and

could appreciate how it can be done subtly. Teachers use a very good range of resources to extend pupils' independent learning, as in a Year 11 presentation on poetry from other cultures. Pupils show good understanding of what is being taught and co-operate readily. This leads to good progress for all pupils, whatever their ability. The good quality of teaching described in the last inspection report has been maintained well.

77. Pupils are prepared to learn. From Year 7 onwards, the atmosphere in most classrooms is purposeful and mutual respect is evident. Pupils listen to one another and the teacher carefully. They usually work in pairs and small groups and this results in good teamwork. Their positive attitudes are an important factor in their good progress.

78. The head of department, ably assisted by the other English teachers, carefully cultivates the strong ethos of the department. Schemes of work are constantly reviewed and revised so as to raise standards further. The department is aware of the need to raise the attainment of boys, and it considers this in setting, in questioning, and in class texts. Regular marking to National Curriculum levels on major assignments helps pupils to understand what they need to improve but this good practice is not reflected sufficiently in annual reports. Since the last inspection, the ICT modules taught in English deliver an agreed part of the ICT curriculum effectively at Key Stage 3.

MATHEMATICS

79. Pupils' attainment on entry is above the national average in mathematics. Pupils make good progress during Key Stage 3 and in the 1999 National Curriculum tests their attainment was well above average for levels 5 and 6. Girls' overall performance exceeded that of boys for the first time in four years. Boys' lower performance last year is against the trend that has been upwards for all pupils. The attainment of pupils in these tests, particularly that of boys, was well below average in comparison with similar schools.

80. GCSE results have fluctuated since the last inspection but are always well above national averages. In 1999 60% of pupils attained grades A*-C with no overall difference between boys and girls, although boys gained more grades at the higher levels (A* and A) than girls.

81. Inspection evidence reflects examination results. Pupils' attainment at Key Stage 3 is above national expectations. Pupils have a good awareness of geometrical and algebraic ideas; for example, higher attaining pupils in Year 9 understand Pythagoras' Theorem well and can use the concept in a variety of practical applications. Lower attaining pupils can successfully apply their number skills to compare the experimental and theoretical probabilities of obtaining a head when tossing a coin.

82. At Key Stage 4, attainment is also above national expectations. In Year 11, higher attaining pupils show a keen perception of the symmetry of quadratic functions, enabling them to draw accurate sketches of curves. They are also able to transform graphs of trigonometrical functions. Lower attaining pupils, who are likely to achieve a GCSE grade, use their awareness of number to solve algebraic puzzles and develop the skill to solve linear equations. However, some are unable to sustain their concentration for the whole lesson. Standards of presentation, at both key stages, are very good with pupils showing clearly the stages in their solution to a problem. Pupils take a pride in their exercise books

and view them as a valuable additional learning resource. However, whilst some pupils have strategies to successfully solve mental arithmetic problems, some pupils are slow to arrive at the answer and will resort to a calculator.

83. Teaching is good overall, with over a quarter of lessons promoting very high standards of learning. Teachers' expectations are high, for example pupils in a lower attaining set in Year 7 were required to plot points accurately onto a scatter diagram and state with understanding the correlation between two sets of data. Lessons are carefully planned ensuring the teaching of basic skills, including the use and understanding of technical vocabulary. Subject content is clear and understood by all pupils. Questions are used effectively to involve all pupils in the development of the lesson. Teachers' detailed knowledge of pupils is characterised by one teacher's very successful strategy of presenting written questions to shy pupils during investigative work. The time given for pupils to think enabled them to answer with clarity and precision.

84. Mathematics teaching is enhanced at Key Stage 3 through the use of ICT. The equipment is old and unreliable, however, and alternative provision and accommodation are necessary if it is to be improved. The very good relationships create a positive working atmosphere and, in better lessons, there is an air of anticipation and an opportunity at the end of the lesson for pupils to review their gains in learning. Teaching methods and opportunities usually match the needs of individual pupils well, including those with a flair for mathematics, making the best use of the lesson time. However, some lessons lack both pace and highlights that add to pupils' enjoyment of mathematics. The department should consider ways to keep pupils' mental recall skills finely tuned and sharp. Apart from a single instance pupils' behaviour is good and teachers control them well. Pupils are keen to learn and to share their findings with each other and the teacher. They work well in pairs, particularly when working in cramped conditions on ageing computers. The department has an effective strategy for supporting lower attaining pupils. The classes for these pupils are smaller and provide easier access to teachers and support assistants. As a result pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The working relationship between teachers and support assistants is very good.

85. Improvements since the previous inspection have enabled the department to move forward. Clear leadership by the head of department has resulted in good teamwork and the sharing of good practice. New coherent working plans are under constant and purposeful review to modify and improve teaching and learning strategies. Learning objectives, which are shared with pupils, have been developed for using and applying mathematics. However, these objectives need to be related to National Curriculum criteria to provide pupils and parents with a better idea of the progress pupils are making towards the set targets. Target setting is beginning to be effective in channelling the efforts of boys in Year 10 who underachieved in last year's national tests. Departmental targets have also been introduced, although they are as yet insufficiently monitored. Careful setting arrangements from the beginning of Year 7 enable pupils of similar ability to develop their understanding, knowledge and skills at an appropriate rate. This is not always the case at Key Stage 4 where some classes are working towards two different tiers of examinations.

SCIENCE

86. In the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 the number of pupils reaching level 5 and above and level 6 and above was well above the national average but was lower than the previous year. It has been well above average for the past four years. It is close to

the average in comparison to similar schools. The performance of boys was a little better than that of girls.

87. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the number of pupils awarded grades A* to C was well above the national average. Overall 74% of pupils obtained these grades, with all candidates obtaining a grade. All pupils who entered examinations in the separate sciences physics, chemistry and biology were awarded grades A* to C. Of the pupils who took the double award science examinations, over half obtained grades A* to C. Overall, results were better than those in 1998 although there was a slight decline in the number of pupils obtaining A*. The performance of girls was similar to that of boys in all areas except physics where the performance of boys was better.

88. Standards towards the end of Key Stage 3 are above average. Pupils in Year 9 have a good knowledge and understanding in all the four areas of study. Many are achieving at levels higher than the national expectation for their age. The attainment of girls is a little higher than that of boys. Lower attaining pupils have, for example, a sound understanding of the structure and function of the eye and can relate this to the structure of the camera. Higher attainers use their understanding of the nervous system to carry out a simple investigation on reaction time. Progress is good over the course of the key stage.

89. Towards the end of Key Stage 4 standards are above nationally expected levels. Pupils have developed a good scientific vocabulary. They approach investigative work with confidence. A high attaining Year 11 group was observed investigating electromagnets after making predictions about the relationships between different variables. Another group was planning an investigation to find out about the factors affecting the action of an enzyme. Pupils understand about the relationship between forces speed and acceleration and concepts such as homeostasis. Pupils make good progress in developing and applying their investigative and scientific skills.

90. Pupils with special educational needs work hard and, with well targeted help from teachers and support staff, attain their targets. Although many have difficulty with written presentation they show orally that they have understood scientific concepts in the same way as their class-mates. Higher attaining pupils speak with a level of understanding that is above average for pupils of this age.

91. Pupils' literary skills are generally very good. They have a sound knowledge of technical and scientific terms. However, some pupils at both key stages fail to pay sufficient attention to presentation. At Key Stage 4 numerical skills are good. Pupils handle simple calculations and formulae competently. The numerical skills of pupils in Year 9 are sound but there is less evidence for the appropriate use of number in Years 7 and 8. The lack of computer hardware prevents pupils at both key stages from fully developing their ICT skills.

92. The quality of teaching at both key stages was never less than satisfactory, and in just under three-quarters of the lessons it was good or very good. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is very good and they share their enthusiasm for science with pupils. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives although these are not always made clear to pupils. Relationships between teachers and pupils are always good and humour is often used to good effect. In the best lessons teachers use a variety of activities to maintain interest. Pupils in Year 8, through discussion, sharing knowledge, research and undertaking a mini quiz, made excellent progress and demonstrated their understanding of the solar system with a visual presentation at the end of the lesson. Time is usually used effectively and lessons usually have a good pace. Pupils respond well to opportunities for taking responsibility for their own learning. A Year 11 group demonstrated good skills when they

researched different examples of homeostasis and organised the most effective way of communicating the information to others. Teachers' expectations are high and lessons always provide challenge. In a Key Stage 3 class pupils were presented with the task of setting up a large number of mini experiments to investigate rusting. They did this with confidence and were able to meet the teacher's expectations of relating what they were doing to combustion and oxidation. Books are marked regularly and comments provide pupils with valuable information about the quality of their work. Targets are clear and ambitious. Pupils are assessed regularly but records are not kept in a way in which progress can be easily monitored. Teachers have a good understanding of the requirements of low attaining pupils and those with special needs. Schemes of work are comprehensive indicating an alternative approach for higher and lower attainers but work is not always sufficiently adapted to meet their needs. There is very good liaison with support assistants, which promotes the effectiveness of learning in lessons.

93. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. They come to lessons wanting to learn and approach the tasks set with enthusiasm. They are courteous to one another and to adults. They work well in groups and support one another. Behaviour in almost all lessons is exemplary. Incidents of inappropriate conduct are rare.

94. The department has responded positively to the previous report and all lessons now provide pupils with appropriate challenge. Two of the laboratories have been brought up to a high standard but the remainder of the accommodation still requires refurbishment. Staff, using attractive displays of work, have worked hard to provide an inviting environment. Pupils are asked to consider the moral and social consequences of science, but there are fewer opportunities to consider the spiritual dimensions.

95. Prior to and during the time of the inspection, the head of department was absent. Staff, under the able leadership of the deputy head of department, continued to work with a sense of common purpose in the interests of the pupils. Four laboratory technicians provide excellent support for teaching. The way in which staff work together and support one another is a strength of the department.

ART

96. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to C in the GCSE examinations in 1999 is well above national averages for all pupils and these results have been consistent for the last three years. However, in 1998 there was a significant difference between the results of boys and girls but this level of difference has not been subsequently repeated. In 1999, GCSE results were above those obtained by pupils at the school in many other subjects. Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 indicate attainment was above national averages.

97. Attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average. Pupils of all abilities achieve good standards in their drawing, print and painting skills; their use of shape, line and tone is accurate. Outcomes are imaginative and often expressive, demonstrating a good understanding and use of colour, pattern and texture. All pupils have a good knowledge of the work of artists and other cultures and of the critical and technical language of the subject. Standards of three-dimensional work are average, because pupils have fewer opportunities to develop these skills.

98. At age 16, the standard of attainment is very high and well above the standard expected for pupils of the same age. The majority of pupils have very good drawing skills, they can record accurately from observation and make very good use of their improving knowledge of the work of artists and other cultures to inform their use of media and technique. Research and graphical design skills are very well developed and show a good understanding of composition and design for different purposes. Printmaking work is well crafted and demonstrates a good understanding of surface and mono-print techniques. Painting skills are well above average; they show a breadth of technique and are often expressive.

99. Pupils with special educational needs, at both key stages, are achieving standards in line with their peers and above those expected nationally. The department does identify gifted pupils, and the higher attainers achieve consistently high standards.

100. Since the last inspection, good attempts have been made to improve the visual resources and increase the size of one of the teaching rooms. These improvements should have enabled more three-dimensional work to be taught; however, this art room is still insufficient in size. It has inappropriate work surfaces and washing facilities, all of which limit the use of clay, work in a range of scale and three-dimensional media. The additional visual resources are used well, but there are still insufficient books to inform the range of pupils' research.

101. The previous high standards achieved in art have been maintained and improved, particularly in the teaching at Key Stage 4. Overall, the quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is good and at Key Stage 4 it is very good. In many Key Stage 3 lessons, and consistently at Key Stage 4, lessons are well structured and effectively managed, with good pace and focused use of resources. Teachers' planning has clear objectives; these are made explicit to pupils and reviewed effectively at the end of lessons to ensure pupils have made good progress. Teachers make very good use of sketchbooks to develop pupils' research and design skills, and to ensure high standards of learning about media and technique, particularly at Key Stage 4. Very good use is made of the study of the work of artists to improve pupils' understanding of content, composition and meaning. For example, in a Year 8 unit on 'Looking at people', pupils were effectively guided in their study of portraits from the last 500 years and they use the information in creating portraits of their own.

102. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are very good at both key stages. Pupils act responsibly, establish good relationships with teachers and their peers, and show respect for the views of others. All pupils work with enthusiasm and remain well motivated throughout their projects. Many pupils take responsibility for the development of their ideas, particularly at Key Stage 4. They carry out effective research using the library, photography and the Internet, and make very good use of sketchbooks to design and record their developing views and ideas. The study of artists and other cultures engenders a respect for the beliefs and views of others. Attitudes to homework are very positive; many pupils use their own computer resources very effectively to extend their designs as well as using computer graphics to present their work.

103. Very effective leadership and management result in high standards in most areas of the subject. Comprehensive documentation that clearly directs pupils' learning provides good quality guidance for teachers in their planning. Procedures for monitoring and assessment are thorough and very well managed, although reports to parents lack clear judgements about standards and progress and do not provide focussed guidance for improvement. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 provides good opportunities for the study of a range of two-dimensional media, but the current breadth of three-dimensional experience is

insufficiently developed. The study of a range of artistic traditions and other cultures enriches the curriculum and contributes well to pupils' knowledge and understanding of art. However, although planning is now in place, there has been insufficient curriculum development in the use of computers in art and design. Display in the art rooms and shared areas is of a high standard; it celebrates pupils' achievement and the visual stimulus effectively support the teaching and learning.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

104. By the end of Key Stage 3, the standard of attainment in both designing and making is well above national expectations. It matches the highest standards in other subjects in the school. Attainment in lessons is of a similar high standard. In food technology, many pupils can apply industrial methods successfully to test and evaluate products, for example in a project to mass-produce biscuits. In electronics, they develop a good understanding of how circuits work, of the purpose of many components and how to find and rectify faults. When designing a mechanical toy, pupils can describe clearly the action of different cams and plan their work with precision. Both higher and lower attaining pupils reach appropriate levels. Folder work is well presented, although the match between the initial specification and pupils' evaluation of the product is not always clear enough. More girls reach the higher levels than boys at both key stages, but this is in line with the national trend.

105. GCSE results in 1999 were well above average for the small numbers of pupils taking the resistant materials and graphic products courses. Pupils currently in Year 11 are achieving above average standards in the work they have done so far at Key Stage 4. Most have a good knowledge of the materials they use and demonstrate good competence in a wide range of skills in their project work in graphics, textiles, electronics, food technology and resistant materials. Although many pupils often show creative flair, their folder work is not always rigorous in its organisation and target setting. In food technology and electronics, some pupils have only a limited understanding of the more complex ideas of each subject, such as nutrition and circuit design. The design process is well understood by all pupils however and they generally work well independently in making a range of products that are finished to a high standard.

106. Teaching is good overall, and leads to effective learning across both key stages. All the specialist teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of their subject. Their careful exposition allows pupils to move quickly on to successful and interesting practical work. In food technology, a clear introduction by the teacher on the use of fats led to a productive lesson where pupils worked independently and compared the results of different recipes, using high levels of technical vocabulary. In electronics, particular attention to safety and testing in the teacher's explanation allowed pupils to complete their circuits carefully. Good direction of assistants by the teacher ensures pupils with special educational needs make the same progress as others. All of the teaching was at least satisfactory. In a textiles lesson, however, more guidance was needed to ensure projects were completed to schedule and that pupils took their assessment seriously. Across all specialist areas at Key Stage 3, pupils' knowledge of their own learning in both designing and making is not high. Teachers give too little guidance on how pupils can reflect on the success of specific aspects of designing and making in project work.

107. Pupils show positive attitudes in this subject. They work safely in the workshop, food and textiles rooms. When large classes use smaller workshops, they behave in mature way, respecting the need for other pupils to have space around benches and machinery. They show pride in making products of a high quality. They participate in extra-curricular activities with enthusiasm, such as a Robot Wars activity as part of the Young Engineer's

club. Pupils work as part of a team and usually cooperate effectively, as in a food lesson where they successfully mass-produced extruded biscuits.

108. Clear improvements have been made since the last inspection. The curricular provision at Key Stage 4 has been increased markedly and it now meets statutory requirements. The department provides a good choice of courses for pupils at GCSE, with five full GCSEs, and two short courses combined with business studies and ICT. Management of the subject is very good, with a meticulously documented programme of study. This enables new staff to identify ways of demanding high standards from all pupils. Some of the accommodation is too small for the current large classes and one GCSE food class has limited access to a kitchen. Resources are also inadequate with a lack of equipment for pupils to gain experience of recent technology such as computer aided design.

GEOGRAPHY

109. Over the last three years grades at GCSE have risen steadily and standards are well above the national average. In 1999 attainment at A*-C grades was significantly above national figures, with girls attaining better than boys. All pupils taking the subject have gained A*-G grades for the last two years. Performance indicators show that girls are gaining two-thirds of a grade higher in geography than in other subjects they take and boys half a grade better.

110. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average. In lessons there are high standards of written and number work and pupils have developed good study and examination skills. Mapping skills are also developing well. In Year 7 pupils can measure line and angle in scale and compass work and use co-ordinates in map references. They show an understanding of contours and have good spatial awareness. Written skills improve throughout the key stage and there are good examples of extended and imaginative writing such as 'poverty in Rio' and the eruption of Mt Pinatubo, in which pupils are encouraged to show feeling for the plight of others.

111. At Key Stage 4 attainment is well above average. Pupils demonstrate a good general knowledge and use appropriate vocabulary. They apply written and number skills to produce good enquiries and coursework and illustrate them with imagination and variety. Pupils have a clear understanding of more complex concepts in geography, shown in work on hierarchies, urban development modelling. The quality of work in preparing case studies is high, for example in studies of field work at Barton-on-Sea and in a particularly resourceful piece of extended writing on the Aral Sea.

112. Teaching at Key Stage 3 is good or better in four out of five lessons and satisfactory in the rest. At Key Stage 4 it is good or very good in all lessons. The subject knowledge of teachers is extensive and they teach geographical skills well. Good teaching enables pupils of all abilities to make good progress. Higher and lower attaining pupils are challenged by work that is well matched to their ability. Pupils with SEN get effective support from learning assistants and make good progress with suitably graded work. Some lower attaining pupils benefit from good teaching in the Youth Award Scheme. High expectations and constant reinforcement help all pupils to make good progress. Teachers and pupils alike show a

commitment to the subject. Teaching is supportive and builds trust and confidence. There is good rapport between teachers and pupils. The insistence that conclusions are based on evidence ensures high quality work and strengthens pupils' understanding.

113. The behaviour of pupils is very good. They show interest in the subject and take-up at Key Stage 4 is high. They work well cooperatively and on their own and are enthused by lessons that are varied and well planned. They are actively engaged in a variety of field-work and visits. Pupils show an appreciation of the feelings of others in their written work. Pupils at Key Stage 4 have produced some good examples of word processing and desk top publishing, but opportunities to use information and communication technology are limited by the lack of resources in the classrooms.

114. Since the last inspection, standards in lessons at Key Stage 4 and in examination results have improved. Understanding of physical geography now matches that of human geography and teaching is better.

115. Leadership of the department is good and teachers are committed to providing lessons of the highest quality. The size of some teaching rooms is inadequate for the delivery of ICT. A review of the way National Curriculum levels are used in target setting at Key Stage 3 would also be beneficial.

HISTORY

116. In recent GCSE examinations, results in both the A*-C and A*-G range have been above national averages, although, in the most recent examination, they were in line with national norms. A major feature of the results has been the relative performance of pupils in terms of gender. Girls have consistently achieved well in public examinations, but boys have performed less well and there has been a decline in the uptake of the subject at Key Stage 4 by higher attaining boys.

117. In lessons, standards are above national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3 and pupils display an impressive array of historical skills from the start of Year 7, including a sense of chronology and an ability to use sources in a critical way to substantiate conclusions. They can also put facts together well to produce structured arguments, as was observed in a Year 7 lesson during which pupils worked in groups to put forward arguments in favour of the various claimants to the English throne in 1066. These arguments were then analysed very closely by a further group of pupils who formed the Witan council. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment levels are also above national standards in lessons, and pupils are developing a detailed knowledge and understanding of complex historical terminology and can analyse a variety of source material in depth, building on the firm foundations laid in the previous key stage. In terms of standards overall, the department has addressed fully the concerns arising from the previous report and has shown significant improvement.

118. The quality of teaching in the subject is mostly good or very good. Teachers have a very sound grasp of subject knowledge, which nurtures the learning process and encourages pupils to develop their basic skills and subject knowledge to the full. This was demonstrated very well in a Year 10 lesson on deep coal mining in the 19th century, in which the teacher used his extensive knowledge of the subject to enthuse pupils and enhance their understanding of the topic. Lessons are planned well with clear aims and objectives, and pupils are also given opportunities to reflect on their progress at the end of sessions. This skilled approach to classroom management has again addressed an issue arising from the previous inspection. There is a purposeful atmosphere in history lessons

and a variety of techniques is used to enhance the progress of pupils. This was seen to very good effect in a Year 11 lesson during which pupils used pictorial sources to analyse, in groups, the hypothesis that there was a golden age of agriculture in 19th century England. The subsequent presentations by individual group members showed a considerable depth of analysis and maturity in presentation.

119. The attitudes of pupils are very good throughout the age range and relationships in the classroom are excellent. Pupils are willing to voice their opinions in classroom debate and show respect for their teachers. They are given confidence by teachers to express themselves in a variety of contexts and are particularly impressive in oral debate. This was demonstrated very well in a Year 8 lesson in which pupils discussed the causes of the English Civil War and were able to articulate these in the ensuing classroom debate. Pupils also make good progress in their written work, particularly at Key Stage 3, where some very detailed project work was seen on the legacy of the Roman Empire and on the results of a field trip to York. Standards of presentation are high and written work in exercise books contains good examples of source analysis and essay writing. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well with appropriate individual education plans and materials to suit their needs, enabling them to make good progress. Higher attaining pupils are given opportunities to extend their knowledge and understanding of the subject, but would benefit from more specific advice and opportunity to develop individual research skills in order to reach their full potential.

120. The department has very thorough documentation and is managed well, although the teaching team has extensive management responsibilities elsewhere in the school. The monitoring of pupils' performance is rigorous. There is a regular field trip to York in Year 7, but opportunities for other year groups are limited. There is a detailed policy on information technology and some impressive word-processed homework and coursework assignments were seen during the inspection, but the department suffers from lack of opportunity to develop this area within the school.

121. Overall, very good progress has been made since the previous inspection. The history department has a very experienced and able teaching team, and a key challenge now is to increase the uptake of the subject at Key Stage 4 and to improve the performance of boys in public examinations.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

122. By the end of both key stages standards of attainment are below national averages and the standard reached by other subjects in the school. Work in lessons is also below average at both key stages when these pupils are compared with others in a similar context. Although most pupils use word processors and desktop publishing to improve the presentation of their work, this is limited in range and complexity. They are unfamiliar with creating documents with a multi-media or web-based dimension. The composition of pupils' documents rarely shows discernment, and few appropriately use a variety of sources of information. Skills for searching for data are not refined, with pupils using only simple searches on CD ROMs. Understanding of using computers as a means of control is a weakness. In geography, English, science and design and technology, pupils are able to use ICT with some independence for presenting and researching the subject. There is little difference in standards reached by girls and boys but both gifted pupils and those with special educational needs are not achieving appropriately at both key stages.

123. By the end of Key Stage 4 the standard of attainment is below the national average, except in a joint course with design and technology where it is in line with national expectations. GCSE examination results in 1999 were below the standard of other subjects in the school. The present standard remains low. Pupils who take the GCSE course lack a rigorous enough knowledge of data handling programmes to use for their project work. Organisational skills with major projects, and the planning of work, are insufficient to allow pupils to work independently. Other pupils in the school take a short course, with no external certification. This does not cover the full programme of study, so by the end of Key Stage 4, pupils are not aware of many of the advanced features of computers and ICT software. They are unable to use simple design systems or to apply their knowledge of control and data logging.

124. The teaching of ICT is mostly satisfactory. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and are able to provide lessons with clear aims, with appropriate challenge. In a complementary studies lesson, pupils quickly learnt how to use the new network and manipulate files with clear instructions from the teacher. In a minority of lessons, the teaching lacks sparkle. In one lesson, pupils were left to explore programmes with little guidance, and they did not gain a clear understanding of the best ways of using a graphing programme. Feedback to pupils on how well they progress is poor. When non-specialist teachers grade work at the end of Key Stage 3, levels are often too high. Homework is rarely set, except for examination classes. There is little rigorous teaching of ICT skills beyond Year 7, so the standard of learning across both key stages is unsatisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs and gifted pupils also make unsatisfactory progress, with little teaching that targets their specific needs.

125. Pupils show satisfactory attitudes. They enjoy using computers, showing respect for the ICT code of conduct. When sharing a computer, they will cooperate and enthusiastically attempt to solve problems together. However, some pupils in Year 7 do not enjoy using the older computers, which run different software that does not match their machines at home. Pupils are disappointed that specific ICT lessons stop after Year 7, and that only pupils who opt for the subject at Key Stage 4 receive their full entitlement.

126. In several subjects, such as art, geography, science and English, there are few opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their learning. Pupils with special educational needs have limited opportunities to use ICT to support their literacy and numeracy. There are no reports to parents in ICT in Years 7 and 8 and progress is not reported across Key Stage 4 except for examination courses.

127. There are insufficient ICT specialist teachers. Although the staff are keen to use ICT for their own subjects, and some apply it well, there is a lack of understanding of the teaching of ICT skills. Resources are poor. Large GCSE examination classes have to share computers even in the new networked learning centre. The remainder of the computers are old, and there is a shortage of some peripheral equipment such as scanners, digital cameras, or special subject software.

128. Management of ICT is unsatisfactory. There is no clear audit of ICT opportunities at either key stage, identifying how the programme of study is covered. Although there are clear priorities for the subject in the school development plan, previous arrangements to extend facilities have not been successful, and the present school infrastructure - curriculum, staffing and resources - is inadequate. There has been a clear deterioration in standards of ICT since the last inspection.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

129. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C in the GCSE examinations in 1999 was well above the national average in French, German and Spanish. The French results showed a rise of 3% overall, but boys improved their performance by 18% and finished well above the national average for boys. Girls' performance dropped by 10%. In German, however, the percentage of girls gaining A* to C grades remained the same, whilst boys' results fell by 24%. No A* grades were secured in any of the three languages. In school, pupils' achievement was higher in German than in many other school subjects. Pupils' achievement was lower in French than in the majority of other subjects.

130. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 in French and German is above average. Pupils' understanding of the foreign language is very good, as a result of the teachers' consistent use of it in the classroom to challenge the pupils. Listening exercises are used in nearly every lesson to help pupils consolidate and develop their skill. Oral skills are good and pronunciation is satisfactory, and in many cases good. Pupils have many opportunities in class to practise with a partner in pair work, but as yet few pupils use the foreign language to the teacher for requests. Reading skills are good. Writing skills are very good. Pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of topic vocabulary, tenses and construction and they write confidently at length.

131. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is above average in French, German and Spanish. Understanding is good, and oracy skills are being developed. Higher attainers write extensively and with accuracy about a wide range of topics and have a good knowledge of tenses, vocabulary and constructions. There is room for more accuracy in the middle and lower range of writing.

132. Teaching is good in three out of four lessons, and just one lesson was unsatisfactory. In this lesson two of the tasks were very unproductive and the pupils were reluctant to speak French in group work. The high standard of teaching impacts well on pupils' learning, which is good at both key stages. There is consistency of teaching across the department in the vast majority of lessons – objectives are shared, past work is revised and consolidated, then developed, and the lesson finishes with a recapitulation of what has been learnt. Pupils therefore have a good understanding of what they are doing and why.

133. Good planning ensures that each lesson has a variety of tasks and of skills. In a mixed ability class in German in Year 7, pupils responded well to challenging teaching. They consolidated their knowledge of leisure activities in pair work, learnt some new phrases with the aid of mime, and performed very well in a listening exercise. Higher attainers in a Year 8 German lesson were well challenged by very good teaching, picking up the workings of the perfect tense of strong and weak verbs very quickly. Their learning was very impressive. Teachers' expectations are high, and they help pupils to progress in nearly every lesson. In a Year 10 German lesson, higher attainers made good progress in a listening exercise and showed a very good understanding of a text about problems with parents over pocket money.

134. Teachers' strategies - the use of pair work, question and answer sessions, good use of the overhead projector and games - help pupils to sustain their concentration and to work at a good speed. Tasks are usually set with a time limit. In many lessons the use of the class interpreter - one of the pupils in the class - to convey the task that has just been set ensures that all pupils know what they have to do. Teachers' enthusiasm for their subject is apparent in many lessons. In a Year 11 Spanish lesson, pupils' written work had been well marked; pupils were able to identify their mistakes easily and the teacher used the most common mistake, the imperfect tense, to show the pupils how to improve.

135. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress on the whole. In three lessons observed, they were well supported. One of the support staff is a native German speaker, which is very advantageous. In a Year 8 French class together with lower attainers and two support staff, pupils were able to develop their knowledge of the perfect tense in games with cards and pictures. They worked hard at the task, persevered and enjoyed what they were doing. The support staff moved from group to group, giving pupils encouragement and helping them to sustain their concentration.

136. Pupils' attitudes at both key stages are invariably good or very good. They are attentive and well behaved in lessons and apply themselves well to their tasks. Relationships in the classroom provide a confident and positive atmosphere in which achievement flourishes.

137. Teaching still remains the strength of the department, despite many changes in staff since the last inspection. Very good monitoring by the senior management and the head of department has helped them to identify weaknesses. The underachievement of boys is still a challenge, and ICT is insufficiently developed.

MUSIC

138. The 1999 GCSE results for pupils achieving the higher A*-C grades were above the national average. Although the results for the previous two years were well above the national average, almost double the number of pupils took the examination in 1999. There is a good take-up rate for the subject in the current Year 10.

139. At the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 attainment is above national expectations. No lessons were observed in Year 11, but analysis of pupils' work confirms this judgement. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils show good performing skills and can read notation with some fluency. They have a good knowledge of basic chord structures and different musical forms and show a secure understanding of the subject's vocabulary. They acquire good listening skills and make effective use of the musical elements in their compositions. They are able to make evaluative comments about their work. In a Year 8 lesson, pupils sang two popular songs and then accurately identified the structure of each. They learnt to play a melody by Handel on instruments and then successfully compared its musical structure to those of the songs. Pupils in Year 7 learnt about the chromatic scale and could identify where semitones occurred in the opening bars of *Fur Elise*. At Key Stage 4 pupils show good general musical knowledge and use different musical devices well in their compositions. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils learnt about Baroque music and were able to name some of the composers, to discuss the instrumentation and to identify key features in an extract from Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are musically able make good progress in lessons.

140. There has been good improvement in the overall attainment of pupils since the last inspection. However, although the majority of pupils at both key stages are achieving above what is expected from pupils of a similar age and ability, a few pupils are capable of achieving even higher standards in all aspects of the work.

141. There is good teaching at both key stages and teaching has improved since the previous inspection. The quality of pupils' learning is good and they use their prior learning well to support and extend their understanding. Teachers make effective use of musical demonstration and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Listening and performing tasks are used well to re-inforce teaching points. For example, good teaching in a Year 9

lesson enabled pupils to understand the development of rock'n'roll. They listened to one of the songs, practised different parts on a variety of instruments and then gave a successful performance. Very occasionally, however, teachers do not ensure that pupils make the best use of individual rehearsal time. This results in some underachievement by a few pupils. Good attention is given to developing pupils' literacy skills in lessons.

142. Extra-curricular activities provide very good opportunities for pupils to gain further confidence as performers. These opportunities widen pupils' knowledge of the musical repertoire and make them more familiar with different musical styles. Over 200 pupils receive instrumental lessons and the peripatetic teachers make a valuable contribution to the work of the department. Pupils have taken part in concerts both in and out of school and these have included the Christmas concert and year group performances to parents.

143. Pupils have good attitudes towards the subject and are very responsive to extra-curricular activities. At Key Stage 3 the majority of pupils are well-behaved and concentrate well in lessons. At Key Stage 4 pupils show a committed approach and work independently on assignments, when required.

144. The head of department, who is new to the school, has a clear vision for the way the subject is to develop, in order to continue to raise pupils' attainment. She is supported well by a colleague who had responsibility for the department in the previous term. Schemes of work and assessment procedures are in the process of being updated. The accommodation is very good and has been improved since the last inspection. The resources are adequate and include computers and software. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

145. In 1999 the number of pupils gaining A*-C grades at GCSE was above the national average, and all those entered gained A*-G grades, above the national norm. In both categories pupils' results have been above the national average over the past three years, with girls attaining higher results than boys, similar to the national picture.

146. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is above national expectations. The majority of boys and girls have a good knowledge of health and fitness. Girls, in Year 7, are able to copy and repeat movements with rhythm and control in dance. Boys, in Year 9, work well together to perform good quality gymnastics sequences.

147. The standard of work seen in Years 10 and 11 is above the national average. Girls in the GCSE basketball group have very good ball-handling skills and a sound knowledge of the rules and tactics. The boys in Year 11 play rugby with stamina, skill and strength. Pupils in these examination groups have a sound knowledge of types of training and their written work is well organised and presented. The majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11, who do not take the GCSE examination, are attaining a level above the expected national norm. The attainment of some individual pupils and teams is very high. They play football, rugby, netball, hockey, tennis, basketball and athletics effectively at district, county and national level.

148. All teaching is sound, the majority is good and one third is very good. The very good teaching addresses all areas of the National Curriculum in the appropriate balance. Year 7 girls come to the school with little knowledge of hockey. They quickly acquire the new skills involved because of the well-planned progressive tasks, which is a feature of all the teaching in the department. Pupils make good progress in planning activities and observing the performance of others in gymnastics and dance as the result of the focus given to these areas by their teachers. The equal progress of pupils, regardless of their different physical abilities, is well supported by teaching in ability and gender groups. Teachers circulate well to set individual tasks, and sometimes divide the teaching group when the range of attainment demands greater flexibility and guidance than whole group teaching would permit. A group of Year 9 boys were given different activities to match their ability in their basketball lesson. This is an aspect of the teaching which could be further developed by all members of the department to ensure the appropriate learning of each pupil. All teachers recap previous work and share the lesson objectives at the beginning of the lesson with the pupils. This is a particularly successful strategy with the lower attaining pupils, who need to refine and revisit existing skills before progress can be made. Teachers have high expectations and good subject expertise. This enables them to fully extend the higher attainers.

149. Pupils behave very well and have very good relationships with their teachers. They wear the school physical education uniform, and look smart and well turned out for their lessons. This positive attitude enhances their learning. In a small number of lessons teaching is too directed and allows few independent learning tasks. There is no opportunity for pupils to develop their information and communication technology skills, and this is insufficiently developed. The pace of lessons in boys' rugby, girls' basketball and girls' and boys' hockey is excellent. Pupils work with energy and enthusiasm allowing good learning to take place. The number of pupils, more boys than girls, who opt to study GCSE physical education and the large numbers attending extra-curricular activities show their real interest in the subject.

150. The curriculum meets statutory requirements but there are few opportunities for boys and girls to work together. The leadership of the department provides very good support for a hard working team. The department documentation is very well presented, comprehensive and informative.

151. The department has made significant improvements since the previous inspection. The attainment of pupils at both key stages has improved. Pupils' progress is good and often very good at Key Stage 4. The improved curriculum gives them the opportunity to acquire depth of knowledge and further skills. The quality of teaching has improved. It addresses the needs of all pupils. Teachers have high expectations, the pace of lessons is good and all pupils are achieving to the best of their ability.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

152. There has been a considerable amount of improvement since the last inspection, with clear vision for the future of the department and an overall improvement of its profile in the school.

153. By the end of Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils attain in line with the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus, and some reach high standards. In most lessons pupils are being encouraged to think more deeply and to interpret their thoughts with regard to their own experiences. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. For example, pupils in Year 9 were working on a passage that gave them an overview of Christianity from

the creation to the resurrection. One pupil put forward the idea that the expulsion from Eden might be seen as a state of mind. They talked about messages and messengers sent by God throughout history, and they discussed the levels of man's understanding over the years.

154. At Key Stage 4, pupils spend several weeks studying other aspects of complementary studies and some were just beginning religious education for the first time this year. In general, pupils attain as expected for their age and experience and in line with the locally Agreed Syllabus. Some attain high standards. Year 11 was seen engaged in defining words such as 'prejudice', 'discrimination', and the whole concept of ethnicity and stereotyping. Year 10 were exploring symbolism, using some artists' work which led them to discuss 'green' issues and the possible religious links that these might contain.

155. Pupils' learning is closely linked to the quality of teaching they receive. In classes where challenge and expectations are very high, pupils are very well motivated and acquire new learning readily. Where the challenge is lower, pupils do not learn so well and their interest and motivation are less. Teachers have high expectations in the majority of lessons, and the level of pupils' learning is very good, overall. Pupils generally work with interest and at a good pace. Those who have special educational needs make good progress towards their targets. In general, pupils are furthering their knowledge and understanding very well, largely due to the very good teaching in most classes.

156. Most pupils enjoy religious education. They respond very well to the teachers' expectations and enthusiasm. Behaviour is very good, and most pupils are willing to join in with lessons and offer their own ideas and opinions. The majority of pupils have positive attitudes and many say that they look forward to the religious education lessons. Pupils' personal development is very good, largely due to the enthusiasm and interest shown in the majority of the teaching.

157. Teaching overall is very good, although it ranges from satisfactory to excellent. In less successful lessons pupils are not sufficiently challenged and expectations are not high. These lessons do not engage pupils fully, and the teacher does most of the work. In better lessons, pupils are fully engaged and active throughout. They are challenged to think more deeply. Planning is very good and most teachers display a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Management of pupils is very good in all lessons and the time is used appropriately. Some lessons rely upon the teacher talking for most of the time, but many use resources to very good effect, creating a good learning environment.

158. The leadership of the department is very good. Schemes of work have been developed which follow the locally Agreed Syllabus very well. Assessment is also good and there are opportunities for pupils to assess their own contributions. The head of the department provides a very clear lead and vision for the future, especially in her vibrant and enthusiastic teaching.

159. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection. Attainment is now either at or above the expected levels. Teaching is generally very good with some that is excellent, and the curriculum follows the Agreed Syllabus very well. The new head of the department has made a very good impact upon the subject and the status of religious education is rising noticeably.