

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **SIR JAMES SMITH COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

Camelford, Cornwall

LEA area: Cornwall

Unique reference number: 112039

Headteacher: Ms A Perlmutter

Reporting inspector: Ian Stuart  
19298

Dates of inspection: 24 – 28 September 2001

Inspection number: 189363

Full 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 - 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Dark Lane  
Camelford  
Cornwall

Postcode: PL32 9UJ

Telephone number: 01840 213274

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr T Griffiths

Date of previous inspection: 16 – 20 September 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
19298	Ian Stuart	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements; How well are the pupils and students taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9756	Kenneth Parsons	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school cultivate pupils' personal development? How well does the school care for its pupils and students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? The adequacy of accommodation.
1085	John Laver	Team inspector	English	
15268	John English	Team inspector	Mathematics	
22691	Ray Woodhouse	Team inspector	Science	
27666	John Dockrell	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages	

18967	Brenda Loydell	Team inspector	Special educational needs; English as an additional language; Equal opportunities	Assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic progress.
10385	Keith Hopkins	Team inspector	Information & communication technology; Design & technology	
31765	Ian Hume	Team inspector	History; Business	The adequacy of staffing resources.
22590	Robert Castle	Team inspector	Geography; Physical education	
18638	Christopher Shaw	Team inspector	Art & design	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
15941	Colin Phillips	Team inspector	Religious education	Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
31705	John Mason	Team inspector	Music	

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London WC2B 6SE

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Sir James Smith is a small comprehensive community school with 651 boys and girls aged 11 to 18. The school is located in the small town of Camelford, many miles from major centres of population or further/higher education. Key factors which affect the work of the school include this geographical isolation, the deeply rural nature of its catchment area, and the high levels of social and economic disadvantage. No pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds; two pupils have English as an additional language. The number of pupils with special educational needs is broadly average, but the number with a Statement of Special Educational Need is higher than average. The attainments of pupils on entry are below average in most years, though there are marked variations from year to year, including fluctuating proportions of boys and girls between different year groups; literacy levels of boys have been particularly low recently.

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

The school gives a satisfactory education to its pupils and students. The school has many strengths; it is very committed to the education of all its pupils, whatever their circumstances or difficulties, but it is doing less well than most schools in some areas of its work. Some interpretations of its results in recent years show very positive outcomes from standards on entry; other interpretations are less positive. Boys' achievements are much lower than the girls' achievements. Teaching is satisfactory for pupils up to the age of 16. Although nearly a third is very good or excellent, some unsatisfactory teaching leads to unsatisfactory learning. Furthermore, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are unsatisfactory or worse in nearly 20 per cent of lessons, despite, in some cases, the best efforts of teachers. As a result, learning suffers and pupils sometimes achieve less than they should. Teaching in the sixth form is good and this is reflected in the students' generally good achievements. Leadership and management are satisfactory, but, in some areas, the school's stated policies are not always fully applied in practice, leading to inconsistencies in the pupils' experiences. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- Many dedicated teachers teach very well and enable their pupils to achieve very successfully.
- Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good.
- Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good.
- The links with local primary schools are very good.
- The school's financial planning is particularly effective in supporting its educational priorities.
- The quality and care of the school building and grounds create a good environment for learning.

### **What could be improved**

- The behaviour of too many pupils is unsatisfactory, hindering their learning and that of others.
- There is a gap in some areas of the school's work between its policies and its day-to-day practices, which means that there are too many inconsistencies in the pupils' experiences.
- There are significant variations in standards attained in different subjects and for different groups of pupils; in particular, boys' attainments are much lower than girls'.
- At whole school level, strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy skills are not yet in place.
- Present arrangements for Key Stage 4 do not allow all pupils to have a curriculum that is best suited to their needs.
- Within their personal development, provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in September 1996. Around that time, two successive small year groups obtained GCSE results that have not been matched since. However, that inspection judged teaching to be unsatisfactory in a high proportion of lessons, particularly at Key Stage 4 where over a quarter was unsatisfactory and where the pupils' behaviour was also criticised. The overall quality of teaching has improved considerably, with the large number of teachers appointed to the school in the last year or so also making a significant contribution to the improving quality of teaching. Pupils' behaviour, as noted in the previous report, is still a significant concern. The quality of the buildings and grounds has improved, with the new mathematics building and bus park being notable recent developments. Improvements in the provision of computers are also notable. Overall, there has been sufficient improvement for it to be judged satisfactory.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and sixth form students at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	B	A	B	B
A-levels/AS-levels	D	D	A	

**Key**

well above A  
average

above average B  
average C

below average D  
well below E  
average

Over the last four years, the school's overall results in national tests taken at the end of Year 9 have been average, rising broadly in line with the national average. However, there have been considerable variations between years, and the 2001 results are below average. English results for boys and girls have fluctuated widely; those for mathematics have shown less marked variation, whilst those for science have shown the most consistency, being above average except in 2001 when they are average. Apart from science, boys have achieved less well than girls by a greater amount than the national difference. Boys who have been in the school since the beginning of Year 7 have generally gained results in line with would be expected by the end of Year 9; girls have achieved well, as they have tended to do somewhat better than would be expected.

Over the three years including 2000, the last year for which national information is available, the total points scores at GCSE, taken at the end of Year 11, have been

above average for both boys and girls, with a trend for the core subjects that is below the national trend. In 2000, girls' points scores were well above average, boys' were close to the national average, giving overall points scores above the national average. However, overall points scores in all individual subjects, except German, were around or below the national average. The proportion of entries gaining higher grades was below the national average, and the gap between boys and girls in the proportion of their entries obtaining higher grades was nearly twice the national difference. The well above average increase in total points scores at GCSE compared with test scores in the core subjects at the end of Year 9 is due, at least in part, to the large number of subjects taken at GCSE, so raising total points scores. The total points scores in the 2001 GCSE results are lower than 2000 as is the proportion obtaining five or more higher grades, though the proportions obtaining at least one or five A\*-G grades is higher than 2000. The total points scores in 2001 are in line with what would be expected nationally from the test scores at the end of Year 9.

In work seen during the inspection, the pupils' attainments by the end of Year 9 are average overall, representing good achievement from their attainments on entry. They are above average in science, geography, history and religious education. At the end of Year 11, pupils' standards and their achievements over time are average; they are above average in geography, history, drama and religious education, and below average in physical education and design & technology. The differences between the attainments of boys and girls, seen in test and examination results, are also noticeable in work seen during the inspection.

#### **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Most pupils enjoy coming to school, though many do not show much enthusiasm for the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Unsatisfactory. Whilst most pupils are well behaved and respond very well to good teaching, too many pupils hinder learning, and there is much boisterous behaviour in corridors.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Many relationships between pupils and their teachers and other pupils are good; involvement in extra-curricular activities is good. Pupils are given relatively few opportunities to take responsibility.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance rates are broadly in line with the national average; unauthorised absence last year was very low.

#### **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	<b>Years 7 – 9</b>	<b>Years 10 – 11</b>	<b>Years 12 – 13</b>

Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Good
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*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.*

For pupils up to the age of 16, teaching is at least satisfactory in about 92 per cent of lessons seen during the inspection. It is very good, and occasionally excellent, in nearly a third of lessons. Whilst there is a close link between the quality of teaching and learning, there are some lessons where, despite sound teaching strategies, learning has been unsatisfactory because some pupils' behaviour has hindered their own learning and that of others. During the inspection, learning was unsatisfactory in about one lesson in seven. Teaching at both key stages is very good in history and good in mathematics, geography, food technology and in the Support Centre; in religious education, it is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. In English, teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4; in science and modern foreign languages, the position is reversed. In music, teaching is good at Key Stage 3. In all other areas and phases, the overall quality of teaching is sound though there is a wide variation between the best and the weaker teaching seen. A particular strength of most teaching is the good knowledge teachers have of the subjects they teach. The main weaknesses in some teaching are the management of pupils and the limited use of homework to set challenging and stimulating tasks to extend pupils' learning. In some classes, pupils are not stretched sufficiently when teachers' expectations of what their pupils can achieve are not high enough, and because homework opportunities are not fully exploited. Strategies across the whole school to teach literacy and numeracy skills are not yet satisfactory. Given, in particular, the low literacy levels of many pupils, especially boys, the effective implementation of whole school policies is essential to raise standards further. Progress made by pupils with special educational needs is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4; learning of literacy skills in the Support Centre is particularly effective.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. However, weaknesses at Key Stage 4 lead to a less balanced and less suitable curriculum for some pupils, and hinder access to the full range of opportunities, including some statutory requirements, for other pupils.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall, though better at Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4. Provision is better in the Support Centre than in other areas. There is a good team of learning support assistants who are generally well used and work well with pupils.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good for the very small number of pupils involved.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Satisfactory overall. Despite examples of good provision and practice, the absence of a whole school approach to this area of the school's work means that opportunities are missed, especially for pupils' spiritual development, which is unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Child protection and welfare provisions are good. Support for pupils with serious problems is very good, with a very good emphasis on including all pupils. General pastoral support and the monitoring of pupils' academic performance and personal development depend too much on the quality of support given by individual tutors.

The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents and some information provided to them is good. However, in many cases, better use could be made of the pupils' planners.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. Despite many strengths of individuals and in particular areas of management, some lack of clarity in lines of responsibility and accountability results in inconsistencies and slackness in the implementation of some policies, especially behaviour management.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governors are well informed; they know the school's strengths and weaknesses, and play an effective role in planning the school's development.

The school's evaluation of its performance	The school analyses all aspects of its performance very thoroughly; implementing improvement in some areas is proving more difficult.
The strategic use of resources	Good. There is very effective financial planning, which is informed by very good financial information and procedures. Funds are targeted to needs appropriately.

The provisions for staffing and accommodation are good overall. Those for learning resources are satisfactory, though recent very substantial investment in new computers and computer suites has given the school first rate facilities in this area of its work. The school is satisfactorily applying the principle of best value in most areas.

**PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The good teaching of many teachers</li> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons</li> <li>• The way serious problems, including bullying, are very effectively dealt with</li> <li>• Most children like school</li> <li>• The approachability of most teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The behaviour of some pupils</li> <li>• The consistency with which homework is set and marked</li> <li>• Some aspects of the leadership and management of the school</li> <li>• The partnership between the school and parents</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with most of the points above, though there are many good features of the partnership with parents, despite some weaknesses. There is evidence of more consistent use of homework this term, but the use of pupils' planners is still an area for improvement.

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The sixth form of this small 11-18 comprehensive school has about 70 students, none of whom comes from an ethnic minority background. About one third of students from Year 11 continue into the sixth form, with few transferring from other schools; numbers have fallen a little in recent years. Given the limitations of its small size, it provides a sound range of subjects, including business vocational courses, enabling students with a range of attainments at the age of 16 to study a course appropriate for their needs.

## **HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

The sixth form is cost effective. It benefits with additional funding from the local authority's scheme to protect small sixth forms, and the overall funding is well used at no expense to the rest of the school. The number of students taking A-level and Advanced GNVQ in recent years has been too small for meaningful national comparisons to be made, though the high points score of 2000 has been repeated in 2001. Information provided by the school for the 2000 and 2001 A-level results shows that most students achieved well, with many progressing significantly from their GCSE results. GNVQ students are also achieving well. Teaching in the sixth form is good in most subjects and very good in mathematics and history. The leadership and management of the subjects taught in the sixth form are generally good. The main strengths and areas that could be improved in the sixth form are:

### **Strengths**

- Teaching and learning are good, with good achievement by most students.
- Given its small size, the quality and range of examination courses are good and appropriate to the needs of the students.
- Relationships are good, and there is a strong commitment of teachers and students to the success of the sixth form.
- Good use is made of the financial resources available to the sixth form.

### **What could be improved**

- There are relatively few opportunities in the regular curriculum to enrich and widen students' experiences beyond their examination courses.
- Whilst there is generally good direction of the sixth form in individual subjects, there is limited direction of the sixth form as a whole or of the work of tutors.
- There is scope for sixth formers to exercise more responsibility for their own learning in subjects and in the life of the sixth form generally.

Further areas for improvement are included in curriculum area reports.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan. Strengths and areas for improvement in individual subjects are identified in the*



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*sections on individual subjects in the full report.*

## **THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS**

The table below shows overall judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses that were inspected in the sixth form. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	<b>Good.</b> Standards at advanced level are above average; students achieve well on all courses, including the GCSE retake group. Teaching, management and organisation are very good.
Chemistry	<b>Good.</b> Standards are average and have improved this year. Students achieve well because of good teaching; the linking of test results to A-level grades would help raise standards further.
Business	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards are average. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but, in some cases, they are very good. Good use is made of connections with the world of work.
English	<b>Good.</b> Results are above average and students show good achievement. Overall, teaching is good, leading to good learning. However, students' depth of learning would improve with more open debate with each other.
German	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards are average, but students are achieving well, as they have studied German for only two years prior to the sixth form. The pace of learning would improve through students' more active involvement in lessons.

In other subjects, work was sampled. Teaching was at least satisfactory in all lessons, but excellent lessons were seen in biology and history. Teaching is consistently good in geography, which is a particularly strong subject in the sixth form.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Tutors provide good educational and personal support for students in the sixth form; in the absence of a head of the sixth form post, much depends on the individual tutors. Information about sixth-form courses is good. Tutors are the key to providing students with careers and guidance on future studies, a role they perform well.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. Heads of subjects and tutors work well in their areas of responsibility, though the lack of a senior sixth form manager weakens the overall direction of the sixth form and its students. Induction arrangements are good,

	with some commendable examples of timetabling flexibility.
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**STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

<b>What students like about the sixth form</b>	<b>What they feel could be improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers know them very well and are very helpful</li> <li>• The good teaching most of them receive</li> <li>• The convenience of a local sixth form</li> <li>• The value of field courses and visits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More opportunities to be involved in the running of the sixth form, and opportunities to take responsibilities elsewhere in the school</li> </ul>

Students are very loyal to the school and the sixth form, and feel the school would be a poorer place without the sixth form. Most would recommend it to others, provided the right course was available. Inspectors agree with the students' views, but they also acknowledge the value of the service offered by sixth formers in the anti-bullying council when it was running last year. Inspectors agree that field courses and visits are of great value in widening students' horizons; these could be further enhanced by similar enrichment opportunities within the curriculum.

**COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

*Inspectors make judgements about provision in subjects and courses, and about leadership and management, in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement "outstanding" in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to "very weak".*

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Quite a number of pupils leave and join the school at various times during their secondary education. For example, about 30 either left or joined the group which entered the school in September 1998 and took their Key Stage 3 tests in 2001. Nineteen pupils who joined the school in 1996 did not take their GCSEs because they had left; twenty others joined the school at various times and took their GCSEs in 2001. Because of this, exact comparisons between the beginnings and ends of key stages are not possible on the basis of available information within the school; also, because year groups are comparatively small, statistics need to be treated with care as the particular circumstances of relatively small numbers of pupils can have a bigger effect on results and achievements than would be the case in schools where year group sizes are large. For example, in its analysis of its 2001 results, the school has identified reasons why 26 pupils, who were predicted to get 5 or more A\*-C grades, underachieved and did not reach that target.
2. The school has information about the Key Stage 2 test scores of pupils who enter Year 7. Based on this information, the year group which took GCSE examinations in 2001 was, overall, above average on entry; of the other year groups, the present Year 7, Year 9 and Year 11 were below average on entry. The present Year 10 was below, but by only a small amount, and the present Year 8 is broadly average. Taken together, over a number of years, the pupils' attainments on entry have been below average; literacy levels, particularly of boys, have been low recently.
3. The results of particular year groups in tests at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE have not necessarily reflected the attainments of the year group on entry; the amount of movement in and out may be a factor in explaining this. For example, the 2001 GCSE results were much lower than those of 2000, though the 1996 intake (taking GCSE in 2001) was above average. The 2001 Key Stage 3 results were below average from an intake only a bit below average, whereas the 2000 Key Stage 3 results were average from a below average intake. Because of the large number of subjects taken by most pupils, the total average points scores at GCSE in 2000 showed very high totals compared with the Key Stage 3 test scores in the core subjects in 1998, whereas the 2001 GCSE points scores show totals in line with what might be expected nationally.
4. Within these caveats, over the last four years, the school's overall results in national tests taken at the end of Year 9 have been average, rising broadly in line with the national average. There have been considerable variations between years, with the 2001 results, as stated above, being below average. English results for boys and girls have fluctuated widely; those for mathematics have shown less marked variation, whilst those for science have

shown the most consistency, being above average except in 2001 when they were average. Apart from science, boys have achieved less well than girls by a greater amount than the national difference. The comparison with similar schools is based on the number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals; in an area with a high number of self-employed people, this benchmark for similar contexts is known to be unreliable in some cases. Information supplied by OFSTED for the 2000 results at the end of Key Stage 3 shows the school's overall performance in all core subjects was well below average in comparison with similar schools, though it was close to average in science. In 2001, based on available information about their attainments on entry, boys who have been in the school since the beginning of Year 7 have generally gained results in line with would be expected by the end of Year 9; girls have tended to do a bit better than would be expected.

5. Over the three years including 2000, the last year for which national information is available, pupils' overall average total points scores at GCSE, taken at the end of Year 11, have been above average for both boys and girls, with a trend for the core subjects that is below the national trend. In 2000, girls' results were well above average, boys' results close to the national average, with overall results above the national average. However, for every subject, except German, in which there was an entry large enough for OFSTED to make comparisons, the average points score for that subject was in line with or below the national average points score in that subject; the large number of subjects taken by most pupils contributed, in many cases, to their above average overall points score. The proportion of higher grades obtained in relation to total entries was below the national average. In 2000, the proportion of entries gaining A\*-B grades was 23.2 per cent, with 48.5 per cent of entries being awarded A\*-C grades, compared with 30.1 per cent and 53.6 per cent nationally. In 2001, the school's figures were 22.8 per cent and 45.5 per cent respectively. The gap between boys' and girls' entries gaining A\*-C grades nationally in 2000 was 10.6 per cent; at the school, the gap was significantly greater at 18.8 per cent in 2000, and 17.2 per cent in 2001. In 2000, pupils' total points scores compared with their 1998 scores in the core subjects at the end of Year 9 was well above average. In 2001, pupils achieved an overall total points score in line with what would be expected from their test scores in the core subjects at the end of Year 9, but with a drop particularly in the proportion obtaining five or more higher grades, and, to a lesser extent, in the overall points score. There are significant differences between how well pupils do in different subjects. Information supplied by OFSTED shows that, in 2000, pupils did particularly well in German, drama, science, geography and French compared with their other subjects, and particularly less well in history, design & technology and art & design. Information from the school for the 2001 results indicates that there are also marked differences between pupils' performances in different subjects.
6. In work seen during the inspection, the current level of attainment of pupils in English by the end of Year 9 is average overall. It is in line with expectations in reading, speaking, listening and writing, although boys attain a lower standard than girls, particularly in writing. The standard of boys' writing in

Year 9 is below the expectation for fourteen year-olds. The achievement of pupils in English overall by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory. Pupils join the school at the age of eleven mostly with standards below average. Although many pupils develop their basic skills well, many lower attaining pupils, principally boys, achieve at a lower level: they do not learn to read with sustained fluency, expression or accuracy, they have a limited range of vocabulary, and their writing frequently contains errors in basic skills of spelling, grammar and punctuation. Higher attaining pupils make mostly satisfactory progress in developing all English skills, although sometimes the pace of their learning is restricted by unchallenging tasks. Pupils with special educational needs make variable progress: when they are supported by specialist staff, they often make good progress in improving their basic English skills. In large mixed ability classes in which there is no specialist support, they make, at best, satisfactory progress. By the end of Year 11 pupils show levels of skill in speaking, listening, reading and writing which are overall in line with the national average, and above for many girls. This represents good achievement for most pupils, of all levels of ability, in relation to their prior attainment at the end of Year 9. Pupils with special educational needs make mostly satisfactory progress in improving their skills. The evidence of the inspection is that the majority of pupils are also in line with national standards by the end of Year 11, both in basic English skills and in the ability to critically analyse and evaluate a range of texts. This represents good achievement for most pupils, of all levels of ability, in relation to their prior attainment at the end of Year 9. Pupils with special educational needs make mostly satisfactory progress in improving their skills. Many pupils achieve a good standard in writing.

7. Drama is taught in Years 7 to 9. Some pupils take drama as an option in Years 10 and 11; their standards are particularly high. Most show good levels of confidence, improvisational and interpretative ability, and skill in evaluating their work. This was evident for example in a lesson in which Year 10 pupils were examining the importance of linking contrasting scenes in improvised drama.
8. In work seen in mathematics up to Year 9, attainment is broadly average; the achievement of the pupils in these three years is good because their overall attainments when they entered the school were below average. Pupils make good progress in all areas of the curriculum, aided by growing familiarity with the use of ICT to assist their learning. Attainment in work seen up to Year 11 is broadly average. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is generally satisfactory, and is better for the girls than for the boys. There is a minority of boys, in sets at all levels of ability, whose achievements are not so good because of a poor attitude to work. In higher attaining sets, pupils develop their skills in solving a variety of algebraic equations, and in handling data. At all levels, pupils learn how to tackle extended investigations and to present their results in a coherent way. Standards of numeracy at both key stages are very variable; overall, they are below average. Many pupils are still unfamiliar with all the multiplication tables, and this slows their progress in many areas. In general, this applies to the middle and lower attaining pupils and to some of those with

special educational needs, whose achievement is not as good in the three years as is that of the higher attaining pupils.

9. In work seen during the inspection in science, standards are generally above average in Years 7 to 9 and in line with expectations in Years 10 and 11. Overall, pupils' achievements are better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. There is a good balance of achievements throughout Years 7 to 11 in all the Attainment Targets in the National Curriculum. Pupils' overall skills of scientific investigation have improved since the last inspection; their planning and observations are well developed, but further improvement is required with their analysis and evaluation of results. Lower attaining pupils are well integrated. However, as they move through the school, a significant proportion of those with learning or behavioural difficulties, particularly boys, fail to produce satisfactory work, and they often show a lack of pride in achievement. In many lessons, pupils are encouraged to express scientific principles in their own words, testing their understanding, and their ability with words, and extending their scientific achievements.
10. In ICT, in work seen by Year 9, attainment is broadly average and shows good improvement from work in Year 7. Most pupils are, therefore, achieving well. Pupils are able to use computers with growing confidence and competence. Standards for the great majority of pupils studying the GCSE examination course are broadly similar to the average expectation; this represents good achievement over time. Some boys and girls are achieving at the highest levels. Standards for the remainder of pupils who do not take an accredited course are very variable and below average. Whilst a minority of subjects provide good opportunities for pupils to use computers to help their learning, this is not as comprehensive as it could be, considering the very good provision of ICT resources now available.
11. In art and design, by the end of Year 9, standards are also average, showing sound achievement. Pupils develop sound skills in a good range of media and are able to research different times and cultures to influence their ideas. Standards by the end of Year 11 are around average with sound achievement overall. Work is often imaginative and shows a good feel for landscape and natural forms. However, the girls' work shows greater depth and commitment, better use of both visual and verbal vocabulary and a greater understanding of the influence of other artists and craftsmen; the boys' work is often careless and unfinished, leading to underachievement in some cases. At both key stages, pupils make poor use of their sketchbooks and homework often shows a lack of thought or care. In work seen in design and technology by Year 9, attainment is average and shows good improvement from work in Year 7; this is most notable in food technology where most pupils are able to understand a design brief and can effectively research solutions to the problem set. Overall, practical work is average and sometimes of an above average standard, as seen in the work of higher attainers in the 'nutcracker' project in Year 9. In work seen by Year 11, standards are below average overall and well below in resistant materials. Pupils' design folders in resistant materials do not reflect the expected processes and principles of designing. However, in food

technology, a significant proportion of the pupils use computers well in the production of their design folders.

12. Standards of attainment in geography by the end of Year 9 are above average; pupils' achievements in relation to standards at entry are good. Year 7 pupils start from a low level on entry with limited geographical skills, but most, including pupils with learning difficulties and low attaining pupils, successfully master the basic skills of map work, scale and direction. The skills of geographical observation and evaluation are very successfully developed through fieldwork, which is continued in Key Stage 4. Standards in work seen at the end of Key Stage 4 are also above average, and pupils achieve at a good level in relation to their work in Key Stage 3, building on their earlier success. Many pupils make good use of computers to assist with word processing, graphs, charts, scanning of photographs and maps; this greatly enhances presentation of work. Standards in history are now very much higher than the results in examinations in recent years. In work seen in the subject, standards are above average by Year 9. Attainment in Years 7 and 8 is often well above average. In view of the varied standards of attainment on entry, this is particularly noteworthy and represents very good achievement. Pupils use the vocabulary and chronologies of history well and often articulate clearly the range of beliefs, attitudes and ideas of the past. The more able can link these clearly to present day situations. Lower attainers, including those with special educational needs, have more difficulty with extended writing and analytical terms, but still attain standards in line with their current potential. In the work seen in Years 10 and 11, standards are above average and sometimes well above average. For most, this is good or very good achievement, but a small number of pupils are underachieving. In religious education, standards by the end of Key Stage 3 are generally above the level expected by the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils show interest in and respect for the ideas, beliefs and practices they are encountering, gaining quite detailed knowledge of a range of religious traditions. Standards by the end of Year 11 are at least in line with those expected by the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils in that year currently do particularly well in their thoughtful, personal response to the ideas and beliefs they encounter, as when a group wrestled with the arguments for and against the existence of God.
13. By the end of Year 9, standards of work in French meet national expectations. The listening skills of all pupils benefit from the teachers' sustained use of the foreign language. Speaking skills are less well developed and there are few instinctive responses. Two groups of pupils are offered one period a week of German as an additional language in Year 9. The work of these groups accelerates to a standard above expectations from a single year of limited study, showing good achievement. By Year 11, overall standards are average but there are marked differences between different groups of pupils. Higher attaining pupils in both languages are above average in speaking and writing. In music, by Year 9, standards in work seen during the inspection are average. This represents good achievement, given that many pupils enter the school at below average attainment in music. Pupils sing well, enjoying both unison and part-singing, and they work well in practical work, whether as a



whole class or in groups. In Years 10 and 11, standards are average with pupils achieving satisfactorily.

14. The average standards reached in physical education in Key Stage 3 represent good achievements by most pupils compared with their standards on entry. By Year 9, most pupils, including those with special educational needs, show competence in gymnastics, and a range of games. Standards are enhanced through pupils' good involvement in extra curricular clubs and inter school matches and competitions. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards attained by pupils by Year 11 are below the level expected of the same age nationally. Skill levels vary, and the attitudes and behaviour of some pupils are unsatisfactory and this considerably constrains their attainment and progress. In business, although there are wide variations in the standards of work seen, attainment in years 10 and 11 is broadly in line with expectations at this stage of the course. Higher attainers successfully apply business concepts and theories to case studies of real organisations and are able to evaluate information from a variety of sources. However, a substantial minority in Year 11 show no substantial improvement since their Year 10 work in their ability to analyse business processes; their achievements are, therefore, unsatisfactory.
15. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress in Years 7 to 9, especially those pupils involved in the small group literacy lessons in the Support Centre, or those well supported by learning support assistants in other classes. Overall, pupils in Years 10 and 11 make satisfactory progress, varying from good where support is good to unsatisfactory for pupils following inappropriate courses, where the academic demands are too great for their levels of learning difficulty.

## **Sixth form**

16. The average points score of students entered for two or more A-levels has fluctuated in recent years. It was below average in 1998 and 1999, and well above average in 2000, the latest year for which national comparisons are available. Although lower than 2000, the average points score in 2001 was also high. However, the small numbers of students entered for any A-level examinations or GNVQ qualifications makes national comparisons unreliable. In 2000, for example, the largest entry for any A-level or Advanced GNVQ subject was five; this reflects the small number studying each course, rather than any students dropping out of the courses. Much more important is how well students achieved compared with their GCSE attainments two years earlier. The school has thoroughly analysed how well each student has achieved. Of the 11 students who took at least two A-levels in 2000, six achieved better than would be expected, all of them by a considerable amount; four underachieved. Overall, achievement was good, particularly, but not entirely, for the boys. A similar analysis of the 20 students in 2001 shows a similar pattern with no noticeable difference between boys and girls; more achieved well compared with those who underachieved. Six did exceptionally well compared with their GCSE scores, and only two underachieved by a considerable degree. Analysis of both Intermediate and Advanced GNVQ is less detailed, but evidence indicates that most have achieved well. Particularly

praiseworthy is the continuation by some students, with the full support of the school, of aspects of their GNVQ work after their time in the sixth form so that they can complete their accreditation. Results from the new AS examinations taken by Year 12 in 2001 are around the national average, though confirmed national comparisons are not yet available.

17. Work in mathematics was inspected in depth. Standards in work seen in AS and A-level courses are generally above average. Presentation is good, and students take care with their work, and use precise and appropriate processes as taught to them, helping them to raise their standards of attainment. Their work is generally accurate and of a high standard. The students' progress over the period of the course is good, influenced both by very good teaching, and by their own conscientious attitude, and consistent good habits in how they organise and present their results. Standards seen in the retake class are in line with expectations given the results at GCSE, and the pupils benefit from good teaching, which helps them to build on existing knowledge, and to sort out gaps and areas where they have up to now not understood the basic principles.
18. In science, the focus of the inspection was on chemistry, but biology and physics were sampled; standards were average in physics and above average in biology. In chemistry, the standards of work are also above average. In Year 13, students have a positive approach to their work, and particularly enjoy success in the challenge of practical assignments. Students in Year 12 are only a few weeks into their course, but are adapting well to the higher levels of work and challenge. Their practical skills vary, but are generally high, and they are learning to think carefully about how to improve the accuracy of their results.
19. In business, the vocational courses of GNVQ Intermediate in business and the Advanced VCE in business were inspected in depth; both courses are offered in years 12 and 13. Standards of work are average, though some is above average. In Year 13, students have a good knowledge of real business organisations and their structure, and understand the relevant business concepts and theories. Many in Year 12 have a good appreciation of graphing techniques and readily understand the relationships of supply and demand expressed in this form. However, some work is poorly laid out and depends heavily on materials provided by the teacher and dictated notes.
20. Standards in the one art and design lesson that was sampled were above average, with some imaginative and well-made examples of work. In the humanities area of the curriculum, geography and history were sampled, though a new course in AS religious education has started this term; it is taught to a small group of students outside the normal school day. Standards in geography are above average because of the good teaching, enabling students to achieve well; standards of fieldwork are particularly high. Standards in history are now well above average, with high achievement and high levels of challenging work rigorously developed.

21. English was inspected in depth. Most students attain standards in English which are in line with the national expectations for those studying at AS level and for those at the beginning of the second year of their A-level course. Students are able to clearly articulate their responses to a range of literary texts, to appreciate the historical context in which they were written, to critically analyse texts for elements such as structure and language, and to make comparisons between them. Students achieve well: they clearly understand the extra demands of the new courses and show good achievement in terms of successfully dealing with the complexity of language, the requirements for more independent study, and the need for more sophisticated analytical skills than at GCSE Level.
22. In modern languages, the focus of the inspection was on German, but one lesson of French was sampled. Students were at average standards, but achieving well with the well-varied material in that lesson. Standards of students preparing for A-level in German are average. However, their achievements over the last year since GCSE are good. Prior to their A-level studies, these students had learned German in an intensive two year course. As a result their vocabulary is limited and some aspects of basic grammar are not secure. Their confidence in speaking German is improving. In Year 12, there are only two students studying German. Standards are average at this early stage; the limitations of vocabulary and weaknesses in grammar apply to Year 12 as well as Year 13. Written work is accurate in the simple introductory tasks of the course. The students' achievement is good because they show a good level of self-confidence and are not afraid of making mistakes.

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

23. Most parents, who responded to the questionnaire, believe that their children like coming to school. Indeed, discussions with pupils confirm this view, but at the same time suggest that they do so without a marked enthusiasm for their lessons or learning. Many do not have an overtly positive attitude to their education – they go along with it. Many pupils do take advantage of the very good range of after school clubs on offer. Their attitude in lessons is very dependent on the quality of the teaching they receive. In lessons that have a fast pace and which provide a stimulating learning environment, they respond well and participate well. In lessons where they can get away with chattering and not working, they will. Even highly experienced teachers face difficulties; in a Year 11 mathematics lesson, for example, pupils took every opportunity to drift off task, but once the homework had been set five minutes before the end of the lesson, they worked effectively on it, showing graphically what they could do if they set their mind to it. Pupils' attitudes are somewhat ambivalent; in well-paced and interesting lessons, with a teacher able to keep order well, they can be attentive and keen to learn. For example, in a Year 9 English lesson on the structure of Victorian short stories, the teacher's high expectations, interesting delivery and tightly structured lesson ensured that pupils remained firmly on task, working in a quiet and creative atmosphere. When they are motivated and controlled, they can display positive and productive attitudes, whilst in another lesson, the same pupils can show silly

and immature attitudes that reduce the effectiveness of their own and their classmates' learning. The level of support received by pupils with special educational needs contributes to the way they participate in class work. Within the wide variations seen, such pupils' attitudes are satisfactory overall.

24. Behaviour is judged unsatisfactory overall because the level of inconsistent and time-wasting behaviour has a negative impact on learning. Pupils are aware of the school's expectations and some quite simply choose not to follow them on occasions. A relatively high proportion of pupils are ready to take advantage of any perceived weaknesses on the part of the teacher. In these lessons, a significant proportion of the whole class can be involved in inappropriate behaviour. There is no universally accepted standard of behaviour in lessons, each teacher, in a sense, having to establish their own authority to achieve the necessary outcomes. Even basic codes that should be second nature in a secondary school – raising a hand before making a point, or not chattering whilst the teacher is talking – cannot be taken for granted. Where there is this underlying lack of recognition of authority, then learning is clearly affected. In addition to the obvious effects on concentration and work achieved, in a minority of science lessons the poor behaviour of pupils has led teachers to use demonstrations when pupils should be carrying out practical experiments themselves. This in turn can lead to lessened interest in the work and hence worse behaviour and poorer learning. Pupils' behaviour in corridors and around the school sometimes lacks consideration for others and basic good manners. There is much jostling and occasional incidents of horseplay as pupils move around the site, with limited regard for the walk on the left rule and relatively few pupils prepared to hold doors open for a following adult, yet alone another pupil. This behaviour is thoughtless rather than ill-intentioned, but some of the recently arrived younger pupils in the school understandably find it intimidating - a corridor full of big noisy Year 11 people can be very scary when you have just moved from a small primary school. Conversely, these same noisy pupils can at times behave very well in lessons, they can sit quietly in an assembly, and when it really matters – in a very overcrowded hall when everybody is trying to have a quick break – they can show an easy tolerance of what could be a fraught situation. Equally, the high level of petty thoughtlessness is not matched by a large number of serious problems. Staff, parents and pupils do not believe that bullying is a major problem and none was seen during the inspection. Pupils are confident leaving their bags unattended and pupils generally respect each other's and the school's property. Certain pupils have achieved a remarkable number of blue slips for poor work or behaviour in the year.
25. An analysis of the number of times teachers call for assistance from the member of the Ethos team who is on-call shows that, as might be expected, boys in years 9 and 10 cause the most difficulties for teachers. However, although there is a normal level of fixed term exclusions for a school of this size, the school has not needed to permanently exclude a pupil in the last two years, showing a commendable commitment to individuals and their circumstances.

26. Most parents hold the view that the school is successful in developing confident and responsible individuals, and in fact pupils' personal development and relationships are satisfactory. The school has a large number of personable and mature young people whom it is a real pleasure to meet. These same individuals can sometimes be quite surly when directed to do something by an adult; they are prepared to co-operate with the school but on their own terms. The school sometimes tends to direct rather than channel this energy, providing only a limited range of opportunities for those capable of taking initiative and showing personal responsibility in their work and around the school. A new co-coordinator has recently overhauled the programme for personal and social education in the school, and the improved planning is already helping tutors to deliver lessons that help pupils think about and address important issues of direct relevance to them. In a Year 8 lesson on citizenship, for example, pupils were encouraged to question what the concept actually means in terms relevant to their own lives. One pupil was able to challenge the basis of the lesson with anarchical counter-arguments, which were skilfully used by the teacher to develop the debate. Many lessons are directed too much by the teacher to allow pupils sufficient scope to help pupils take responsibility for their own learning. There are real opportunities for the school to develop personal responsibility in pupils and get them working alongside staff in running the school, to their own and the school's benefit. The School Council is not seen by pupils as being an effective forum for genuine dialogue; they believe it meets infrequently, and, when it does, the agenda is largely set by adults. The ABC anti-bullying initiative is very good, but is not operating at present because existing trained students are concentrating on their studies and no other students have yet been trained. There is no system of prefects or other ways to give older pupils a taste of real responsibility. The extensive after school provision, including, for example, training for the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, does help the individuals involved to mature. Year 12 pupils fulfil a valuable role in helping in the induction and support of Year 7 pupils. Overall, provision for pupil's personal development is sound.
27. Relationships in the school are satisfactory. The system whereby form tutors stay with the same group of pupils as they progress up the school means that they are able to build a closer relationship with them, and where it works well, it contributes to mutual respect and partnership in learning. Pupils' relationships with other teachers do depend on the individuals involved, some teachers developing a productive relationship with many of their pupils whilst others are not respected as much. Pupils often value each other as individuals and they can understand the impact of their actions on others; at other times there is petty and senseless friction. For example, at the start of a Year 8 lesson, a boy ostentatiously tipped a girl's bag off a chair in order to sit down, rather than ask her to move it. The two failed to co-operate with each other throughout the lesson. Some pupils do not empathise well; overall, their understanding of the impact of their actions on others is unsatisfactory. In group work, pupils can share resources and co-operate with each other, respecting each other's beliefs. Low and high attaining pupils are often able to work constructively together. They show respect for the school's property and

are trusted by teachers to use resources and facilities; there is no graffiti around the school. Boys and girls usually work together unselfconsciously. Conversely, there are times when there is long-term friction between individuals, or when issues from their home villages spill out into the school environment.

28. Attitudes of pupils with special educational needs are similar to others, though with variations depending on their level and type of difficulty. In the Support Centre, they are generally interested in their work, and behave well. The recent development of linking the behaviour support system with special educational needs in the Support Centre is good in principle, but is not yet functioning as effectively as possible. This link, and the management of both behavioural support and special educational needs support, needs to be reviewed and monitored so that the distinctive features and purposes of each are clearly identified; at present, the assistant head, who has oversight for all these areas, is carrying a very heavy workload because of the temporary absence of the special needs co-ordinator.
29. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory, being in line with the national average for a school of this type. There are no particular groups of pupils with unsatisfactory attendance records, although there are a few specific pupils across the school who have particularly high rates of absence. The level of unauthorised absences recorded is well below the national average. The school has worked very hard, with the involvement of outside agencies, at addressing issues of unexplained absences. This has been very successful, helping in its desire to include all pupils, and that regular attendance matters. Pupils generally come to school punctually and this allows a prompt start to the school day. However, attendance during the first couple of weeks of the autumn term 2001 was well below 90 per cent, with a declining rate of attendance from Year 7 through to Year 11. The school attributes this to its being a peak time for parents taking pupils on holiday and to a high level of illness at the onset of autumn.
30. The standards of pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development have remained the same since the last inspection of the school in 1996. That report recorded a wide range of behaviour within different lessons, including behaviour in a proportion of lessons which impeded progress, and noted pushing and shoving in corridors, all comments that apply equally today.

### **Sixth form**

31. The attitudes and personal development of sixth form pupils are satisfactory. They are satisfied with the provision being made for their needs and are given more responsibility for their learning. They recognise the value of what the sixth form has to offer, given the limitations of its small size. They are courteous and responsible and behave well; they were very pleased to talk to the inspectors openly and maturely, and their relationships with each other and with adults are good. The inspectors valued their conversations with sixth formers and believe their opinions are relevant and accurate. Attendance of

sixth formers is good. There is more potential to involve them more fully in the running of the school, through, for example, a sixth form council or committee. A number of sixth formers have been trained and have considerable experience of, and commitment to, the anti-bullying council (ABC), though, now they are in Year 13, they are no longer involved. A number of them spoke eloquently of what they have done and of the value they believe the scheme to be. The involvement of some sixth formers in some charity work, the induction of new pupils and other voluntary work give some useful opportunities for service.

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

32. The quality of teaching is much better than that seen at the last inspection when over a quarter of teaching at Key Stage 4 was judged unsatisfactory, and 17 per cent of teaching throughout the school, including the sixth form, was judged unsatisfactory. Although teaching nationally has improved substantially in the last five years, these figures were still very high by the standards of 1996. At this inspection, no unsatisfactory teaching was seen in the sixth form; for pupils up Year 11, teaching was at least satisfactory in about 92 per cent of lessons seen. It was very good, and, occasionally excellent, in nearly a third of lessons. Overall, teaching in Years 7 to 11 is judged satisfactory; despite many strengths and much improvement, more unsatisfactory teaching was observed than is seen in most schools, and, in some lessons, despite sound teaching strategies, teaching did not have the potential impact it should have had on the pupils' learning. Although there is a close link between the quality of teaching and the quality of learning, that link is less close than it is in most schools; the behaviour of some pupils in some lessons hindered their own learning and that of others. Learning was unsatisfactory in about one lesson in seven, contributing to underachievement by some pupils.
33. Teaching at both key stages is very good in history and good in mathematics, geography, food technology and in the Support Centre; in religious education, it is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. In English, teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4; in science and modern foreign languages, the position is reversed. In music, teaching is good at Key Stage 3. In all other areas and phases, the overall quality of teaching is sound though there is a wide variation between the best and the weaker teaching seen.
34. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach, and this is a strength of most lessons, leading to positive learning by pupils. This is well illustrated in mathematics where all the teachers are good mathematicians; they can explain the basic concepts in the clearest possible way, and can also respond to pupils' questions with appropriate examples and give alternative approaches to help the pupils who are experiencing difficulties. They teach in a way that helps the pupils understand the basic principles as well as being able to carry out the processes needed to get the answers to solutions.

35. Planning is a strength of the best lessons. In an excellent lesson on designing and making a suitable product for a local bakery, the structure and order of the lesson were very good; pupils were very well informed about what they were going to do, where they were expected to get to, and what they would need to learn. As a result, in a short space of time, they worked enthusiastically and the learning was excellent because they had high expectations of what they would achieve. There was a buzz of excitement, and pupils knew what they were doing. Indeed, having high expectations of what pupils can do is a hallmark of good teaching, which results in good learning. This is as true of lower attainers as it is of high attainers. In a very good lesson containing some of the lowest attainers in Year 10, the teacher succeeded in extending the pupils' creative thinking with also an insistence on grammatical accuracy and correct spellings. A lively and interesting explanation of both the creative aspects of writing and of the basic skills was followed by very good use of computers to aid spelling and grammar and the presentation of the work. The two teachers complemented each other well in excellent one-to-one work. Although the level of attainment was still low, there was evidence of understanding, and the teaching led to very good learning. In an outstanding Year 11 lesson on medicine in history, containing pupils with potential GCSE grades from A\* to G, the teacher's high expectations and his valuing the contributions of every pupil were the keys to the excellent learning that went on. He communicated his vitality, energy and enthusiasm to the pupils, and he developed all their contributions; they, in turn, responded with articulate comments, making connections, both with ideas and historically, with social and economic issues. The excellent help provided by the learning support assistant very effectively served the needs of pupils with learning difficulties, so enabling all groups, boys and girls, to learn equally well.
36. Most teachers use a sound variety of teaching styles to promote the learning of pupils, though, sometimes, even with good attempts to motivate pupils, the response of some pupils does not allow satisfactory learning to take place. Sometimes their lack of motivation relates to their having to take a course that is not appropriate to their needs which makes the job of the teacher that much more difficult. Sometimes, however, lessons are dominated too much by the teacher; as a result, pupils have too few opportunities to take responsibility for their learning or to be challenged. They are less motivated as a result and consequently learn less. This can be a vicious circle: because of misbehaviour by some pupils, teachers feel less confident about using more adventurous and challenging teaching techniques, including practical and experimental work. They use a tightly directed approach to contain pupils; whilst this is often successful in achieving at least satisfactory levels of learning, the opportunities to extend the learning, particularly for the higher attainers, is lessened. In most cases where interesting and demanding tasks are required of pupils, they respond well. They also responded well in their learning as well as in their behaviour when they are out of school doing fieldwork: particularly good learning took place on the geography and history field trip that took place during the inspection, because the work was well planned into



manageable units, interesting, relevant and carefully designed to meet the needs of differing groups of pupils.

37. Because learning is unsatisfactory in nearly one lesson in seven, and behaviour is unsatisfactory in nearly one lesson in five, the management of pupils in lessons is judged unsatisfactory overall. Learning is adversely affected when some pupils do not allow a lesson to proceed at a brisk pace and when they disrupt their own learning and that of others. Teachers work very hard to motivate their pupils, to maintain discipline and to ensure that pupils learn effectively. Many are very successful with all classes; some are more successful with some classes than with others. Whilst teachers have more problems with lower attaining groups and with boys, that is not always the case. Low expectations of what pupils can achieve and insufficient attention to the needs of different groups within a class are the main reasons for unsatisfactory management of pupils. When pupils are not stretched fully, or when they either cannot or do not see the relevance of what they are doing, they react with unsatisfactory behaviour and attitudes. As there is not an underlying assumption amongst pupils that, in all but the most exceptional circumstances, they will behave well, even very experienced teachers have to struggle at times to manage whole classes successfully. There are some occasions when teaching strategies, which in most schools would be successful, do not work well despite the best efforts of the teachers, and, therefore, learning is either unsatisfactory or not as good as it should be.
38. The lack of full challenge in homework tasks also reduces pupils' learning in some cases. There is evidence of some improvement in the setting and use of homework this term, but many teachers do not exploit the potential of homework as a way of extending pupils' learning into exciting and stimulating research work. Much homework is to finish work started in class. Often this means that the higher attainers either finish in class or have little to do at home, whilst those who are struggling in class struggle further at home and sometimes give up. Overall, the use of homework to support the pupils' learning is unsatisfactory.
39. The quality of day-to-day marking is generally satisfactory, though there are many inconsistencies between and within subjects. Many teachers mark thoroughly and conscientiously with good indications of how pupils can improve their standards. Sometimes, however, pupils' understanding of the assessment of their work and what they have to do to get better is not clear, and not all subjects make effective use of assessments and National Curriculum levels to inform them of their attainment or to challenge them to move on to the next level. There are examples of good practice in English where constructive marking and information is beginning to be used for target setting, and in history where there is regular use of assessment data to set high and achievable targets; in modern foreign languages, assessment of pupils' work is being developed so that pupils can understand and be challenged by National Curriculum levels.

40. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is not yet satisfactory and the school is less advanced in its plans for implementing strategies across all subjects than is found in most schools. There are examples of good practice in subjects such as geography and science; in both subjects, there is an emphasis on key words and the correct use of terminology. The English department has made a conscious attempt to raise the literacy standards of boys in particular, and this is beginning to have an impact on standards. However, until the planned whole school policy is introduced and applied by all teachers, the good examples of teaching strategies to raise literacy standards tend to occur in individual lessons and in some subjects. Teaching of numeracy skills is also variable and so some pupils lack confidence in number work across the curriculum.
41. In subjects across the curriculum, the teaching of pupils with special educational needs is sound. Similar strengths and weaknesses that are found in teaching of all pupils also apply to the teaching of pupils with special educational needs in normal classes. Many teachers use very good strategies to ensure that the needs of all pupils in their classes are properly catered for, and the pupils' needs are well served as well by learning support assistants who work very well with classroom teachers in their teaching strategies to support pupils with special educational needs. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs in the Support Centre by teachers and assistants is good, especially the teaching of literacy in 'Catch-Up' sessions and the 'Toe by Toe' sessions for pupils with dyslexia or extreme reading problems. A very good feature is the appropriate manner of those teaching and supporting pupils with special educational needs, being relaxed yet rigorous, emphasising the development of pupils' self-esteem.

### **Sixth form**

42. The overall quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is good. The teaching enables students to acquire new knowledge, develop their ideas and increase their understanding. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subjects and this is a major contributory factor to aiding the students' depth of knowledge and understanding. No teaching was unsatisfactory, but the best teaching more actively engages students in debate and discussion, with a strong interchange of ideas that takes the students' learning forward rapidly and challenges and extends their intellectual and creative skills. In an excellent biology lesson, for example, the exchanges between the teacher and the students were at a very high level with particularly good use of questions and answers to keep everyone thinking and challenged. The teacher knew everyone's strengths and weaknesses very well, and knew where to spend more time and where to push the pace of the lesson quickly; the practical tasks gave very good opportunities for students to test and to experiment to take their learning forward. An excellent history lesson in Year 12 was close to undergraduate level in its level of challenge, with the teacher creating an exciting, vibrant atmosphere for analysing the distinction between primary and secondary sources. The excellent guiding of

the discussion enabled students to assess the quality of different types of evidence and led them to make a series of accurate and incisive comments.

43. Whilst not all teaching matches the quality of the very best, teaching in most subjects is good. In geography, for example, students are learning well because of good teaching which fully extends them with challenging questions; the strong teaching of fieldwork and the teachers' very good subject knowledge also contribute substantially to the good learning that goes on. Of the subjects inspected in detail, teaching and learning are very good in mathematics, good in English and chemistry, and satisfactory in business and German, though there are examples of very good teaching in business.
44. All the mathematics teachers in the sixth form are very good mathematicians. Not only do they present the concepts very clearly so that the pupils can understand them easily, but they also provide that extra background to the mathematics that puts it in a context and attempts to bring it alive. Such teaching interests and stimulates the students and greatly encourages their learning. In some subjects, whilst teaching is good overall, day-to-day assessment does not always make the contribution it should to the students' learning processes. In chemistry, for example, the marking of tests is thorough, but it is not always clear how standards relate to AS or A level grades. The monitoring of students' work in folders is not so thorough, resulting in a large variation in the quality of their notes.
45. Where students are able to actively develop their thinking, their learning is better than on occasions where the teacher gives students less responsibility for their own learning. This is well illustrated in business lessons. In a Year 13 class, for example, the teacher successfully engaged all students in a lively debate on the consequences of poor group management. He led a lively dialogue with the class, consistently developing their ability to describe and analyse the relationship between quality and staff turnover, management, motivation and productivity. The students responded well to this level of challenge, and, as a result, the quality of learning was very good, developing the depth of their understanding very well. In another lesson where teaching was less dynamic, the relationship between tax, subsidy and production was described by the teacher rather than allowing students to develop and test hypotheses through debate. Whilst the level of learning and understanding was satisfactory, the students' depth of intellectual effort and independent thinking skills was limited.
46. Similar differences were noted in English. In a Year 12 lesson where the teacher had challenging expectations of students, they responded enthusiastically to the complexities of Shakespearean verse patterns in "King Lear". The qualities of good teaching led to good learning by the students as they developed their skills of critical analysis. On some other occasions, the lessons are very teacher-directed, and there is relatively little encouragement for students to engage in more open debate with each other; consequently, their depth of their learning is more limited. In German, the demand placed on students, because all lessons are conducted in German, helps their learning.

47. Overall, teachers work very hard to engage sixth formers in their studies, and the small sizes of groups enables them to give much individual attention, which helps the learning process. However, at times, the very small group sizes do limit the opportunities for rigorous and vigorous discussion in lessons, limiting the scope for intellectual development through the interchange of ideas between students.

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

48. The school's curriculum is satisfactory overall. All National Curriculum requirements are met at Key Stage 3. Overall, provision for geography, history, art and physical education are particular strengths; higher attainers have good opportunities to study a second modern foreign language. Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. However, there are some important factors about the organisation of the Key Stage 4 curriculum, which result in a lack of balance and inequality of opportunity.
49. The school provides satisfactory arrangements for all the subjects of the National Curriculum to be taught and this gives pupils sound learning opportunities up to the end of Year 9. In the interests of improving literacy for lower attaining pupils in Key Stage 3, the school provides extra literacy lessons and, in Years 8 and 9, a course called European studies, in which literacy replaces two of the three French lessons allocated to the rest of the year group. These pupils have a single lesson of basic French. This means that pupils have to be 'disapplied' from the National Curriculum or, sometimes, withdrawn from regular French lessons. Although proper procedures are followed, this is not entirely satisfactory as it involves a larger number of disapplications than is found in nearly all other schools. The effect is to make it very difficult for pupils to rejoin normal foreign language lessons at a later date. As a result, pupils then need disapplication again in Key Stage 4.
50. For Key Stage 4, the school recently re-organised the options scheme to introduce more choice and to cut down the number of subjects taken by pupils. The basic principles of more choice are sound, with pupils choosing from an appropriate range of non-compulsory subjects to go with those required by the National Curriculum. However, the arrangements have meant that there is some inequality of opportunity, producing a lack of balance with unsatisfactory outcomes for some pupils. In a relatively small school, the problem is complex with no ideal solution, but the identification of a number of particular difficulties facing pupils in the school indicates the importance of conducting a wide ranging review of the Key Stage 4 curriculum. Such a review would need to include full consultation with teachers, pupils, parents and governors, and to draw on good practice elsewhere, to resolve as many of the problems as possible.
51. The following sections refer to some of the impacts on pupils of the present arrangements, which are far from ideal.

52. In religious education, pupils who take the short GCSE course study the subject for only three whole days in Year 10 and one hour per week in Year 11; other pupils receive no course in religious education. Although about 75 per cent of pupils do now take this course, this means that an unusually high percentage of parents have signed a form to say that they do not wish their child to study religious education. This is against the spirit of the legal arrangements for withdrawal from religious education, particularly since these parents appear willing for their children to study religious education in Key Stage 3. For those who do take the course, the time allocation is very low even for a short course. Whilst the quality of the course is high, the amount of time available does not allow full justice to be done to it.
53. Pupils who want to study two science subjects at GCSE, which, in most schools, is normal practice, cannot take a full course in ICT, design & technology or food technology; they can only take a short course in one of them. This causes several problems. For those choosing not to do ICT, although they will use ICT in other subjects during Key Stage 4, this is not assessed and therefore the school does not meet the statutory requirements for assessing ICT at Key Stage 4. Pupils who do take two sciences and the short ICT course cannot take design & technology. It is a requirement that all pupils take a design & technology course unless there are compelling reasons otherwise. The arrangement of option choices is not an appropriate reason for disapplication from statutory requirements. There is a further impact on motivation, particularly in the design & technology department. Because most well motivated or higher attaining pupils tend to take two sciences, there is a higher than normal proportion of lower attainers or less motivated pupils taking the full design & technology courses. This adversely affects morale for both pupils and teachers, leading to lower achievement.
54. Because of timetabling arrangements for science, there is a wide range of ability in many classes; some contain the full range of ability, with others containing a very broad spectrum. Whilst teachers work very hard, the wide range of ability does not suit the preferred teaching styles of some of them, and it makes teaching very difficult.
55. The introduction of vocational courses at Key Stage 4 is a very positive development. However, the GNVQ in business is not as successful as it should be. It is taken mainly by lower attaining pupils, particularly those not studying a modern foreign language, and it is not meeting their needs adequately. The groups are large, up to 30 pupils, which makes the administration of this work-related course difficult, as much one-to-one work between teacher and pupil is required. Because this particular course is not meeting the needs of some of the pupils, there are problems of motivation and discipline, particularly in Year 10. In Year 11, two teachers are timetabled together, which helps the situation. In addition, a small group of pupils in Year 11 are doing the more practically based NVQ course in conjunction with a local college. This is much better suited to their needs.

56. Particular provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall; it is also better at Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4. All pupils follow the full curriculum, allowing equal access to all courses. However withdrawal of pupils from lessons for a short time (15 minutes for each individual in the 'Toe by Toe' sessions) or for one lesson per week for extra literacy work, creates difficulties of continuity and so hinders equal opportunities, as described above. Parts of the normal curriculum are not suitable for those pupils with more extreme learning difficulties as many of the GCSE courses are too theoretical for them. Despite some changes noted above, there are insufficient suitable vocational or alternative accreditation courses for them to succeed. Gifted and talented pupils are not identified on a whole school basis, and, therefore, there is no particular monitoring arrangement to ensure that their individual needs are being met. There is evidence from several subject areas that the highest attainers are not always sufficiently challenged in the schemes of work and curriculum opportunities.
57. There are many good aspects of the curriculum. Mathematics and English provide good experiences for all groups of pupils, and use ICT well to enhance learning. Drama enriches the pupils' learning experiences at Key Stage 3, and science at this stage is also good. Examples of good opportunities are also found in history and geography at both Key Stages where good coverage of the National Curriculum requirements is enriched by very good field work both locally and further afield. This results in stimulating lessons because the pupils can apply first hand experience to the development of knowledge and understanding. Art is similarly enriched by working with local artists and craftsmen and visiting galleries and exhibitions. In physical education, a good quality and range of activities is supplemented by good provision for after school sports and GCSE physical education in Key Stage 4. Indeed, the range and quality of the school's extra curricular activities are very good, including a wide range of sports, arts, recreational and academic clubs. Special buses are laid on three evenings a week to take pupils home afterwards and the participation rate and interest are high.
58. Although the curriculum is satisfactory overall, problems of equality of opportunity, breadth and balance have increased since the last inspection; some of the problems have occurred as a result of staffing difficulties, for example in losing dance and textiles expertise. Given the enthusiasm and commitment of the teachers, evident in their willingness to provide much extra tuition after school, and provided that the implications of any changes are carefully thought through, the school is soundly placed to make improvements to its curriculum.
59. The school provides satisfactory careers guidance for its pupils and students. There is some careers education from Year 7 onwards that encourages them to think about their personal strengths and weaknesses and the options these open up. They are also encouraged to keep their personal Record of Achievements up to date. In year 9 pupils are given sound advice on their curriculum options choices, whilst in Years 10 and 11 good advice is provided, increasingly on an individual basis, with work experience often tailored to pupil's particular emerging interests. The Connexions work adviser is involved when this will be useful. The careers co-ordinator is active in advising as necessary, a real commitment given that she receives no additional non-contact time for this responsibility. There is a satisfactory selection of careers information in the school library.

60. There are good links with the local community. The school is a focal point for the surrounding area, with many local organisations making use of its facilities. Adults can join sixth form courses under the Adult and Continuing Education (ACE) scheme, as well as attending the ACE evening classes that use the school facilities. The adjacent leisure centre is a facility of equally good benefit to the school and the wider community. The local schools' police liaison officer visits regularly. The school receives good support from local businesses in terms of work experience placements for pupils, whilst year 11 pupils benefit from the mock interviews that local organisations provide in their own premises. The school produces a good school newspaper "Community Link" to encourage local interest and involvement in its life.
61. The school's relationships with partner educational institutions are very good. The school has very close links with its feeder primary schools. It provides very good opportunities for pupils at these schools to get to know Sir James Smiths before they join it, and care is taken to acquire information on individual pupils before, for example, organising tutor groups. These induction procedures are effective in ensuring that the big step from primary to secondary education is as stress free as possible. There are appropriate links with other educational establishments, for example, Duchy College to widen the options available to older pupils.

### ***Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development***

62. Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is broadly satisfactory overall. However, a lack of planned provision for this area across the school means that these aspects of pupils' experience vary considerably. There has been no whole school analysis of what happens at present, nor of what the school intends to happen. An initiative like 'Thought for the week' is not working properly; most pupils and many teachers did not know what it was for the week of the inspection. Provision for pupils' spiritual development, as part of their overall personal development, is unsatisfactory despite examples of good practice. The school does not meet the statutory requirements for collective worship, stating that teachers are unwilling to lead it. The assemblies provided for each year group twice a week are good occasions; those seen during the inspection were well planned and thoughtful. Although contributing well to the pupils' moral and social values, opportunities for reflection were not always used. Much of the content of the religious education programme is aimed at encouraging spiritual development and pupils are given every encouragement to develop a reflective approach to life. Otherwise, although some individual teachers make use of the opportunities presented by their subjects, most departments have not considered their contribution to this area.
63. Provision for the pupils' moral development is satisfactory. It is clearly planned in activities such as tutor time, religious education and assemblies, where pupils are encouraged to consider moral issues and to learn how to make choices for themselves about behaviour and lifestyle. The programme for

personal and social education covers a good range of moral issues, and makes appropriate arrangements for drugs and sex education. Moral issues are also considered in other subjects. In geography and science, for example, pupils consider responsibility for the environment. Pupils throughout the school generally know what is expected of them, and are encouraged to be aware of right and wrong and to be sensitive to the views and values of others. The positive approach to behaviour makes a useful contribution to their development of this awareness, but inconsistencies in the way systems, such as the use of coloured slips, are applied inhibit its effectiveness.

64. The quality of relationships throughout the school is generally sound, providing support for the satisfactory provision the school makes for the pupils' social development. The school makes very great efforts to be socially inclusive, and the absence of any permanent exclusions in the last two years, as already noted, is a measure of the commitment of the school to helping pupils with difficulties in their social development. Tutor time and religious education again play a large part in pupils' social development through their consideration of social issues. But other subjects also make a significant contribution, particularly through the opportunities provided for co-operative working in pairs or groups. Where pupils are given responsibility, as, for instance, in reception duties for pupils in Years 7 to 9, they show themselves to be useful members of the school community, but there are fewer opportunities than are found in many schools. Lessons in citizenship were introduced for pupils in Year 8 in September 2000, but an opportunity is missed for pupils to learn directly about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship through membership of the school council, which pupils do not perceive to be effective. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to be involved in extra-curricular activities and a range of visits linked to various subjects, which help them to expand their horizons. There are, also, some good opportunities for some individuals, including, for example, the Camelford Youth Forum.
65. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory overall. Useful opportunities are provided through music, drama and art to extend the pupils' cultural awareness, including activities in the community and visits to theatres and art galleries. The wide range of prose and poetry used in English is also helpful in encouraging pupils' cultural development. Other than through religious education, however, there is little evidence within current schemes of work that the school has a systematic approach to the raising of pupils' awareness of multi-cultural issues in an area of relatively little cultural diversity. There are some good examples, though, of ways in which individual teachers or subjects provide pupils with knowledge and understanding of cultures other than their own. In modern foreign languages and geography, for instance, they are introduced to a range of other cultures, often supported by valuable field-trips or exchange visits. In art, extensive use is made of examples from a range of cultures, including Indonesian and Australian Aboriginal art. This term has also seen the introduction of a Chinese club.

### ***Equal opportunities***



66. The aims of the school are socially inclusive, with emphasis on individual needs and a common entitlement. There are many examples of good practice, notably in catering for a variety of special educational needs. However, as already stated, withdrawal of students from ordinary classes does cause problems of continuity, and reduces equal access to all areas of the curriculum. Although the school has addressed the problems of providing a curriculum at Key Stage 4 that meets the needs of all pupils, including the ones with the most severe learning difficulties, the weaknesses, identified earlier, of access and suitability of courses, mean that equal opportunities are not secure for all pupils. Boys generally do not achieve as well as girls by a much greater amount than the national difference. Extensive analysis of data shows the low literacy levels of boys throughout the school, contributing to lower GCSE results for boys, particularly in English. Although this has been recognised by the teachers, no coherent whole school policy or action has yet been implemented, nor have strategies tried successfully elsewhere been introduced. The very few pupils with English as an additional language are making similar progress to other pupils, and there is no evidence of race or sex discrimination. Many pupils come from socio-economic backgrounds that are much more disadvantaged than average; the school recognises this and attempts to help them in many ways. The recent appointment of a youth worker/counsellor and the development of 'Connexions' have helped those with personal problems, and is a commendable initiative. Very good help to promote equal opportunities comes from funds from the Sir James Smith Trust. Each year, the fund contributes significant amounts to financially help pupils so that they have access to the full curriculum for visits, equipment etc. Despite the weaknesses identified, there are many good features, and, overall the school's arrangements to provide equal opportunities for all pupils are satisfactory.

### **Sixth form**

67. The sixth form curriculum is good overall. It provides appropriate educational opportunities and fulfils an important local need. There is good provision for the development of individual students, and a commendably flexible approach to timetabling. Because of small numbers, the group dynamics of some classes are limited, creating a particularly important need to enrich students' experiences and to provide further opportunities for stimulating discussion and debate. The statutory requirements to provide religious education for all students in the sixth form are not met.
68. The school gives students good impartial advice on their sixth form choices, pointing out clearly the constraints imposed by the small size of the school and the options available at other institutions. Other establishments are too widely scattered for the school to operate realistically within a 'consortium' arrangement. Indeed, the distances and times involved in travelling to colleges of further education, coupled with the problems of rural transport, pose a severe constraint on many students. It is not unusual for students to revise their options because of this. The school takes a pragmatic and flexible approach, offering different combinations of GCSE, AS, GNVQ and A-level courses to suit individual needs. Although this places extra demands on teachers, students may join or leave a course at different times if it suits them better, and teachers will put on extra classes outside normal school hours.
69. Courses running this year include GCSE mathematics, GCSE geology (one lesson per week) and physical education. AS/A-level courses at present include history, geography, English, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, French, German, art and photography; GNVQ business is a popular and

valuable option, with some students also taking elements of the course with their AS/A-level subjects. A notable addition this year is the religious studies AS course taught entirely outside the normal school day. Opportunities for study outside normal classes are good, with good access to the library and computers. Less secure are opportunities for enrichment such as courses for all students in religious education, citizenship or general studies. Physical education is confined to one optional lesson per week; it is supervised but not taught. However, the weekly tutorial period is a valuable opportunity for tutors to help students with their studies and to prepare them for their future lives and careers. An excellent lesson was seen in Year 13 with the tutor discussing university applications and life at university. There were high levels of mutual respect between the tutor and the students with very good communication between them with thinking and discussion at a high level. Sixth formers are less involved in the running of the school as is often seen, so opportunities are missed to broaden sixth formers' experiences and to enhance their social development. Sixth formers themselves see the value of continuity that 'staying on' can bring them, but are also mindful of the limitations that it imposes as opportunities are limited.

70. The small size of some examination groups means that lessons can be quite intense with no real opportunity to bounce ideas around and develop a more creative approach. On the other hand, students do get very individual attention, and exciting field trips to places like Mallorca mean that pupils get very useful first hand experiences. These and other visits, such as the London visit of art groups, contribute to the good achievements of most students.
71. The school has satisfactorily maintained its sixth form provision since the last inspection and continues to review its position in the light of continually changing circumstances.

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

72. The school's procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are good. The school provides a caring, supportive and inclusive environment in which pupils can feel safe and valued. The senior management team and teachers at all levels make considerable efforts to address the welfare of individual pupils when they need it. The contribution of teachers, particularly the Ethos Team, is something that is noted and appreciated by both parents and pupils. The teacher responsible for child protection has received suitable training and liaises with the local social services department as necessary. Adults are made aware of their child protection responsibilities, and proper records are kept. There is good provision within the programme for personal and social education, taught by form tutors, to help pupils to take responsibility for their own safety. The school site generally provides a safe environment and teachers have most routine health and safety procedures and testing in place. The Cornwall Local Education Authority carried out a full health and safety audit towards the end of the summer term and there are some issues the school has yet to address. In particular, not all areas of the school have been covered by risk assessments as laid down in the regulations. New

procedures need to be implemented to ensure that the practice complies with the school's own policy. No unsafe practice was seen in lessons during the inspection.

73. All teachers are active in the pastoral care of their pupils. Form tutors know their pupils well, particularly when they have progressed up the school with the same tutor group. When needed, the Ethos Team provides good support, attending year group meetings, which are used to highlight problems and successes. Members of the team provide good advice to form tutors and long term monitoring for those pupils who find it difficult to meet the school's expectations, though a tighter definition of their support role would make their interventions more effective. Throughout the school, many teachers know their pupils well and successfully meet their individual needs. They are effective in supporting them when they need it. The monitoring of pupils' personal development is sound, although quite dependent on individual class tutors. The best tutors write perceptive comments in the annual report to parents, showing how they treat each pupil as an individual. The Ethos team provides good advice and support when pupils are experiencing problems. Teachers appreciate the good support they get when they need it from the "on call" senior member of staff, mainly from the senior management team, but sometimes from the Ethos team. Tutors keep satisfactory records on pupils' personal development, whilst pupils themselves are encouraged to maintain their Record of Achievement that they bring from their primary schools as they progress through their secondary education. Where form tutors take this seriously, it is useful in helping pupils review how they are achieving both in and out of school, but its effectiveness does depend on the priority on the task by individual tutors. The school employs a counsellor to provide additional confidential personal support for pupils when this is appropriate, a very good facility that is helping these pupils to cope better with the challenges they are facing in life, and is an important feature of the school's policies on inclusion. As noted earlier, the personal and social education curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' development, helping pupils grow into responsible adults through sensitive handling of issues such as sex education and drugs education. The school is particularly pro-active in helping pupils settle into the school when they arrive from the primary phase and it handles the transfer arrangements very well. Discussions with primary schools are used to identify any special learning needs and to help to organise the tutor groups in Year 7. Pupils have good opportunities to become familiar with the school and to meet fellow classmates and teachers before they start. These arrangements help them settle quickly, though the boisterous behaviour does cause some stress.
74. Support for pupils with special educational needs, including those with Statement of Special Educational Need, is good. Teachers and learning support assistants know pupils very well. Pupils with physical disabilities are well cared for, and their individual needs addressed by action by the school or Cornwall Local Education Authority. Statements for all pupils at Stage 5 of the special needs register are well written, and what needs to be provided is done well. Individual education plans are well written with clear specific targets, success criteria, and suggested learning resources. Strategies for teachers

and learning support assistants to use are defined, as well as stating how parents and the pupils themselves can help achieve the targets. This is a major improvement since the last inspection when individual education plans were criticised. Although the special educational needs files are thorough with full details of annual reviews, the inclusion of academic information and results, along with copies of reports to parents, do not yet give the fullest picture of each pupil's progress in order to improve monitoring.

75. The school has satisfactory procedures to monitor attendance and encourage pupils to attend regularly. There are sound systems in place to identify problems with attendance as they emerge, based on good use of the computerised attendance figures to spot problems and trends. The school follows up attendance problems and involves the Educational Welfare Officer, who comes to the school weekly, as necessary. Her involvement enables the school to address potential problems at an early stage to ensure that the pupils do not develop a long term trend of absence. Morning registration periods are efficiently conducted; however, during the inspection, some pupils do not return to their tutor rooms at the end of the school day for afternoon registration, although few of them are then marked down as absent. This slackness by some tutors gives the wrong message to pupils by indicating that it does not matter if important routines are not followed, and makes the application of other rules and disciplines more difficult if contradictory messages are given out by teachers. Although the school has worked very closely with other agencies to tackle unauthorised absences, there is a need at present to tighten up on the school's response to pupil absences for which no explanation has been received from parents. There are no routine procedures to telephone parents in these circumstances; at the time of the inspection, the figures showed a large number of pupils who were absent for reasons unknown to the school. Again, slackness in this area makes insistence on high standards in other aspects of school life much more difficult to enforce.
76. There are comprehensive procedures and policies to monitor and promote good behaviour, including a five-stage process of dealing with problems that arise; these are clearly set out in the Staff Handbook. However, there is a gap between the impact of what the school is promoting and what happens in practice, and, overall, the impact of the school's procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour is unsatisfactory, despite the thoroughness of them. Initial responsibility for the management of behaviour lies with the form tutor. Subject teachers largely communicate about good or bad behaviour or work through issuing green or blue slips. Individual teachers or subjects can organise detentions or provide rewards. Pupils who are causing behavioural problems get referred, in various ways, to the Ethos team; the team acts as a support for the whole school, including, with the senior management team, an "on call" response to incidents, and longer term support through attendance at year group meetings when pupils are discussed. The team monitors blue and green slip issues, using the information to identify pupils' emerging problems. The pupil withdrawal and support facility helps pupils' learning both by providing a more focused environment in which those that are withdrawn can

work, but also creating a less-interrupted working environment for the rest of the class.

77. There are many pupils for whom good behaviour is not a problem, but there are a number of pupils who consistently find it difficult to follow codes of behaviour; the number of blue slips received by some pupils – up to 40 in a year – suggests that the system does not work for them as a deterrent. In the middle ground, much depends on the calibre of individual tutors. It is here that there is a lack of support for tutors who need it; in many schools the support from an effective immediate line manager, such as a head of year, head of key stage or head of house, can make a considerable difference in nipping trouble in the bud. Evidence from the inspection is very clear about considerable variations in the effectiveness of tutors in dealing with pupils who have been misbehaving; in particular, disciplining pupils, whose behaviour elsewhere has been sufficiently bad to warrant blue slips, in a tutor group in front of other pupils is inappropriate and often ineffective. On some occasions, the pupil takes on the role of a hero in front of his or her peers, rendering any action by the tutor to be ineffective. Concerted disciplinary action, as well as the necessary help and support, by a tutor and a line manager is invariably more effective if carried out away from the glare of publicity. The Ethos team does valuable work as part of their wider range of responsibilities, but does not have this immediate line management responsibility. The blue and green slip system is well known to pupils and, for many, it does act as a motivator to behave well, but clearly there are limits to its effectiveness. Many pupils, and some parents, complain about the lack of efficiency, at times, with which green merit slips are recorded, perceiving deficiencies to be unfair, and, ultimately, a de-motivator. The standards of behaviour achieved owe as much to the relationships and personal effectiveness of individual teachers as it does to the systems. The school has a good policy of involving parents early on if a pupil is having particular difficulty with behaviour. The bullying policy provides a suitable framework, based on a no blame approach to dealing with the issue, and is very effective and much appreciated by pupils and parents.
78. Arrangements for assessing the pupils' academic achievements are satisfactory overall, being effective in most subject areas, except for cross-curricular ICT. Assessment procedures are good in geography and very good in modern foreign languages; because of new procedures being implemented, they are potentially good in physical education. The assessment policy of the school is sound and coherent, but practice depends on individual teachers; in particular, assessment is not integrated sufficiently into normal classroom activities, and self-assessment by pupils of their strengths and weaknesses is inconsistent. Targets are developed regularly through discussion between students and the assessment co-ordinator, but these are usually quantitative and students need to know what to do to help them improve. Boys, in particular, need considerable help in knowing what they need to do to raise their achievements. However, the headteacher spends much time with target setting interviews with individual pupils, providing a valuable opportunity to raise their aspirations and self-esteem.

## Sixth form

### ***Advice, support and guidance***

79. The overall quality of advice, support and guidance for students in the sixth form is good. Before they join the sixth form, there is clear impartial advice to the students about options available to them. There is a commendable lack of pressure placed on students to join the sixth form at the end of Year 11, and the opportunities and limitations of the sixth form are presented clearly at open evenings, a careers day with involvement of further education colleges, and other occasions; where individual needs are better provided elsewhere, prospective students are encouraged to look at alternative post-16 providers. This shows the school's commitment to the needs of individual students. Induction is, therefore, good, with a member of the Ethos team responsible for the arrangements, which includes a two day induction period. In the early stages of courses, the school takes sensible and pragmatic action to changes in students' needs, and, indeed, usually re-admits each year a few students who, having tried a college, decide they would be better catered for in the school sixth form. There are different reasons for this, but the security of the sixth form and easier travel arrangements are the most common reasons given.
80. Tutors provide good educational and personal support for students in the sixth form. In the absence of a head of the sixth form post, the quality of the support is very much down to the calibre of individual tutors, though the formal arrangements with the Ethos team are the same as with the rest of the school, and minutes of their meetings are passed to the Ethos team. The limited evidence from the inspection, including conversations with students, indicates that support and monitoring arrangements work well, with most students satisfied with the support given. The tutorial programme covers a sensible range of topics, and the quality of a tutorial lesson seen in Year 13 was outstanding. The tutors have sound procedures for monitoring attendance; they are efficiently administering the new scheme, for which Cornwall is a pilot rural area, of an educational maintenance allowance, the payment for which depends on regular attendance. These same tutors are crucial in providing students with careers advice and guidance on future studies; they perform this role well. It is particularly helpful that the teacher with responsibility for careers is a sixth form tutor. Students have good access to well-informed guidance from their tutors, and have a self-referral access to the careers service, which seems to work well. There is good access to reference material, including higher education information, and Internet sources, with opportunities to attend a higher education fair in Exeter. Most students who were interviewed felt that work experience in the sixth form had been useful, but they had had to find their own placements and one student, at least, had been unable to do so. Whilst work experience for GNVQ students is monitored, this does not happen with other students, so the school has no clear way of evaluating its effectiveness for most students. Because the sixth form is small and students are well known to teachers, support and guidance to the students are good; however, as already stated, a great deal depends on the tutors and their

ability to provide high quality support and guidance. For example, the tutor is totally responsible for the university application process; there is no involvement of a senior tutor or senior manager. Whilst, at present, there is no evidence of any difficulties, the quality of vitally important tasks depends on what the tutor is able to give; the absence of a manager with clear overall responsibility for the sixth form makes the present generally successful arrangements vulnerable should circumstances change.

### **Assessment**

81. Most students feel that they know how well they are doing and are willing to follow the advice of their teachers; this was particularly noticeable in English. Most of the responsibility for assessment in the sixth form lies in subject areas. At this level, the arrangements are satisfactory in all areas, and good in some, including English, mathematics and geography. In these subjects, students consequently know how well they are doing and how they can improve. In chemistry, the marking of tests is thorough, but it is not always clear how standards relate to AS or A level grades. The monitoring of students' work in folders is not so thorough; this results in a large variation in the quality of their notes. In business, the level of marking and comment on student work gives sufficient information to encourage improvement, although some factual errors and those of grammar and spelling remain uncorrected. Overall, the quality of marking helps learning, and, indeed, almost all students learn well. In modern foreign languages, the formal framework is limited; arrangements are supportive on a personal level, but students would benefit from more frequent use of examination grades in marked work. In Year 13, where writing has been identified as a weakness, this would help students to measure their achievement and provide teachers with the opportunity to set targets and identify areas for practice. Across the sixth form as a whole, tutors monitor the students' overall progress; this is done on a regular basis and is well planned. As with other areas of sixth form support, a lot of responsibility lies with the tutors. The student by student analysis of examination results indicates underachievement by relatively few students, indicating that effective action is taken when necessary, a view generally supported by the students. Information to students and parents in written reports is sound, and they give a clear indication of strengths and weaknesses, as well as future potential.

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

82. Just over a sixth of the parents took the opportunity to express their views of the school through the parents' questionnaire or the parents' meeting. Of those expressing a view, the majority was positive about all aspects of the school. In particular, parents believe that their children like school, that the teaching is good and that their children make good progress. They particularly appreciate the range of activities outside of lessons that the school provides. A significant minority of parents was critical of the standards of behaviour in the school and the amount of homework set for their children. Some parents believe the school should work more closely with them and keep them better informed, and do not feel that the school is well led and

managed. Many parents combine praise with their concerns. None are hostile to the school, but most parents who provided comments believe it can do better. Overall, parents' views of the school are satisfactory.

83. A very high proportion of pupils live some distance away from Camelford, arriving by bus each day, and this makes it more difficult for the school to maintain close links with parents. It does make it even more important that communications with parents are treated as a high priority. The information the school provides for parents is sound. The prospectus and annual governors' report to parents are both well-written documents that give a good flavour of the school. The two versions of the prospectus, one aimed at parents, the other aimed at pupils, are particularly good and are clearly written; they are commendably free of educational jargon in ways that make them useful to their respective readers. There are two forms of written reports on pupils' progress. The interim version consists of a simple coding system to show parents whether progress is sufficient or not. The full annual written report is a computer-generated document, with standard paragraphs for each subject on curriculum coverage, to which teachers add their own comments on individual pupils. The quality of the information depends on the individual teacher. The best contain perceptive and helpful comments on attitudes, progress and level reached. However, many subject comments are very general, with vague targets. Where appropriate, GCSE predicted grades are given. Arrangements for parents to discuss their children's progress with teachers are sound. For most years, there is one parents' meeting, where they have the opportunity to meet subject tutors, with an extra one for parents of Year 7 pupils soon after they have joined the school, and an additional options meeting for Year 9 parents. Parents are generally conscientious at attending these meetings, and some would appreciate more discussion time with tutors to be made available at them. There is a good regular newsletter on the life of the school and regular letters home on specific issues. Overall, information provided to parents is satisfactory.
84. Links with parents of pupils with special educational needs are good in informal contact, through the annual reviews and in the development of individual education plans. Links with primary schools are very good, as are links with St. Austell College to which many pupils with special educational needs go at the age of 16; another good link has been recently established with the agricultural section of Duchy College which allows some Year 11 pupils to attend there part-time.
85. Some parents are frustrated by the inconsistent setting of homework by teachers. There have been very recent improvements, with the potential for long term benefits; for the first time, parents have received a homework timetable, and the student planner provides a way of keeping track of homework and also communicating in a less-formal way with form tutors. At present, student planners are not being used consistently, and are not being taken seriously by some pupils and teachers. Many are not being signed by either form tutor or parent. Proper use of these books would improve information to parents and open up more opportunities for parents to help with homework if they wish to do so. The school's behaviour policy places considerable emphasis on involving parents if a pupil is having problems



conforming to the school's expectations, and this approach is often productive in getting a good partnership to support the malefactor; at times, however, this policy does not seem to work. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are always invited to attend the regular review of their child's progress and to make comments on individual education plans, giving them the opportunity to contribute to their child's progress. There are other good aspects of the partnership with parents, including the school association, the PSA, which organises social and fundraising events; however, the three vacancies for parent governors is a matter of concern. The school issues its own home school links questionnaire at parents' meetings, which is a good way to ascertain levels of parental satisfaction.

86. The satisfactory partnership with parents has been maintained since the last inspection of the school.

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

87. The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are satisfactory, and there are strengths in important areas, which have a positive impact on the work of the school. Considerable time and energy have been spent in procedures to encourage improvements in teaching, including classroom observation and feedback, devising strategies to combat less effective teaching, and great care in the appointment of a considerable number of new teachers in the last two years. The better quality of teaching seen in this inspection compared to the previous one indicates success in this area. The detailed analysis of data is another strength, as is the involvement of the headteacher and other senior staff in target setting with individual pupils. Improvements in accommodation have required considerable expertise and persistence, and other areas, where there has been good or very good leadership and management by senior staff, have included financial planning and liaison with local primary schools. However, in some other areas, there is a lack of clarity in lines of responsibility and accountability. This results in inconsistencies and slackness in the implementation of some policies. Because of the gap, on occasions, between the policies and the management of day-to-day practice, the school is sometimes less effective than it could be. More consistency in applying policies and more cohesion in management structures are keys to managing further improvement in the school. Areas where these inconsistencies are particularly noticeable include: aspects of behaviour management, use of student planners, the daily reading time, afternoon registration procedures, homework and marking policies, classroom and workshop routines. Inspectors are sympathetic to the frustrations expressed by some parents and pupils to these weaknesses in the running of the school; whilst pupils are generally supportive of the school, and are loyal to it, they tend to be less enthusiastic about their experiences than is the case in many schools.
88. The headteacher and senior managers are providing satisfactory direction for the work and development of the school. The aims and aspirations of the school are clearly set out in both the pupil and parent prospectuses, and the

Staff Handbook is a good document for teachers to use in their understanding of the school's aims and values. Relationships are generally good; there is a commitment to equal opportunities and the inclusion of all pupils, with very great efforts made to help pupils with serious difficulties and problems, though some aspects of the curriculum hinder full equality of opportunity. The overall quality and care of the school environment are good. As already stated, there remains some gap between the school's aspirations and the variations in the pupils' experiences. Whilst there is good practice in some areas, with a culture that recognises that rigorous monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching are the keys to raising standards further, it is less well embedded in other areas of the school. The lack of clear lines of responsibility means that too much is left to subject areas and tutors, making the implementation of policies on matters such as behaviour, literacy, numeracy and assessment more difficult to achieve, and they are less well co-ordinated than is often found in other schools. Management of special educational needs is, however, a strength. Although the special needs co-ordinator was absent on maternity leave during the inspection week, the qualities of her good leadership and management are clear in the excellent documentation, systems and procedures. Management of change in special educational needs is very good, with thorough preparation for the new regulations and new code of practice, whose introduction has now been delayed nationally until 2002. Policy and practice in the special educational needs department match the school's aims well.

89. The headteacher and senior managers have clearly identified what needs to be done to improve. Analysis of data is thorough, and detailed self-audits provide large amounts of information that inform the planning processes. The school development plan is a sound document. It has a clear rationale, and has a relatively small number of well defined objectives with related tasks, personnel, resource and financial implications, and success criteria. If well used, it ought to be a powerful management tool for improvement in its key aim of sharing good practice so that all classes have a stimulating learning environment. The present three year development plan is in its early stages, so it is not possible to judge its effectiveness yet; crucially important will be the capacity of management structures and key personnel to facilitate its different objectives. Whilst there is a shared commitment and a desire of teachers to raise standards, the capacity of middle managers to be the catalysts for change, although satisfactory overall, is variable. They are not backed up by a strong line management role for senior managers, who also do not, therefore, provide this catalyst for improvement in all subject areas. There is a similar gap in strong line management in the direction of the work of tutors. However, the aspiration of the school for improvement is seen in the planning of a strategic plan for the next ten years. Under the leadership of the deputy headteacher, this is an ambitious and valuable exercise involving extensive consultation inside and outside the school. Again, the rationale is good, and, if successfully brought together and well used, will give a powerful agenda for future planning and decision making.

90. There are established systems for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching, and the school states that all heads of subject received training on observations and feedback during 1999/2000. The new performance management arrangements are appropriate, building on previous practice. Staff development policies are very well administered with thorough procedures and clear criteria, linked to school priorities. There is evidence, through the improved quality of teaching since the last inspection, that arrangements for monitoring and evaluating teaching and for the professional development of teachers are having a positive impact. However, the effectiveness is uneven as there are still significant variations in performance between different subjects and within some subjects.
91. The governors are well informed and receive large amounts of information. Their procedures and structures are good, and they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The high quality of financial information available to them ensures good quality decisions about financial planning in relation to the school's priorities. There are particularly useful links with certain sections of the school, including the sixth form and special educational needs, and governors have links with subjects. They have a good awareness of some difficult issues facing the school by the attendance of a governor at re-admission meetings following exclusions of pupils. Governors play an effective role in planning the school's development, and, overall, fulfil their responsibilities in a satisfactory way.

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

92. There is a good match of teachers to the curriculum, with almost all teaching their main subject and occasionally their second subject. The school is fully staffed, with six new teachers, including three newly qualified teachers. Whilst there have been a relatively large number of new teachers since July 2000, particular care has been taken with selection procedures to ensure a good match with the school's needs. Professional development programmes for individuals are formulated following an assessment of present and future curriculum requirements. Overall, the school has taken careful and appropriate steps to ensure that its staffing capacity is fitted to these requirements. Staffing is good for special educational needs; although there are less hours from teachers than previously, the learning support assistants are of good quality and well used. Administrative and clerical staff have all received training which will allow both general and specialist functions to continue efficiently in the case of absence of any member of the team.
93. Accommodation is good; the school has benefited from new buildings in recent years, one very recently, and there are sufficient rooms for the number of pupils in the school; subjects have their own areas within the site rather than being spread out. All these aspects of the accommodation have a positive impact on learning. Accommodation in special educational needs is very good, with the suite of small rooms providing a good learning environment; the accommodation is an improvement since the last inspection. A benefit of the school's relatively small size is that pupils do not have to walk excessive

distances between lessons, so time is not lost when teaching and learning should be taking place. Specialist facilities, including several ICT rooms, are good, and these facilities enhance learning opportunities. The library, though small, also includes space for pupils to access computers; it is a good learning resource and an attractive environment for work. Opportunities for the whole school to meet are limited because the hall is not big enough to accommodate the whole school comfortably at the same time. The changing rooms for physical education do not provide a pleasant environment and need refurbishment. The standard of cleaning and day-to-day maintenance is very good. Overall, the headteacher and others have successfully managed the buildings and grounds, and building programmes and improvements, so that all who work on the site have a generally good environment that is appropriate for the important work that they do. Plans for new permanent buildings for music and drama will enhance learning opportunities in these areas of the curriculum.

94. Learning resources are adequate overall; there has been considerable investment recently and, in 2001, the school is one of the highest spenders in Cornwall in this area. The recent provision of four well-equipped computer rooms is a great improvement, so that resources for ICT are now very good, and good in design and technology. However, there are insufficient computers for pupils in the Support Centre to make full use of the many good programmes now available; more computers or greater access to the school's computer suites would improve resources for special educational needs, as would more books for slower readers in the library. All other subjects have satisfactory resources, with religious education having good video resources; art is well equipped for ceramics. Good quality visits in several subject areas supplement text-book resources and make good use of the local area. The library gives a pleasant environment in which to work; it is well managed and satisfactorily resourced for most curriculum areas.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Leadership and management***

95. The general strengths and weaknesses of leadership and management in the school as a whole apply equally to the sixth form, including the strengths and weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation of teaching. Overall, leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. Heads of subjects and tutors work well in their areas of responsibility, though the lack of a senior sixth form manager weakens the overall direction of the sixth form and its students. This is not a serious problem at present because of the good work of individuals, and, at senior level, there is thorough analysis of results, which, at the very least, checks that outcomes are on target.
96. The rationale for provision in the sixth form is sound and is clearly understood, and the outcomes for most students are good. The sixth form is small and many arrangements for evaluating its performance are informal but generally effective, because of the good leadership in different subject areas, and

because of the good work of tutors in the support and guidance of the students. The link governor plays a very effective role in keeping important sixth form issues in focus. For example, there was a particularly helpful review of the first year of operation of AS levels at a recent governors' meeting, which informed the debate about future strategies about sixth form provision.

## **Resources**

97. The deployment of financial resources in a small sixth form requires good management skills, a clear rationale for the provision made, and a careful assessment of how effectively resources are used in relation to the school's overall resources. The school makes good use of the resources made available to the sixth form and applies the principles of best value successfully. At present, the sixth form benefits considerably from the Cornwall Local Education Authority's formula to protect small sixth forms. In the present financial year, this has raised its income by over 25 per cent compared with what it would have been based purely on student numbers. The school uses this income wisely to staff and resource the sixth form without either subsidising, or being subsidised by, the rest of the school. What it wants to do is supported by good financial planning. The match of teachers to the curriculum is good. Accommodation for the sixth form is satisfactory, and does not adversely affect standards. However the sixth form block has a damp problem and is not an attractive building in which to study, whilst the sixth form common room, housed in a circular building, provides an interesting space that calls out for a brighter interior. Most resources for sixth form teaching are kept in subject areas and are adequate for the students' needs. Normally, sixth formers have good access to computers, including the internet, to support their work.
98. The limitations of the small sixth form are clear in other sections of this report, but given the limitations of its small size, it provides a sound range of subjects, including business vocational courses, enabling students with a range of attainments at the age of 16 to study a course appropriate for their needs. Its results have improved and most students achieve well. It serves a local need and, within the parameters of its funding and location, it is cost effective.

## **Efficiency of the school**

99. Financial planning is good and is well linked to the school's educational priorities. There is an impressive clarity in the management of the school's finances, which, amongst other benefits, ensures that the principles of best value are rigorously considered in financial matters. High quality information prepared by an assistant head, with very good support from the school bursar and other key administrative staff, working closely with the relevant governors' committee, enables financial decisions to be coherently and quickly made for the benefit of the pupils' education. For example, a recent report made four recommendations to a full governors meeting for allocations and changes based on very detailed up-to-date information about balances and particular needs; one gave details of how a surplus had arisen in one area, with a

proposal for it to be used to cover additional costs of providing new ICT facilities for pupils. The difficult financial position as recently as the 1999/2000 financial year has been successfully resolved, and good decisions have been made to make effective use of funds, including the use of clerical staff to take some administrative work away from teachers. Variations from year to year in expenditure under different headings are very properly related to educational priorities, such as investment in new computer suites or improvements in accommodation. Overall, there is good use of resources, including special funding and special grants. Specific funds for special educational needs are well used, with the hours attached to individuals used flexibly to address identified needs. Technology is very effectively used to support financial management and day-to-day administration. A short but very good paper on the principles of best value is a model for good practice. Governors and teachers are beginning to use it, and, if its principles are always fully applied as effectively in all areas of the school's work as they are in its financial affairs, it will be a valuable help in monitoring the school's performance.

100. Because of the additional funding the school receives, particularly for the sixth form, from the Cornwall Local Education Authority's scheme to protect small schools, the school has a basic budget per pupil that is higher than average. Additional funding for specific purposes is in line with comparable schools. Overall, teachers teach about the same amount as the national average, but in class sizes a bit larger than average. The buildings and the environment of the school are good; resources are adequate, though good and much improved in ICT. On the other hand, the behaviour of pupils is considerably worse than is usually found. Pupils come from an area with high levels of social and economic disadvantage; their attainments on entry year by year vary considerably, but, overall, are below average. In most recent years, but not 2001, they obtain above average points scores at GCSE, having taken more subjects to examination level than in many schools. There are, however, marked variations between subjects and much lower attainment by boys; the proportion of higher grades in relation to the number of entries is below average. There is a lot of good and very good teaching and it is much improved since the previous inspection; but, with a higher than average amount that is unsatisfactory, teaching is satisfactory overall, as is the leadership and management of the school. Taking all these factors into consideration, the school is judged to give satisfactory value for money. Its improvement since the last inspection has also been satisfactory; with detailed attention to the weaker areas identified in this report, it has the capacity to improve its effectiveness further.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

To improve further, the school should give consideration to the following issues. Many of them overlap, with the common themes of consistency in application, and clear lines of responsibility and accountability to support their implementation. The numbers after each issue refer to the relevant paragraphs in the report. An asterisk (\*) after a key issue denotes that elements of this area are contained in the current school development plan.

1. Improve levels of behaviour in the school by: (\*)
  - a. continuing to develop ways of improving weaker teaching;
  - b. ensuring that the curriculum serves the needs of all pupils;
  - c. reviewing behaviour management policies to ensure that they are effective, and then consistently applying them;
  - d. reviewing pastoral structures so that teachers are fully supported in their work to improve pupils' behaviour.(23,24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 33, 36, 37, 55, 63, 73, 75, 76. 77, 85, 87, 88, 100, 108, 116, 117, 122, 130, 137, 138, 158, 165, 177, 190.)
  
2. Take steps to eliminate inconsistencies in the application of school policies by:
  - a. identifying and clarifying what is expected of all teachers all the time;
  - b. reviewing policies which, for whatever reasons, are not working properly;
  - c. insisting that agreed procedures and routines are followed, and providing line management responsibilities for ensuring they are followed.(24, 27, 38, 39, 40, 62, 63, 75, 76, 77, 85, 87, 88, 89, 111, 131, 138.)
  
3. Develop strategies further to improve standards across all areas of the school's work, and especially the attainment of boys by: (\*)
  - a. rigorously monitoring teaching in underperforming areas of the school, and giving high quality advice and support;
  - b. identifying clear lines of responsibility and accountability for performance;
  - c. tackling issues of boys' underachievement consistently and methodically at whole school level, including encouraging a culture in which boys want to succeed.(4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 33, 56, 66, 77, 78, 85, 87, 88, 90, 100, 111, 115, 122, 124, 129, 138, 139.)
  
4. Implement whole school policies for teaching literacy and numeracy as key areas for improving standards by: (\*)
  - a. giving high priority and status to the policies and their implementation;
  - b. ensuring that proper and detailed monitoring is undertaken at senior level.(6, 8, 40, 66, 87, 111, 114, 115, 123.)

5. Review in detail the Key Stage 4 curriculum to ensure it provides equality of opportunity and meets the needs of all pupils by: (\*)
  - a. consulting at all levels, including pupils and parents, about what should be included in the curriculum;
  - b. determining how the best provision of challenging and relevant courses can be made within the resources available.(15, 36, 48, 50, 52, 53, 54, 56, 58, 66, 125, 134, 160, 177.)
  
6. Encourage and improve provision for pupils' spiritual development, as part of enhancing their personal development, by:
  - a. analysing how all subjects and all areas of the school's life can contribute to developing pupils' spiritual awareness, and how this would benefit their personal development;
  - b. conducting a whole school review of ways of involving pupils more fully in the running of the school to enhance their personal development;
  - c. providing professional training in this area of the school's work.(26, 52, 62, 64, 126, 186.)



## Sixth form

1. Investigate all possible ways of enriching students' experiences beyond their examination courses by:
  - a. determining how further intellectually stimulating, challenging and interesting activities could be provided on a regular basis;
  - b. encouraging opportunities for students to debate and discuss important issues, including moral and ethical matters, in groups larger than those found in most of the school's sixth form classes.  
(42, 45, 47, 67, 69, 70, 186.)
  
2. Analyse how the future needs of the sixth form can best be met by:
  - a. considering whether present management structures give sufficient focus to the development needs of the sixth form, its tutors and its subject teachers;
  - b. considering whether present management and support structures meet the needs of sixth form students sufficiently well.  
(80, 81, 95.)
  
3. Consider how sixth formers can be given more responsibility for, and ownership of, their own learning and their life in the sixth form by:
  - a. encouraging subject teachers to employ teaching strategies that promote independent learning;
  - b. discussing with sixth form students how they could be more involved with taking responsibility within the sixth form and in the school as a whole.  
(31, 42, 43, 46, 69, 212, 213, 224, 232.)

**PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS**

**Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection**

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	118
	Sixth form	30
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		66

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection**

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	4	32	42	31	9	0	0
Percentage	3	27	36	26	8	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	3	10	11	6	0	0	0
Percentage	10	33	37	20	0	0	0

*The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for the sixth form here as each lesson represents more than three percentage points.*

**Information about the school's pupils**

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	579	72
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	42	

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	19	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	86	

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	31
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	21

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	91.2
National comparative data	91.3

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
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 (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	53	59	112

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	18	32	37
	Girls	40	38	37
	Total	58	70	74
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	52 (80)	63 (58)	66 (66)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	16 (45)	35 (35)	31 (22)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	32	29	25
	Girls	49	37	37
	Total	81	66	62
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	72 (63)	59 (77)	55 (84)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	39 (26)	26 (41)	33 (42)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

**Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	55	50	105

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	20	50	51
	Girls	30	47	47
	Total	50	97	98
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	48 (46)	92 (97)	93 (100)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	41.5 (43.6)
	National	38.4 (38.0)

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	0
	National	n/a

**Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	651
Any other minority ethnic group	0

**Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	45	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

**Teachers and classes****Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	36.03
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.1

**Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	441

**Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.4
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**Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	25.5
Key Stage 4	21.8

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Financial information**

Financial year	2000/1
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	£
Total income	1835424
Total expenditure	1803148
Expenditure per pupil	2766
Balance brought forward from previous year	62506
Balance carried forward to next year	94782

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	10.85
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	12.15

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Results of the survey of parents and carers**

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	651
Number of questionnaires returned	113

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	49	41	9	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	49	42	7	2	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	30	34	28	4	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	50	17	9	4
The teaching is good.	30	58	8	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	46	12	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	35	11	3	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	47	36	11	4	3
The school works closely with parents.	31	41	20	4	4
The school is well led and managed.	38	39	11	8	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	50	9	3	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	39	52	4	2	4

**Summary of parents' and carers' responses**

Thirty four parents attended the parents' meeting and nineteen sent in written comments, most of which gave reasons for their responses. The balance of comments both at the meeting and in writing was positive and largely reflects the responses in the questionnaire. Very few responses came from parents of sixth form students. Concerns over behaviour were mentioned in the majority of the comments, with many also referring to inconsistencies in the amount and challenge of homework tasks, the use of rewards and sanctions. Many combined their concerns with praise, particularly for many teachers. None were hostile to the school, but most parents who commented believed the school could be better.

## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4**

### **ENGLISH**

101. Overall, the quality of provision in English is satisfactory, with girls achieving better than boys.

#### **Strengths**

- Girls achieve well, with standards often above average.
- The provision of drama adds breadth to the curriculum, and there are very good GCSE results in drama.
- There is frequently good teaching, especially at Key Stage 4.
- There is good committed leadership by the head of subject.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Raising the attainment of boys.
- Improving management of behaviour in a minority of classes.
- More consistently challenging higher-attaining pupils in some lessons.

102. The proportion of pupils at the end of Year 9 attaining Level 5 or above in the 2001 national tests was well below the national average, and below the average for similar schools nationally; girls' attainment was higher than that of the boys. Over the previous three years standards in English have been similar to those in mathematics, but well below those in science. In work seen, the current level of attainment of pupils in English by the end of Year 9 is in line with the national average in reading, speaking, listening and writing, although boys attain a lower standard than girls, particularly in writing. The standard of boys' writing in Year 9 is below the expectation for fourteen year-olds.
103. The proportion of girls gaining an A\*-C grade or an A\*-G grade by the end of Year 11 in the 2000 English language GCSE examination was above the national average, whilst the proportion achieving an A\*-C grade in English literature was close to the national average. The proportion of boys gaining an A\*-C grade in English language was well below the national average, although the proportion achieving an A\*-G grade was in line. Not all boys were entered for the English literature examination, but the proportion of those that did take the examination and gained an A\*-C grade was close to the national average. The evidence of the inspection is that the majority of pupils are in line with national standards by the end of Year 11, both in basic English skills and in the ability to critically analyse and evaluate a range of texts.
104. By the end of Year 9, the majority of average attaining pupils speak with appropriate clarity, listen well and read with reasonable fluency. They have an average standard of accuracy and range of vocabulary in their written work. The range and depth of writing increase significantly by the end of Year 9. The quality of descriptive and imaginative writing is frequently good, as for

example when pupils write "mystery" stories. Higher attainers write clearly and accurately, for example when writing "Buddy's Diary". Some pupils use the internet effectively to research topics such as Arthurian legend. The achievement of pupils in English overall by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory. Pupils join the school at the age of eleven mostly with standards below average. Although many pupils develop their basic skills well, many lower attaining pupils, principally boys, achieve at a lower level: they do not learn to read with sustained fluency, expression or accuracy, they have a limited range of vocabulary, and their writing frequently contains errors in basic skills of spelling, grammar and punctuation. Sometimes these lower attainers do not complete their written work. When, for example, writing dialogue, they sometimes forget the conventions of accurate speech marks and paragraphing. Higher attaining pupils make mostly satisfactory progress in developing all English skills, although sometimes the pace of their learning is restricted by unchallenging tasks. Pupils with special educational needs make variable progress: when they are supported by specialist staff, they often make good progress in improving their basic English skills. In large mixed ability classes in which there is no specialist support, they make, at best, satisfactory progress.

105. By the end of Year 11 pupils show levels of skill in speaking, listening, reading and writing which are overall in line with the national average, and above for many girls. This represents good achievement for most pupils, of all levels of ability, in relation to their prior attainment at the end of Year 9. Pupils with special educational needs make mostly satisfactory progress in improving their skills. Many pupils achieve a good standard in writing. Higher attainers show good comprehension skills and a good standard of critical analysis, for example when comparing stories by different authors such as Conan Doyle and Roald Dahl. They note differences in style, exploring character and using the text sensibly to support their judgements. Some of the work on "Macbeth" and "An Inspector Calls" shows a good understanding of context and an appreciation of literary devices. In contrast, lower attainers and some average attainers rely more on retelling plot than analysing the text, and the work of some lower attainers is marred by common spelling and punctuation errors, for example when writing book reviews and writing "letters" on the theme of scientific research on animals. These pupils achieve at a lower rate than the majority.
106. A relatively small number of pupils opt for the GCSE drama course. Their standards are particularly high by the end of Year 11, and drama is a strength of the school. The majority of pupils show good levels of confidence, improvisational and interpretative ability, and skill in evaluating their work. This was evident for example in a lesson in which Year 10 pupils were examining the importance of linking contrasting scenes in improvised drama.
107. The overall quality of teaching in English is good, and leads to good gains in learning. Teaching is satisfactory or better in two lessons in three for pupils in Key Stage 3, and unsatisfactory in one lesson in three. The teaching is always good or very good for pupils in Key Stage 4. Consequently, pupils'



learning and their achievements are better at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. Where teaching is good or very good, for pupils of all ages, a combination of questioning and explanation, based on good subject knowledge, succeeds in reinforcing and extending pupils' knowledge and understanding. For example, in a Year 11 lesson on "An Inspector Calls" the questioning was effective in extending lower attaining pupils' understanding of devices used to develop character in the play. In the best lessons, teachers maintain a good pace, with sharply focused activities which keep pupils working productively. As a result they improve their skills well and increase their knowledge and understanding. A good example was a Year 10 lesson on autobiographical writing in which the teacher made effective use of Amelia Erhart's autobiography as a stimulus, and used a range of resources and the provision of writing frames to assist lower attainers. The teacher also set specific time targets for activities so as to make the tasks suitably challenging, again promoting good learning. Teachers make the objectives of their lessons very clear and ensure that pupils know what they have achieved by the end. For example, at the end of a Year 7 drama lesson pupils were encouraged to evaluate each other's improvisations and comment on what they had learned. There is a pleasing emphasis in good lessons on accuracy of language and good presentation, and this results in pupils of all levels of ability making a sustained effort to do well, and consequently they learn well.

108. In the minority of lessons which are unsatisfactory, or where there are elements of the teaching which are unsatisfactory, teachers have difficulty in managing a substantial proportion of poorly behaved or poorly-motivated pupils, and the disruption which occurs considerably restricts the pace and quality of learning. This occurred in two Year 9 lessons in which several pupils were unwilling to listen or were incapable of working sensibly without the direct supervision of the teacher. Sometimes higher attaining pupils are not given appropriately challenging work early enough in the lesson, for example being given a simple copying task, and this restricts the pace and quality of their learning.
109. Leadership and management in English are good. The head of subject has worked hard to overcome staffing difficulties and to raise the attainment of boys. Assessment in English is good, with constructive marking and information beginning to be used for target setting and the raising of expectations. Numeracy skills are being addressed, for example when the department teaches library skills, and computers are used particularly for research and for word processing, although their use is not consistent in all classes. The department makes a good contribution to social and cultural provision by encouraging pupils to work collaboratively and by using a wide range of prose and poetry texts.
110. In 1996, attainment was at a similar level to now, with girls achieving better than boys. The majority of pupils, then as now, were making good progress in their learning. Teaching is mostly sound or better, as it was then. Assessment and leadership of the department remain good. Therefore overall there has been satisfactory progress since the previous inspection.

## Literacy

111. At present, the school has unsatisfactory procedures for promoting literacy throughout the school, and this restricts the quality of learning particularly of many lower attaining boys. The English department has made a conscious attempt to raise the literacy standards of boys in particular, and this is beginning to have an impact on standards. For example the careful choice of reading material such as science fiction is designed to appeal to boys. However, the school's "rolling reading" programme to raise reading standards in other subjects has not worked effectively and has not been applied consistently. Unlike most schools, a strategy for promoting literacy across the curriculum, although written, has not yet been formally introduced. Consequently, although there are good examples of teachers trying to improve standards of literacy, they occur in individual lessons and are not the result of a consistent whole-school policy. Some subjects like modern foreign languages do make use of banks of key words in order to emphasise the importance of pupils knowing and using appropriate technical vocabulary, and key analytical terms are introduced at appropriate moments in history lessons. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to improve the techniques of note taking or extended writing. In some teacher-directed lessons, there are relatively few opportunities for structured speaking opportunities to increase pupils' confidence and competence in debate. When pupils show poor listening skills, they are unable to follow the teacher's explanations; for example, in a Year 10 lesson, because they did not listen properly, they were unable to understand the distinction between "attracting" and "absorbing". Overall there is insufficient attention given to practical classroom strategies for raising the standards of literacy, particularly of boys.

## MATHEMATICS

112. Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is good.

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good overall; the teachers are very good mathematicians, able to teach ideas clearly so that pupils can understand them
- Quality of the presentation of pupils' work is good
- Standards for girls have risen steadily
- Most pupils behave well and make good progress
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and contains all the required elements
- Standards of coursework are good
- The department is well led and managed

### Areas for improvement

- Standards of numeracy
- Consistent marking arrangements
- Full implementation of the Key Stage 3 strategy, particularly techniques which increase the degree of involvement of all pupils in all parts of the lesson.

113. Standards in mathematics at the end of Year 9 are broadly average. In the year 2000 national tests, 63 per cent of pupils scored level 5 or above, compared to the national average of 65 per cent. Over the last three years, the performance of the girls has steadily moved ahead of that of the boys; in general, standards in mathematics are not as good as those in science, although in most years in the last four they have been better than those in

English. In the GCSE examinations at the end of year 11 in 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining a grade A\*-C was just below the national average, with 42 per cent gaining one of those grades compared with the national average of 47 per cent. The proportion gaining at least 1 grade A\*-G was above the national average, and was very close to 100 per cent. In the 2001 examinations 33 per cent of all the pupils obtained a grade A\*-C, well below the trend in the national results. In these examinations, standards for girls were broadly in line with recent national averages, but for boys were below, and, as in the first three years, the gap between the performance of the girls and the boys is widening.

114. In work seen up to Year 9, attainment is broadly average; the achievement of the pupils in these three years is good because their overall attainments when they entered the school was below average. Pupils make good progress in all areas of the curriculum, aided by growing familiarity with the use of ICT to assist their learning. Thus in Year 7, pupils were seen using a computer programme to search for patterns in numbers, and, at the same time practising their number facts and skills. They become familiar with the basic properties of shapes, learn increasingly complex operations with algebraic expressions, and learn the basic principles of handling data. Standards of numeracy are very variable; overall, they are below average. Many pupils are still unfamiliar with all the multiplication tables, and this slows their progress in many areas. In general, this applies to the middle and lower attaining pupils and to some of those with special educational needs, whose achievement is not as good in the three years as is that of the higher attaining pupils.
115. Attainment in work seen up to year 11 is broadly average. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is generally satisfactory, and is better for the girls than for the boys. There is a minority of boys, in sets at all levels of ability, whose achievements are not so good because of a poor attitude to work. In higher attaining sets, pupils develop their skills in solving a variety of algebraic equations, and in handling data. Pupils in one Year 10 set successfully calculated and drew graphs depicting tendencies in seasonally varying data. In middle and lower attaining sets, pupils were seen successfully consolidating their knowledge of statistical methods, and of the basic principles of algebra. At all levels, pupils learn how to tackle extended investigations and to present their results in a coherent way. Standards of numeracy continue to be a bar to better achievement for a significant group of pupils, especially low attaining sets, where pupils not only lack the basic facts, for example knowledge of multiplication tables, but also lack strategies to work out a variety of problems in mental arithmetic.
116. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally good. In most cases, they are very good, with pupils enthusiastically and sensibly contributing to the lesson during the whole class sessions, working hard when set individual problems, and co-operating when they are asked to work in groups. The majority of pupils at all levels of attainment organise their work with great care and accuracy. However, in a significant minority of classes throughout the five years, there are groups of pupils, mostly boys, but occasionally also some

girls, who behave in an immature manner, don't listen when the teacher is talking and chat at every opportunity during the individual sessions. Despite good planning and sound teaching strategies, in some classes, particularly middle and low attaining sets, there are sufficient numbers of such pupils to disrupt the progress of the others, both through spoiling the working ethos of the classroom, and taking up the teachers' time and energy trying to maintain good order.

117. Teaching is judged good overall, though it is better in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4 where it is satisfactory overall. It is satisfactory or better in almost all lessons, and in nearly half of the lessons it is very good or excellent. All the teachers are good mathematicians, so they can explain the basic concepts in the clearest possible way. They can also respond to pupils' questions with appropriate examples and give alternative approaches to help the pupils who are experiencing difficulties. They teach in a way that helps the pupils understand the basic principles as well as being able to carry out the processes needed to get the answers to solutions. Lessons are well planned, have a variety of activities and phases to keep the pupils interested, and in the best cases give pupils real opportunities to stretch their thinking and explore their understanding of the subject. As a result of these strengths in the teaching, the pupils' learning in most cases is good, particularly in Years 7 to 9. In some classes, normally middle or low attaining sets, not enough action is taken to ensure that a small minority of pupils does not disturb the generally good ethos in the lesson. The teachers are beginning to provide greater opportunities to improve the numeracy skills of the pupils. They also mark homework in great detail, giving the pupils clear guidance on how to improve, and also encouraging them when they try hard, even if with less success than their teachers would wish. However there is some inconsistency in the department on the marking of classwork, which results in some pupils not learning from their mistakes, because the work is not marked.
118. Since the last inspection, there has been an improvement in the standards of attainment of the girls, while that of the boys has remained static. The quality of teaching is much more consistent, and is of a higher quality than in 1995. The curriculum followed by the pupils covers all the statutory requirements, and the teachers assess each pupil's progress systematically so that underachievement can be identified and tackled quickly when it occurs. Leadership and management are good, with good organisation and delegation of tasks. There is a real sense of teamwork in the department that is helping to build consistency, and is focused on the continuing need to review and improve standards.

## SCIENCE

119. Overall the quality of provision in science is good.

### Strengths

- Standards are above average in Years 7 to 9
- Teaching overall is good

- Good teamwork is developing in the science department, with an awareness of the need for further improvement
- Pupils' investigative skills show a marked improvement

#### Areas for improvement

- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 in order to raise boys' standards at this level
- The use of ICT by all pupils
- The behaviour of a significant minority of pupils
- The monitoring of teaching
- The accuracy and grading of teachers' assessments

120. Standards on entry are generally below the national average. In national tests in 2000 at the end of Year 9, standards were above the national average for all schools, and in line with those in similar schools. This represents good achievement during Years 7 to 9. Results in Year 9 in the last three years have remained consistent, with a further improvement in 2001 in the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard. Teachers' assessments of pupils' work do not show a close correlation with the test scores. There is no consistent or significant difference in the standards of boys and girls in Year 9. Standards in science are higher than those in mathematics and English.
121. In the GCSE examinations taken in 2000 at the end of Year 11, pupils were entered for the double science examination. Across the year group, the proportions of pupils gaining grades in the ranges A\*-C and A\*-G were both in line with the national averages. However, girls' results were 10 per cent higher than the boys at A\*-C, in spite of these boys having a higher average points score when in Year 9. Boys nevertheless did better in science than they did in their other subjects. The overall achievement by the year group is broadly satisfactory. Results in 2001 show a reduction in the proportions of pupils gaining both grades A\*-C and A\*-G, with girls again outperforming boys.
122. In work seen during the inspection, standards are generally above average in Years 7 to 9 and in line with expectations in Years 10 and 11. Overall, pupils' achievements are better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. There is a good balance throughout Years 7 to 11 of all the Attainment Targets in the National Curriculum. Pupils particularly enjoy practical lessons, and there are occasions when teachers miss the opportunity to provide appropriate practical exercises. Nevertheless, pupils' overall skills of scientific investigation have improved since the last inspection; their planning and observations are well developed, but further improvement is required with their analysis and evaluation of results. A group of higher attaining pupils in Year 11 became very involved in measuring how air resistance affects the swing of a simple pendulum, and in refining their results. They clearly understood the principle of a fair test. Lower attaining pupils are well integrated; they achieve well in Year 7, such as those in a class planning to study how the amount of water affects the growth of seeds. As they move through the school, however, a significant proportion of those with learning or behavioural difficulties,

particularly boys, fail to produce satisfactory work, and they often show a lack of pride in achievement. This was evident in a Year 10 class learning about the transfer of heat by radiation; a lack of concentration by a significant number of boys, in spite of the teacher's efforts, led to unsatisfactory learning overall.

123. Teachers in the science department are clearly aware of the importance of developing pupils' literacy skills, and there are many examples of good practice. Key words are stressed, displayed in laboratories, and often consolidated at the end of lessons. In many lessons, pupils are encouraged to express scientific principles in their own words, testing their understanding, and their ability with words, and extending their scientific achievements. In a minority of lessons, there is too much copying from the board, resulting in a lack of challenge and less progress being made. Numeracy is not given such a high priority, and pupils in general lack confidence with number work. Graphs are used from Year 7 onwards, but there is still inconsistency in presentation in Year 11, with some pupils unsure of how or why to draw the line of best fit. The use of formulae by higher attaining pupils is satisfactory, but there is less evidence of lower attaining pupils using calculations. Insufficient progress has been made in the use of computers to support pupils' learning in science. However, teachers in the department understand the need to improve provision, and to ensure that pupils in all year groups are provided with more examples of the usefulness of computers in recording measurements, and in research.
124. Teaching in the department is good overall, but varies from satisfactory to excellent; it is good in Years 7 to 9, satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, and good in the sixth form. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subjects, and often add interest to lessons with the quality of background information. This was particularly evident in an excellent Year 13 biology lesson on the quality of water in the environment; the teacher was very well prepared, had an excellent rapport with the students, and they responded to her obvious knowledge and enjoyment of her subject. Teachers' planning is thorough, but is concentrated more on what they are intending to teach than on how pupils are going to learn. Best practice is seen in classes where learning objectives are clarified at the start to give purpose to the work. Teachers have a high expectation of pupils being on-task, and this aids learning. The management of pupils is variable; in the best lessons, the teacher's natural enthusiasm for the subject conveys itself to pupils, as in a Year 10 lesson on the production and properties of sound waves; as a result, good learning occurred. In a Year 9 lesson on the benefits and disadvantages of alcohol, the teacher's frequent use of praise persuaded pupils to produce their best work, and they learnt valuable lessons for life by concentrating on the exercises provided. There are occasions when the lessons are too dominated by the teacher, with insufficient opportunity provided for pupils to use their initiative; the result is that some pupils are too reliant on their teacher, and do not learn to think for themselves in order to overcome difficulties. This is a disadvantage when they take examination papers. The marking of work this term is generally good, with the best examples informing

pupils what they have to do in order to improve. Homework is set regularly, but often lacks challenge, and therefore interest, for the higher attaining pupils, and, consequently, holds back their learning.

125. A number of other factors affect pupils' achievements in science. The overall leadership and management of the department are good, and there is a clear commitment to continuing improvement, as in the review of schemes of work. This leads to work being provided at the correct level in class, and the opportunity for pupils to succeed in their studies. The department monitors pupils' results in national tests in order to identify strengths and weaknesses in provision. There is insufficient monitoring of teaching, within the department, so that basic errors in teaching are not easily eradicated. Furthermore, insufficient time is devoted at department meetings to discussing strategies for teaching, and for improving pupils' behaviour. Pupils' attitudes to learning are satisfactory overall, but there is a significant number of pupils, mainly boys, who cause difficulty for teachers by their lack of application. Too often they show low levels of concentration and a lack of pride in the presentation of their work, and their learning suffers. Moreover, the timetable arrangements for science classes in Years 10 and 11 result in large classes and a wide range of attainment in each class; these factors exacerbate the situation, with the result that, by Year 11, in spite of department planning, too many pupils underachieve.
126. Overall, the department has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. In particular, teaching has improved; it is never less than satisfactory, and is often very good or excellent. There is a good sense of teamwork developing within the department, and a good balance of experienced and more recently qualified teachers. The use of computers has not been sufficiently developed since it was criticised in the last inspection report; pupils' skills have improved, but there are still insufficient opportunities for pupils to experience their use in science. Opportunities are often missed to reflect on the wonders of science, and to make a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, such as lessons on the radiation of heat and light through space, and on the force of gravitation. Greater priority needs to be given to the quality of presentation of pupils' work, and to improving their pride in their achievements. Improvement is also needed in the accuracy of teachers' assessments; pupils' work is not related to national standards often enough. As a result, teachers' assessments in Year 9 do not show a close correlation with test scores, and, therefore, are less useful than they should be in monitoring pupils' progress.

#### **ART AND DESIGN**

127. Overall, the provision for art and design is satisfactory

##### Strengths

- The curriculum is broad and balanced
- The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good
- The art environment is stimulating and imaginative

Areas for development

- Teachers do not plan lessons carefully enough
- Teachers do not make effective use of sketchbooks or homework
- Pupils are not fully involved in the assessment of their work

128. GCSE examination results in 2000 showed that, overall, pupils' attainments were below average compared with schools nationally. Girls reached a higher level than they did nationally, but the boys were well below average; because of this, they pulled the overall average down. In 2001, although the figures are not yet officially confirmed, the overall attainment appears nearer the national average. Again, the boys did less well than the girls although, this time, the difference is closer to the national picture. The teacher assessments of pupils at the end of year 9 show that more pupils attain the higher National Curriculum levels than is expected for pupils of their age.
129. Evidence from the inspection finds that standards in Year 11 are around average and are likely to be average by the time pupils take the examination. Overall, this represents sound achievement and progress in relation to the pupils' prior attainments. All pupils can produce a personal response to a given stimulus. The end products are often imaginative and show a good feel for landscape and natural forms. The girls' work shows greater depth and commitment, better use of both visual and verbal vocabulary and a greater understanding of the influence of other artists and craftsmen. The boys' work is often careless and unfinished, leading to underachievement, and the development of skills in painting and drawing is weak. Girls are also better at talking about and analysing their work. At the end of Year 9, standards are also average, again showing sound achievement in relation to their starting points in earlier years. Pupils develop sound skills in a good range of media and are able to research different times and cultures to influence their ideas. At both key stages, pupils make poor use of their sketchbooks and homework often shows a lack of thought or care. It is rare for pupils to use their sketchbooks to pursue a personal line of enquiry; as a result, they do not extend their artistic work as far as might be possible.
130. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. The strengths lie in the teachers' own knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject and the rich variety of stimuli they provide. In one good lesson, the teacher showed the Year 9 pupils a wide variety of masks from different cultures. They had a lively discussion on the social and spiritual significance of these artefacts. Access to books and the Internet added to the research facilities and ensured that the pupils' learning was good and that they made good progress. The teacher also helped the lower attaining pupils with some visual resources which were very suitable for their needs; as a result, their learning was good. Generally though, teachers do not plan the lessons in sufficient detail to provide this kind of support. There are no specific objectives for lower attainers or pupils with special educational needs and this often results in desultory or inappropriate behaviour and unsatisfactory learning. In an unsatisfactory Year 11 lesson, the teacher gave insufficient thought to the learning needs of individual pupils.



This, coupled with low expectations of homework and classwork, as well as the teacher's tolerance of rude and childish behaviour, resulted in little progress being made. Pupils enjoy art and usually respond well to the environment. However, their learning is sometimes constrained by thoughtless behaviour. In order to learn better, they also need to be more involved in assessing and evaluating their own work, so that they know what they need to do to improve. In this respect, the teachers' marking and the yearly reports are of little value because they do not explain what the pupils know, understand and can do. Nor do they set clear targets for improvement.

131. The department is soundly led by a teacher whose own knowledge, interest and artistic achievements are clearly an inspiration to the pupils and one of the main factors in the results achieved. This is particularly the case in 3D work and ceramics. However, art and design has made unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection. Teaching is not as good: the planning and setting of objectives is still a problem; and ongoing assessment has not improved. Whilst the department uses statistics to analyse the results in tests and examinations, it has made little progress in using this to raise attainment. School objectives for improving the achievement of the boys and lower ability pupils in general have been only partially implemented and not applied rigorously on a daily basis. Recent problems of staffing within the arts faculty as a whole have contributed to the insufficient support in the monitoring and development of teaching and learning.
132. Given the enthusiasm and commitment of the teachers and, with high quality support at senior management level, the department has sound potential to make improvements and raise attainment even further.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

133. Despite many strengths, the overall quality of provision is unsatisfactory.

### Strengths

- Most of the teaching in Years 7 to 9 is of a good standard, resulting in at least satisfactory learning in most lessons, and good achievement by pupils.
- Good teaching in food technology assures good achievement by all pupils who clearly understand how well they are progressing.
- The development of pupils' literacy skills, particularly technical vocabulary, in food technology is good.
- There is good use of ICT by a significant proportion of pupils to complete their coursework

### Areas for improvement

- Overall results at GCSE are significantly lower than the national average with few pupils attaining at the highest grades. However, a significant proportion of higher attainers in Years 10 and 11 are unable to take the subject.
- Regulations for the disapplication of pupils from a technology curriculum are not being applied in the true spirit of their intentions.

- There is a lack of rigour in applying the principles and processes of designing across the subject, with pupils having insufficient opportunities to practise and develop their creative skills.
- There are inconsistencies across the material areas in the way pupils are required to research, record and present their design work in Years 7 to 9; control technology is underdeveloped.
- There are weaknesses in marking and assessment arrangements in Years 7 to 9.
- There are inconsistencies in the way teachers apply important workshop rules.
- The behaviour and attitude to learning of a significant minority of pupils is poor.

134. Overall standards in design and technology are broadly similar to the national average at the end of Year 9 and significantly below it in Year 11. Given pupils' below national average attainment on entry, this represents good achievement by the end of Year 9. However, this is not sustained and leads to unsatisfactory achievement by the end of Year 11. GCSE results were significantly below the national average in 2000. The results for the school in 2001 are similar, being significantly below the national averages for 2000. The unsatisfactory achievement in Year 11 can be attributed in part to the prolonged absences of the specialist teachers and the school's difficulties in obtaining other specialists to cover their absences. The curriculum structure does not enable the highest attainers in the school to study the subject in Years 10 and 11 and this does affect outcomes. Girls attain significantly better than boys in the subject, but they do not achieve as well as girls nationally. Boys attain significantly below boys nationally. Pupils do not attain as well in the subject as they do in their other subjects.
135. In work seen by Year 9, attainment is average and shows good improvement from work in Year 7; this is most notable in food technology where most pupils are able to understand a design brief and can effectively research solutions to the problem set, with growing use of the Internet to help them generate ideas. In some areas of the subject, there is insufficient scope provided for pupils to be creative in their design work. Higher attainers convey their design ideas satisfactorily with average graphical communication skills. Lower attainers, including those with special educational needs, have much weaker skills of presentation and often spoil work through the over-use of felt tip colours. Overall, practical work is average and sometimes of an above average standard, as seen in the work of higher attainers in the 'nutcracker' project in Year 9.
136. In work seen by Year 11, standards are below average overall and well below in resistant materials. Pupils' design folders in resistant materials do not reflect the expected processes and principles of designing. Across all material areas, a very small minority of pupils are achieving satisfactorily, and producing design folios that show average graphical communication skills. The presentation and graphicacy skills of average and lower attainers are often very weak. Too many pupils cannot use the correct technical terminology

when describing their designs and in outlining the processes involved. In food technology, a significant proportion of the pupils use computers well in the production of their design folders. Because the use of computers as a control tool is underdeveloped, standards are below the expected level.

137. Most pupils have a good attitude to learning and their behaviour is good in many lessons in Years 7 to 9, particularly in food technology, where they are well motivated by the tasks set and the teaching styles and strategies adopted. However, in all years, across all material areas, significant numbers of pupils have a poor attitude to learning and show poor behaviour, despite the teachers' best efforts to encourage and support them with their tasks. Persistent chatter, a lethargic attitude to work, a very slow response to teacher's intervention and poor behaviour from a minority means that not all pupils are able to fully focus on tasks; much time is wasted and their learning, and that of others, is affected.
  
138. The good achievement where it occurs in Year 7 to 9 is attributable to good teaching, which is evident in most, but not all, lessons. Where the teaching is less than satisfactory, the design processes and principles are not practised, and work is directed too much by the teacher, with little scope for pupils to develop their creative skills. The department's workshop rules are not consistently applied, for example in the wearing of aprons for practical tasks. This gives pupils conflicting messages when other teachers, quite rightly, insist on the wearing of aprons for practical work. The teaching methods and styles used are mostly successful in enabling pupils to improve and develop their design and make skills, but it is not consistently applied across all design areas. Teachers produce design worksheets that provide pupils with clear guidelines for their design tasks, although worksheets are not always sufficiently modified to meet the needs of pupils of all levels of attainment. The development of pupils' literacy skills, particularly the technical language of the subject, is not universally implemented across all design areas. Teachers provide pupils with high levels of individual support and guidance, which assures that most pupils are aware of what they are required to do in lessons. As a result, their learning is satisfactory and often good, building effectively on their prior skills and knowledge. However, marking is inconsistent, and incomplete or unfinished work is not rigorously challenged. In these circumstances, learning suffers, and pupils' achievements are below their capabilities. In Years 7 to 9, assessment procedures and practice do not always inform pupils what level of the National Curriculum they are working towards. Because of this, their learning does not concentrate on the things they need to do to improve, hindering their progress. Homework is set; however, learning is reduced because homework is not always conscientiously completed by pupils, with insufficient action taken by teachers to insist on higher standards. Teachers promote safe working practices with pupils' safety a principal factor in all lessons. The technician and learning support staff provide invaluable contributions to the pupils' learning by helping them whenever possible with their tasks. However there is insufficient technical support time in food technology; as a result, some opportunities for pupils to develop their practical skills cannot be taken.

139. There are many positive and good features of leadership and management of the subject. However, the disapplication of higher attainers from studying the subject and the long-term absences of specialist staff at a crucial time has contributed to a fall in standards. Overall therefore, these weaknesses mean that progress since the last inspection and the overall leadership and management of the subject have been unsatisfactory. However, the appointment of two new specialist teachers to the technology staff is bringing with them a new ethos for learning and a greater focus on raising standards.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

140. Overall, the quality of provision is good.

### **Strengths**

- Fieldwork is undertaken in all year groups. This aspect underpins the whole geography curriculum; both teachers and pupils constantly refer to fieldwork in lessons.
- Teachers have good expectations of both work and behaviour.
- Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of the subject, and plan and prepare the work well.
- The subject is very well led, with a good scheme of work.
- Teachers of geography show very good enthusiasm for the subject, working well together as a team.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Teachers need to consider further how pupils learn and adapt their teaching methods to suit the needs of all pupils.
- Greater involvement by pupils in their learning will enhance their standards.

141. By the end of Year 9, pupils reach standards that are above average; this is confirmed by the teachers' own assessments. Pupils, by the end of Year 11, demonstrate standards that are above average; this is also confirmed by the GCSE examination results. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A\* to C in the 2000 GCSE examination is just above the national average; the recent 2001 results are better than the 2000 results. Since the last inspection there has been steady year-to-year improvement in examination results. Pupils tend to obtain better GCSE results in geography than those they get in most other subjects. All pupils entered both in 2000 and 2001 gained A\* to G grades. The previous lower attainments by boys compared with girls in examination results has now been successfully addressed; gender differences are not now significant.
142. In work seen during the inspection, the pupils' standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 are above average; their achievements in relation to standards at entry are good. Year 7 pupils start from a low level on entry with limited geographical skills, but most, including pupils with learning difficulties and low attaining pupils, successfully master the basic skills of map work, scale and direction in relation to their immediate local vicinity. They draw on first hand

examples to show how villages and town are initially established. High attaining pupils successfully explain the respective advantages and disadvantages of different locations. The progress made in Year 7 and Year 8 is good; pupils continue to build upon and refine these basic geographical skills of presentation. By Year 9, pupils continue to make progress in developing basic geographical skills of presentation, drawing sketch maps and the functions of keys, scale and symbols. Pupils show a secure knowledge of life in Japan. They know, for example, the importance of the physical geography and that the very small percentage of low-lying land along the coastal area houses over two thirds of the population, and higher attainers can successfully explain the consequences of the physical geography. With an emphasis on key words and the correct use of terminology, the subject successfully supports the development of pupils' literacy skills. Pupils' exercise books across the range show a good understanding of conservation, including the moral issues of conservation and sustainability. The skills of geographical observation and evaluation are very successfully developed through fieldwork.

143. Standards in work seen at the end of Key Stage 4 are above average, and pupils achieve at a good level in relation to their work in Key Stage 3, building on their earlier success. Both literacy and numeracy skills successfully support the pupils' work in geography, successfully, for example, using pie charts to plot data. Pupils show good use of technical words in their correct context. The extensive fieldwork undertaken shows pupils, including those with special educational needs, understand how features of the coastline are formed. Higher attaining pupils take their understanding further, comparing, for example, the different ways of protecting beaches against storms, the effectiveness of varying defences and their cost assessing best value for money. Concepts and the linking of physical, human and economic geography are developing well for the majority of pupils in Year 10. Pupils in Year 11 show good standards in their population work, and high attaining pupils very successfully put forward reasons for birth and death rate changes. The work of Year 11 pupils shows good achievement in relation to the pupils' prior attainment. Course work demonstrates that pupils used a range of methods; this is a consequence of skills and later concepts being developed throughout both key stages. Many pupils make good use of computers to assist with word processing, graphs, charts, scanning of photographs and maps; this greatly enhances presentation of work. A feature is the annotation of work, a skill well embedded in Key Stage 3. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are well-integrated into lessons and receive good support by teachers, classroom assistants and their peers.
144. The quality of teaching and learning is good at both key stages. Overall, teachers show very good knowledge of geography; they apply their knowledge well in order to promote the pupils' learning. This is very well demonstrated in a Year 10 lesson on coastal erosion where features are well linked to previous fieldwork. Planning of work is good; this assists progression and continuity within the department. Learning is encouraged by the teachers' high expectations of both pupils' work and behaviour. There are good examples of

probing and challenging questions in order to stimulate investigation, as seen during a Year 13 lesson on coastlines and a Year 7 lesson on settlements; pupils respond well and give responses of high quality, which show good understanding. At times, teaching methods do not take into consideration how different pupils learn. Teaching and learning styles need to be adapted in order to suit all pupils. Greater involvement in their learning will further enhance standards. Teachers make good use of a range of resources to enhance their teaching, such as the use of high quality video extracts, which both consolidate and extend learning. Teachers are sufficiently flexible in their teaching to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs; the support that teachers give is good. Although there are a very small number of occasions where pupils misbehave, teachers' high expectations of pupils' behaviour quickly overcome such problems. Overall, attitudes and relationships are good; this further promotes pupils' learning.

145. The head of department shows very good leadership with a very clear vision and management; he is successfully developing all aspects of geography. There is a good curriculum, which has breadth, balance and relevance. Relevance is well demonstrated by the very good fieldwork programme, which successfully underpins the whole geography curriculum. Planning of the curriculum, including schemes of work, makes for consistency in the teaching and learning; planning is a strength. The use of computers is well planned. Computers are successfully used in different curriculum topics. For example, in Year 8 lessons computers are used in conjunction with fieldwork related to local traffic. Monitoring, assessment and moderation of pupils' work are good and successfully inform the planning of the curriculum. Good marking is mainly associated with assignments and special pieces of work. Exercise books are regularly marked; however, this is less informative and, therefore, less useful to pupils as an aid to improving their work.
146. The department has made good progress since the last inspection; the issues of the last report have been successfully addressed. There has been steady and sustained improvement in examination results. The geography teachers work closely as a team under the direction of the head of department. They are very supportive to one another; they are all very enthusiastic and committed to the raising of standards still further.

## **HISTORY**

147. Overall, the quality of provision is very good

### **Strengths**

- Most pupils successfully use skills that are important in studying history.
- Teaching is very good; close teamwork complements good planning of lessons and a wide range of strategies is used to suit the varying needs of pupils.
- Pupils respond positively to teachers' expectations of good behaviour; almost all are working hard towards achieving their potential.

- The subject is very well led; schemes of work are good and include field and project work.
- Assessment information is used to track the progress of each pupil and to identify underachievement; there is good use of the National Curriculum levels to assist teachers and pupils in planning how to improve standards further.

#### Areas for improvement

- The use of computers to aid learning in pupils' work is not yet extensive.
- Further development of numeracy skills will help the analysis of historical data
- More development of good techniques of classroom organisation in mixed ability classes will improve teaching still further.

148. Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 have been poor, with GCSE examination results in 2000 and in 2001 very much below national averages. Very few pupils obtained high grades, and a high proportion obtained very low grades; pupils did significantly less well in history compared with the other subjects they took. However, by now standards of attainment in current work have improved markedly.

149. In work seen, standards are above average by Year 9. Attainment in Years 7 and 8 is often well above average. In view of the varied standards of attainment on entry, this is particularly noteworthy and represents very good achievement. Pupils use the vocabulary and chronologies of history well and often articulate clearly the range of beliefs, attitudes and ideas of the past. The more able can link these clearly to present day situations. In Year 9, the majority can use analytical terms, for example, those related to the 18<sup>th</sup> century growth of population, economy and society. Lower attainers, including those with special educational needs, have more difficulty with extended writing and analytical terms, but still attain standards in line with their current potential. Overall, teachers place good emphasis on reading skills and on the use of the technical words used in history; this has a beneficial effect on their literacy skills and their achievement in the subject. Numeracy skills are at least adequate for dealing with the simple calculations of percentage and graphical illustrations required. However, whilst there is discriminating use of some internet sources that helps learning, the use of computers to produce spreadsheets and graphical illustration is not widespread and little work is completed by word processor.

150. In the work seen in Years 10 and 11, standards are above average and sometimes well above average. For most, this is good or very good achievement, but a small number of pupils are underachieving. The majority produces notes, class work and homework to a high standard. They identify information sources and use them carefully and comparatively to arrive at relevant historical conclusions. The work of lower attainers and those with special educational needs generally meets the realistic targets set.

151. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally good. In all years there is a good working atmosphere characterised by application and enthusiasm. Pupils are encouraged to ask questions and feel involved in their work; as a result learning is good and sometimes very good. On a few occasions, pupils may offer inappropriate comment or be distracted; in these situations teachers skilfully re-engage their attention.
152. Teaching is very good and sometimes excellent throughout Years 7 to 11. The following examples illustrate how high quality teaching leads to high quality learning. A Year 7 lesson on 'Why was the year 1066 a year of crisis?' provided a stimulating and challenging opportunity for extended question and answer, during which pupils of all levels of attainment contributed. A linked homework task was clearly explained in relation to National Curriculum levels; as a result, pupils knew at which level they were working and how to improve. Very good classroom management in a Year 9 class included extensive involvement of pupils in a discussion of the links between social and economic processes related to the growth of business. There were also stimulating cross-curricular references to scientific manufacturing processes which led to pupils deepening and developing their understanding. Through lively and enthusiastic teaching, a consistently high level of challenge is offered to pupils of all abilities. This results in pupils offering well-structured verbal contributions, which use and extend the descriptive and analytical terminology of history. An outstanding feature of Year 11 lessons containing pupils of all abilities is the way that the needs of all groups of pupils are successfully catered for; this allows pupils of all abilities to achieve very well. In particular, there is excellent use of a learning support assistant to help pupils to work through common tasks, with the assistant paying careful attention to developing the skills of clear written and verbal presentation. There are planned opportunities for pupils to take part in structured visits to places of local historical interest. A well organised Year 10 visit to Delabole slate quarry was devised so as to assist pupils in comparing past with present and in analysing processes of economic growth and decline.
153. Learning resources produced by the teachers have a positive effect on learning. Pupils are pleased to use these and take pride in their homework, which is regularly marked in consistent manner by all teachers. The subject is very well led. Good teamwork by committed teachers includes the regular use of assessment data to set high and achievable targets for individual pupils. The strong leadership and excellent teamwork has resulted in a remarkable improvement over a very short period, and there is potential for further development.

#### **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

154. Overall, quality of provision is satisfactory

Strengths
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- Teaching is good in most lessons, with a good range of activities suitable to pupils' needs.
- Most pupils achieve well in most lessons and over time, with satisfactory behaviour and hard work because they are interested in their work.
- The computer to pupil ratio is slightly better than the average, providing good potential for the cross-curricular use of the technology.
- Well-planned timetabled lessons for all pupils in Years 7 and 9, with good management by the subject co-ordinator, ensures that pupils get their proper entitlement for access to computers.
- Good technical support ensures that equipment functions effectively in all areas.

Areas for improvement.

- In Years 10 and 11, teaching in a very small minority of timetabled ICT lessons is unsatisfactory because the unsuitable work programme does not interest and motivate them.
- In Years 10 and 11, insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to use computers in support of their learning in too many subjects.
- The assessment of pupils' ICT capability across all subjects of the curriculum in both key stages is insufficiently rigorous and comprehensive, and does not contribute to the overall levels of attainment achieved by pupils at the end of Year 9 or Year 11.
- Pupils' experiences in control technology, data logging and measurement are insufficient.

155. In the timetabled information and communications technology (ICT) lessons, the overall standards attained are broadly similar to the national average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. This represents good achievement overall given these pupils' below average attainment on entry. No externally accredited courses have been offered over the past three years; therefore it isn't possible to make any national GCSE comparisons.

156. In work seen by Year 9, attainment is broadly average and shows good improvement from work in Year 7. Most pupils are, therefore, achieving well. Pupils are able to use computers with growing confidence and competence. Higher and average attainers show good word processing skills and can competently import graphics and images into their text to add impact to their presentations. Their projects illustrate that they can decide on the most relevant programmes and know about commercial applications of ICT as, for example, when organising a school disco. In a minority of subjects, pupils are increasingly using the Internet to research their projects and show good skills in finding suitable sources of information to complete their tasks; this was seen in a Year 9 science lesson dealing with 'alcohol'. Lower attainers, including those with special educational needs, have satisfactory skills and produce work of an appropriate standard for their capability. Almost all pupils have good practical skills in using the keyboard and the mouse, and negotiate menus and functions readily and successfully.

157. Standards for the great majority of pupils studying the GCSE examination course are broadly similar to the average expectation; this represents good achievement over time. Some boys and girls are achieving at the highest levels. Most of these pupils are developing their skills in the use of a good range of computer programmes, and are competent in using word processing, spreadsheets and desktop publishing software. Standards for the remainder of pupils who do not take an accredited course are very variable and below average. Whilst a minority of subjects provide good opportunities for pupils to use computers to help their learning, this is not as comprehensive as it could be, considering the very good provision of ICT resources now available.
158. Most pupils have a good attitude to learning, and their behaviour is good in most lessons. However, in all years, very small numbers of pupils have a poor attitude to learning and show poor behaviour, despite the teachers' best efforts to encourage and support them with their tasks. Inattentiveness, persistent chatter, a lethargic attitude to work, a very slow response to teacher's intervention and, sometimes, a disregard for the teacher's requirements affect learning; overall standards and achievement are adversely affected for these pupils.
159. The good achievement by the end of Year 9 is attributable to the quality of teaching, which is never less than satisfactory and which is good in most lessons. Teachers' planning is thorough, and the tasks set are topical and interesting and well related to pupil's interests. Worksheets that are produced to guide pupils in their work support the higher and most of the average attainers well, but are not sufficiently modified to meet the needs of lower attainers and those with special educational needs. Good oral assessment techniques provide pupils with a clear direction for their work and in identifying areas for improvement. In the best lessons, the control and management of pupils are good with good individual support and encouragement provided when and where necessary. Good humour prevails in these lessons, creating a positive atmosphere for learning; pupils' strengths and weaknesses are generally well known by the teachers, who are sensitive to individual needs. As a result, learning is good in these lessons. In the least effective lessons where teaching is less than satisfactory, the tasks chosen are not well matched to pupils' interests and ability. The pace of work is slow and pupils are not kept on task with sufficient rigour. In these circumstances, pupils' learning is unsatisfactory. In some lessons, over large teaching groups, where the teacher is unable to provide sufficient individual support for pupils at their computers, and where some pupils share computers and others do not, there are unequal opportunities in the use of computers; this means that the learning of some pupils is reduced. In timetabled ICT lessons, the planned work covers the requirements of the National Curriculum; however, control technology and data logging and measurement are of a very basic nature and generally very much underdeveloped, adversely affecting learning in these areas. The new ICT resources should now enable these particular elements to be properly provided. The technician provides an invaluable contribution to pupils' learning by helping individuals and ensuring the efficient operation of the equipment.

160. ICT is timetabled in Key Stage 3 with a generous amount of curricular time provided. This has resulted in improved standards. However, there is an uneven level of access to pupils' full entitlement to ICT at Key Stage 4. Pupils' use of ICT is very much dependent upon the interest, expertise, experience and enthusiasm of subject teachers. The newly appointed curriculum co-ordinator provides clear educational direction for the subject and has recognised the shortfalls identified above. Following a recent audit and mapping of the curricular provision, he is in the process of developing a more consistent and co-ordinated provision for all pupils across all subjects, together with a new system for a more rigorous monitoring of practice and the standards achieved. This augers well for the future.
161. Since the last inspection standards have improved. The quality and range of ICT resources and the accommodation have been greatly improved through the provision of state of the art equipment linked to the Internet in four ICT suites. An accredited ICT course has been introduced at Key Stage 4. However there has been insufficient improvement in cross-curricular provision and in the assessment of standards across the curriculum, and these are areas for further development.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

162. The quality of provision is satisfactory

### **Strengths**

- The subjects are well led
- There are good systems in place to support teaching and learning
- New assessment systems give pupils a good understanding of their attainments
- The availability of German as a second language caters for higher attainers and results are well above national.

### **Areas for improvement**

- More opportunities are needed for pupils to speak the foreign languages
- The use of a wider range of strategies in teaching will extend learning opportunities
- Schemes of work need further development to make them useful working documents for teachers' planning

163. GCSE results in French in 2000 are in line with national averages. Girls are closer to the national average than boys. Both boys and girls do well in French compared with their other subjects. There is no consistent trend in French results. Results in German have shown a marked upward trend over recent years. In 2000, they are very well above the national average and show higher attaining pupils getting maximum benefit from the study of a second language. National Curriculum teacher assessments at end of Year 9 show pupils to be broadly at national average standards.

164. By the end of Year 9, standards of work in French meet national expectations. The listening skills of all pupils benefit from the teachers' sustained use of the foreign language. Speaking skills are less well developed and there are few instinctive responses. Higher attaining pupils respond well to the expectations of teachers; they achieve well to reach above average standards. They are confident in speaking but pronunciation is often inaccurate. Written work is accurate and pupils can write short passages of self-description. Two groups of pupils are offered one period a week of German as an additional language. The work of these groups accelerates to a standard above expectations from a single year of limited study, again showing good achievement. Pupils with special educational needs who are starting French in Year 7 keep pace with the group where support assistants are present. Some of these pupils are regularly withdrawn from one of their French lessons and the loss of continuity limits their achievements. In Years 8 and 9, pupils with special educational needs have a single lesson of French to a separate programme. This sustains their interest in language learning but is an inadequate base for further study because their standards are low.
165. By Year 11, overall standards are average but there are marked differences between different groups of pupils. Higher attaining pupils in both languages are above average in speaking and writing. There are good examples of lengthier writing and redrafting. These pupils can write about past events such as holidays and argue the relative merits of small shops and superstores. In other groups standards for many pupils are below expectations with limited achievement. Pupils lack confidence in speaking even in the simplest situations. Written work is often limited to simple sentences. Unguided writing shows weaknesses in basic grammar. Achievement for many of these pupils is limited by poor learning skills and low levels of participation in classwork. The attitudes and behaviour of a few pupils create a bad learning environment for the other pupils in their groups, limiting learning and achievement.
166. Teaching overall is satisfactory; it sometimes good or very good. Teaching is good at Key Stage 3, and is better there than at Key Stage 4. All teachers have very good personal language skills. The availability of native speakers is a valuable aid that leads to good learning; they are able to check that the language used is up-to-date and authentic. In one Year 10 lesson, a native French speaker told the groups that he had never heard a French person use a word that frequently appears in their textbook. Teaching is largely in the foreign language so that pupils are used to the speed and intonation. They develop good listening skills and can pick out key information when listening to tape recordings by native speakers. Preparation is good, and teaching leads to better learning when the pupils are actively engaged; for example, computers are used effectively to reinforce their learning. In some lessons, the overhead projector is used as a games board where words and pictures are partly covered and pupils have to guess and remember the items; this interesting approach motivates all groups of pupils, and they learn well as a result. In another lesson, the routine task of learning furniture vocabulary was

made more interesting by asking the pupils to construct silly sentences, for example by saying that the bath is under the table in the garden. In these lessons pupils enjoy their learning, and, consequently, make good progress. Teachers use paired work to practise speaking but generally they do not create enough opportunities for pupils to speak nor do they insist enough on accurate pronunciation. As a result pupils do not speak the foreign language with confidence and do not use the language in everyday classroom situations. Higher attaining pupils show a very positive response to the teaching and their attitudes contribute to the good pace of their own learning. In some groups the teachers cannot meet their teaching targets because of the time required to manage the unhelpful behaviour of a few pupils; in these cases, the learning of all pupils is less than it should be.

167. The subjects are well led. Systems are being put into place which will enable the team of teachers to use a co-ordinated approach to their work; as a result, there should be greater consistencies and higher overall standards in the pupils' work. Particular strengths are the assessments being developed so that pupils can understand and be challenged by the levels of the National Curriculum. These are displayed in classrooms with examples of work to illustrate what each level means. All pupils have their own file with marks recorded and containing pieces of work that meet the targets. All these features of good management are encouraging pupils to have high expectations to reach their full potential. Draft schemes of work note opportunities for the use of computers, and the use of a computer room is now featured on the timetable with corresponding improvements to pupils' achievements. A good start has been made in the monitoring of aspects of teaching. This needs to be more rigorous in identifying strengths and weaknesses and on a formal basis to meet the aims of raising standards. The department is receptive to ideas and advice and shows the commitment and capacity to improve the teaching and learning of modern languages.

## **MUSIC**

168. The quality of provision is satisfactory

### **Strengths**

- Pupils enjoy making music and work together in a co-operative spirit
- Teaching very successfully involves and motivates most pupils, using a variety of methods to help them develop their musical experiences
- Pupils show an active interest in the extra opportunities offered by both the department and the community at large.

### **Areas for improvement**

- In some lessons, there is too much disruptive chatter in individual work in class which reduces learning
- Few girls take GCSE courses in music
- Assessment and monitoring arrangements are not yet consistent

169. GSCE results for music in 2000, based on a group size a little lower than necessary for reliable statistical comparison, were above the national average. The standards reached at the end of Year 9 are broadly in line with the national average. There are no post-16 courses in music. The standards of work seen during the inspection were in line with the national average for Years 7 to 11. Since the last inspection, there is no clear trend in standards in music at GCSE. The range from above average to well below average is not entirely reliable, again due to variable group sizes each year and different levels of prior attainment. In 2000 pupils generally did better in GCSE music than in their other subjects, but in 2001 they did less well. There is no significant difference between the standards reached by boys and girls, although only very limited data were available for analysis.
170. By Year 9, standards in work seen during the inspection are average. This represents good achievement, given that many pupils enter the school at below average attainment in music. In Years 10 and 11, standards are average with pupils achieving satisfactorily. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated and their achievements are also satisfactory. In Years 7 to 9, pupils sing well, enjoying both unison and part-singing. They perform responsibly and with correct techniques on classroom percussion. They work well in practical work, whether as a whole class or in groups. Alongside some good individual project work, other individual practical work is lacking in focus and direction. Pupils at all levels are successful at developing musical ideas, but less so in extending them. For example, Year 9 pupils produced some very good rhythms based on the Masmoodi Tal, but were hesitant in repeating the cycles they had created. In Year 10 one pupil showed clear ability in building a musical structure by use of sequencing software, but in Years 7 to 9 only the schemes of work gave any indication of use of computers in music. Pupils' work shows a satisfactory level of literacy awareness, using musical vocabulary in class well. In work in Year 7 to develop a feel for 3- and 4- time, pupils of all ability levels responded well with good learning taking place. Other aspects touching on numeracy saw pupils mastering the uneven accents in the Masmoodi Tal project already mentioned.
171. In Years 7 to 9 the overall quality of teaching is good, although a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Pupils show interest and responsibility, especially in class and group work, because the teaching is methodically thought through and builds confidence. Plenty of movement and rote work, whether using voices or instruments, further ensures keen participation and the development of the pupils' personal musical experiences. Where learning and concentration are impaired on occasions by high levels of chatter, this is due to planning which does not give the pupils sufficient challenges. For example, in a Year 8 lesson based on Holst's 'The Planets', pupils were hardly able to hear the music for talk, while exercises were also being demanded of them. These could have been constructively set for homework to enable more focused work in class. Except for project work, homework tasks are informal and erratic. High attainers are not stretched sufficiently and, although teaching is alert to them, there is no formal

mechanism for recognising the gifted and talented pupils. In the GCSE course, teaching is satisfactory; to improve pupils' learning, it needs to be more structured to enable pupils to be more focused in their integrated coursework. The teaching observed was particularly impressive from the perspective of cultural, social and even moral education. In the Year 9 Indian music project, the introduction, showing a Sari and a model of an Indian dancer, aroused the curiosity and interest of the whole class. In Year 7, the whole class music making placed each pupil in a position where they recognised that their own individual contribution was essential to the success of the piece. Because of this involvement, pupils' attitudes in class are good and the learning of most is good, although behaviour is satisfactory overall. Over 50 pupils take lessons in stringed instruments, brass, woodwind, guitar, percussion and singing. These lessons are given by members of the Cornwall Music Service. They are well organised, with good pupil attendance and efficient mechanisms for causing minimum disruption of other lessons. In guitar lessons observed, the teaching was very purposeful employing a variety of methods to move individual or group learning forward. The high level of knowledge and understanding in teaching of the instrument, its repertoire and its place in society was highly motivating for all the pupils and led to excellent pupil-teacher relations and good learning.

172. The music curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is very inclusive. Not only does it offer good opportunities to pupils of all levels of attainment, but it also successfully encourages pupils to take an interest in the music of non-Anglo-European cultures. Assessment is currently haphazard with at least three different grading systems in use. The department is working at introducing a National Curriculum related system for assessment, monitoring and reporting to assist pupils to take better account of their learning. When these developments are fully in place, they should be a very positive help in raising pupils' expectations of what they need to do to raise their standards further. Extra curricular activities are also available, including a singing group and GCSE music support classes. An initiative to stage a musical in 2002 is already underway. In 2001 two adults attended the GCSE course and, in another initiative linking school and community, several pupils of the school sing in the head of music's choir outside school. All these very positive aspects of the subject's provision contribute to raising standards. Planning for the new GCSE specifications requires a clearer focus to maximise learning opportunities, especially with regard to using resources efficiently. In this respect, although generally adequately resourced, pupils would benefit from up-to-date keyboards and more computers, not only to access information, but also to facilitate individual composition work, and, thus, raise standards. Music in the school is well led and efficient, making good use of the limited accommodation and resources. The imminent move to new purpose-built accommodation adjacent to dance and drama raises an organisational issue for the school of whether music should be linked with creative arts rather than design and technology. Present arrangements may be a factor in the current imbalance, very evident in the current Year 10, that many more boys than girls opt for GCSE in music, contrary to national trends.

173. Overall, the subject has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection, maintaining and developing many positive features, but not fully addressing those areas identified for improvement: a tendency for pupils to chatter too much and the need for assessment to be more closely matched to National Curriculum requirements.

#### PHYSICAL EDUCATION

174. The quality of provision is satisfactory.

##### Strengths

- Teachers show good knowledge of the subject; they are enthusiastic and want pupils to be successful.
- Planning and the new assessment systems are good.
- There are strong links with the community and the sports centre.
- The North East Cornwall schools sports co-ordinator pilot scheme enables strong primary and secondary school links, which are just starting to impact favourably on standards in Year 7.
- Levels of participation and standards in extra curricular activities are good.

##### Areas for improvement

- The curriculum needs to be reviewed in order to include more of the aesthetic areas of the subject; at present the programme is games dominated.
- Alternative courses need to be introduced, in addition to GCSE, for pupils in Years 10 and 11 in order to meet the needs of all pupils.

175. Both the 2000 and 2001 teachers' assessments of the pupils' attainments show standards are broadly in line with national averages. Evidence gathered during the inspection confirms that the standards pupils attain by the end of Year 9 are at the level expected for pupils of the same age nationally. The GCSE course is new for pupils in Years 10 and 11; as yet, there are no GCSE results for this key stage. Evidence from the inspection shows that standards of pupils' attainment in Year 10 are broadly in line with national expectations. However, standards in lessons seen in Year 11 are below average; these are a consequence of some pupils' unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour. Since the last inspection dance is no longer studied at GCSE level. No significant difference was observed between the performance of boys and girls.
176. The average standards reached in Key Stage 3 represent good achievements by most pupils compared with their standards on entry. By the end of Year 9, most pupils, including those with special educational needs, show competence in gymnastics, and a range of games. In games, pupils apply the rules fairly and accept decisions gracefully. Year 7 pupils take partial responsibility for their own warm up; they know some of the reasons for warming up the body prior to taking part in physical activities, and, in rugby many know the basic safety points for tackling an opponent. Year 8 pupils in gymnastics can make short sequences involving simple basic jumps; they handle both fixed and portable gymnastic apparatus efficiently and safely. However, the quality of movements is not always secure. By Year 9, pupils know that the reasons for



warm up are to maximise performance and to reduce the effect of injury. In basketball, high attaining pupils make effective use of different sorts of passes within a game and move well off the ball using depth successfully. The use of width is as yet underdeveloped, but pupils with learning difficulties and low attaining pupils contribute well to the passing aspects of the game. Standards are enhanced through pupils' good involvement in extra curricular clubs and inter school matches and competitions. Attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory and these aspects help learning. All pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is a second language, are fully integrated into lessons.

177. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards attained by pupils by Year 11 are below the level expected of the same age nationally. Skill levels vary; for example, in basketball, high attaining pupils are able to keep their heads up to see team members and opponents and, as a consequence, maximise the use of width and depth within a game. Most pupils successfully show good effective use of the hand and fingers when dribbling the ball, but low attaining pupils and some pupils with learning difficulties find dribbling with the ball on one side of the body difficult. Pupils show a good understanding of the benefit of warming up to improve performance and to minimise injury. At times, pupils' attitudes are unsatisfactory and considerably constrain attainment and progress. Year 11 pupils opting to follow a GCSE course show a very basic understanding of factors contributing to fitness, and many of the group reach a satisfactory level of fitness. Pupils use stop watches to time their peers; however, techniques are very inaccurate. Learning in lessons, achievement over time and attainment are well hindered by the unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of some pupils; this accounts for the below average level of attainment overall. Teachers work very hard with pupils in this key stage; because, overall, their teaching is good, pupils usually make satisfactory progress. However, in a minority of lessons, this is not the case with only limited learning taking place. The GCSE course is not suitable for many pupils, who would benefit more by taking other certificated or school based courses, which are more appropriate to their needs. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are well-integrated into lessons and receive good support by teachers, though for reasons already stated, they make only satisfactory progress.
178. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages; however, there is a minority of lessons where teaching has some shortcomings, largely related to the management of pupils. These shortcomings were particularly evident in a Year 9 basketball lesson and a Year 11 GCSE theory lesson. Overall, teachers have high expectations of both effort and behaviour of pupils and, as a consequence, they work hard in a range of activities and learn well in some lessons. Teachers constantly strive for high standards of behaviour and positive attitudes. This was well demonstrated in a Year 10 hockey lesson where the teacher had to return to teaching basic hockey skills as the pupils were unable to effectively work in a mini game with their peers, a consequence of very immature behaviour and unsatisfactory attitudes. Support systems to help teachers with badly behaved pupils are not effective.

Overall, teachers show good knowledge and understanding of physical education. They apply this knowledge successfully in their teaching; for example, they teach Year 10 pupils to use the reverse stick in hockey, and Year 7 pupils learn how to maul safely when playing rugby. This good knowledge has a positive impact upon pupils' learning. Good questioning by teachers reinforces the pupils' knowledge and understanding. For instance, during a Year 10 basketball lesson, the teacher probed and challenged the pupils' knowledge of attacking and defensive dribbling. Planning and organisation are good; they ensure progression and continuity from year to year. Over a period of time all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make steady progress in both key stages. This is a consequence of good relationships, good subject knowledge, good planning and good evaluation of pupils' work. Teachers make good use of information from individual educational plans in order to adapt their teaching strategies to meet individual pupil's needs.

179. The leadership of the department is satisfactory. The head of the department gives clear educational direction for the subject; the department is well organised and managed. The North East Cornwall schools' sports co-ordinators pilot scheme is successfully used to enhance staffing for the school, other local secondary and primary schools. It is too early to judge the impact of the scheme on standards within physical education. However, there are signs that it is starting to impact favourably on standards in Year 7, for example in rugby. A community sports hall and swimming pool, school gymnasium, hard area, and adjacent school fields constitute good accommodation. These features allow for a varied programme of activities. Overall, the curriculum is satisfactory, though it is games orientated. However, the aesthetic aspects are less well developed, which includes the development of the girls' physical education programme. The curriculum embraces the changes made by the recent curriculum 2000 update; assessment has been successfully developed. Literacy and numeracy support the teaching; for example, pupils use technical words appropriately like double dribble, travelling and mauling. In fitness work they use the names of muscles and stopwatches to time shuttle runs. The department offers a good and varied range of seasonal extra-curricular activities for all pupils which both supports and extends the curriculum.
180. Satisfactory improvements have been made since the last inspection. The majority of issues raised have been addressed. The standards of teaching and learning have improved. There has been improvement in assessment procedures. Teachers work hard and effectively as a team and are committed to the raising of standards in physical education.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

181. The quality of provision is good in Years 7 to 9, but is unsatisfactory overall in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form.

Strengths
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- The quality of teaching and learning is good and often very good.
- All pupils in Years 7 to 9 receive a full programme of religious education in line with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.
- The subject has improved considerably since the last inspection and is continuing to develop well.
- It is attracting good numbers of students for examination courses.

#### Areas for improvement

- A significant proportion of students cease to have any experience of religious education beyond the end of Year 9.

182. Results in the short course GCSE, which increasing numbers of students opt to pursue in Years 10 and 11, were well above the national average in 2000 for the proportion of students gaining grades A\*-C. A smaller group of students achieved results in the most recent examination that were broadly in line with the average of the previous year. A first small group of students took the full GCSE course in 2001, and also achieved standards in line with the expected national average for the higher grades. These results are very commendable, showing the motivation and interest of the students and the commitment of their teacher, since they were achieved with a considerably smaller allocation of time than would be the case in almost all other schools. In the case of the full GCSE, considerable teaching took place beyond the timetable in the pupils' own time. Nevertheless, some of these students have now embarked on an AS level course in religious studies in the sixth form, again taught in their own time. There was no significant difference between boys and girls either in the results or the numbers opting for the subject.

183. These results are indicative of overall standards in the subject. Standards by the end of Year 11 are at least in line with those expected by the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils in that year currently do particularly well in their thoughtful, personal response to the ideas and beliefs they encounter, as when a group wrestled with the arguments for and against the existence of God. They also acquire detailed knowledge of a range of practices and beliefs of religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism, relating these well to their own experience. In this, they are able to draw on the knowledge they have acquired in their earlier years in the school, where, from their earliest days, they are encouraged to develop a good awareness of religious belief, to understand why people believe and to explore their own ideas. Standards by the end of Key Stage 3 are generally above the level expected by the locally agreed syllabus. The pupils show interest in and respect for the ideas, beliefs and practices they are encountering, gaining quite detailed knowledge of a range of religious traditions. They show their understanding in their often sensitive response in discussion and in the quality of their written work, such as that produced by Year 9 pupils who wrote their own newspaper accounts of the Holocaust, many of them produced to a high standard using a good range of computer skills.

184. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good and often very good in Key Stage 3, and is very good in Key Stage 4. The two teachers each bring

particular strengths to their work, and many lessons achieve a very high level of interaction between teacher and pupils. The teachers have very good relationships with their groups, which is a strong feature of the department. They show very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and have high expectations of their pupils in terms of both behaviour and what they can achieve. They are enthusiastic about and have a lively approach to their teaching. They clearly value the contributions of all pupils, creating an atmosphere of mutual respect. The best teaching draws on a breadth of subject knowledge, interests and humour that the pupils find stimulating and exciting. They respond very well to this, with most showing good and often very good motivation and interest. All this has a very positive impact on learning. Most pupils are keen to learn, and they enjoy the wide range of learning opportunities presented, as when Year 9 pupils engaged in a lively approach to their study of episodes in the life of Martin Luther King through their own dramatic scripts. Pupils of all attainment levels, including higher attainers and those with special educational needs, make good progress and learn well because of the carefully structured approach to learning in all lessons, and because of the use of resources and activities that provide appropriate challenge to the range of abilities. Since many pupils came into the school with only limited background knowledge, they are achieving well. Homework is used well in all years to extend and reinforce the pupils' learning through a range of activities, which also encourage the pupils to become more independent in their learning. All work is marked carefully, and useful arrangements for assessment and the recording of pupils' progress are being put in place.

185. The subject makes an important contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils, providing many opportunities for reflection, the careful consideration of moral and social issues, and the development of a good understanding of a wide range of cultures and beliefs. It also contributes to the pupils' development of skills in literacy through, for instance, an emphasis on the development of appropriate language and the provision of many opportunities for different forms of writing. It makes a useful contribution to the development of skills in using computers whenever possible.
186. Since the previous inspection, the subject has continued to develop well, particularly in terms of its standing with the pupils and the way this has generated examination groups. The subject is very well led by the teacher responsible for it within the Humanities department. Appropriate time is allocated in Key Stage 3 to meet the requirements of the agreed syllabus, but the time allocated to the subject in Years 10 and 11 is not in line with recommendations, placing extra demands on the department to achieve what it does. The arrangements for parents to opt their children out of the subject at this stage are contrary to statutory requirements and the normal pattern of provision in most schools. Since there is no general provision for religious education in the sixth form, also contrary to statutory requirements, this means that in many years a significant proportion of students have no contact with this aspect of education beyond the end of Year 9.

## BUSINESS

187. Overall, the quality of provision is satisfactory

### Strengths

- The use in lessons of the experience in the world of work of pupils' parents, relatives and friends is a valuable aid to pupils' learning.
- Most pupils make good use of the terminology of business.
- There is good teaching of information and communication technology in the course
- Good use is made of connections with the world of work
- The use of industry standard software is good and particularly valuable for a business course.

### Areas for improvement

- Some portfolios of pupils are poorly constructed with heavy dependence on materials produced by teachers.
- Standards of oral and written work of some pupils are low; a small minority do not actively contribute in lessons and are achieving very little.
- Some teaching does not engage the attention of pupils and failure to control the boisterous behaviour of a few adversely affects the learning of others
- For many essential activities in GNVQ courses, class sizes are too large.

188. Part one of GNVQ Business is taught in Years 10 and 11. The first pupils to complete the course will do so at the end of this academic year, so there is no published data to compare with national averages. Although there are wide variations in the standards of work seen, attainment in years 10 and 11 is broadly in line with expectations at this stage of the course. Higher attainers successfully apply business concepts and theories to case studies of real organisations and are able to evaluate information from a variety of sources. However, a substantial minority in Year 11 show no substantial improvement since their Year 10 work in their ability to analyse business processes; their achievements are, therefore, unsatisfactory. Portfolio work and student files vary in quality. The best show good skills of layout and organisation and good note-taking skills. However, some are poorly laid out and contain little material other than materials provided by the teacher and dictated notes. Whilst virtually all have at least an acceptable command of the terminology of business, a few remain unable to communicate this effectively in writing. The numeracy skills of most are sufficient to understand graphic illustration and information contained in spreadsheets. Information and communication technology skills are generally good and these skills help the learning process as well as the presentation of work; most students word-process their work.

189. Whilst most pupils are well behaved, the attitude and behaviour of a minority is at times inattentive and sometimes disruptive. In one Year 11 class, learning was unsatisfactory because levels of concentration were impaired by boisterous behaviour.

190. Teaching in Year 10 classes has some unsatisfactory elements. These weaknesses, including low expectations of work and behaviour and low levels of challenge, limit the learning and achievements of most pupils. In one lesson, pupils were unable at times to hear the contribution of others. The teacher gave equal praise to all comments, irrespective of their value or correctness. The very large size (28 pupils) of the class was inappropriate to the nature of the tasks set. During question and answer sessions on types of business organisation in a Year 11 class, the teacher involved no more than half the class and individuals who exhibited lack of attention were not challenged. In a Year 10 ICT business class the teaching was very good. The teacher acted as a good role model, giving a clear specification of the task using a projector; as a result, pupils went on to learn successfully, attaining good standards of work on the layout of a business letter, including the creation of headers and footers.
191. Overall planning is satisfactory and meets the requirements of the validating body. However, there is potential for further use of assessment data for individual target setting

## PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, five subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2000. Very great care is needed when interpreting these results as very small numbers of students are involved.

### *GCE A level*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		Scho ol	Engla nd	Scho ol	Engla nd	Scho ol	Engla nd
Mathematics	3	100	9 0	0	4 5	6. 0	6. 0
Chemistry	3	100	9 0	3 3	4 2	6. 7	5. 9
English	2	100	9 6	1 0 0	3 6	9. 0	5. 9
German	1	100	9 3	0	4 1	4. 0	5. 9

### *GNVQ qualifications*

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		Scho ol	Engla nd	Scho ol	Engla nd	Scho ol	Engla nd
Advanced Business	5	6 0	8 6	2 0	4 1	2 0	2 6

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

192. Mathematics and chemistry were inspected in detail. Biology and physics are also taught at AS and A-level.

## MATHEMATICS

193. Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is good.

### Strengths

- Overall standards at AS and A-level are above average
- A good proportion of pupils retaking GCSE obtain a higher level pass
- Teaching is consistently very good
- Management and organisation of the course are very good
- The students' achievements on all courses provided in mathematics are good

### Areas for improvement

- There are no significant areas for improvement.

194. Attainment in the A-level examination has been above average in most recent years, though, in 2000, results were average. The 2001 results were above the 2000 national results. In the first of the new AS level modules assessed during the year 2000 to 2001, standards were also above average. Twelve pupils with grades from D to G at GCSE in the 2000 examinations retook the examination in 2001; seven of them obtained grades A\*-C, which is above the national average.

195. Standards in work seen in AS and A-level courses are generally above average. The pupils follow a modular course; this involves units that include pure mathematics, discrete mathematics, mechanics, and statistics. During the inspection, work was seen in all these areas. Presentation is good, and students take care with their work, and use precise and appropriate processes as taught to them, helping them to raise their standards of attainment. Their work is generally accurate and of a high standard. In pure mathematics in Year 12, students were seen to be successfully developing their familiarity with the algebra of surds, and in the other module studied this term were learning techniques to solve minimum connection problems. In Year 13, the A-level class was also successfully learning the derivation of the formula for summing arithmetic sequences, and how to apply it. The students' progress over the period of the course is good, influenced both by very good teaching, and by their own conscientious attitude, and consistent good habits in how they organise and present their results. Standards seen in the retake class are in line with expectations given the results at GCSE, and the pupils benefit from good teaching, which helps them to build on existing knowledge, and to sort out gaps and areas where they have up to now not understood the basic principles.

196. The teaching is consistently very good. The teachers are all very good mathematicians. Not only do they present the concepts very clearly so that the pupils can understand them easily, but they also provide that extra background to the mathematics that puts it in a context and attempts to bring it alive. Such teaching interests and stimulates the students and greatly encourages their learning. Teachers also provide support to help the pupils to organise their work effectively and to develop good working practices - one



teacher provides a particularly useful technique for her pupils in the form of a clever way to keep notes of all the important facts and processes. All these good teaching practices mean that the students learn very well.

197. All the students following the AS and A-level courses are conscientious and have a good attitude to learning. Although they are sometimes diffident about contributing actively to the lesson, they ensure that they record all necessary information, and mostly get their work done on time. Those on the retake course have a good commitment to improving their grade, although they sometimes get discouraged when they meet a particular part of the programme that they find difficult.
198. Since the last inspection the teaching has improved further. Mathematics is well led in the sixth form, with courses well planned and managed. The teachers ensure that the students understand the structure of the course and its specific examination requirements; assessment arrangements are good. The students are given very good guidance to help them meet the demands of the course, such as how and when to revise for each of the assessment points. Resources for learning are adequate and are well backed up by further material prepared by the teachers. The students are generally appreciative of the high quality that is provided for them in the course.

## **SCIENCES**

199. The focus was on chemistry, but biology and physics were sampled. In biology and physics, examination results in 2000 were generally in line with national averages, with students achieving well compared with their GCSE results. In 2001, additional teaching in physics contributed to a big improvement in results. In the last three years, all students taking A-level examinations in the three sciences have obtained a pass grade; this is higher than national pass rates. Very few girls take AS and A-level courses in science, despite their good GCSE results. Teaching in physics is normally thorough, and a good lesson in Year 13 on the nature and impact of gravitational forces raised students' awareness and understanding, and improved their use of formulae. Students' folders in physics are not carefully maintained, and have limited use during revision for examinations. In biology, teaching was excellent in the lesson observed, with a lively exchange of views because of the very good relationship between teacher and students.

### **Chemistry**

200. Overall, the quality of provision is good.

#### **Strengths**

- Results are normally in line with national averages, but showed a marked improvement this summer.
- Most students achieve well compared with their GCSE results.
- Teaching is good; modules of work are planned carefully.

- Relationships between teacher and students are good.
- Students know their individual targets.

#### Areas for improvement

- There is only one teacher of chemistry in the sixth form, and the style of teaching lacks variation.
- There is insufficient monitoring of students' routine work in folders.
- The marking of tests does not relate the standard of work to A-level grades.
- Very few girls take chemistry in the sixth form.

201. The A-level results this summer showed a significant improvement; all students obtained grades in the range A to C, and the proportion gaining the higher grades was double the national average. They achieved well in relation to their GCSE grades.
202. The standards of work of current students are also above average. In Year 13, they have a positive approach to their work, and particularly enjoy success in the challenge of practical assignments. They demonstrated a good knowledge of the properties of organic substances when undertaking an analysis and identification of three colourless liquids. In a theory lesson about polymerisation, they showed the ability to predict chemical reactions, and also the properties of the products formed.
203. Students in Year 12 are only a few weeks into their course, but are adapting well to the higher levels of work and challenge. Their practical skills vary, but are generally high, and they are learning to think carefully about how to improve the accuracy of their results. They are less confident at present with balancing equations, and with their use of formulae and calculations, as was shown in a lesson using titration to find the concentration of a solution of hydrochloric acid.
204. Teaching is good overall; the teacher has good subject knowledge. The tasks provided for students indicate sound planning, and a clear understanding of the needs of the AS and A-level modules. The learning objectives for each lesson are clear. In each lesson, there is an opportunity for students to work individually, and to use their initiative. This leads to increasing confidence as they progress through the course. The clarity of calculations, and model answers, need improving. The marking of tests is thorough, but it is not always clear how standards relate to AS or A level grades. The monitoring of students' work in folders is not so thorough; this results in a large variation in the quality of their notes, and their pride in presentation. There has been insufficient development in the use of ICT to provide experience for students about the usefulness of computers in advanced studies in chemistry.
205. Students all show a positive approach to their studies, and clearly enjoy A-level chemistry. They develop a confident working relationship with their teacher, and generally contribute well to lessons. They listen well to their teacher and to one another. The result is that good learning takes place. A

high proportion of students in Year 13 are contemplating careers involving chemistry.

206. At a time of change within the science department, there is a commitment by the teacher responsible for teaching the A-level course to maintaining the high standards achieved in chemistry. The planning of the scheme for teaching each module is kept under review, and overall leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Individual targets are set for students, based on GCSE performance, and on each student's approach to the more demanding AS and A-level examinations. These targets are generally realistic, and provide encouragement for students to aim as high as they can.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

207. No courses in this curriculum area are taken at present.

## **BUSINESS**

208. The inspection of this area involved the vocational courses of GNVQ Intermediate in business, offered in Year 12, and the Advanced VCE in business.

### **Business**

209. Overall, the quality of provision is satisfactory

#### Strengths

- The use in lessons of the experience in the world of work of pupils, parents, relatives and friends is good
- Most students make good use of the distinctive terminology and analytical methods of business
- There is very good teaching in some areas
- Good use is made of connections with the world of work, including work experience
- The use of industry standard software is beneficial to students
- Teacher-produced materials make a very effective contribution to learning resources

#### Areas for improvement

- A minority of the students' portfolios are poorly constructed with heavy dependency on teacher-produced materials
- The use of ICT in the students' work could be developed further
- Less capable students are passive in class discussion sessions, reducing the quality of their learning

210. Results overall are in line with national and local averages. In 2000, almost 50 per cent of Advanced GNVQ students (equivalent to AVCE) achieved distinction or merit, but for the Intermediate GNVQ, only two out of 11 achieved merit and none a distinction. Some students who left school for employment before finishing their courses have later completed the qualification outside school following advice from teachers, showing a commendable amount of flexibility by the school and the students.
211. The standards of work of current students are average; some are above average. In Year 13, there is a good knowledge of real business organisations and their structure and students understand the relevant business concepts and theories. They also understand the macro-economic factors affecting the business environment and overall, and are able to evaluate information from a variety of sources. The lesson structures are valuable in focusing their attention on development; links are made to past work, for example on motivation. In Year 12, the development of skills of analysis is good for the early stages of these courses. In a class doing project work on customer care, students showed good knowledge of the concepts of economies of scale and scope, and were able to link this to concepts of monopoly and to the division of labour. They use their practical knowledge of the local economy to illustrate their work, for example in relation to marketing. In both courses, most students show good skills of layout and organisation and good note-taking skills. Many in Year 12 have a good appreciation of graphing techniques and readily understand the relationships of supply and demand expressed in this form. However, some work is poorly laid out and depends heavily on materials provided by the teacher and dictated notes. Most students use internet-based sources of information with discrimination, but a minority depend upon the teacher's recommendations for sources.
212. Teaching is satisfactory overall; however, it is often very good. Where it is very good, it features clear objectives and a consistent approach to reinforcement of the analytical methods and models characteristic of business studies. A Year 13 class on human resource planning successfully engaged all students in a lively debate on the consequences of poor group management. The teacher led a lively dialogue with the class, consistently developing their ability to describe and analyse the relationship between quality and staff turnover, management, motivation and productivity. Where teaching is very good, it focuses on clear expression, clear presentation by use of whiteboard and on the use of well laid out teacher materials. Students respond well to the level of challenge in these classes; as a result of this very good teaching, the quality of learning is also very good and students develop their understanding very well. However, in a less dynamic teaching session, the relationship between tax, subsidy and production was described by the teacher rather than allowing students to develop and test hypotheses through debate. Whilst the level of learning and understanding was satisfactory, the students' depth of intellectual effort and independent thinking skills was limited.

213. The level of marking and comment on the students' work gives sufficient information to encourage improvement, although some factual errors and those of grammar and spelling remain uncorrected. Overall, the quality of marking helps learning, and, indeed, almost all students learn well. Where teaching involves them in debate and discussion, they are particularly keen to respond. They are willing to learn from and support each other in group work. A few have not yet developed the confidence necessary to make good class presentations or to make independent and well structured notes. Most have developed well during work experience and are able to use data from these periods to good effect in their work.
214. Leadership and management of business in the sixth form are satisfactory. The courses follow the requirements of the validating body and are managed satisfactorily. New schemes of work for these evolving qualifications are clear and successfully identify the basic strategies required. The successful aspects of teaching are underlain by good support material and a range of teaching strategies suited to varying abilities.

### **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

215. No courses are taken at present in this area of the curriculum, though students have good access to computers; they use computers extensively for research as well as for the presentation of their work.

### **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

216. In this curriculum area, the school timetables an optional programme of physical recreation for one hour each week; the physical education teachers supervise this programme. A certificated Sports Community Award course of the Central Council for Physical Recreation operates for a small group of students. This provides a valuable opportunity for students to assist physical education teachers within school and within their feeder primary schools. However, overall, the provision of school based courses in physical education for sixth form students is very limited.

### **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

217. No courses are taken at present in this curriculum area.

### **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

218. Within this area art and design was sampled. The art department provides well for A-level art students who make good progress and achieve above average results. In the two lessons observed, the quality of teaching and learning was good, with the teacher's knowledge and

understanding of the subject being a particular strength.

## **HUMANITIES**

219. Within this curriculum area, geography and history were sampled. There is also a new course in AS religious education, which has started this term; it is taught to a small group of students outside the normal school day. It was not possible to sample this course. Provision in geography is good, and it is a popular subject. Results are above average; students achieve well because of the good teaching they receive. Fieldwork is a great strength, and teachers have very good subject knowledge. Work is well prepared and teachers use challenging questions in order to fully extend the students' learning. In history, examination results in 2000 were below average but students achieved broadly in line with what would be expected from their GCSE results. Three lessons were observed. Two were very good and one was outstanding. The high quality of the teaching focuses on a continual challenge to students, resulting in very good attainment and achievement. In Year 12 classes on isolationism and the Munich putsch, the enthusiastic approach of the teachers led to outstanding achievement in the analysis of sources and motivation.

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

220. English and German were inspected in detail; French is also taught at AS and A-level.

## **ENGLISH**

221. The quality of provision in English is good, with the department having adapted well to the demands of relatively new syllabuses.

### **Strengths**

- There has been good and effective implementation of the new post-16 courses.
- Teaching is good overall, leading to good gains in learning by the students.
- There is good achievement by most students in making the transition from GCSE to the greater demands of AS and A-level courses.

### **Areas for development**

- There is a need to promote more active involvement of students in lessons, which, at present, are sometimes dominated too much by the teachers.

222. The A-level results in English in 2000 were above average, with one student attaining an A grade and the other a B grade. The trend in results over the previous three years has been variable, but this is because of a very small examination entry. The AS results in the new examination in 2001 were in line with the national expectations, and this represented good achievement for these students in terms of their transition from GCSE work.
223. The evidence of the inspection confirms that the majority of students attain standards in English which are average for those studying at AS level and for those at the beginning of the

second year of their A-level course. Students are able to clearly articulate their responses to a range of literary texts, such as "Enduring Love", "Emma" and "King Lear", to appreciate the historical context in which they were written, to critically analyse texts for elements such as structure and language, and to make comparisons between them. Students achieve well: they clearly understand the extra demands of the new courses and show good achievement in terms of successfully dealing with the complexity of language, the requirements for more independent study, and the need for more sophisticated analytical skills than at GCSE Level. They respond well to these demands.

224. The quality of teaching in English is good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. The good teaching is characterised by secure subject knowledge evident in the good explanations which teachers give to students; in one lesson, for example, the teacher focused on the differences in language and mood between "Sons and Lovers" and "To the Lighthouse". Teachers also have challenging expectations of students, which was evident for example in the enthusiastic way in which the Year 12 class was introduced to the complexities of Shakespearean verse patterns in "King Lear". These qualities of good teaching lead to good learning by the students as they develop their skills of critical analysis. Occasionally the lessons are very teacher-directed, and there is relatively little encouragement for students to engage in more open debate with each other; consequently, their depth of their learning is more limited. However, the students' attitudes towards English are positive and contribute to their good learning.
225. The post-16 curriculum in English is well managed by the head of subject, and the overall leadership and management of sixth form English are good. The new courses have been well resourced and effectively introduced. Assessment is good, and students consequently know how well they are doing and how they can improve. The study of a variety of texts helps to promote cultural awareness and an historical perspective.
226. The small examination entry is reflected in the variation in examination results since 1996, with no consistent pattern. Overall there has been satisfactory progress in attainment and achievement in English since the previous inspection.

## **MODERN LANGUAGES**

227. The focus of the inspection was on German, but French was also sampled. In 2001 all the students entered for A and AS Level French gained a pass grade. There were two A grades at AS Level but no overall pattern. In the single lesson observed, there was good teaching with stimulating and well-varied material which led to good learning. Students were engaged by the tasks, which prepared them well for the topic of racism.

## German

228. The quality of provision is satisfactory

### Strengths

- Students are well supported by the teachers' experience in examination preparation
- German is available as an alternative or additional foreign language, giving good choice to students
- Students have proven linguistic ability at the start of the course

### Areas for improvement

- An increased focus on securing basic grammar is needed
- Increased opportunities for oral work are needed to raise oral standards
- Opportunities to ensure that students are more active in their own learning will improve the pace of their learning by challenging them more

229. Over the last three years, only three students have been entered for A-level German. All obtained an A-level award, and, for two of these students, their grades show good achievement from their GCSE results. Numbers are too small for valid national comparison. In 2001, six students were entered for the new AS level German. Four students gained grades A to E. Attainments are better in speaking than in writing, where standards are below average. Four students are continuing to complete the full A-level course.

230. Standards of students preparing for A-level are average. However, their achievements over the last year since GCSE are good. Prior to their A-level studies, these students had learned German in an intensive two year course. As a result their vocabulary is limited and some aspects of basic grammar are not secure. The same students also study French following a five year course to GCSE. Whilst they had very good results in both languages at GCSE, they are more confident, spontaneous and communicate more easily in French. Their confidence in speaking German is improving as seen in the recent AS examination results. Students can discuss topics such as the environment, give the causes of some of the major problems and suggest possible solutions. In speaking, they have good pronunciation but insecurities in grammar are seen in the lack of fluency. They are beginning to write at length, for example when identifying the main features of a fairy tale, but much of their work is restricted to simple structures and vocabulary.

231. In Year 12, there are only two students studying German. Standards are average at this early stage; the limitations of vocabulary and weaknesses in grammar apply to Year 12 as well as Year 13. Written work is accurate in the simple introductory tasks of the course. The students' achievement is good because they show a good level of self-confidence and are not afraid of making mistakes. This helps the pace of the lessons, which supports good learning and achievement.



232. The sixth form teaching is good and the teachers' experience at this level is seen in several aspects of preparation and teaching. There is a good range of authentic materials and expectations are high. Good adult relationships with the students also support the good learning that is taking place. For the first half of the autumn term, the students are benefiting from the availability of a German student who takes an active role in teaching. As a result students' listening skills are challenged and pronunciation is becoming more precise. All lessons are conducted in German, and the demands that this puts on the students helps their learning considerably. Teachers provide grammar reference sections for students' work files and create opportunities for grammar practice and improvement. In order to meet the requirements of AS Level and cover half of the topics for examination at the end of Year 12, teachers are giving insufficient attention to the need to reinforce key grammar and extend basic vocabulary to ease the transition from GCSE. As a result, this aspect of the students' learning is less secure. Where small group numbers make students hesitant to participate, teachers need to adopt strategies which make the students more active in order to increase the pace of their own learning.
233. Students of German show an interest in the subject sustained from their selection at Key Stage 4 as good linguists. Nearly all sixth form German students are also studying French. This enables them to transfer study skills from one subject to the other. The very good attitudes to study are reflected in the total work focus in lessons and the punctual completion of written tasks. They show good independence in learning and would benefit from more guidance in study skills. In the preparation for an oral presentation in the most recent examination, one student made her own tape to help her to learn the script by heart. Relationships between students in the groups are supportive, and this also helps their learning. Students from the sixth form offer support for the language days organised for Years 10 and 11, giving further opportunities to develop their language skills.
234. Leadership and management of modern languages in the sixth form are satisfactory. The department has a very limited formal framework with the limited number of students in the subject. This is supportive on a personal level, but students would benefit from more frequent use of examination grades in marked work. In Year 13, where writing has been identified as a weakness, this would help students to measure their achievement and provide teachers with the opportunity to set targets and identify areas for practice. The department has full records which track students' progress from Year 9; however, this information is under-used in planning suitable teaching strategies to meet the individual needs of the students. In the small sixth form situation, teachers would benefit from mutual observation and the opportunity to study the organisation and teaching strategies used in other sixth forms and colleges.