

INSPECTION REPORT

ALDERMAN PEEL HIGH SCHOOL

Wells-next-the-Sea

LEA area: Norfolk

Unique reference number: 121170

Headteacher: Ms C Crawford

Reporting inspector: Ms G Kayembe
2901

Dates of inspection: 25th – 28th September 2000

Inspection number: 192414

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Secondary
School category:	Comprehensive
Age range of pupils:	11-16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Market Lane Wells-next-the-Sea Norfolk
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R Hiskey
Date of previous inspection:	24 th -28 th February 1997

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Mr J Lovegreen 22423	Team inspector	English	
Mr M Davis 18584	Team inspector	Science	
Mr A Allfree 8503	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology	
Mr H Davies 13734	Team inspector	Geography Religious education	
Mr D Martin 17732	Team inspector	History	
Mr R Bulman 15396	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Equal opportunities	
Mrs M Young 31660	Team inspector	Music	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a comprehensive school for 343 boys and girls aged between 11 and 16. It is significantly smaller than the average sized comprehensive. The intake is drawn mainly from Wells and nearby villages. Almost all pupils are of white UK heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, about 15 per cent, is similar to the national average. However, this figure does not take full account of the social and economic disadvantage experienced by many pupils due to the seasonal and low paid nature of employment in the local area. Wells itself is located in a remote and rather isolated part of the country and this also has an impact on the range of opportunities pupils have for extending their social and cultural horizons out of school. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average. This is reflected in the above average proportions of pupils on the school's register of special needs and who have a statement of special educational need. An acting headteacher and acting deputy are currently in post whilst governors are in the process of appointing a permanent headteacher following the recent resignation of the previous one.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. The school's educational provision makes a positive difference to pupils' learning and attainment. By the time they leave they have improved substantially the quality and standards of their work. Good teaching and learning, particularly at Key Stage 3, enable pupils to make good progress and achieve well. Current leadership and management have a positive impact on the work of the school and therefore on the quality of pupils' work. Overall, the school is effective in helping pupils to reach standards that are high enough given their low prior attainment. Good pastoral care contributes significantly to the high standards of academic and personal development achieved. Taking the cost of education at the school, which is high, into account, it provides satisfactory value for money. However, good value is most certainly added to pupils' learning.

What the school does well

- Good leadership and management which has established shared aims, good team work and a strong commitment to change and improvement
- Good teaching which leads to good learning and this enables pupils to achieve well
- The governing body makes a strong contribution to the work of the school
- Standards of work in mathematics, science, English literature and geography are high
- Community links, including links with partner institutions, are very strong and have contributed well to the very successful development of the work-related curriculum in Years 10 and 11
- The work of non-teaching staff makes a very positive contribution to the work of teachers and the smooth day-to-day running of the school

What could be improved

- Standards in writing and modern foreign languages as they are too low
- Boys' achievement as they are not doing as well as the girls
- Whilst the school provides a safe and caring environment, some aspects of welfare and guidance for pupils are weak

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress in improving itself since the previous inspection. It has kept pace with national improvements in performance in GCSE examinations and national tests for 14-year-olds. There has been good improvement particularly in the standards of work in geography, religious education and design and technology. The school has tackled well most of the key issues arising from the previous inspection. For example, the quality of teaching and learning is better with pupils now being actively involved in lessons. Good improvements have taken place in provision for religious education, and in the opportunities for spiritual development provided through assemblies and religious education. These aspects are now good, although the school still does not fully meet the requirement for a daily act of worship. Standards of work in modern foreign languages, although improved since the previous inspection, remain low. However, good progress has been made in developing the work-related curriculum, and provision for this is good.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	B

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

The table above indicates that pupils' performance in GCSE examinations has been consistently in line with the performance of schools nationally. The similar schools comparison shows that this is better than the performance of schools with similar intakes. Pupils' overall performance in the most recent GCSE examinations of 2000 improved slightly, although the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C fell. This was balanced by more pupils gaining at least one or more GCSE at grades A*-G. The school did not meet its targets for 2000. Nonetheless pupils are achieving well given the low attainment when they start school. GCSE results are particularly good in science, English literature and geography, but tend to be poor in modern foreign languages. Results in the national tests for 14-year-olds were in line with national averages in 1999, although the performance in English was well below average. The results for 2000 were similar to those of 1999 for mathematics and science but were worse in English, where boys' performance was particularly weak. Staff illness in English has slowed down what the school would like to do in terms of improving the provision and standards in literacy. Boys also perform less well than the girls in art, design and technology, music and modern foreign languages.

On the whole, attainment in lessons reflects the performance of pupils in public examinations. Pupils with special educational needs are doing well and as a result they achieve creditable results in tests and GCSE examinations. Attainment in geography, science and mathematics is above average and good compared to pupils' prior attainment. In English, whilst pupils are making relatively good progress with oral work and in reading, their writing skills are weak and let them down in examinations. This is particularly so for boys. In history at Key Stage 3, pupils' skills in historical enquiry are below national expectations.

Standards of work in music at the end of Key Stage 3 and in languages throughout the school are also low. Work in design and technology is above average by Year 11, largely due to the good development in pupils' technical expertise and skills of construction.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	On the whole pupils' attitudes to the school and to lessons are positive, and are consistently good at Key Stage 3. A minority at Key Stage 4 tend to show signs of disaffection which affects their progress. Overall, the majority of pupils are happy at school and respond with enthusiasm to their work and to the good range of activities provided outside lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good for the vast majority of pupils, often very good. A minority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 misbehave in some lessons. Although teachers usually manage this well, the poor behaviour does slow down their learning. Behaviour around the school and in the dining hall is consistently good.
Personal development and relationships	Good overall. Pupils behave responsibly and are developing well their understanding and acceptance of commonly held values. The majority are sensitive to the needs of others and are respectful of their peers and adults. Relationships amongst pupils and between staff and pupils are very good.
Attendance	Attendance is close to the national average, but it should, and could, be better.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching seen was at least satisfactory in 95 per cent of lessons, and good or better in 69 per cent. Very good or better teaching was seen in about 23 per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching is good overall and this is generally matched by the quality of learning, although poor behaviour of older pupils in some lessons results in learning being unsatisfactory in these instances.

Teachers pay mostly satisfactory attention to the development of basic skills such as literacy and numeracy as part of their teaching, although in English not enough attention is paid to developing pupils' writing skills. Where teaching is good, lessons are lively and the content is well structured so that pupils work enthusiastically and build new skills and knowledge successfully. In the majority of lessons expectations are high and pupils are effectively challenged to think for themselves. Teaching is good in English and science, and very good in mathematics. Where teaching is not better than satisfactory, or where it is unsatisfactory, the most common shortcomings are slow pace and insufficient challenge for pupils so that

not enough work gets covered and pupils are not stretched enough. In some cases ineffective control of some pupils' poor behaviour results in little learning taking place. However, in the very best lessons, teachers controlled difficult pupils exceptionally well.

Overall, the good quality of teaching results in pupils' needs being effectively met and the criticisms of the last report about lack of sufficient challenge for brighter pupils and not enough support or help for those with special needs have been largely addressed.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good at all key stages. The school has made good progress on developing the work-related curriculum since the last inspection and the provision for this makes a salient contribution to pupils' learning. Most subjects make good use of computers; however little use in some means that National Curriculum requirements for the use of computer technology are not being fully met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special needs make good progress. The organisation of provision and the support provided by learning support assistants are good. Teachers are aware of pupils with special needs and many provide good support. Targets in pupils' support plans are much clearer and more comprehensive than at the time of the last inspection. Some are still not sharp enough though. There is not, however, close enough monitoring of the progress being made by pupils with special needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Religious education and the programme for personal and social education make a strong contribution to pupils' personal development. Assemblies provide a clear framework for nurturing spiritual and moral values. However, the tutor periods are not well used to introduce and reflect on the Thought for the Day. Provision for moral and social development is good and for cultural development is satisfactory. Not enough is done to prepare pupils for life in a multicultural society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils find pastoral staff approachable and the school does much to help pupils feel safe and secure. However, there are some weaknesses in the procedures for welfare and guidance of pupils, as described below.

Whilst there is an ethos of care and concern for the health and welfare of pupils, there are a number of issues in relation to the procedures for health and safety; training for child protection; assessment of pupils in some subjects and monitoring and raising attendance levels. In addition, poor use is made of the tutor periods in some cases to support pupils' academic and personal development. There is rigorous academic monitoring of individual pupil's progress which is being further improved through the use of computer databases to track and record progress. Reports to parents do not give them adequate information about their child's progress, but the school works well in partnership with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher provide very clear educational direction for the school. There is good teamwork amongst staff and a strong commitment to improvement and change. There is an increased involvement of staff in their contribution to the development of the school. The school identifies well its priorities and is very good at taking effective action to tackle perceived weaknesses.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors make a very good contribution to the work of the school. They are very well informed and sub-committees are actively involved in reviewing various areas of the school's work in a good deal of detail. Governors provide very good support to the headteacher and act as a reliable and effective sounding board for ideas, initiatives, policies and procedures. However, not all legal requirements are fully met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is good at diagnosing its strengths and weaknesses and in taking effective action to deal with aspects of its work which need improvement. The work of teachers is regularly checked and monitored and the monitoring information gathered is actively used to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of its resources, including staff. Excellent use is made of the library, although the library stock is limited. The school is making sound progress in applying the principles of best value to its work.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What some parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their child is making good progress • The school expects pupils to work hard and achieve their best • Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school if they have concerns or worries • The school helps children to become mature and responsible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework that children receive • The range of activities outside school hours • Some concern about high turnover of staff and discontinuity in teaching due to staff illness

The inspection findings support parents' positive views of the school. An appropriate amount of homework is set regularly and the range of extra-curricular activities is good, although the school is restricted in how much can be provided after school as most pupils have to catch a bus home. There has been a high turnover of staff in the last couple of years. However, the school has provided good support to new staff, teaching and non-teaching, and the influx of new personnel has been of benefit. New teachers are settling in well and are, on the whole, providing good quality teaching. Illness amongst staff in modern foreign languages and English has had some negative impact on the work of these departments.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Results of various tests on entry indicate that when pupils start at the school, their attainment is significantly below average. Tests in mathematics reveal that attainment on entry is well below average in this area and pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are on the whole fairly low when compared to the average comprehensive intake. The entry profile is skewed downwards with a higher proportion of lower attainers and fewer higher attainers when compared with most schools. Given their low starting point, pupils do well to attain results that are comparable with most schools in national tests and examinations. Standards of work seen during the inspection also point to good achievement throughout the school.
2. The results of National Curriculum tests taken by 14-year-olds indicate that pupils' performance has been broadly in line with national averages in English and mathematics, and has been above average in science. When compared to the performance of pupils in similar schools, where similar schools are defined on the basis of the number of pupils eligible for free school meals, the school does not do well. In 1999, for example, the school's results in National Curriculum tests were below those of similar schools. However, the free school meal category the school has been placed in does not take account of the low attainment on entry, and hence, is not a reliable comparison.
3. Pupils' performance at GCSE, based on the last three or four years, has been in line with the performance of schools nationally. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C has been close to the national average, but the proportion gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*-G has been above. When compared to similar schools, based on free school meals, results are below average. However, when pupils' results at GCSE are compared against their prior attainment, pupils' achievement is good.
4. The National Curriculum tests and GCSE examination results indicate a pattern of underachievement of boys, most significantly in English, although girls on the whole tend to do slightly better than the boys in mathematics and science as well. From year to year there are fluctuations in the respective performance of boys and girls in the National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science for 14-year-olds. However, taking the results between 1996 and 1999, boys' performance in English was below average whilst girls' was broadly average. Boys attained results that were in line with the national averages for boys in mathematics and science, whilst girls attained results that were above the average for girls nationally in these subjects. At GCSE, boys' performance in French was particularly poor, but was also significantly lower than that of girls in English, art, design and technology, mathematics and music.
5. In individual subjects at GCSE, pupils' performance in 1999 in science, English literature and geography was significantly above that of pupils nationally, although in literature a smaller proportion of pupils took the examination than the proportion nationally. Poor results in French indicate that the school has not successfully tackled the issues relating to this from the last inspection. Difficulties in staffing and staff illness have in part held back development of modern foreign languages. Music results are also on the low side, with the numbers taking the subject being small. In all other subjects, results were in line with national averages, including in design and technology, which was

identified as a weak area in the previous inspection report, hence indicating good progress. The results for 2000 are broadly similar to the results for 1999, but no comparisons can be made with schools nationally as national results are not yet available. The school did not achieve its targets for 2000, but nonetheless pupils performed well given their low attainment on entry to the school. Given the often small size of the groups taking public examinations, small differences in numbers often have a relatively big impact on the overall percentages.

6. There has been steady improvement in the school's performance in public tests and examinations since the previous inspection. The trend of improvement in the school's results has kept pace with the trend nationally, with good improvement in design and technology since the last inspection, but insufficient in modern foreign languages.
7. The inspection findings generally reflect the results of national tests and examinations. By the time pupils reach Year 9, they are attaining broadly average standards of work. Their achievement is good given their low starting point. Similarly, attainment by the time pupils are in Year 11 is in line with national averages and achievement is good. However, at both key stages, there are some variations between subjects. In English in Years 7 to 9, attainment in writing is a major weakness with pupils demonstrating poor grammar and punctuation. They are not sufficiently well equipped or trained to adapt their writing successfully for different audiences and purposes. As pupils move into Years 10 and 11, some of these failings are corrected, but for many they persist leading to underperformance at GCSE level. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening and in reading are usually sound, often good, especially in Years 10 to 11 and overall, pupils make good progress in reading and oral work. Standards of work in mathematics are above average by the time pupils are in Year 9 and are in line with national expectations by the time they reach Year 11. Standards of numeracy and mental arithmetic have improved since the last inspection and are satisfactory. They are often good in Key Stage 3 where pupils have benefited from the mathematics department's strong emphasis on promoting number skills in line with the National Numeracy Project. Pupils use calculators with care and confidence and are taught to estimate orders of magnitude. Many can work without a calculator to a considerable extent. In science, attainment is above average by Years 9 and 11. At both key stages, pupils demonstrate satisfactory skills in investigative work. At GCSE level, there are examples of very good quality investigative work, but lower attainers often need considerable support in this area. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of scientific facts and ideas are often good by Year 11.
8. In most other subjects, including religious education, pupils' attainment is similar to that found nationally by the time they are in Years 9 and 11. By Year 11, work in design and technology is of a good standard overall, largely due to good quality planning demonstrated by pupils and their technical expertise when producing artefacts or food items. In geography by the time pupils reach Year 11, pupils display good, and in some cases very good, investigative and analytical skills and, as a result, the standards of their work are high. However, in history, pupils' standards are below expectations by Year 9. Whilst they have a secure grasp of historical facts, they lack sufficient depth of knowledge to develop a secure enough understanding of historical ideas or to apply them in order to find out more about events and characters from the past. Standards in modern foreign languages are below average, particularly so in French, and pupils are achieving less well than they should be by the time they reach Years 9 and 11. This is particularly noticeable given that standards of work seen in Year 7 are in line with age-related expectations. In music, by Year 9, pupils' work is a little below the standard expected nationally.

9. The achievements of boys are a matter of concern, particularly in English, art, design and technology, music and modern foreign languages. Boys also show some signs of underachievement in mathematics by Year 11. Teachers' predictions, supported by statistical evidence, suggest that boys could do better. The recent requirement for teachers to set individual targets for pupils has not had time to take full effect. Despite training and advice, not all teachers are adapting their methods to suit the range of ability in their classes, and there is insufficient emphasis on strategies for motivating boys to succeed.
10. Standards of literacy have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory. Reading aloud is encouraged in some science lessons and history, and the latter has invested in two-tier textbooks to make information more accessible to weaker readers. These features help pupils to develop further their skills in reading and researching for information. In physical education there is very good use of technical vocabulary, for instance the correct names of muscles in warm-ups, and key terms such as 'aesthetic' and 'refinement' which pupils are expected to integrate into their practical work. In science pupils are helped to become familiar with such vocabulary by its frequent use and careful pronunciation by teachers when it is first introduced. Language is widened in religious education, history and geography by emphasising new key words and concepts. Almost all subjects make a good contribution to pupils' speaking and listening skills by well-worded questioning, and in mathematics by expecting them to explain problems which they are trying to solve in investigations. Modern foreign languages make good use of pair work and teaching of grammar to enhance pupils' awareness and confidence in speaking and writing in the foreign language. History teachers use opportunities for discursive writing, but have not yet made enough use of frameworks or templates for guiding pupils' writing or do not encourage enough pupils to write at length. In geography pupils write accurately and at length.
11. There is widespread evidence of pupils applying their mathematical skills in other subject areas. In science at Key Stage 3 there is a range of work showing good estimating and measuring skills and most pupils produce good graphical work, although some below average ability pupils have difficulty choosing the appropriate bar or line graphs to represent data. Opportunities to calculate are adequate but pupils get little chance to practise arithmetical skills. In Key Stage 4 science there is evidence of pupils of all abilities having the skills to represent data graphically and perform calculations, with the more able showing good skills. There is good promotion of mathematical skills in design and technology. Pupils weigh, calculate proportions and make costings of finished items to a good degree of accuracy. There is good accurate work in the production of scale drawings and patterns. Work in history shows pupils interpreting numbers, graphs and tables competently. In geography coursework there is effective use of bar charts and graphs to illustrate data and good use of a range of statistical techniques. In physical education pupils demonstrate good problem-solving skills in working out strategies to outwit opponents when playing games, and they measure accurately to calculate the pace and speed required. Calculation of price, change, percentage, temperature and times of arrival and departure of buses and trains are features of work in modern foreign languages. In other subjects there is only limited evidence of pupils displaying their numeracy skills. There is a whole-school policy for numeracy but links between mathematics and other subject departments to encourage a wider promotion of number skills are still developing.
12. In relation to their previous levels of attainment, pupils make good progress. At the end of Key Stage 4 at the age of 16, all pupils with special educational needs achieve GCSE awards in at least one subject. Levels of reading, in particular, and other aspects of literacy have also improved. As a result pupils are better able to understand the

demands of other subjects. Evidence of improving standards is found in mathematics and science. In science, for example, all pupils with special educational needs are entered for GCSE examinations and the vast majority achieve a pass grade. Progress is good in many subjects because pupils are very well supported in lessons by learning support assistants and by additional teachers who ensure that pupils understand the content of lessons and what is being asked of them. Standards are rising because targets in individual education plans are more appropriate to individual needs than at the time of the previous inspection and subject departments are beginning to build consideration for pupils with special educational needs into schemes of work. Levels of attainment and the quality of learning could be higher still if targets in individual education plans were more specific, related more closely to subjects and designed to allow progress towards these targets to be monitored more regularly. Specialist support staff rarely receive information about the content of lessons before they begin. However, their good skills and knowledge of individual pupils enable them to overcome this difficulty in most cases. Better collaboration from class teachers with specialist support staff with respect to sharing the planning for the lesson would help them do an even better job. Overall the good standards achieved and the good progress made is the result of the good quality of additional support pupils are given in lessons by class teachers and specialist support staff.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. The attitude to school of the large majority of pupils is good, this is consistently so at Key Stage 3. This is a result of overall good teaching standards that usually ensure the interest of pupils is engaged. Pupils are interested in their progress and most work hard towards the targets agreed with their teachers. In the majority of their lessons they are keen to do well and concentrate effectively on the task in hand, this is particularly so in lessons where careful planning has resulted in the setting of well-prepared and stimulating work. In Key Stage 4, a small number of disaffected pupils have poor attitudes to work and little interest in learning and this adversely affects how well they learn.
14. Pupils appreciate the range of extra-curricular activities provided during their lunch period and many of them value the provision for 'catching up' and doing homework. Excellent use is made of the library for personal study and access to information. Homework is usually completed and many pupils do this very conscientiously. In the good or better lessons, pupils are expected to take responsibility for their learning and this helps them to make good progress. Overall, pupils are now much better at working on their own and taking responsibility for their learning than at the time of the last inspection. However, in a few lessons, the problems identified in the previous inspection persist, and pupils remain too dependent on their teachers. In these instances, pupils do not sufficiently develop the habit of independent learning they need to take them into adulthood.
15. Arrangements to ensure pupils have opportunities to take responsibility, use initiative and grow in understanding of the world about them are good. These opportunities have a positive impact on the overall personal development of pupils, particularly those provided outside lessons. The student council encourages pupils to take responsible attitudes to the school and its environment. It is well supported and those representing their year groups show high levels of commitment. The opportunity to contribute their views is valued and individual projects, such as researching the implications of changes to uniform, result in them exercising good levels of initiative and responsibility. Opportunities provided through the personal and social education programme, mentoring by Year 11 pupils and other positions of responsibility effectively develop

good levels of social awareness and an understanding of community issues, both in school and beyond. Most pupils are attentive to the needs of others and gain a useful insight into the lives of those less fortunate than themselves through their work for charity and support for community groups.

16. Behaviour in lessons is usually good and results in the majority of pupils being able to take full advantage of learning opportunities provided. A few pupils, usually lower ability boys in Key Stage 4, are immature, lack self-discipline and find it difficult to concentrate. It results in them being disruptive and sometimes rude to their teachers and other pupils. This supports the views of some parents. However, unlike at the time of the last inspection, where such behaviour occurs it is usually dealt with well and only occasionally results in any appreciable interruption to learning for other pupils. On a very few occasions poor behaviour across all ability groups is linked to lessons not being well planned to provide sufficient challenge. In most lessons, particularly at Key Stage 3, pupils respond well to firm and fair discipline, seeing the need to respect the rights of others to work and to be heard without interruption. The incidence of exclusion is low at ten fixed term, usually of only one day, for the last school year. Arrangements to support a subsequent improvement in behaviour through a behaviour agreement, careful monitoring and discussions with parents are usually successful. School premises are treated with high levels of respect. There is no graffiti and virtually no litter about the site. Equipment, for example tennis rackets used at lunchtime, is treated with respect. Pupils are polite and courteous to visitors. They are pleased to discuss their work and most are able to do so with confidence.
17. Relationships throughout the school between pupils and with adults are usually very positive. Pupils and parents confirm there is very little bullying and that where it occurs it is dealt with effectively. None was observed during the inspection. This helps younger pupils to settle happily and confidently when they start at the school in Year 7. They also appreciate the support given by Year 11 mentors. During the inspection some good examples of mutual support and appreciation of others' efforts were seen. These illustrate pupils' well-developed ability to work effectively in pairs and small groups and to co-operate effectively across the range of ability. A few pupils, particularly those of lower ability in Key Stage 4, show a marked lack of respect for the views, opinions and feeling of their peers, for example when they talk noisily through presentations of work and interrupt when others are speaking. Most are interested in and respect the traditions and customs of other cultures when they discuss and learn about these in religious education lessons, although overall there are not enough such opportunities in other subjects. At break and lunch times pupils socialise very effectively.
18. Although a little below the national benchmark, levels of attendance and punctuality for the whole school are broadly satisfactory. Figures for the last school year are 91.8 per cent. This has remained static for two years but is a small improvement from the time of the last inspection. Unauthorised absence is low at 0.5 per cent. Although followed up by heads of upper and lower schools, there is no analysis by year or tutor group. It is known that some absence relates to a few pupils who persistently refuse to attend and the school works with the education social officer about these. Registration procedures have now been computerised and meet requirements for the current school year. They ensure an accurate record of those present. The large majority of pupils arrive punctually at the start of the school day, movement around the site is usually accomplished with little delay between lessons, resulting in good use of the time available for teaching. A few pupils in Key Stage 4 do not show sufficient urgency about being punctual for afternoon registration.

19. In all lessons pupils with special educational needs work well. They concentrate throughout the lesson and their behaviour is good. These features assist them to make progress, as does the support provided by both learning support assistants and teachers. The majority of pupils are very willing to contribute to lessons and to read aloud when asked to do so. Pupils are very supportive of the contributions made in lessons by their colleagues and they respect these efforts, no matter at what level. They are eager to learn and respond well to praise and encouragement.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

20. The quality of teaching is good overall and a significant improvement from the time of the previous inspection. It was at least satisfactory in 95 per cent of lessons seen, good or better in 69 per cent and very good or excellent in 23 per cent. In about five per cent of lessons, the quality of teaching was less than satisfactory. There are few differences between the key stages in the proportion of teaching that is at least satisfactory, but teaching is better in Key Stage 3 in that there is significantly more good and very good teaching at this key stage than for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The difference is in part related to the difficulties some teachers have in dealing with a small, but significant, minority of disaffected pupils in Key Stage 4. The quality of learning matched the quality of teaching fairly closely.
21. Teaching and learning in English and science are predominantly good, and very good in mathematics. There is sound teaching of skills in literacy and numeracy in subjects across the curriculum, but literacy teaching in English suffers from poor attention to writing, including some basic skills of punctuation and grammar. A co-ordinated programme of teaching of basic skills of literacy and numeracy in subjects other than English and mathematics is at the early stages of development. The overall quality of teaching is good in geography, history, information and communication technology, physical education, religious education and personal and social education. This leads to good learning for pupils and good progress being made by the majority. The quality of learning closely matches the teaching and is also good.
22. In the majority of lessons, planning and preparation are major strengths, with teachers carefully identifying what they want pupils to learn. As a result pupils are clear about what is expected of them and also if they have achieved the goals set out by the teacher. Good planning also ensures that expectations of pupils are high, for example, in geography and science, the higher attaining pupils are successfully challenged to produce work of good quality and to develop high level skills, such as those of analysis, and understanding. In the best mathematics lessons, high expectations and challenging tasks enable pupils to think mathematically and give good reasons for their answers. However, in music, planning is a weakness, with too many activities being planned for the time available and not enough attention being paid to selecting the most important key objectives for any one lesson.
23. A key characteristic of the best lessons is the use of a wide range of teaching methods and varied activities for pupils. Lesson content is well structured and coherently ordered so that pupils are able to grapple with it successfully and to learn new skills and ideas in a logical fashion. The good variety of teaching methods used provide frequent opportunities for pupils to become actively involved in their own learning and this is a real improvement from the previous inspection, where pupils were said to lack the skills of independent learning. For example, excellent use of the library as an integral part of lessons encourages pupils to develop secure research skills. In a few lessons, teachers are still not giving pupils sufficient opportunity for developing the skills of independent learning. However, it is not a major issue as it was at the time of the

previous inspection. The skilful use of questioning in the best lessons ensures that pupils are well-motivated, keen to answer and willing to think hard. In a drama lesson, for example, careful open-ended questions, with alternative phrasing to help pupils to understand, resulted in drama pupils feeling included in their own learning and helped them to begin to discuss the quality of their practical work. Brisk pace ensures that pupils are alert, concentrating well and ready to work at a good pace themselves. In the majority of lessons, teachers have the knack of creating a purposeful working atmosphere where time is well used, and resources provide the right stimulation for pupils and help them gain important insights into specific aspects of the subject being taught. In an excellent child development lesson for Year 11 pupils, meticulous preparation of resources and exceptionally well-conceived tasks grabbed pupils' interests well and helped them to develop good understanding of the contribution that children's story books made to early development of their reading.

24. In the small proportion of teaching which was unsatisfactory, the main shortcomings included lack of effective pace and sufficient challenge for pupils. These shortcomings were also a feature of some lessons which were otherwise satisfactory. In some lessons, management of pupils was a key weakness which led to insufficient progress being made by the majority of pupils as too much of the teacher's time was taken up with controlling the behaviour of a minority. This was seen, for example, in a geography lesson in Year 8 and a child development lesson in Year 10.
25. The quality of marking is satisfactory overall, but there are some inconsistencies. The quality of homework is sound. It was an area in which a minority of parents expressed dissatisfaction. However, the quality and quantity of homework is about right for pupils' ages.
26. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from the strategies the school has put in place to address literacy and particularly from the lessons in Years 7 to 9 specifically devoted to this end. In these lessons the standard of teaching is good. All teachers have access to individual education plans and are aware of pupils with special educational needs in their classrooms. Most provide sensitive support to these pupils and this helps them to make good progress. Teachers do not, however, always pay particular attention to the specific targets contained in individual education plans when planning their lessons and, in these instances, not enough use is made of tasks and materials specifically designed to meet the needs of individual pupils. In contrast, however, in physical education open-ended tasks in gymnastics allow pupils to produce sequences at their own levels of attainment. In a Year 8 history lesson, pupils were given worksheets specifically designed to match their levels of literacy. In a Year 9 science lesson pupils worked to targets specifically negotiated with the special needs department. When pupils are arranged in groups that match their levels of attainment and teaching is well matched to the needs of each group, the quality of learning and the progress made is good. Specialist support staff almost invariably provide good support to pupils with learning needs. However, when supporting pupils in lessons, their task is not made easy by lack of access to lesson plans beforehand. In some lessons there is good collaboration between subject teachers and learning support staff.

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

27. The school offers a good curriculum in Key Stage 3. Mathematics is a particular strength with an excellent revised curriculum in Year 7 which is in line with national numeracy strategies. The amount of time allocated to religious education has doubled since the previous inspection and the schemes of work are currently being revised to match this increased time. There are satisfactory developments in the literacy strategy especially in Year 7. However, there are a few weaknesses in the curricular provision. Drama is well structured but does not have sufficient time to develop evaluative and exploratory work and, thus, does not prepare pupils sufficiently for work at GCSE level. In history there is a lack of opportunity for independent research resulting in a lack of depth in pupils' understanding and writing. There is an inequality of access to the programme of study in physical education. The boys have the option in Year 9 to study dance or rugby, but not both. The use of information and communication technology is good in most subjects in both key stages. Some subjects make too little use of computers as part of their teaching, namely art, music, modern foreign languages and physical education. Thus, statutory requirements for the use of computers are not currently being met in art, music and physical education. Most subjects are beginning to build information and communication technology work into their schemes of work. The new co-ordinator is aware that up-to-date monitoring is needed to establish exactly what contribution each subject is making to the teaching of information communication technology.
28. The curriculum in Key Stage 4 is good. As well as the National Curriculum subjects, options include GCSE courses such as business studies, child development and drama. A valuable contribution to the depth of the curriculum since the previous inspection is the addition of the well-structured work-related learning programme. Currently selected groups of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are involved in working within local industry in order to provide them with a curriculum that suitably meets their needs. Their progress is closely monitored and most pupils' results at GCSE were one grade above their predictions. There was a noted improvement in behaviour whilst in school and a close working relationship with parents. At the end of the last school year all pupils involved in this scheme gained employment. The size of the school has made the introduction of GNVQ courses difficult because of training and financial implications. Despite this, the school is working well towards increasing opportunities for vocational education. For example, plans are in hand to offer GNVQ units through collaboration with another local secondary school.
29. The school ensures equality of opportunity for all and all pupils have full access to the curriculum. There is sensible disapplication of pupils from modern foreign languages for the work-related learning programme. These pupils are given effective, additional support through the special educational needs programme.
30. With the exception of a small number of pupils who do not follow a course in modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11, pupils with special educational needs have full access to all aspects of the curriculum and the extra-curricular activities that are offered by the school. There has been good improvement from the time of the last inspection in the quality and comprehensiveness of individual education plans. Pupils now have clear targets, although some of these could be focused more sharply on exactly what pupils need to do. It would also help if targets were broken down into smaller more measurable short-term objectives. Many pupils with special educational needs take advantage of the good extra support provided by lunchtime homework sessions and are keen members of the gardening club. Pupils with special educational needs in Years 10 and

11 benefit from additional early career interviews and advice before they leave school at the age of 16. There is, however, no whole-school strategy to provide for the needs of gifted and talented pupils. Individual subjects make sound provision in some cases, such as additional classes or after-school clubs for able pupils in mathematics and science. Overall, there is scope for the school to improve on this.

31. The school's extra-curricular programme is good, with a very good programme in physical education. Teachers work hard to provide learning opportunities at lunchtimes and after school. Helpful revision and homework sessions are provided. Clubs include provision for pupils working at Level 8 in mathematics, support in food technology, modern foreign languages, careers, gardening and a variety of musical opportunities such as choir, wind band and percussion group. The wide range of sporting activities includes girls' and boys' football, hockey, climbing, gymnastics, inter-house competitions and matches against other schools. There are visits to national sporting events and trips abroad to France and Germany. The school's curriculum provision is also enhanced by its involvement in the Duke of Edinburgh's award. The pupils are enthusiastic and there is good participation.
32. The school's partnership with the community is very good. These numerous links have a positive impact on the pupils' attainment and personal development. For example, the pupils are involved in organising a party for the senior citizens. They make the food and provide musical entertainment. There is a close relationship with a local leisure and keep-fit company. Visitors to the school include members of the local clergy and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution as well as members from many other local organisations. The careers convention in conjunction with Year 9 parents' evening is well attended by local industry.
33. The links with other educational establishments are also very good. Every attempt is made to make the move from primary to secondary phase as smooth as possible. There are taster days in Year 5, an induction day in Year 6, and many invitations for Year 6 pupils to visit the school for plays and activity days. Curriculum links are discussed every half term and there is moderation in the marking of pupils work in Years 6 and 7. Links with the two local post-16 establishments are also impressive. Year 11 students from another local secondary school are now being invited to meet Year 11 pupils at Alderman Peel to give them an opportunity to get to know each other before starting college together and therefore maximise involvement in organisations such as college councils on arrival. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
34. The programme of study for personal and social education provides a sound basis for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and the school has responded positively to the previous inspection report in respect of spiritual development. The 'Theme for the Week' and 'Thought for the Day', which provide the basis for daily collective worship, have been revised and clearer guidelines provided for tutors. In addition, departmental schemes of work are now required to provide opportunities for spiritual development. As a result provision for the spiritual development of pupils is now satisfactory. School assemblies incorporate a spiritual element although not all tutors ensure a daily act of collective worship for their pupils when their groups do not take part in school assemblies. Good opportunities are provided for pupils' social and moral development and, while provision for their cultural development remains satisfactory, too little attention is being paid to the need to prepare pupils for life in a multicultural society.

35. Many, though not all, departments now incorporate aspects of spirituality into lessons and their schemes of work. As a result pupils are provided with opportunities to discuss and reflect on such issues as life and death in religious education, the meaning of infinity in mathematics, environmental and health issues in science, the question of slavery in history, the wonder of natural phenomena in geography, the sense of awe in winning at the Olympics and learning how to lose in physical education. Moral issues feature strongly in the personal and social education programme, particularly in relation to self, to 'Why me' and 'Where am I going?' Due consideration is given to issues such as genetic engineering, donor surgery and religious views on divorce and marriage. In geography problems of space for the population of Japan and issues surrounding ageing populations are part of lessons. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop socially through co-operation with others in lessons, working together in sports teams and musical ensembles, to accept positions of responsibility as mentors and members of the school council, to raise funds for charities and through service to the school and the community. Though satisfactory, cultural experiences are not as well developed as other aspects. Opportunities exist to visit art galleries, to make good use of local visual resources in art, to participate in school visits to Europe and to study the cultural aspects of other countries in geography and modern foreign languages and of other religions. Visiting artists contribute to music and in English and history pupils consider the cultures of the black peoples of North America. Some consideration of racism occurs in religious education and personal and social education lessons and there are links with the Gambia whilst a multicultural day is planned with the local primary school. However, in respect of a multicultural dimension to pupils' development there has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. Although members of staff know pupils very well indeed, and very positive relationships result in pupils thriving in a secure environment and being confident to share problems, formal procedures to secure their welfare, health and safety are unsatisfactory overall. This is as a result of recent new staffing arrangements whereby staff recently promoted to senior positions are waiting to attend courses organised by the LEA. Relationships with local primary schools are well established and ensure there is a good exchange of information about individual pupils transferring from Year 6. Arrangements to familiarise them with the school successfully ensure they settle happily and confidently when starting in Year 7.
37. There is guidance about child abuse, but not all non-teaching adults at the school are aware of this or receive regular briefing on procedures. There is no policy that reflects the local child protection committee's guidelines, for example in recognising the signs and symptoms of abuse. The local authority's requirements for the appointment of a governor with responsibility for child protection and information to parents about the school's procedures are not met. Action has been taken to secure the future training of the designated person for child protection. The strong tutor system supports the personal needs of pupils well and there are regular meetings of the pastoral team where concerns about individual pupils are shared and suitable action agreed, involving parents where appropriate.
38. There is an appropriate health and safety policy, and although the person responsible has not yet been trained, there is advice available through the local education authority. Arrangements to deal with first aid emergencies are sound with first aid facilities located both centrally at reception and in legally required areas around the school, for example design and technology, science and physical education. There is firm planning to update first aid training as required. Pupils gain a good understanding of fire procedures

through drills practised each term. Fire-fighting equipment together with alarms are regularly checked and maintained. The school is now aware that all fire escape routes should be unlocked during the school day. Arrangements for subject specific risk assessments are usually at least satisfactory, but not consistently so and, although good in science, they do not meet requirements in design and technology despite the care of teachers to brief pupils on safety procedures during lessons. The school is inspected annually to identify safety concerns and suitable action is subsequently taken. This procedure has not yet been developed fully to meet the current requirements for risk assessment. Arrangements for the regular testing of electrical appliances are fully in place.

39. A computerised registration system has recently been introduced that enables access to a full range of information to assist in monitoring levels of attendance and reasons for absence. Until this time, while analysis at individual pupil level has been taking place, no analysis of attendance by year or tutor group has been done to enable effort to be focused on specific problems. The levels of attendance overall are marginally below a new national benchmark and the school needs to develop strategies to overcome this. Registers, together with the late booking in procedures, provide an accurate record of pupils present in the school and are kept secure in case of emergency. Although reasons for absence are always required, too much time elapses before unexplained absences are followed up. Where the school is concerned about an individual pupil there is effective liaison with the educational social worker.
40. The procedures in place to assess pupils' attainment and how well they are getting on are good overall. Individual pupils and their achievements are discussed with Year 6 teachers before pupils start at the school. Results of testing at the end of Key Stage 2 are suitably analysed and used by teachers as a further guide to expectations for individual pupils and to facilitate banding arrangements. Subject teachers regularly assess the progress made, they discuss the results of this with pupils individually; listening to their views and agreeing targets for future efforts. This is most effective where there is a high level of accuracy in the judgements made and targets have been well thought out to address identified needs. Where targets are set pupils find these helpful. The progress of individual pupils is well monitored. Procedures usually ensure that problems affecting learning are identified quickly and dealt with well. In some subjects, mainly English, history, modern foreign languages and music, assessment procedures are less effective because of how they are implemented. On occasion assessment descriptors at Key Stage 3 are too general resulting in an imprecise understanding of what is needed. At Key Stage 4 where National Curriculum levels are used instead of GCSE grades this is not as helpful to pupils. Targets set in annual progress reports are often too broad to give pupils a firm grasp of where to focus their future efforts. The personal guidance given by teachers in lessons is of a high standard and valued by pupils, particularly at Key Stage 4 where they recognise there are increasing expectations for them to take responsibility for their own learning.
41. The school has an effective system for keeping records relating to pupils with special educational needs and to review in conjunction with parents, both statements, as required by the Code of Practice for special educational needs, and individual education plans on an annual basis. Targets are not yet sufficiently precise or short term, however. As a result effective monitoring of progress towards these targets does not take place regularly enough, new targets are not always set as soon as the previous ones are reached and progress towards meeting targets is not always communicated to parents. In some cases targets in individual education plans do not match targets in statements of special educational need because some statements are dated and the needs of pupils have changed.

42. The personal support and guidance pupils receive is good. There are effective and well-understood procedures for dealing with behaviour and discipline problems. The school seeks to involve parents at an early stage where there is cause for concern and this reinforces a good working partnership. They are equally well informed where their children achieve well. The staff handbook promotes a consistent approach to classroom management and where this is effectively implemented it usually results in a positive learning environment. The rewards system is valued, more so by pupils in Key Stage 3. Some pupils in Key Stage 4 have noted that its implementation is inconsistent, particularly where supply staff are involved. This makes it less effective in motivating them. The full records kept by staff, both formal and informal, ensure there are the means to monitor behaviour patterns effectively. An anti-bullying culture is promoted well through the programme for personal, health and social education. The school also ensures that parents are made aware when their children are involved in bullying. Suitable action is taken to deter re-occurrence and inspection evidence confirms the view of parents that it is effective. The Year 11 mentors have been prepared well for their role and are valued by those younger pupils who need to share concerns but prefer not to go to an adult. Pupils are only excluded from the school as a last resort where other sanctions have been ineffective in changing behaviour. Time spent out of school is kept to a minimum length and the procedures used are correct. Subsequent monitoring systems support pupils well when they return to school. The school is trying, rightly, to promote the use of the tutor period for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal and academic development. Whilst there were examples of some very good use of tutor periods for this purpose, there were also examples of poor use by some form tutors. This resulted in wasted time and disaffection by some pupils, particularly at Key Stage 4.
43. There is an effective personal, health and social education programme, the content of which is kept under review and updated as needed. Pupils receive good quality careers guidance and take part in a well-planned work experience programme that prepare them well for the decisions they must make about continued education and training at the end of Key Stage 4. Drugs awareness and sex education are both addressed effectively within personal, health and social education and attention is suitably given to the need for pupils to make informed choices. The programme of assemblies makes a positive contribution to personal development. Pupils' records of achievement provide a good record of individual academic and personal achievements.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

44. The overall effectiveness of the school's links with parents is good. The large majority of parents are pleased with what the school provides and achieves. Inspection findings support their positive views. Their children are expected to work hard and they make good progress. They grow in maturity and most develop responsible attitudes. Parents are usually comfortable about approaching staff with concerns and feel confident they will be informed of any problems their children experience. They do have a few concerns, but there is not enough evidence to justify most of these. Some parents do not feel their children have the right amount of homework. Evidence during the inspection confirms that a suitable amount of work that supports classroom learning is usually set on a regular basis, although some pupils complete much of this at 'homework club' held during the lunch period. Others vary in how conscientiously they tackle the work and spend more or less time accordingly. Some parents would like to see more opportunities for extra-curricular activities. Although there is a good range of activities on offer during the lunch periods, opportunities after school are necessarily restricted because of the number of pupils needing to catch a bus home. There has

been some concern about the recent leadership and management changes, necessitated by the suspension and resignation of the headteacher, together with a high staff turnover. Inspectors are able to reassure parents of the effectiveness of the recently appointed acting headteacher who has very good support from the governing body. New members of staff are supported well, settling into their roles effectively and generally providing a good quality of teaching. However, there has inevitably been some negative impact on pupils' learning due to the instances of illness in the English and modern foreign languages departments. A few parents do not feel well informed about how well their children are getting on. Inspectors agree that annual progress reports do not provide sufficient information.

45. The usually positive relationships that parents have with staff result in them being confident to contact the school and discuss any problems and concerns they have about their children. The student planners provide an effective means of communication. They are usually used well and are checked regularly by staff. The school provides a useful list of diary dates for parents at the beginning of the school year. There are reminders about these together with reporting about current news and events in the regular newsletters. The prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are well written and provide overall a good range of information about routines, expectations and school performance. Some requirements have been overlooked. The prospectus does not make sufficiently clear its policy for children with special educational needs, and teacher assessments for end of Key Stage 3 tests together with local comparisons for GCSE results are not given. The governors' annual report to parents does not report on progress made on its action plan following the last inspection. There is also insufficient information about arrangements for pupils with disabilities and how successful they have been in meeting the needs of children with special educational needs through their policy for this. Before their children start at the school parents receive good quality information and the opportunity to visit the school and speak with staff. At times where choices must be made, for example what subjects to choose for GCSE and the training and education opportunities available after reaching the age of 16 years, there are well-planned information events. These additionally provide access to a suitable range of people who can advise them, for example the careers officer, local training providers and staff from colleges of further education.
46. Annual progress reports to parents have been changed following the last inspection when in some subjects they were too lengthy and complicated. They are now too brief and do not tell parents what their children know, understand and can do. The progress made over the course of the year is not clearly set out and many of the targets set are too general to help parents understand what must be done to improve. Reporting on attitudes to learning and individual pupil's personal development is good. With effect from the last academic year there are suitable arrangements for all parents to discuss annual progress reports with teachers soon after they are received. During these discussions, mutually agreed targets for pupils are usefully set.
47. The involvement of parents with the school has a satisfactory impact on pupils' learning overall. Consultation about the home/school agreement has successfully resulted in a document that promotes a positive working relationship and makes clear the role of both the school and parents in supporting this. It has received a high level of support from parents. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are effectively consulted when individual education plans are being drawn up and are invited to attend the annual reviews of both statements and individual education plans. There is an effective parent and teacher association that contributes to the work of the school through social fund-raising events to provide 'extras' to enhance subject teaching. Such funds are also

used to help needy pupils afford school trips and visits. The school uses a range of questionnaires to test the feelings of parents, for example about the arrangements made for careers' conventions, option information events and house names. They were also asked for their views when the school piloted changes to the organisation of the school day. It is now in a good position to extend this process to involve parents in full consultation to inform the decision-making process for future changes to procedures and routines.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

48. The overall leadership and management of the school are good. The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher work in close partnership providing very good leadership and management of the school. They have set high standards and expectations for the work of the school and provide a very firm and clear steer for its future educational development. Within the uncertainty of the current situation, with the last headteacher being suspended early last academic year and then tendering his resignation towards the end of the year, the acting headteacher and acting deputy have enabled a calm atmosphere to prevail across the school and to provide staff with a sense of stability and renewed purpose. As a result, staff confidence and morale, which became somewhat tenuous at the start of last year, have not suffered unduly. In fact, many members of staff, particularly the teaching staff, have successfully taken on new and more demanding roles in order to fill gaps left by a much reduced senior management team.
49. Over the last couple of years the school has reduced its senior management team down from two deputies to one. As the only senior teacher currently is acting up as a deputy, the senior management team consists of teachers who have had little experience in senior management before. This has made a good contribution to their development and the enthusiasm of the team has also ensured that in the face of difficulties the school has been well-run and new developments, material to the school's continued improvement, well maintained. There is no doubt that the quality of leadership and management has made a salient contribution to the improved provision in the school since the previous inspection and in particular to the improved quality of teaching and learning. However, senior managers are now becoming stretched and this is beginning to show in terms of the greater attention now being required to see through current developments and to monitor and pursue consistency of implementation of new policies, procedures and systems. For example, there are some inconsistencies in the extent to which whole-school developments are implemented across the school, such as in assessment, the use of information and communication technology, and the use of the tutor periods. Thus, the school should not continue to run with such a pared back school management team, or alternatively it should make more time for those in senior positions to carry out their whole-school responsibilities.
50. Most heads of department provide at least sound leadership and management and many lead their departments well. However, there are significant weaknesses in the management of English and modern foreign languages which have a detrimental impact in the quality of provision in these areas and hence the standards achieved by pupils. Some weaknesses in management, not as significant as in English and languages, are also evident in physical education and music. In design and technology there is not as rigorous a management overview of the whole subject. There is good leadership and management of pastoral staff and this makes a good contribution to the support and care given to individual pupils.

51. The school has a very good knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses and there are very good systems in place for checking the work of the school, including monitoring of teaching. This has led to good improvements in aspects such as teaching and also to the development of good strategies to help tackle the issues in most cases. Staff illnesses in English and modern foreign languages have slowed down what the school would like to do in these areas. The school is making sound preparations for implementing the new procedures in performance management. There are shortcomings in the layout and presentation of the school development plan, although the school has identified appropriate areas for improvement and is very good at prioritising and taking the action required to tackle perceived weaknesses.
52. Governors are enthusiastic and very well informed. They are keen to make a valid contribution to the work of the school and have therefore reflected quite carefully on how they organise their work, including sub-committee work, in order to improve it further. They have provided very good support to staff during a difficult period. Overall, governors fulfill most of their responsibilities very well, although there are a few areas where the school does not meet legal requirements.
53. The organisation of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. An effective policy and helpful handbook guide the work of all staff in catering for the needs of such pupils. All staff have access to pupils' individual education plans. Departmental meetings to discuss individual pupils and other aspects of the provision are held weekly and there is a good system of record keeping and data collection for reviews of statements and individual education plans. The department has sufficient teaching and support staff to meet the needs of its pupils. The governor linked to this area takes an active interest in the work of the department, visiting regularly to provide support and assess progress. Finance and resources are adequate though little use is made of specialist computer programs as yet. Development planning is in place, and in the case of literacy, well linked to whole-school development planning and to the demands of the previous inspection report. There are few opportunities for staff development for learning support assistants, but where these exist, they are well used. The finance provided to the department is appropriately spent but the school does not track closely enough the funds allocated to subject departments for special educational needs. Thus, it is not possible to judge how effectively these monies are spent. The acting deputy headteacher is the special educational needs co-ordinator. Since taking up the role of acting deputy headteacher, there has been less time available to fully analyse the progress of pupils or the provision made by subject departments and to pursue ways to build on the good reputation for special educational needs already achieved.
54. The governors have followed closely the recommendations of the most recent auditors' report. Statements of policy and procedures for handling and accounting for money are in place, and careful monitoring encourages good practice. Additional responsibilities have been assigned to generate extra income and the control of specific funding. The governors effectively apply the principles of best value where possible and are becoming more adept in using comparative data to analyse the school's efficiency.
55. The substantial benefit to the school's finances derived from lettings is due to be increased by an imaginative programme of community use. The good management of extra funding for small schools has resulted in generous staffing, and is evident in the high standard of the school's accommodation and resources. A planned financial surplus enables specific projects including the refurbishment of a food technology room and improved computer facilities. The multiple responsibilities recently assumed by the school's managers have delayed other schemes such as the management of cleaning, caretaking and grounds maintenance.

56. The resources for learning are good. The provision of computers is good both in terms of quantity and quality. The school library is a good resource which does an excellent job in promoting literacy and in supporting effective and challenging teaching in subjects. The provision of resources in curriculum areas is good in English, mathematics, history and modern languages and satisfactory in all others. The school also makes good use of resources beyond the school.
57. The school's accommodation is good. The school makes very good use of its buildings and grounds. Rooms are well maintained with good display noted in the science and mathematics areas. The previous weakness highlighted by inspectors concerning health and safety issues in a food technology room has been resolved. Further improvements to the careers library and to the science laboratories are planned. Pupils take an active role in maintaining the quality of their environment.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

58. In order to improve further and to tackle the weaknesses identified in this report the headteacher, senior staff and governors should:
- Improve standards in English and modern foreign languages so that they are in line with national expectations by:
 - i. tackling effectively the weaknesses in pupils' writing;
 - ii. providing pupils in English with more opportunities to write for a wider range of purposes and audiences;
 - iii. implementing the whole-school strategy for use of literacy across the curriculum;
 - iv. ensuring that there is sound quality of leadership and management in both subjects;
 - v. improving to a satisfactory standard the quality of pupils' written work in languages;
 - vi. developing more creative and imaginative approaches to teaching and learning in languages.(Paragraph numbers: 5-8, 10, 21, 50, 61-63, 67-70, 120-124)
 - Address effectively the issues of boys' underachievement by:
 - i. improving boys' literacy skills;
 - ii. ensuring that all teachers are effectively adapting their teaching methods to suit the needs of boys and to motivate boys;
 - iii. taking effective action to tackle the disaffection which affects some boys as well as girls, but is more noticeable amongst boys in Key Stage 4.(Paragraph numbers: 4, 7, 9, 13, 24, 64, 91, 92, 97, 104)
 - Tackle effectively the shortcomings in the provision for pupils' welfare and guidance by:
 - i. ensuring that there is effective monitoring of attendance and action taken quickly where reasons for absence are not forthcoming so that it improves to at least above the latest national benchmark of 92 per cent;
 - ii. ensuring that appropriate attention is paid to all the issues of health and safety identified during the inspection;

- iii. putting in place a pertinent policy and guidance notes for all staff on child protection issues and that non-teaching staff are well briefed about the procedures to be followed;
 - iv. ensuring that there are appropriate and effective systems for assessing pupils' progress and attainment in all subjects, particularly in English and modern foreign languages;
 - v. ensuring that the progress of pupils with special educational needs is effectively monitored;
 - vi. ensuring that all teachers make effective use of the tutor period so that it makes a useful contribution to pupils' academic and personal development.
- (Paragraph numbers: 18, 36-41, 65, 123)

Minor weaknesses

59. In addition to the main key issues listed above the school should also tackle minor issues raised in the report:
- 1. Meet legal requirements – collective worship, use of information and communication technology, school reports, annual governors' reports to parents, school prospectus. (Paragraph numbers: 27, 34, 45, 52,114)
 - 2. Ensure that senior managers have sufficient time to manage their responsibilities effectively. (Paragraph number: 49)
 - 3. Develop further the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum so that all departments (including SEN) make effective use of computers. (Paragraph numbers: 27, 53, 93, 114, 118)
 - 4. Raise attainment in history and music at Key Stage 3 (Paragraph numbers: 8,109, 125, 127).
 - 5. Improve the opportunities for pupils to learn about living in a multicultural society. (Paragraph number: 35)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	109
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	55

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	20	46	26	5	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	343	N/a
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	51	N/a

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	17	N/a
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	90	N/a

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.7
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	39	38	77

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	13	29	25
	Girls	23	22	24
	Total	36	51	49
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	47 (49)	66 (61)	64 (60)
	National	63 (64)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	8 (10)	31 (39)	30 (16)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	22	24	26
	Girls	23	25	30
	Total	45	49	56
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	58 (55)	64 (75)	73 (60)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	19 (14)	42 (40)	27 (31)
	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

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	25	41	66

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	9	22	23
	Girls	19	40	41
	Total	28	62	64
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	42.4 (47)	94 (91)	97 (93)
	National	(46.6)	(90.9)	(95.8)

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

GCSE results	GCSE point score
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Average point score per pupil	School	38 (37.5)
	National	(38)

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

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	1
White	341
Any other minority ethnic group	1

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	10	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 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	25.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	13.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	252

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.7
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	20.4
Key Stage 4	17.5

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1,162,594
Total expenditure	1,162,660
Expenditure per pupil	3,420
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	-66

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	343
Number of questionnaires returned	37

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	24	68	8	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	51	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	16	65	14	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	5	59	30	3	3
The teaching is good.	27	49	11	0	14
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	51	19	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	51	38	5	0	5
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	41	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	14	73	11	3	0
The school is well led and managed.	30	41	14	8	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	59	3	3	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	16	43	27	3	11

Other issues raised by parents

Parents at the meeting expressed concerns about the recent high turnover of staff and the impact of staff illness in some subjects. There have been more staff changes in the last two years than usual; staff have left to retire, for promotion and two staff have taken maternity leave. Overall, the impact of new staff is beneficial. There has been some long-term staff illness, most notably in English and modern foreign languages. Currently, this is not having a detrimental impact on the quality of teaching being received by pupils. However, it has affected the performance of pupils in modern foreign languages, which is low.

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

ENGLISH

60. At the time of the inspection the head of English was absent from school, and the head of drama had left his post. The remaining English staff, including several supply teachers, were making valiant efforts to ensure that pupils received relevant and organised lessons, and in this they were successful. The school had asked a supply teacher with considerable previous experience in English and drama to act as head of both departments.
61. Pupils' overall standards of attainment in English have declined since the previous inspection, due to a decline in writing skills. There is significant underachievement by boys. Results in national tests are well below average, and although GCSE English language results are close to national averages, they too have declined. Nonetheless the results achieved at GCSE are largely good when pupils' prior attainment is taken into account. All pupils make good progress in reading, and in speaking and listening skills. The progress in writing of pupils aged 11 to 14 has been unsatisfactory. This is because teaching, although usually very conscientious and diligent, has not given sufficient focus to developing pupils' language skills, or to expecting a sufficiently wide range of writing. Marking of pupils' work has been far too variable, as has precise advice on how to improve. Whilst providing intelligent and valuable units of work and assessment systems, the head of department has not been able to create a clear and consistent sense of purpose. There has been insufficient checking of how teachers and pupils perform; strategies for improvement are inadequate.
62. English results in national tests taken by pupils at 14 have been erratic. Whilst over four years performance has been close to the national average, girls' performance has declined and that of boys has been well below national average in three of the last four years. The 1999 results were well below the national average and those achieved by schools with a similar intake of pupils. They were also inferior to those gained by the same pupils in mathematics and science. The 2000 results were slightly worse. A detailed scrutiny of pupils' books and files confirmed that there has been too much emphasis on literature and imaginative writing in Years 7 to 9, leaving pupils ill-equipped to demonstrate a full and accurate range of written skills. GCSE English language results have improved in terms of the percentage achieving a grade A*-G, but the overall level of attainment and the percentage of A*-C passes has declined since the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils gaining a grade A*-C in English language was in line with national averages in 1999 but lower in 2000. Again, boys' lower achievement is the main factor. GCSE English literature results remain amongst the best in the school. Although a smaller proportion of pupils are entered than is the case nationally and twice as many girls are entered as boys, the results represent good achievement. In drama pupils learn good group and performance skills by the time they are 14. Their ability to judge their own and others' performance and to make improvements in the light of discussion is limited, however, because the single lesson each week gives insufficient time for such activity. Up to one-fifth of pupils, with a good mix of boys and girls, take GCSE drama as an option. Results have varied considerably, and are below national average, but tend to be appropriate for the abilities of pupils taking the subject.
63. Pupil achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9, but good at GCSE. This is because there is no clear focus on the requirements of writing in National Curriculum English. As a result, teaching has been unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3. Teachers have not been given sufficient guidance on the criteria for a pupil to attain a particular level. As a result

both teachers and pupils assume that lengthy work with a literature or creative/imaginative bias is the ideal. Writing to persuade, inform and analyse is rare, and rarely successful as few pupils can sustain it in an appropriate form such as a letter, review or newspaper article. With good teaching, pupils can demonstrate good control, as in the case of a Year 9 pupil who sustained tone and formality in both an imagined newspaper article about the Prime Minister's wife being saved from drowning whilst on holiday, and a formal letter of thanks from the Prime Minister himself. But few pupils are such confident writers. The uncertainty of many stems from marking which is too varied in quality. Too many errors of punctuation and grammar go uncorrected (as noted by some parents), and there are too few occasions when pupils are clearly told, with priority targets, what precise skills need to be shown for them to improve their grade. The potentially valuable assessment sheets are conscientiously used by both teachers and pupils, and stimulate pupils to consider their own standards and enter a written dialogue with teachers about them. However criteria are too generalised and both grades and comments often become vague or over-generous, generating a degree of complacency. A Year 9 class who had created witches' spells after reading 'Macbeth' concentrated on rhyme and humour to the detriment of how the text used vocabulary to give the reader a clear view of the atmosphere in the scene and the sense of evil. In direct contrast pupils make good progress with reading and oral skills in the vast majority of lessons, because they are taught their value and teachers skilfully encourage pupils to use and develop them.

64. GCSE results and the amount and quality of coursework folders prove the good achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11, because of teaching which has been good. Pupils make good progress, especially in the case of girls and with literature. Relatively good reading standards help pupils to respond to and appreciate set texts. Teachers make very good use of class and group discussion, asking demanding and thought-provoking questions which enable pupils to gain good insights into topics and to express them clearly and with confidence. In a particularly good lesson, this helped the teacher of a Year 11 low ability class, in which almost all pupils had special educational needs, to teach the value of role-play and hot-seating during the study of extracts from 'Julius Caesar'. Pupils learnt to distinguish characters, and to contrast the marriages of Caesar and Brutus. Such approaches also provide a stimulating basis for written work, which is well structured by teachers through coursework units. Marking is better related to examination requirements. Pupils respond well to the more detailed and helpful assessment sheets. There continues to be some underachievement amongst some boys, frustrated by their apparent lack of success when assignments are returned. As they have not previously been taught an adequate range of language skills for writing, they find it difficult to structure and develop ideas on paper and to use redrafting opportunities effectively.
65. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in all years, despite there being insufficient use of the detail from individual education plans in planning how to teach them. Also, short-term targets could be more in number and more specific. However, pupils and their needs are known: they are taught sympathetically, but with the expectation that they will behave, work hard, and will achieve. A low ability Year 9 group all learnt how to use a computer to complete, print and save a short story on being homeless. In this they were helped by the teacher explaining very clearly what was expected, and then by the quality of individual advice offered by both teacher and support assistant. On some occasions pupils would benefit from support assistants being more involved in deciding the best materials and approaches to help individual pupils with statements of need.

66. In lessons observed during the week, the quality of teaching was good. The occasional unsatisfactory lesson was more than balanced by the two-thirds of lessons which were at least good. Most teachers quickly establish a positive lesson atmosphere, using established routines and explaining to pupils the purposes of the lesson and how these will be achieved. Pupils usually respond well to this, although some GCSE groups contain pupils who are disaffected and disenchanted, partly because they realise that some past teaching has not given them adequate preparation for what is now expected of them. One Year 11 group comparing newspaper coverage quickly learnt how to access the range of information and share it within a group. Half, however, were unable or unwilling to share summaries of articles, or to consider the journalist's attitude by discussing word use, despite good prompts and encouragement from the teacher. As a result, word play in headlines such as 'DELIA PANS HER RIVAL COOKS' and 'GOLDEN AGE' (on Jonathan Edwards' Olympic success) went unappreciated. Some teaching was too undemanding: pupils in a Year 10 class learnt little in a lengthy teacher-led class discussion on 'Julius Caesar'. The teacher only managed to actively involve a third of them, and few original ideas were drawn out. In contrast careful open-ended questions, with alternative phrasing to help pupils to understand, resulted in drama pupils feeling included in their own learning and helped them to begin to discuss the quality of their practical work.
67. Good accommodation and resources, including a good range of texts, ready access to videos and some to computers, all help pupils learn. Good attitudes to English are evidenced in the good pupil behaviour in most lessons, and the willingness of the majority to get involved in group work and class discussion. Books and files are neat and well kept, most pupils wanting to work hard and succeed. Too many pupils are unquestioning, and over-reliant on the teacher for ideas and structure in written work. In practical drama most pupils are trusting, responsible and co-operative.
68. The leadership and management of the English department have been unsatisfactory. The original clear and intelligent vision for teaching the subject has not responded sufficiently to national changes, and the use and value of well-conceived assessment sheets has not been checked. The department lacks cohesion, as seen in marking variations, disappointing national test results and inattention to the development of language skills. Progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory: some weaknesses have been addressed, but in the key areas of test results, GCSE English language results, boys' achievement, the range of writing produced, and progress in basic skills in Years 7 to 9, there has been a deterioration.

Literacy

69. Standards of literacy have improved since the last inspection and, with the exception of writing skills at Key Stage 3, are now largely satisfactory. Considerable thought and some training has gone into the literacy initiative, and all departments accept their role in using and developing language skills. More and better information about pupils' literacy levels and experiences in primary schools is being given to subject departments, and there is a planned rolling programme to develop the use of 'key words' and writing frames. In the past, work has related too closely to the English and special needs departments. An intervention scheme to boost the attainment of some Year 7 pupils in reading and writing has worked well, but what is done in departments remains very varied and too uncoordinated. Reading aloud is encouraged in science (where it could happen more) and history, and the latter has invested in two-tier textbooks to make information more accessible to weaker readers. In physical education there is very good use of technical vocabulary, for instance the correct names of muscles in warm-ups, and key terms such as 'aesthetic' and 'refinement' which pupils are expected to

integrate into their practical work. In science pupils are helped to become familiar with such vocabulary by its frequent use and careful pronunciation by teachers when it is first introduced. Language is widened in religious education and geography by emphasising new key words and concepts. Almost all subjects make a good contribution to pupils' speaking and listening skills by well-worded questioning, and in mathematics by expecting them to explain problems which they are trying to solve in investigations. Modern foreign languages make good use of pair work and grammatical terms to enhance pupils' awareness and confidence. History teachers use opportunities for discursive writing, but have not yet made enough use of frameworks or templates for guiding pupils' writing or to encourage enough pupils to write at length. In geography pupils write at length about life in Kenya and Amazonia.

70. These examples of good literacy development, however, are inconsistent. The literacy plan has not yet been fully implemented. Most pupils cannot yet see literacy as a feature of every subject, and so their awareness of its importance, and their confidence in using language in varied ways in different subjects is under-developed. The impact of departmental literacy policies which influence how pupils are taught remains varied. One excellent feature is the library which is attractive, and well stocked with a range of books, reference articles, cassettes and videos. It is most efficiently run by a full-time fully qualified librarian. This facility is well respected and well used, and has a significant impact on the reading and investigational skills of the pupils.

MATHEMATICS

71. There have been a number of developments in mathematics in the past two years. There has been a clear emphasis on widening the range of teaching strategies, developing the curriculum for Key Stage 3 and introducing the National Numeracy Strategy for Years 7 and 8. Although these developments have yet to be reflected in external assessment results there was evidence during the inspection of an improvement in the work in mathematics since the last inspection.
72. Standards on entry have changed little in the past four years and, based on pupils' Key Stage 2 test results, are well below average. Results for the 1999 entry indicate that very few are high attainers. In a standardised numeracy test for this group of pupils barely a quarter scored above average.
73. Between 1996 and 1999 the performance of pupils in the National Curriculum tests at Key Stage 3 have been close to the national average. During this time the performance of boys, in terms of average National Curriculum points, has been below that of boys nationally whilst that of girls has been above their counterparts nationally. The proportion of pupils gaining National Curriculum Level 7 in year 2000 was 16 per cent with no significant difference in achievement by boys or girls. Overall standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are close to the national average with girls performing marginally better than boys.
74. The proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades in the 1999 GCSE examinations was above the national average, with girls performing better than boys. The year 2000 results show an overall fall in results for A*-C but with boys performing better than girls. Between 1996 and 1999 results, in terms of achievement of A*-C grades, have been above average in two years and below average in two, but the overall achievement of grades A*-G has been consistently above the national average for both boys and girls. In the year 2000 examinations only one pupil in Year 11 was not entered for the examinations and all candidates achieved grades between A* and F. Taken as a whole,

standards at Key Stage 4 are in line with national averages with no significant variation between achievement of boys and girls.

75. Standards of work seen in Key Stage 3 are good. The development of number skills is progressive through the key stage and by Year 9 all pupils can handle decimal numbers and percentages. More able pupils can work well without a calculator and deal competently with estimation. Good use is made of computer software to introduce algebraic formulae and symbol manipulation for pupils of all abilities. Some less able pupils, however, lack the confidence in their computer skills to take maximum advantage of the facilities. All pupils, but especially those with special educational needs, make good progress through this key stage in relation to attainment on entry, and this is confirmed by the achievement in the national tests at the end of the key stage.
76. In Key Stage 4 standards of work are satisfactory. In much of the investigative work standards are good and pupils of all abilities write well about their work. There is evidence of good information and communication technology skills in both the manipulation and presentation of information in this work. Pupils with special educational needs clearly find this application of information and communication technology motivating and produce some good investigations. Work in algebra and in shape and space builds well on the work in the previous key stage and some good quality graphical work was seen in pupils' books. Whilst the more able can handle algebraic concepts such as simultaneous equations well, many pupils lack confidence in the formulation and manipulation of algebraic expressions. There is limited evidence of independent learning in the work seen and achievement is in line with the standards at the end of the key stage. Given the achievement on entry to Year 10 this reflects satisfactory progress for most pupils and good progress for those with special educational needs.
77. The quality of teaching is very good or better in the majority of classes seen and never less than good. Hence it is very good overall. Teaching is marginally better in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4. Lessons are well planned with a variety of teaching strategies and effective use of time. Teachers have secure knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, mathematics and a detailed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their pupils, including those with special educational needs. Good use is made of additional in-class support in lessons with lower achieving pupils. In a Year 9 class dealing with ordering decimal numbers one half of the class worked on computers with the learning support teacher to reinforce previous work while the teacher worked with the other half to extend the topic with more complex examples. The motivation and challenge across the ability range that this provided ensured that the understanding of all pupils was enhanced. The good individual support provided by the teacher in some lessons, particularly those without additional in-class support, is often, however, at the expense of promoting independent learning and providing challenge for the most able in the class.
78. Most pupils are well behaved and willing to work when given appropriate tasks. They can be very supportive of each other when working in pairs and in small groups. A small number of pupils in Key Stage 4 do not listen well or concentrate on the task given without continued intervention by the teacher. Lessons are well organised and good classroom management ensures that even when pupil attitudes are not of the highest standard effective learning still takes place. Overall, the good relationships between pupils and teachers and the pleasant orderly environment of the vast majority of classes make a significant contribution to the good standards achieved in mathematics. In a middle ability Year 9 group of enthusiastic pupils the teacher used well-directed rapid

fire questions to maintain an excellent challenging mental arithmetic session on fractions and percentages which the pupils clearly enjoyed as they made very good progress in their understanding of the topic.

79. The department is well managed and although all the teachers have significant responsibilities outside the department they work well as a team sharing resources and good practice. There is a clear focus in the department to widen the range of teaching strategies which has raised the quality of teaching and to further develop the work in numeracy. General resources are satisfactory but much of the computer provision is old and out-of-date and does little to raise expectations. There is no provision of appropriate information and communication technology to support teaching in the classroom and this aspect is not sufficiently embedded in the schemes of work.
80. Since the last inspection an emphasis on developing a wider range of teaching strategies particularly for numeracy has resulted in improved teaching and an increase in the quality of number work with and without calculators, particularly at Key Stage 3.

Numeracy

81. Standards of numeracy and mental arithmetic have improved since the last inspection and are satisfactory and often good in Key Stage 3 where pupils have benefited from the mathematics department's strong emphasis on promoting number skills in line with the National Numeracy Project. Lessons are often planned to start with a short number puzzle or number game and these are popular with pupils. Pupils use calculators with care and confidence and are taught to estimate orders of magnitude. Many can work without a calculator to a considerable extent.
82. There is widespread evidence of pupils applying their mathematical skills in other subject areas. In science at Key Stage 3 there is a range of work showing good estimating and measuring skills and most pupils produce good graphical work. However some below average ability pupils have difficulty choosing the appropriate bar or line graphs to represent data. Opportunities to calculate are adequate but pupils get little chance to practice. In Key Stage 4 science there is evidence of pupils of all abilities having the ability to represent data graphically and perform calculations, with the more able showing good skills. There is good promotion of mathematical skills in design and technology. Pupils weigh, calculate proportions and make costings of finished items to a good degree of accuracy. There is good accurate work in the production of scale drawings and patterns. Work in history shows pupils interpreting numbers, graphs and tables competently. In geography coursework there is effective use of bar charts and graphs to illustrate data and good use of a range of statistical techniques such as Spearman's rank correlation. In physical education pupils demonstrate good problem-solving skills in working out game strategies and they measure accurately to calculate pace and speed. Calculation of price, change, percentage, temperature and times of arrival and departure of buses and trains are features of work in modern foreign languages. In other subjects there is only limited evidence of pupils displaying their numeracy skills. There is a whole-school policy for numeracy but links between mathematics and other subject departments to encourage a wider promotion of number skills are still developing.

SCIENCE

83. Pupils achieve well in science. Good teaching raises their knowledge and understanding from below average at the start of Year 7 to above average when they sit their GCSE examinations five years later.

84. At the end of Year 9 pupils' attainment has risen reaching, overall, the national average. Two years later attainment has risen further with pass rates at GCSE above the national averages for the higher grades A*-C and also for the full range of grades A*-G. The school enters all pupils for dual award science and in 1999 all candidates gained A*-G passes. In most years boys and girls achieve equally well and there is little difference in their attainments at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11. Standards in Year 9 have risen in most recent years and remain consistently above average at the end of Year 11, despite a fall in the A* to C passes in 2000.
85. The pattern of rising standards and good achievement is also evident in lessons and from test results. These show that good teaching is raising attainment in science in all years. Standards rise to often satisfactory and sometimes good levels in topics covering biology, chemistry and physics by the end of Year 9. At this stage most pupils have a sound and many a good grasp of the basic skills needed for scientific investigations. They make simple predictions drawing on science learned earlier and effectively plan a fair test to evaluate their predictions. Some less able pupils have difficulty applying their knowledge in experimental work and of these a significant minority have difficulty writing clearly and accurately about their work. The science department pays careful attention to pupils on the special needs register. Teachers and support assistants work effectively, enabling these pupils also to achieve well.
86. Good achievement continues in Years 10 and 11. Test results show good standards in biology, chemistry and physics. These standards are less evident in pupils' exercise books but this is compensated for by use at home of good revision texts published in association with the GCSE examination board. Towards the end of Year 11 the quality of investigation report improves both for lower ability pupils and particularly by those who work towards the A and A* grades at GCSE. Here the best quality is exemplary.
87. Standards in basic skills are satisfactory overall. The department contributes to pupils' skills in writing, listening and speaking, where standards are overall satisfactory but with some weaknesses in writing by lower ability pupils in Year 9 and below. Pupils handle and use numbers satisfactorily. In Year 7 well-motivated pupils estimated the mass of different objects with increasing accuracy before weighing them. A significant number of higher ability pupils in Years 10 and 11 plot graphs accurately but most pupils do not get sufficient practice at calculating using formulas. Pupils have good opportunities to use computers and the standards of work are usually high. They use spreadsheets and word-processors well when preparing some reports of scientific investigations. Pupils also learn well how to use computers in measuring; in a higher ability Year 8 class pupils transferred temperature measurements they had taken using dataloggers confidently into computers for processing.
88. Teaching of science is good. In Years 7 to 9 teaching was very good in half the lessons inspected and overall three-quarters of all lessons were good or better. None was judged unsatisfactory. Thorough planning, good expectations and very effective management of pupils' results in orderly classes in which all pupils achieve well. In the best lessons interest and enthusiasm flourish and learning is enhanced. Such enthusiasm was infectious, extending Year 8 pupils' understanding of the diversity of chemical elements in a lesson where the teacher's expectations were set high. Teachers and support staff ensure good achievement by pupils with special educational needs. The contribution of additional in-class support encouraged such pupils to develop their measuring skills well in a Year 7 lesson. There are few weaknesses that adversely affect learning in all years but more notably in Years 10 and 11. In some lessons pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to learn independently and teachers do

not explore enough, pupils' previous understanding in lessons. The department needs to address these issues in its future development. Although there is a strong emphasis on factual knowledge which is often taught as whole-class activities, the skills of scientific investigation are well taught.

89. Leadership in the department is good. Clear educational direction and aims have enabled teachers to raise pupils' attainment significantly to a point where it is a strength in the school. Overall resources are adequate and are used effectively in pupils' learning. The well cared for accommodation is attractive; good displays of work celebrate and encourage learning but lack of design flexibility restricts the range of teaching strategies that are effective. The main area for development is to ensure sufficient time is given to monitor, evaluate and guide the work of science teachers frequently enough. Teachers and pupils are well supported by a hard working technician.

ART AND DESIGN

90. Since the last inspection the satisfactory attainment at Key Stage 3 recorded then has been maintained. Teacher assessment in 1999 showed that about three-quarters of the pupils meet or exceed national expectations. Inspection evidence confirms this view of standards and pupils who are currently in the last year of the Key Stage 3 course show similar levels of attainment. For example in a Year 9 lesson, pupils' drawings of the quay side show satisfactory attainment in the use of line and tone, producing drawings which have a freshness which results from working from direct observation. Similarly in Year 7 where pupils experiment with colour mixing and the control of paint, attainment is of a satisfactory standard.
91. In 1999, GCSE results were above the national average in both the numbers gaining grades A*-C and A*-G. In 2000, though national comparison data is not yet available, attainment was less good for those gaining A*-C grades. Since the last inspection above average attainment has been maintained. When comparing attainment at GCSE in art with that of the same pupils in other subjects, attainment in art is better. Girls do significantly better than boys. The folders of work of some pupils currently in Years 10 and 11 show good standards of attainment with some lower attaining pupils doing as well as their peers. In contrast to this, work seen in some lessons was less good. In a Year 11 lesson, predominantly of boys, attainment was below average with poor levels of attainment over time and low productivity. In contrast to this, pupils in a Year 10 lesson show above average attainment. Engaged on their first major project, pupils are making lively self-portrait paintings applying paint in different ways with increasing confidence.
92. Teaching is satisfactory with many lessons having good features. The teacher has a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. This is seen for example in a Year 7 lesson about colour where the teacher explains simple colour theory and pupils are encouraged to apply this information in their work. In all lessons there is an expectation that pupils will work hard. For example, in an outside drawing lesson pupils show good levels of application even when not being closely supervised. This is also true in a Year 10 lesson where pupils enter the room and go to work without prompting, showing good levels of both application and self-motivation. The effect of this satisfactory teaching linked with good co-operative attitudes is that pupils of all abilities make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 and mostly good progress at Key Stage 4. A small number of boys in Year 11 are making unsatisfactory progress. At both key stages assessment is satisfactory, pupils feel well informed about how well they are doing and verbal feedback is provided in lessons to set targets for improvement.

93. The curriculum at both key stages is satisfactory. Pupils work in two and three dimensions and have access to a satisfactory range of media, from drawing and painting, to printmaking and constructing. When learning about art by looking at examples of the work of others, pupils often consider work from other times and different cultures. The work they do mostly reflects a western tradition, and whilst there are some aspects of the curriculum that are designed to raise the awareness of art from other cultures this type of work is underrepresented. Similarly work using information and communication technology is used in the department, with images, for example, being collected using a digital camera, but pupils, particularly at Key Stage 3 do not have the opportunity to apply this technology in a sustained way.
94. Art makes an effective contribution to the cultural life of the school. Gallery visits are arranged and the work of local artists is used to show how professionals use the same tools and equipment in realising their work thus encouraging pupils to see themselves as artists. Good use is made of both the natural and built environment to provide a stimulus for work. Through drawings pupils are encouraged to make an aesthetic response to the place where they live. This too adds a cultural dimension to their lives.
95. This is a single teacher department where curriculum planning is effective and resources are well managed.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

96. Maintaining standards recorded at the time of the last inspection, teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 found pupil attainment to be in line with national averages. This was confirmed by inspection evidence. The work of pupils currently in Year 9 shows similar levels of attainment. By this time pupils can draw up their own design brief, for example when designing a mobile phone casing they can identify a number of possible ideas and draw up a specification. A less than average number of pupils can confidently visualise their ideas through sketches and drawings using appropriate conventions. All pupils can accomplish this aspect of designing using simple diagrammatic sketches. Overall skills in making are better. Pupils select and use both hand and power tools appropriately and they recognise the need to work with precision and attention to detail. For example when making trusses in a structures project pupils measure and cut angles precisely and can assemble components with care.
97. At Key Stage 4 standards of attainment have improved since the last inspection. In 1999 the number of pupils gaining GCSE A*-C and A*-G grades was above the national average. The biggest improvement has been in the resistant materials course. In 1997 no pupils gained GCSE A*-C grades in the resistant materials course. By 1999 those gaining the higher grades was a little below the national average – this represents a significant improvement. No national data is yet available for the year 2000 but results are less good than 1999, but the trend since the last inspection is an improving one. At the time of the last inspection girls did better than boys and this is still the case. When comparing the attainment of pupils in design and technology with other subjects, pupils do slightly less well in design and technology but this variation is small. The attainment of those currently in Year 11 reflects the improvements in the GCSE results in all design and technology areas. Design folders are well presented, although many still do not take advantage of information and communication technology to further enhance the presentation of their work. Ideas are mostly well researched with many sources of information being used, including the Internet. The visual presentation of ideas through drawing is mostly satisfactory with pupils producing scale drawings and accurately

measured plans. Planning is good and there is documented evidence in folders to show that pupils can plan and manage a work schedule, make appropriate modifications to work as it progresses and evaluate finished products. Skills in making are generally better than those of designing, and all pupils, including lower attaining pupils, use hand and machine tools with confidence. For example pupils in Year 11, when modelling ideas in three dimensions, cut and construct materials using the right tools for the job showing care and attention to finish. Similar standards of attainment were seen in a Year 10 graphics product lesson where pupils made accurate isometric drawings of kitchens and converted these into three-dimensional models using card. Design folders from this area are of a satisfactory standard with thorough evaluation of products being a good feature.

98. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Pupils at both key stages enjoy design and technology and for many it is their favourite lesson. Pupils are well motivated and they are particularly enthusiastic about using various materials to make things. The effect of consistently satisfactory teaching coupled with pupils' enthusiasm is that all abilities make at least satisfactory progress and many make good progress. Good progress, particularly in making, is often made by lower attaining pupils. For example in a Year 10 graphics product lesson, lower attainers drew to scale and built models with an average degree of accuracy. In all lessons teachers are well organised, plan effectively and use time well. A consistently good feature of teaching is the clear instructions given to pupils at the start of each lesson and in many cases tasks are broken down into manageable units. For example, in a Year 7 food lesson where pupils were using the cooking equipment for the first time to prepare a simple meal, whole-class instruction gave them clear step-by-step guidance about how to use the equipment. Providing opportunities to show independence is also a good feature of the Key Stage 4 lessons. Each lesson starts with helping students to focus on one particular aspect of the lesson, which will help them to succeed. For example in a Year 11 resistant materials lesson where pupils were evaluating their designs through modelling, they were reminded of the value of modelling and the need to refer to specifications when making modifications. A less good feature of teaching particularly at Key Stage 3 is the lack of opportunities taken when marking pupils' work to set short-term targets for improvement. The tracking of pupil attainment as they move through Key Stage 3 has recently been made more manageable and effective. Pupils are made fully aware of their progress and of the level of their attainment.
99. Currently the curriculum is being broadened to include the use of computer-aided design and manufacture, and plans are in hand to improve access to information and communication technology.
100. Currently the head of art, supported by co-ordinators for food and resistant materials, manages the department. The head of art has no technology teaching commitment. Whilst administratively this is satisfactory the management needs of the department are not being fully met. No individual with the appropriate skills has the responsibility to oversee the whole curriculum in design and technology and to ensure that curriculum development is both effectively targeted and managed.
101. The department is safety conscious and pupils are always given the right instructions about working safely, but risk assessment is not routinely added to lesson plans neither does it feature in the documentation for each project. The floor in the resistant material workshop is unsafe. It is made of wood and very slippery. Abrasive pads should be fitted to the floor by each workbench and each piece of machinery.

102. Since the last inspection the major achievement of the design and technology department has been to improve standards of attainment at Key Stage 4.

GEOGRAPHY

103. By the end of Year 9, attainment overall is in line with national expectations. From observations of books and lessons this is also true of the current Year 9. This indicates good progress across the three years, as pupils' entry levels overall are below the national average. Pupils display satisfactory mapping, graphical and diagrammatic skills. They are able to carry out investigative tasks and produce satisfactory project work on the countries they study, for example Kenya and Japan. By the end of Year 11, standards in June 2000 were well above the national average. Indications early in the current Year 11 show standards above the national average. Pupils display good and in the case of the higher attainers, very good investigative and analytical skills, for example in field study comparing the structure and profiles of Wells and Sheringham beaches. In this work there is very good use of numerical and graphical methods to analyse and evaluate data.

104. Very good results were achieved at GCSE in 2000 and pupils achieved better in geography than in all but one other subject. GCSE results in 1998 and 1999 were in line and just below the national average for higher A*-C grades but above the national average for overall A*-G grades. In both these years girls attained at a higher level than boys. In 1997 however both boys and girls attained well above the national average, with boys achieving better grades than the girls. In 2000, there was a significant upward movement, with both boys and girls gaining grades well above the national average (compared to 1999 national figures).

105. Teaching has continued to be satisfactory with a substantial percentage of good practice. There is a small amount of less than satisfactory teaching. In most lessons planning is thorough and clear, and appropriate aims and tasks are set for pupils, which leads to a good quality of learning. Unsatisfactory teaching was associated with weak planning and class management, which reduced potential learning and progress. There are good opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology to assist enquiry tasks. This was seen when Year 11 pupils studied the potential conflicts in the development of coastal areas. Pupils are given a good in-depth introduction to a range of different countries and in case studies exploring geographical ideas and theories. Good use is made of oral brainstorming techniques to challenge pupils' thinking and develop curiosity about the human and physical world. Pupils' personal development is assisted by the investigation of social and cultural aspects of places studied, for example Japanese society and culture in Year 9.

106. Progress overall is good and pupils with special educational needs make equally good progress as their peers. Good progress is not only associated with good and competent teaching but also with positive attitudes shown by most pupils.

107. Geography is well managed under the umbrella of the humanities faculty. There was little criticism in the 1997 report and the department has continued to develop good assessment procedures, which are used to plan the scheme of work as well as individual lessons. A good range of tasks, using the local area, develops pupils' practical field study skills, as well as preparing them for coursework assignments at GCSE. The subject provides good input into academic and personal development.

HISTORY

108. Standards at Key Stage 4 are above average. In the GCSE examinations over the past four years attainment at A*-C has been significantly above the national average. Standards are also good in comparison with other subjects in the school. Lesson observation and scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that these good standards are being maintained for the pupils studying history in the current Years 10 and 11. This is the result of good teaching which is well focused on the key historical issues of the syllabus. However, the number of pupils choosing to study history at GCSE remains low.
109. By the end of Key Stage 3 the majority of the oldest pupils are on target to achieve standards below what is expected nationally. Despite the pupils' overall low attainment on entry these standards could be higher. Pupils demonstrate sound historical knowledge but the lack of depth to this knowledge means that their historical understanding is not well developed. Also their enquiry skills are relatively weak, particularly when trying to decide which sources they can rely on.
110. At Key Stage 4 pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress. What pupils do well is to communicate historical ideas orally and in writing. They show good factual knowledge and understanding. Their relative weakness is in handling historical sources. Their extended writing is particularly good as is demonstrated in their GCSE coursework on how successful President Roosevelt's New Deal was. There is no significant variation between the achievement of boys and girls. At Key Stage 3 pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, are making satisfactory progress. In all years the pupils show sound factual knowledge of events and can give verbal explanations to questions such as 'Why did Britain want an empire?'. Many pupils in all groups are keen to respond to teacher questioning and to offer comments.
111. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Standards at GCSE have been maintained and there is now a wider range of written activities at Key Stage 3.
112. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is always satisfactory, and frequently good at Key Stage 3 and consistently good at GCSE. There are a number of strong features of this good teaching. In a Year 11 lesson the teacher took good advantage of the small group size to encourage a very open discussion approach in evaluating President Roosevelt's New Deal. This enabled the pupils to test out their ideas resulting in their gaining a stronger understanding. In a Year 7 lesson the pupils were enthused by the range of historical sources made available, including some intriguing artefacts. As a result they were keen to apply their historical skills to trying to decide what they could learn from these sources. There was a very good supportive atmosphere in all lessons. As a result the vast majority of pupils were willing to participate in teacher-led discussions. The relative weakness in teaching was where too much content or too many new ideas were introduced too quickly resulting in pupils only developing a superficial understanding of why things happened. The attitudes of pupils of all abilities to learning are good in all year groups. They work well together. GCSE pupils have very good sets of notes.
113. The management of history is good. The quality of the assessment and tracking of pupil progress is well developed, however, teacher assessments of pupils' attainment by the age of 14 tend to be too strict. The department makes effective use of its good resources. These factors have a positive effect on the quality of education provided.

There is good planning at Key Stage 3 which now needs to be updated in the light of the latest National Curriculum changes. Greater use needs to be made of information and communication technology, site work and local history in order to improve pupils' historical understanding and enthusiasm for the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

114. Pupils achieve well across the school and their standards of work match the standards found nationally by the time pupils are in Years 9 and 11. In their work on using spreadsheets the standards produced are edging towards being above average. The school has recently appointed a new co-ordinator for information and communication technology and is in the process of upgrading its equipment. Whilst teachers in many subjects make good use of computers as part of their teaching, in some subjects, such use is underdeveloped. As a result, the school is not fully meeting the National Curriculum requirements for use of information and communication technology across the curriculum.
115. Overall, by the time pupils are in Year 9, they show good basic skills in the use of computers, for example they know how to log onto the network, they demonstrate good familiarity with a standard keyboard and know how to load, save and print their work. The majority of pupils demonstrate sound skills with commonly used information and communication technology applications such as wordprocessors, databases and spreadsheets. Pupils in a Year 9 class made good progress in learning how to use a spreadsheet to model a simple calculator which would add, subtract, multiply and divide two numbers. All successfully put formulas into the spreadsheet and the ablest demonstrated good skill in placing and programming a 'button' to clear the 'calculator screen'. Lower attainers also attempted this task, but needed considerable help from their teacher.
116. By the time pupils reach Year 11 they have developed sound skills in using desktop publishing programs. For example, a group of Year 11 pupils produced a newssheet which made effective use of columns. Their work demonstrated appropriately developed skills and understanding of how to combine text and pictures and to produce a layout which looked reasonably professional. Key Stage 4 pupils are quietly confident when using programs such as databases and spreadsheets. A group of Year 11 pupils for example, made effective use of a spreadsheet to produce graphical displays of data they were given. However, pupils are sometimes overly concerned with the use of colour and graphics to make their work look more attractive than being sufficiently pragmatic about selecting the graphical display which is most suited to the nature of the data they wish to display in this way. The result is that many display their data using inappropriate graphical forms. However, they are usually dissuaded from retaining their initial choices by their teacher.
117. The quality of teaching is predominantly good and occasionally very good. The most effective features of the teaching include well-defined and interesting tasks which enable pupils to engage effectively with their work and to make good progress in their learning. These include tasks such as using a spreadsheet to developing a model of a simple calculator and experimenting with numerical data to produce a variety of graphs and charts. The very good subject knowledge and expertise of the teacher enable good anticipation and countering of the problems and the pitfalls that pupils are likely to meet. There is good monitoring of pupils' efforts as they work and quick response when they are seen to be making mistakes. These features ensure that pupils are well focused on their work and that they quickly learn to avoid common errors. In the best lessons, pace of work is rapid. There is not, however, always sufficient attention paid to the needs of

all pupils, and sometimes abler ones are left working on the same tasks too long or lower attainers not given quite enough support. In addition, little whole-class teaching was seen. This is partly a result of the screen projector currently being under repair. In some cases, whole-class teaching has become a casualty of the single period lessons for most year groups. In these there is rarely time at the beginning or end to go over work and reinforce learning.

118. Whilst many subjects make good use of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning, this is not a consistent feature of all subjects or teachers. It is, thus, an area for continued development across the whole school. Art, music, languages and physical education in particular make too little use of information and communication technology. On the other hand, examples of subjects which make good use of computers include geography, where pupils use the technology available to find useful geographical information, and in science for datalogging work. In most of these subjects, effective use of computers could bring particular benefits for the achievement of boys.
119. The school has yet to undertake its national training for information and communication technology and has not yet received its share of nationally available funds for the purchase of hardware. These should help to improve the school's overall provision. The new co-ordinator is making a positive impact on the school and the management and organisation of the area. The school is aware that there is no whole-school group with an overview of the use of computers across the school. There is a whole-school map of the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum, but it is now a little dated and the school needs to monitor how much is currently being done and where more use could be made.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

120. In 1999 GCSE results in French at grades A*-C were well below the national average and depressed by the poor performance of boys. These results were an improvement on the very low standard of the previous year, although pupils still did less well in languages than in other subjects. The results obtained in French at A*-G were also below average in both years. Of the small number of girls entering for French in 1999, only three achieved grades B and C. German results at A*-C in 1999 were well below the national average, and no pupils achieved higher than grade C. These results were lower than those obtained in 1998, which were also below average. In both years, all pupils entering gained grades in the A*-G range. This year results in German improved, and one girl as well as three boys achieved grade A.
121. The standard of work seen in French at the start of Year 7 is satisfactory, but during Key Stage 3 it is mostly below the national expectation. After a few lessons, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, exchange everyday greetings and basic information about themselves and their daily lives. They learn vocabulary and phrases they need in class and soon understand short captions and simple texts. Higher attainers grasp the elements of French grammar, effectively applying the skills gained in primary school. By Year 8, most pupils speak and write briefly about their families and daily lives. A minority of lower attainers have to revise poorly learnt language such as numbers. By the end of the key stage, most pupils express their likes, dislikes and preferences, or extract details from short recordings and texts about teenage interests such as school, sport and leisure to a reasonably satisfactory standard. Speaking is less well developed than other skills, although higher attaining pupils can make up and perform short dialogues on topics such as birthday parties. The use of tenses is underdeveloped and most pupils only express a limited range of ideas in speech or

writing, with varying degrees of accuracy. Most pupils can follow lessons conducted almost entirely in French, usually showing understanding and good-natured appreciation of their classmates' efforts. With additional support, lower attainers, including some pupils with special educational needs, stay interested and involved, but a minority loses interest and as their concentration lapses, the pace and effectiveness of the lesson decreases.

122. At Key Stage 4, both higher and lower attainers work as a class or individually to acquire the skills and knowledge they will need in their examination. Much of the work in French is pitched at the foundation level of GCSE, but pupils in German were seen working purposefully on descriptions of recent holidays that matched the higher grades. In French, poorly motivated pupils have to spend time with teachers and their assistants reinforcing simple items such as household furniture that they have forgotten or missed through lack of continuity. In both languages there is little creative or imaginative writing, and little use of computers to enrich the quality of learning. Some low ability pupils learn little when presented with the same material as their higher attaining classmates, but achieve a greater measure of success when tasks are simpler and they receive individual attention.
123. The quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. At both key stages, a minority of the teaching is very good. The teachers seen were fluent in French and German, had very good knowledge of examination requirements and managed their pupils well. These teachers are strong personalities who relate positively to their classes. They plan and deliver well-structured lessons that are gradually restoring the damage done to some pupils' confidence by weaker teaching earlier in their schooling. The methods are often traditional although sound, creating a firm framework for learning about topics such as rail travel, motoring or changes in domestic life. Teachers encourage pupils to work in pairs and groups on surveys and dialogues, challenging the most able and supporting those pupils who find languages hard. Occasionally the pace of their lessons slackens as they deal firmly with poor behaviour before proceeding. Bright and up-to-date materials are well exploited by teachers but creativity in lessons is scant, reflecting the limited language skills that many older pupils possess. Teachers assess their pupils' achievements informally with frequent tests and questions. Their marking is regular and thorough, often supplemented by useful comments and advice, but the department lacks a co-ordinated scheme for setting individual targets. Homework is regular and well matched to pupils' abilities. Teachers offer their pupils any individual help they require, and encourage further learning by organising trips abroad. There is, however, no concerted programme of enrichment and only limited celebration of pupils' achievement through example and display.
124. The management of the department since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory, dissipating the talent and energy of the teachers and their pupils. Recent examination results in German show what pupils can achieve. For many, particularly in French, lack of progress has led to a cycle of disillusionment and correspondingly poor outcomes. The efforts of teachers and pupils alike need to be better co-ordinated, and subject to fuller, clearer schemes of work. A wider range of strategies must be used in teaching, including games, competitions and the use of computers, if more pupils' interest and motivation is to be sustained.

MUSIC

125. Statutory teacher assessment in 1999 of standards in music showed 88 per cent of Year 9 pupils were working at the level expected for the end of Key Stage 3. This compares with a national average of 67 per cent. The results were lower in 2000 when

the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level dropped to 37 per cent. This drop does not signal a decline in standards, but is a result of rather generous grading in 1999, which then became too strict in 2000. Inspection evidence indicates that whilst standards are below average for 14-year-olds, they are not as low as the teacher assessments for 2000 indicate. Girls are attaining better than boys, but both are still below the national average.

126. Results at GCSE music for the last three years show a variable pattern. Since 1998 the percentage of pupils achieving A*-C grades has risen to 66 per cent in 2000. The number of pupils achieving A*-G in 2000 has reached the expected target of 100 per cent. In 2000 the number of A*-C GCSE passes are well in line with the national average, however very small numbers of pupils are involved. Over the last three years the numbers of boys and girls studying music has varied with girls generally achieving higher grades than boys.
127. Standards in work seen during the inspection were generally below national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3. Written work includes analysis of group compositions, aural responses and information about composers and pieces of music. Pupils follow instructions carefully but are not sufficiently encouraged to develop their compositions beyond the given boundaries. There is insufficient active participation in lessons and this has a negative impact on standards of work. Recordings of their performance by Year 7 demonstrate group compositions of ostinato patterns. All are carefully played and show evidence of maintaining independent parts and clear rhythmic accuracy. In lessons pupils display evidence when questioned of musical understanding and knowledge, for example when discussing how chords are formed in keys other than C major. Apart from a small piece of word processing, there is no evidence of any practical use of computers to support composition. Progress made by pupils with special educational needs is not always monitored sufficiently rigorously.
128. The standard of work seen at Key Stage 4 is generally in line with expectations. Those who choose to study music beyond the age of 14 generally all play instruments. Pupils can converse about their learning and progress, acknowledging weaknesses and recognising strengths. Musical notation is neatly presented and there is evidence of structured self-analysis and evaluations of compositions. Few compositions use both treble and bass clef, generally treble clef melodies with occasional bass chords added. Written work is marked with comments designed to show pupils how to improve. Some worksheets are used to reinforce theory knowledge and application. Pupils would benefit from increased technological resources to support compositions.
129. At both key stages learning is well supported by good relationships. Pupils' attitudes are generally positive and show interest and respect for others' work. Many pupils enjoy the subject and are involved in instrumental lessons. These are well organised and contribute to the way extra-curricular activities enhance music within the school and the local community. Opportunities are taken to encourage visiting professional performers so that pupils can experience musical life beyond the classroom.
130. Teaching overall is satisfactory. It is usually satisfactory at Key Stage 3 with examples of good teaching at Key Stage 4. Some teaching at Key Stage 3 was unsatisfactory. Pupils are taught musical notation and use it within their compositions along with other forms of notation. The GCSE syllabus is covered evenly and pupils are encouraged to achieve in each aspect. Changes in the expectations of examiners are monitored carefully and teaching adapted accordingly. Teaching and learning at Key Stage 3 is more variable with lesson planning an area of weakness. Pupils are generally aware of the aims of a lesson but time is not allowed at the end to either reinforce what has been

learnt or to enable pupils to reflect and evaluate their work. There is a lack of variety in the methodology and teaching style tends to be mainly teacher directed. Pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to contribute musically to their learning. While whole-class teaching can be appropriate, some pupils can become disaffected and not always give of their best. Pupils are aware of the teacher's expectations, but these need to be higher in order to challenge the more able. The scheme of work does not reflect current practice with National Curriculum references unclear and learning objectives needing to be more sharply focused. Literacy opportunities are not clearly identified and nor are different tasks and materials for pupils of differing abilities. The department handbook is limited and lacks detail regarding policies for the department and procedures for assessment.

131. Some progress has been made since the previous inspection but overall progress has not been as marked as it should be. Standards at both key stages have not risen consistently. Expectations, planning methods and organisation are no longer appropriate to provide sufficient challenge for all pupils. Provision for computer-aided learning has not developed as it should have over the last five years.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

132. Attainment for the majority of pupils currently in Year 9 is average. A minority of pupils are above and a few are below the national expectations. The standards in gymnastics are below average when the pupils arrive in Year 7. By Year 8 the pupils are able to plan their own sequences drawing on their knowledge of composition and can work to each other's strengths and weaknesses. Their work is imaginative and exciting to watch. This represents good achievement over time. In swimming the pupils are confident in the water and have well-developed backstroke techniques. The pupils' evaluative skills are not sufficiently developed and they are not yet confident in using technical language when speaking or writing. The teachers' new ideas to encourage these skills are effective to a point, but do not consistently encourage the pupils to think and discover for themselves. In games, the pupils have satisfactory ball skills and they are quick to grasp new skills such as using the reversed side of the stick in hockey. A minority of pupils have poor co-ordination skills and find it difficult to control the ball.
133. Attainment for the majority of pupils in Year 11 is average. A minority of pupils are below average. Their skills are more refined and consistent and they have a greater understanding of strategies in games such as basketball and badminton. The opportunity to follow different activities within the community in Year 11 is popular and gives the pupils a valuable outlook on sport for life. For example, those boys who use the local fitness centre already have good knowledge of how to plan their own training programme using the various machines available. The pupils working below expectations, mostly girls, have poor badminton skills. They have a limited range of shots and are slow to anticipate the response from their opponent. The small hall with only one court is not an effective working space for even moderate numbers. The changing rooms need refurbishment. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are physically less confident, are well integrated into most lessons at both key stages. The vast majority achieve well relative to their ability because of the appropriateness of the task set and the care and individual attention given by the teachers. Occasionally pupils do not achieve as well as can be expected. This occurs when the tasks are either too hard or too easy for their ability. As in Key Stage 3, the pupils are not confident in using technical vocabulary. This is because there are too few planned opportunities for them to develop their evaluative, coaching and officiating skills.

134. The quality of teaching is always satisfactory with the majority good. There are elements of very good teaching in a minority of lessons. The best teaching is at Key Stage 3. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Particular strengths, evident in most lessons, are the teachers' knowledge of the pupils and their ongoing assessment in lessons. Comments are constructive, encouraging and ensure individual and group progress. The pupils achieve particularly well when the tasks are designed to encourage a wide range of skills. In one very good gymnastics lesson, the pupils who were unable to physically take part were involved in helping small groups of pupils to construct sequences of movement by giving ideas and pointing out areas for improvement. This, combined with tasks that encouraged the pupils to use their imagination and worksheets that prompted ideas, resulted in a greater understanding of how to construct a sequence and refine their balances. Question and answer sessions occur in most lessons but do not always result in consolidation of knowledge. The pupils are effectively involved in assessing their own strengths and weaknesses at the end of each module and help to set their own targets for improvement. However, this level of detail is not included in the reports to parents and the pupils are not aware of how they achieve relative to national standards. Teacher and pupil demonstration and video and photographic evidence of past performance are effectively used to illustrate correct techniques and areas for improvement. Schemes of work do not yet include tasks to develop the pupils' own information and communication technology skills within the curriculum. There is nearly always sufficient time in the lessons to transfer new and consolidated skills into the final activity. Very occasionally the timing of tasks is a shortcoming and there is not enough time for the aims of the lesson to be met. The teachers mostly have high expectations of all of the pupils and continually encourage them to strive for better performance, appropriately related to their ability. The pupils respond well to the teachers' enthusiasm and enjoy their lessons.
135. Leadership of the department has ensured that standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. Teaching has improved. Lessons now include a greater variety of tasks to ensure that the needs of pupils of all ranges of ability within the class are met. The boys have the option in Year 9 to study dance or rugby, but not both which creates inequality of access to the programme of study. With this exception, the curriculum at Key Stage 3 is good and is better balanced than at Key Stage 4. Opportunities are varied at Key Stage 4 and there are good links with local clubs and associations allowing pupils to further their own interest in activities such as sailing and archery. Pupils are unable to study this subject to examination level. Assessment procedures overall are unsatisfactory. Although the pupils undergo an induction test when they arrive in Year 7 the results are not linked to nationally expected standards and their achievements are not tracked closely across the key stages. The use of the new levels will help to ensure a greater consistency in the teachers' judgements at the end of each key stage. Ongoing day-to-day discussion ensures considerable consistency in teaching standards but formal monitoring has not been clearly established. The teachers are committed to providing a varied extra-curricular programme. The pupils enjoy success in inter-house, local and county competitions with particular strengths in athletics giving a wide range of pupils the opportunity to take part in competitive events.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

136. Religious education has improved very significantly since the last inspection, in the quality of teaching, in standards of work achieved by pupils and in the time allocated in Years 7 to 9.
137. By the end of Year 9 pupils are reaching standards in line with the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus and indications from books and in lessons suggest that the current Year 9 will reach similar standards. This represents good progress as overall entry levels in Year 7 are below expectations. Written work has improved in quality and detail. By the end of Year 11, where all pupils study for the GCSE short course, attainment is in line with the national average. This again is a considerable movement forward on the situation existing at the time of the last report, when attainment was described as poor or very poor. Results at GCSE in 1999 were just below the national average for higher grades but moved in line to national standards in 2000 both for A*-C and overall A*-G grades (compared to 1999 national figures). This is good progress, when pupils' lack of subject knowledge and poor achievement in earlier years is taken into account. In 2000, boys gained a higher proportion of higher grades than the girls.
138. Teaching has moved from unsatisfactory and usually poor, as reported in 1997, to be very good overall, with some excellent practice. Lessons are well planned and the teachers show enthusiasm and very good knowledge of the subject, which interests and motivates pupils. Class management is good in all years and as a result of high expectations, combined with positive and hard working response from pupils, good progress in learning is made. Pupils with special educational needs are making equally good progress. Challenging questions are used to develop pupils' own thinking and there are good opportunities for the development of enquiry skills, in both the lower years and through well-organised coursework projects in Years 10 and 11. As a result, pupils' knowledge of rituals, worship and symbolism, associated with the six major faiths studied in Key Stage 3, is now satisfactory. In the GCSE course most pupils display a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of Christian and Islam beliefs and values. Good examples were observed in Year 11 lessons when pupils explored Christian responses to scientific developments, racism and the depiction of religious issues on television. Satisfactory responses were also observed in Year 10, where pupils were discussing arguments for and against the existence of God. Overall, learning and progress are good, which leads directly from the quality of teaching and the positive attitudes displayed by most pupils.
139. There has been a great deal done by a hard working and very well-organised head of department to rectify the poor management situation which existed in the past. Schemes of work are in place and assessment procedures have been introduced to assist the learning process. The subject now has a very good influence on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A number of people are invited into lessons to assist pupils and widen their experience. A very good example was seen in Year 11, when a governor, who is also the education officer at the Walsingham Shrine, was in lessons to answer individual questions from a Christian point of view and act as a sounding board. Pupils are encouraged to visit local places of worship but at the moment opportunities to increase awareness and gain first-hand knowledge of other faiths through visits do not exist. This needs to be planned in the future. Information and communication technology is being used well as an aid to learning and this is having a beneficial impact on the progress pupils make.