

INSPECTION REPORT

THE HURST COMMUNITY SCHOOL

BAUGHURST

LEA area: Hampshire

Unique reference number: 116422

Headteacher: Mr M Christian

Reporting inspector: Mrs S Chamberlain
7661

Dates of inspection: 14th –18th May 2001

Inspection number: 193592

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Brimpton Road Baughurst Tadley Hampshire
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Goodchild
Date of previous inspection:	21 April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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				The school's results and achievements
				How well are pupils taught?
				How well is the school led and managed?
				What should the school do to improve further?
			Equal opportunities	
9052	Helen Barter	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
				How well does the school care for its pupils?
				How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
4749	Martin Ash	Team inspector	Modern languages	
21954	Terry Chipp	Team inspector	Art	
8859	Tom Dodd	Team inspector	Design and technology	
23324	Sylvia Greenland	Team inspector	Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
10443	Andrew Harris	Team inspector	Drama	
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16939	Malcolm Padmore	Team inspector	Information technology	
3731	William Robson	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
			English as an additional language	
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			Religious education	
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	11
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	14
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	16
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	19
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	21
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	22
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	24
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	25
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	30

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Hurst Community School is a comprehensive school for 11 to 16 year olds with about an average number (813) of pupils on roll. The gender balance is good overall although not consistence through the years. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average at 3 per cent. The number with English as an additional language is below average at only 3 pupils. There are 17.5 per cent of pupils with special educational needs and 0.15 per cent with statements. The attainment of the pupils on entry is in line with, or slightly exceeding, national averages.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school with some excellent features. The school is well led and combines good teaching and very good outcomes in terms of examination results and pupils' attitudes. The expenditure per pupil is above average. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- GCSE results are well above average.
- Good teaching resulting from clear and very good leadership.
- The monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance is excellent.
- The contribution of the community to pupils' learning.
- Pupils' attitudes to school are very good and are supported by very good provision for their moral development.
- The personal development of pupils is very good and is exemplified by very good relationships across the school.

What could be improved

- Physical education in Key Stage 4, music in Key Stage 3 and information and communication technology (ICT) across the school
- Pupils' basic skills in ICT, writing, spelling and numeracy
- Assessment procedures across the school
- The behaviour of a small but disruptive group of pupils.

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 improvement since the last inspection. The standard of teaching has improved significantly since 1997. Staffing in modern foreign languages is now stable after a period of many changes. Although still in its infancy, information and communication technology development has begun and includes the installation of a brand new network. There is a more focussed awareness of pupils' spiritual development, which has been supported by staff training. Assessment at whole school level has improved although some departments need to adopt the good practice used in, for example, English. There are improved homework systems.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	All schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	B	B	A	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

Since the previous inspection GCSE results have risen to their highest ever, 60 per cent, in year 2000 for pupils gaining 5 A*- C grades. The school has recently received a School Achievement Award for Improvement; it is in the top twenty most improved schools. In 2000, results for 5 A*- G and 1 A*- G are below those at the time of the previous inspection, having been affected by some movement of pupils in and out of school during Years 10 and 11. Average point scores have risen steadily since 1997 to 44.5, well above average for 2000 and above average overall for the latest three years. The pupils' performance at GCSE is average when compared with schools, which have a similar context. In 2000, the average point scores for boys were well above the national average for boys, whereas for girls they were above average for girls. Pupils' achievements at this level are very good.

In 2000, average point scores gained in statutory tests for pupils aged 14 are well above average in English and above average in mathematics and science. Girls performed better than boys in English and similarly in mathematics and science. The trend in the school's average National Curriculum points for these three subjects is broadly in line with the national trend over the years 1997-2000. Statistics comparing this school with those of a similar context indicate below average status. This figure is misleading, given how well the pupils' achieve. Achievements at this level are good.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in all subjects. They make satisfactory progress in their literacy skills but some of the lowest attaining pupils require further support. Those pupils with English as an additional language make good progress as do the gifted and talented whose work is tracked carefully. The school sets appropriate targets, which it at least meets and sometimes exceeds.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have good attitudes to school. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave well. There is, however, some low level disruption by a small minority of pupils.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils are making very good progress in their personal development and have very good relationships with each other and their teachers.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Teaching is good overall; it is best at Key Stage 4. Of the lessons seen none were unsatisfactory. Over three-quarters of lessons (78 per cent) were good or better and approximately a third (35 per cent) were very good and, occasionally, excellent. Pupils' learning follows a similar pattern except that in a small number of lessons seen learning was unsatisfactory. These occurred in Key Stage 4 and amounted to four per cent. Low-level disruption by a small minority of pupils, mainly boys, affected learning in some subjects, for example, physical education and information technology. Teaching was considered excellent in a history lesson in Year 8 and a geography lesson in Year 7. Teaching in English, mathematics and science is of a high standard. Pupils learn well in these subjects. The teaching of the basic skills of writing, spelling, numeracy and information and communication technology across the curriculum could be improved.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum provides a broad range of opportunities to meet the needs of most pupils. However, there are weaknesses in the provision of ICT at both key stages. Pupils who may become disaffected are properly included by being offered work related curriculum and other individual arrangements. There is good extra-curricular provision, very good careers education and excellent community contribution.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for in main stream lessons. More one-to-one support is necessary for some pupils.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	If pupils need support with their English, it is provided for effectively.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The overall quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. The school has made good progress since the previous inspection.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares well for its pupils and offers them good quality educational and personal support and guidance. Health and safety procedures are sound. Risk assessment is in place but could be more rigorous. The school produces very good data for use by the departments when tracking pupils' progress and setting targets. Although a relatively recent innovation this is put to good use in many departments; such good practice needs to be adopted by all departments.

The school has very effective links with parents and as a result parents have good views of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The new headteacher, who has made an excellent impact on the school and is managing change very effectively, has a very clear vision for the school. The senior management team is a dedicated group, which is committed to ensuring the full potential of the school is realised.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is effective in fulfilling its statutory duties. They play an important part in shaping the direction of the school but have a number of new members who are still settling in.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is an efficient organisation, which has excellent systems in place to monitor its performance.
The strategic use of resources	Financial control is secure. The local educational authority is happy with the level of reduction of the deficit, which occurred as a result of falling numbers some years ago. Best value is sought on all big purchases.

There is a satisfactory match of teachers and support staff to meet the demands of the curriculum. Learning resources are satisfactory. The school has invested heavily in information and communication technology recently but there remains a need to improve the pupil/computer ratio, to make better use of interactive computer displays and to acquire computer aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) software and equipment. Accommodation is satisfactory overall.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are comfortable about approaching the school with problems. • They think the teaching is good and that the school expects their children do their best. • Their children are making good progress and like coming to school. • Helping their children to become mature and responsible. • The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They do not feel there are sufficient opportunities for extra-curricular activities. • The school doesn't work closely with parents. • Parents are not kept well informed how their children are getting on. •

Inspectors agree with the positives but do not agree that the school does not work closely with parents and believes that they are kept well informed through the system of reports and review. Inspectors find a good range of extra-curricular activities but note that recently there has been a limited number in competitive sport.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Since the previous inspection GCSE results have risen to their highest ever, 60 per cent, in year 2000 for pupils gaining five A*- C grades. The school has recently received a School Achievement Award for Improvement. It is one of the top twenty most improved schools in the country. In 2000, results for five A*- G and one A*- G are below those at the time of the previous inspection, having been affected by some movement of pupils in and out of school during Years 10 and 11. Average point scores have risen steadily since 1997 to 44.5, well above average for 2000 and above average overall for the latest three years. The pupils' performance at GCSE is average when compared with schools who have a similar context. In 2000, the average point scores for boys were well above the national average for boys, whereas for girls they were below average for girls.

2. In 2000, average point scores gained in statutory tests for pupils aged 14 are well above average in English and above average in mathematics and science. Girls performed better than boys in English and similarly in mathematics and science. The trend in the school's average National Curriculum points for these three subjects is broadly in line with the national trend over the years 1996-2000.

3. Standards in English are well above the national average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Results in Year 9 national tests and GCSE have improved significantly in recent years. Pupils achieve well because their attainment on entry is close to national averages. Most pupils speak confidently in standard English by the end of Year 9 and develop this skill further in Year 10 and 11. They read with good understanding in all years. By the end of Year 10 most can give a personal response to poetry and fiction. They make good reference to the text to back up their views. Most pupils express their ideas clearly in writing, but in all years a significant number have poor spelling and do not punctuate their work correctly.

4. Overall standards of literacy are good. Pupils speak clearly and most use standard English confidently. Most can read texts in different subjects with good understanding. Standards of written work are not always at the same high level. Although pupils express their ideas clearly, their handwriting is often untidy and spelling and punctuation is inaccurate.

5. Pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations in mathematics when they enter the school and above by the time they are 14 and thereafter. This good progress reflects the effective and well-organised teaching from which they benefit.

6. Pupils demonstrate satisfactory use of numerical skills in their work across the curriculum. In design technology measuring and weighing skills are satisfactory and pupils show that they can apply spatial ideas through building geometrical form and by drawing two and three-dimensional representations. In Science there is good graphical work particularly in GCSE classes studying photosynthesis for example. There is no evidence to suggest that any pupil is denied access to any element of curriculum because of poor numerical skills.

7. In science, at age 14 the proportion of pupils reaching level 5 or above for 2000 was above the national averages. Compared with similar schools it was well below average. Attainment in lessons is good. The proportion of pupils obtaining level 5 or above has remained almost the same since the last inspection; this does not quite suggest the good progress made in later years. At age 16, the proportion of pupils obtaining A*- C grades in

the GCSE is above the national average. Attainment in lessons is good. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A*- C has increased significantly since the last inspection.

8. Teachers' assessments of pupils' aged 14, in art, were below average in 2000. Work of average and above average was seen in lessons and on display, suggesting that teacher assessments were too harsh at this level. Results in GCSE examinations in 2000 were well above average as was much of the work of 16 year olds seen and on display. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory across Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. A particular strength is the pupils' growing ability to express their feelings and opinions through their artwork.

9. Standards of attainment are above average in geography at the end of Year 9 and well above average at the end of Year 11. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average overall. Achievement is good at both key stages. In history in 2000, pupils' results in teacher assessments were average but for GCSE higher grades they were below average. In work seen, standards were high in both key stages. Achievements are good.

10. In design and technology, teachers' assessments, lesson observations and examination of pupils' work indicate that attainment is above expectation and higher grades at GCSE are above the national average. Pupils' achievements are good. Attainment in IT at both key stages is below national expectations. The results of the 2000 teacher assessments reflect this judgement. Only 25 per cent of pupils at Key Stage 4 take GCSE IT, the remainder do not follow an IT course. Standards in GCSE are good.

11. GCSE results in French were above national expectations in 2000, and teacher assessments in French were higher than national averages in 2000 at the end of Year 9. In German, results GCSE results were below average in 2000 and in line with the average at the end of Year 9. Achievements are good in both languages and at both key stages.

12. In music, standards are average in Key Stage 3 and good in GCSE. Most pupils do not take GCSE music and the standard attained by the majority is average. In the lessons seen, standards are below average in Key Stage 3, pupils taking time to reach required levels after starting school with low standards at age eleven.

13. By age 14, many pupils are attaining standards at least in line with expectations especially in athletics and cricket, however, girls' attainment in tennis is below expectation. At age 16, pupils studying for GCSE attain very high standards; the standards achieved by others are low. Achievement in physical education, overall, is satisfactory being marginally better at Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4.

14. Standards are average in religious education at both key stages. Pupils' achievements are good. All take integrated humanities and overall gain above average results.

15. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in all subjects and all pupils on the special needs register achieved several GCSE passes in 2000. The progress of those who have particular difficulties with reading and writing is satisfactory overall. They make good progress when taught by a specialist teacher in English classes in Years 7 and 8, but other teachers lack sufficient knowledge to teach basic literacy skills and this limits their progress with spelling and punctuation during Key Stage 3. Pupils with specific literacy difficulties (dyslexia) make good progress in lessons when they are withdrawn for individual tuition, but this specialist support is not frequent enough and pupils forget much of what they learn from week to week.

16. Those pupils with English as an additional language make good progress, as do the gifted and talented whose work is tracked carefully.

17. Standards are high across the school except in physical education at Key Stage 4, music at Key Stage 3 and information and communication technology across the school. In these areas standards fall below those of the rest of the school.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

18. The previous report made positive comments about pupils' attitudes to school life and to their learning and this continues to be the case. Pupils' good attitudes to learning and the interest that they have in school activities have a good impact on their learning and the standards that they achieve. Pupils' behaviour continues to be good and the relationships that pupils have with each other and with adults in the school are very good.

19. Since the last inspection, pupils' attendance has remained in line with the national average. An increasing trend of unauthorised absence is now being reversed as a result of closer monitoring and this is now also in line with the national average. Although pupils' learning is not significantly disrupted by absence, there is still some of the lateness to lessons reported at the last inspection. This occurs particularly after the brief registration in tutor groups when pupils take a long time to get to their first lesson.

20. In the questionnaires completed before the inspection, nearly all parents agreed that the standard of behaviour in the school is good and that their children are helped to become mature and responsible. At the meeting with the registered inspector, parents felt that overall behaviour was good and that the school works hard to deal with pupils who break the school rules; for example, if they leave the school premises during the day. Most parents say that their children like coming to school. The inspection confirmed these positive views.

21. Pupils enjoy school and their lessons. Their enthusiasm and interest in learning ensures that they make very good progress. They are motivated to learn, play a full part in their lessons and concentrate well on tasks set for them. In many lessons there is an industrious atmosphere where pupils work hard either independently or in groups or pairs. They are keen to talk about their work and to discuss it with their teachers and peers. They participate fully in discussions and listen carefully to instructions and questions. In an English lesson, for example, pupils' concentration and interest was high as they read *'The Street Child'*. Their willingness to respond and their ready contributions to the ensuing discussion led to good quality learning. Overall, pupils' interest and attention in nearly all lessons are good. There are some instances of inattention, however, when pupils do not settle and are unenthusiastic about what they are doing. In information technology, for example, some pupils play games when the teacher's attention is turned away from their screens. In other lessons, a few pupils need reminders to stay on task and not to talk when the teacher is talking. This occurs particularly in physical education lessons when some girls show a lack of enthusiasm and allow the boys to lead. There are, however, examples where pupils are highly motivated. In a catering lesson, pupils were keen to succeed, to introduce their own ideas and to demonstrate their ability.

22. Pupils' behaviour is good. Most pupils understand, accept and respond well to the school's code of conduct and are fully aware of the standards expected of them. Almost no unruly behaviour was seen either in class or around the school site. The behaviour of pupils in their social areas and in the dining room was typical of their ability to get on with each other and behave sensibly. They are friendly, courteous and helpful when teachers or visitors ask for their assistance. There is very little graffiti or litter around the school and most pupils treat the school environment with respect. The school encourages good levels of independence

and responsibility and as a result pupils behave sensibly when using areas such as the library outside lesson time. Apart from some inappropriate behaviour seen in a few lessons where pupils persisted in irritating behaviour, there are infrequent incidents of aggressive behaviour or bullying. In discussion with pupils during the inspection, they said that they feel safe in school and that although there is sometimes some tension between individuals, there is no physical bullying and teachers deal very quickly with any problems.

23. This year there have been two permanent exclusions and 48 pupils having fixed-term exclusions. Although this is an increase on the previous inspection, the school is using exclusion appropriately to give clear messages to pupils about the standard of behaviour that is expected in school.

24. Pupils' personal development is good. Teachers are very good role models in their relationships with pupils and, as a result, pupils get on very well with each other. There is a good atmosphere around the school, which ensures that all pupils feel part of the community. They help each other in lessons, share materials, discuss each other's work and listen carefully to the views of others. Pupils work together well, for example, when taking part in role-play in modern foreign languages lessons. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in pupils' ability to reflect on their feelings and experiences. In religious education, for example, pupils write moving poetry to express their emotions as a result of their work on the Holocaust. In a personal and social education lesson, Year 9 pupils showed their growing maturity as they listened carefully to two visiting speakers and discussed the implications of teenage pregnancies.

25. Pupils are developing a good understanding of what they need to do to improve and to achieve better grades in their examinations. Through assessment and discussion with tutors on review days, pupils are developing an understanding of their strengths and areas for development. Pupils are developing good study and organisational skills, take responsibility and are preparing themselves well for the move to college or work. They make a good contribution to the organisation of the school through membership of the house and school councils and in their roles as sports captains and prefects. They welcome the opportunity to help others and to take part in charity fundraising. They are very proud of their recent achievement in the 'Young Enterprise' scheme when they won several awards on behalf of the school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

26. Teaching is good overall; it is best at Key Stage 4. Of the lessons seen none were unsatisfactory. Over three-quarters of lessons (78 per cent) were good or better and approximately a third (35 per cent) were very good and, occasionally excellent. Pupils' learning is similar, but in a small number of lessons seen learning was unsatisfactory. These occurred in Key Stage 4 and amounted to four per cent. Low-level disruption by a small minority of pupils, mainly boys, affected learning in some subjects, for example, physical education and information technology. Teaching was considered excellent in a history lesson in Year 8 and a geography lesson in Year 7; both lessons well structured and operating at a brisk pace.

27. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects are good; in art, they are very good both teachers being practising artists who bring with them a wealth of experience. In geography and history teachers' knowledge is also notable; in both subjects teachers have the very latest information and views and these are reflected in their teaching.

28. Teachers plan effectively. Lessons are normally well structured and include a variety of strategies to help pupils learn. Pupils respond appropriately and are rarely disruptive when

the teaching is motivating and captures their interest. In geography, for example, the pace of lessons is brisk and there is no room for disruption or bad behaviour. In religious education, teachers manage pupils very well. Pupils are put into planned groups in a specified seating arrangement. This is very effective and ensures a good environment where learning happens automatically. In music the pace of lessons in Key Stage 3 is too slow and pupils can become restless as a result.

29. All departments encourage pupils to participate in discussions and sometimes remind pupils to use standard English when necessary. History teachers include literacy development in their schemes of work. They display keywords for different year groups in each classroom and encourage pupils to skim and scan texts for information when making notes. They teach pupils how to structure their notes as well as their history essays and provide systems and methods for organising their writing. Most departments provide keywords for pupils but teachers do not make sufficiently explicit reference to them and pupils do not always spell them correctly. Some teachers insist on pupils completing corrections of spellings and punctuation but the marking of these is inconsistent in most subjects. In English, lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are taught basic literacy skills through an appropriate English scheme of work, which is adapted to meet their needs. They make good progress when taught by a teacher who is aware of current developments in the teaching of literacy. However, other teachers lack this knowledge and these pupils' progress with spelling and punctuation is no better than satisfactory.

30. Teachers have high expectations, reflected in external examination results. In physical education, for example, teachers set high but achievable goals and are rarely disappointed with pupils' responses. In mathematics teachers approach lessons in a very businesslike manner and pupils respond with active, organised learning.

31. Pupils' self-awareness and knowledge of their individual performance is generally good but is lacking in Key Stage 3 in art and physical education. In physical education, for example, there are no opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own performance. Usually pupils are interested in their lessons and they, normally, concentrate and are able to work well on their own or in groups.

32. In most subjects assessment procedures are satisfactory; in English they are very good and teachers in other departments would do well to adopt such good practice. In both mathematics and science, marking needs to be strengthened. Marking, generally, is only adequate. Basic spelling mistakes are often ignored and there appears to be inadequate systems in place to ensure corrections are done.

33. Homework is used as a tool to aid learning and its practice and use is good overall. However, there is still some inconsistency in amounts, quality and timing; the school is working hard to correct such shortcomings. Pupils who have English as an additional language are rare but are taught with sensitivity and care when the need arises.

34. The teaching of numeracy in subjects other than mathematics is satisfactory. There are examples of good work in science investigative work and in class where pupils analyse data to find averages of sets of results. In design technology pupils are taught how to use charts, graphs and tables to represent their research findings. In history, on the other hand, there is less use of statistical techniques than is usually the case. Very few departments have specific policies in place for the teaching of numeracy.

35. Good preparatory work has been done towards the introduction of a whole school policy for the teaching of numeracy skills, which includes producing excellent examples of

where opportunities occur in which such skills need to be employed and how best they might be taught. But the school does not have an agreed policy for teaching numeracy yet. This means that the departments overall lack a common approach in their teaching and therefore the pupils' learning is less effective than it could be. This position is shortly to be remedied and plans are already set for the necessary staff training to take place.

36. The new computer network has improved access to ICT. Teachers are slowly taking up the challenge but there is still a need for more teaching of the basic skills associated with ICT.

37. Some pupils with special educational needs in Years 7 and 8 are taught English in the learning support department, with an emphasis on basic literacy skills. Learning support teachers and special needs assistants withdraw others from some lessons for individual or small group tuition. The quality of teaching by specialist teachers is good. Teachers have a good knowledge of ways of helping pupils with reading and writing difficulties. Their understanding of individual pupils' needs enables them to plan the work carefully to ensure that pupils are suitably challenged. Pupils enjoy the lessons and learn well because of the variety of activities, good pace and excellent relationships between teachers and pupils. Special needs assistants provide some pupils with extra tuition in reading and writing. This provides a useful opportunity for pupils to practise their literacy skills and many gain confidence when reading. However, this work is not linked to prior assessment of pupils' needs and this prevents pupils from making as much progress as they might in the time available. Assistants work very effectively in support of pupils and teachers in all subjects. Teachers take account of this support in their planning so that assistants are usually fully involved in lessons. Some outstanding support was seen in physical education where the assistant completed a 100 metre run with a pupil with visual impairment, enabling him to participate fully in the lesson. Most subject teachers adapt their lessons well to meet the needs of pupils on the special needs register. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.

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

38. Curriculum provision is good. The school provides a broad range of learning opportunities, enriched by extra-curricular activities that meet the needs of most pupils. The total teaching time is a little above that recommended by the government and the percentage of time allocated to each subject is appropriate. A policy is in place and the curriculum is regularly reviewed. All pupils have full access to all parts of the curriculum and different groups are monitored to make sure of equality of experience.

39. Years 7 to 9 study all National Curriculum subjects as well as religious education, drama and personal and social education (PSE). All pupils take French and German from Year 7 onwards. Problems with provision of language teaching identified at the time of the last inspection have now been addressed. Religious education now meets time requirements. However, in information and communication technology the full range of National Curriculum requirements as outlined in the programme of study is not yet taught.

40. In Year 10 and Year 11 the provision to GCSE is a core of English, mathematics, science, and integrated humanities, which includes religious education, plus physical education and careers education. This is complemented by a choice from 10 GCSE options and GNVQ art. At present only the 25 per cent of each year group who study Information technology as a GCSE option are taught the required curriculum that should be available to all pupils at this stage. A number of pupils in each year group are disapplied from the full statutory curriculum in order to follow a work-related curriculum in partnership with local

colleges. Others with special aptitudes follow specially tailored curricula biased towards, for example, the humanities or the arts. These two special options enable many pupils who might otherwise have become disaffected to continue in mainstream education.

41. Apart from art there is no provision of GNVQ courses to meet the needs of pupils who would prefer a more practical curriculum. However, the school is aware of this shortcoming and GNVQ catering and childcare are already in place for September 2001, with further courses under consideration.

42. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The school meets the requirements, which are outlined in the statements of pupils with special educational needs. However, there is insufficient support for pupils with specific literacy difficulties.

43. The school has a draft policy for teaching literacy across the curriculum but its implementation is at an early stage. As a result there is a lack of consistency in the contribution that different subjects make to the development of pupils' literacy skills.

44. Strategies for teaching numeracy skills across the curriculum, although satisfactory, do not adhere to the newly formulated policy which is still to be implemented. Pupils demonstrate satisfactory use of numerical skills in their work across the curriculum. In design and technology measuring and weighing skills are satisfactory and pupils show that they can apply spatial ideas through building geometrical form and by drawing two and three-dimensional representations. In science there is good graphical work particularly in GCSE classes studying photosynthesis for example. There is no evidence to suggest that any pupil is denied access to any element of curriculum because of poor numerical skills.

45. Provision for extra-curricular activities is good. There is a wide range of sporting activities, though due to staffing and transport difficulties there have recently been a limited number of opportunities for competitive sport. Many subjects run lunchtime and after-school study support groups. Cultural and artistic enrichment is provided by a range of drama productions and concerts, including a joint Christmas concert with local primary schools, and visits to theatres and galleries. Foreign exchange visits take place regularly; for example a French group was visiting during the week of the inspection. Also, a humanities-based group is visiting Sicily at half term to build on links with local schools and experience first-hand historical artefacts and the eruption of Mount Etna. A successful summer school provides activities for a range of pupils including those identified as gifted and talented. A thriving activities week in the summer term enables pupils to learn from the expertise and enthusiasm of teachers in particular topics. In order to strengthen this range of provision the school has recently applied for a New Opportunities Fund grant to provide sports coaching and transport, and secure funding for the summer school.

46. Personal, social and health education is good. It is provided through one lesson a week in years 7, 8 and 9, taught by specialists, covering health, smoking, drug abuse, sex, relationships, environmental issues and careers. An integrated humanities GCSE course in years 10 and 11 continues this provision, and also includes religious education and citizenship. The teaching in both these courses is well informed and sensitive, with outside speakers making relevant contributions. For example, during the inspection a speaker from the local Pregnancy Crisis Advisory Centre was working with year 9 pupils.

47. Careers education is very good and provision in years 10 and 11 is an improvement on that seen in the last inspection. Pupils are prepared from Year 7 onwards as part of the PSE and integrated humanities programmes. Guidance is provided for Year 9 option choices through class talks and individual interviews. Work experience is provided for Year 10 pupils and an annual careers convention involves local businesses and informs pupils and their

parents about opportunities. The Hampshire Careers Service provides a full programme of interviews for Year 10 and Year 11 pupils. Regular participation in Young Enterprise enables the development of business skills and Hurst School won four of six prizes at a presentation evening during inspection week.

48. The local community makes an excellent contribution to the work of the school in a number of other ways. Artists in residence and visiting theatre groups enrich the arts curriculum. Sponsorships, and funding for prizes and for the summer school and the Sicily exchange visit, come from local businesses. Health professionals contribute to the personal and social education programme and visiting speakers are invited to share their expertise in many areas of the curriculum.

49. Excellent links with partner institutions lead to smooth transition experiences for pupils at the beginning and end of their time at the school. Strong liaison between subject teams and primary schools leads to a continuity of learning experience and the sharing of accurate assessment information. Positive links with The Basingstoke College of Technology and Queen Mary's College make possible the work-related curriculum and also encourage a large number of pupils to continue into further education. The school regularly takes Initial Teacher Training pupils from Reading University and is a member of the Basingstoke Consortium of Secondary Schools, which supports curriculum development and in-service training.

50. The quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is now good overall. The school has made good progress since the previous report.

51. Provision for the pupils' spiritual development is now satisfactory, although the school fails to comply with the requirements for a daily act of collective worship. The school has made efforts to resolve the issues brought to its attention through the previous report concerning the lack of an act of collective worship and the need to develop a more consistent approach to spiritual matters. There is now a more consistent approach to assemblies and time is provided in some of these for pupils to reflect on spiritual and moral dilemmas. Across the curriculum there are good opportunities for spiritual development: in science where pupils expressed a sense of wonder when studying childbirth, design and technology, English and art. In music lessons, pupils are given the opportunity to reflect on the mood of music and use their imagination as to what kind of occasion the music would be used for. There are missed opportunities in modern foreign languages.

52. The school makes a very good provision for pupils' moral development. A strong emphasis on the way one's actions affect others runs through all aspects of school life. The concept of a moral community is stressed both in documentation and in practice, and there are firm but fair disciplinary procedures that help pupils distinguish right from wrong. Issues of bullying are dealt with effectively and teachers provide very good role models throughout the school. There are also numerous initiatives to sustain the moral development of pupils, such as the school House system that raises money for chosen charities each year. Moral development is also promoted in all subjects across the curriculum.

53. The provision for social development remains good. The school council and house system encourage pupils to take responsibility and is a useful channel of communication between staff and pupils. The school provides a safe harmonious atmosphere for all its pupils and there are positive relationships in most lessons and throughout the school building. Opportunities for social growth are provided in most subjects through group and pair work in lessons. The House system encourages pupils to form friendships across the years. The prefects make a valuable contribution towards Year 7 pupils making the transition from primary to senior school. There is a range of lunchtime and after school activities to

enhance the social development of pupils including learning support for English and mathematics.

54. Provision for the cultural development of pupils is good and opportunities have improved since the previous report. There are activities and exchanges to enrich pupils' awareness and knowledge of the wider world. There are exchanges in modern foreign languages. Cultural growth is also fostered through various clubs and activities. Good examples are to be found in geography, design and technology, modern foreign languages, drama and art. Limited opportunities are in physical education and science. There is a shortage of relevant multi-cultural text in English. The school provides well for pupils who require individual programmes by its work-related initiatives. These ensure that the needs of all pupils are included within the curriculum.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

55. The school cares well for all its pupils because it successfully creates a welcoming, orderly community in which pupils are encouraged to learn and to get on with one another. Arrangements for pupils' well-being are good and there are good procedures to support pupils' personal development, including their behaviour and attendance. Parents are pleased with the support and guidance offered to their children. At the meeting with the registered inspector, most parents said that tutors and teachers know their children well and make good contact with them when there are problems. Most feel that the new system for reports and reviews is working well and that pupils are helped to make progress and to work to the best of their ability.

56. The school has good procedures for child protection and ensuring the care and welfare of all groups of pupils, including any who are in care. There is good use of meetings of relevant staff to establish agreed support and to ensure effective liaison, where necessary, with outside agencies. There are good arrangements for the care and support of pupils who are taken ill at school, including good first aid provided by the Matron and other trained staff. The school meets the statutory requirements for health and safety and, on the whole, the school provides a safe and secure environment. A few issues were identified during the inspection, which the school were quick to deal with. However, although risk assessments take place, these issues were evidence that the school does not monitor the outcomes of such assessments as closely as it might. The school has systematic procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance and has effective support from the education welfare service. Good use is made of computerised systems to monitor patterns of absence and to follow up incidences of unauthorised absence. As a result of closer monitoring, the school is succeeding in reducing the amount of unauthorised absence.

57. There are good procedures in place for monitoring and promoting pupils' behaviour. The behaviour policy is well understood and, on the whole, staff apply it consistently. However, there are some lessons where teachers' management of pupils is less secure and these give rise to some incidents of low-level disruption that interfere with the progress of the lesson. There are good procedures for dealing with anti-social behaviour and any bullying, should it arise. Pupils say that staff are supportive and that they can go to them with any worries. The school has identified that some pupils need additional support with their behaviour and puts in place very good individual strategies to help them make improvements. For example, small 'anger management' groups, individual registration arrangements for those pupils who may be upset when arriving at school, and club for a small group who find it difficult to cope with the lunchtime period.

58. The school has good procedures for monitoring and promoting pupils' personal development, having re-evaluated these since the last inspection and has now restructured

its pastoral support system into houses. As a result, pupils are developing closer links with their tutors and heads of houses as they move through the school. The pastoral curriculum for use in tutor time is not yet fully developed. However, the time is used well to support and promote pupils' personal development, for example, when tutors discuss pupils' progress, or when there are discussions about whole school issues such as behaviour and bullying. Where pupils are identified as giving cause for concern, appropriate guidance is provided either in terms of personal or academic support. Because teachers know pupils well and have good communications with colleagues, pupils' personal development is monitored well and information communicated effectively. Overall, there is a good emphasis upon the promotion of self-discipline and personal and social responsibility. Parents and pupils appreciate the systems for reward, such as certificates of commendation, and say that they provide effective motivation to help pupils work towards improvement. The school encourages pupils to take responsibility as councillors, prefects and captains and has good expectations that they will take these roles seriously. Although not yet fully established, the school has recently introduced progress files for all pupils in order to achieve more consistent recording and monitoring of pupils' development and achievement and to help them develop skills of self-assessment. Pupils' handbooks are used well to record targets and to help pupils monitor their own progress towards achieving them.

59. Since September of this academic year very good whole school procedures have been put in place for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. These procedures are not fully used in all departments yet but their benefit is to be seen in the good practice of most. Upon entry to the school all pupils complete tests measuring their current verbal, numerical and reasoning abilities. This procedure is repeated at the end of the first year in the school. These results are given to the various departments who use them to inform curriculum organisation such as setting in mathematics. They also act as a gauge for each pupil's achievement and progress in each subject.

60. At least three times each year departments monitor pupils' performance against National Curriculum standards and record the results which are fed back to the school's senior management, who check for anomalies and evidence of underachievement. Where appropriate, action is taken to secure improvement. An example is the special programme established for a group of a dozen year 9 boys who were not achieving as well as their ability ratings suggested possible. A meeting was held for their parents to make sure they were informed and involved. A special programme of supervision was then instigated to encourage improved performance. When testing suggested that the literacy standards were lower than usual in a particular year of entry departments were notified of the situation and adjustments made to the English curriculum to address the problems identified.

61. In most departments pupils are made aware of their National Curriculum level at least once per term. They are encouraged to set and achieve individual short-term targets. In English, for example, this may mean learning the spelling of some words which the pupil finds difficult; in mathematics it may be learning a particular technique more thoroughly or revising one or more multiplication tables. In most subjects, as is the case in design and technology, a failure to make the expected progress by any pupil is followed up by the subject teacher. Careful checking of levels for individual pupils enables heads of department to keep an overall eye on departmental standards as a whole.

62. One of the termly assessment activities is purely for internal auditing purposes for pupils and teachers. The other two result in information that is also given to parents. The individual meetings established for discussion of each pupils' progress and targets with form tutors is particularly effective and is much valued by those many parents who take the opportunity to attend.

63. Procedures for assessing the needs of pupils on the special educational needs register are very good. Pupils' needs are identified quickly and efficiently. They are usually known before they arrive in the school because of close links with local primary schools. Teachers monitor these pupils' progress closely. All teachers, special needs assistants, parents and pupils themselves contribute information about pupils' progress, so that annual reviews of pupils with statements are carried out very efficiently. The special needs co-ordinator ensures that useful targets are written for pupils in their individual education plans. Teachers take account of these in their planning. Pupils are aware of their targets and know what they need to do to make progress.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

64. The school has a very effective partnership with parents. Since the last inspection, the school has improved the quality of information provided for parents. It has put in place a new system for reporting to parents and it has improved the quality of pupils' written reports.

65. In the questionnaires and at the pre-inspection meeting, parents expressed good views about the school. They are pleased with what the school provides and how well their children achieve. Nearly all parents feel that teaching is good, that their children make good progress and that the school has high expectations for their children's work and behaviour. They say that the school helps their children to be mature and responsible and that their children like coming to school. Parents feel that the school is well led and managed and that they are comfortable approaching the school with any questions or problems. Some parents criticised the range of extra-curricular activities provided. Some feel that the school does not work closely with them and that they are not kept well informed about their child's progress. There are fewer parents who are concerned about the school's provision for homework than at the last inspection, although some parents still feel that the provision is inconsistent.

66. Inspectors agree with parents' positive views of the school but do not agree that the school does not work closely with them because the school provides very good information through the system of reports and reviews. Inspectors find that the range of extra-curricular activities is good but recently there have been limited opportunities for involvement in competitive sport. The school has recently consulted with parents on the homework issue and is seeking ways to achieve better consistency.

67. The school works continuously to maintain very good relationships with parents and to encourage parental involvement in their children's education. The quality of information provided for parents is very good. The school has put in place a very good system for informing parents about pupils' progress through interim report and review meetings. The improved end-of-year reports give parents clear information about pupils' progress and effort and what they need to do next to improve. The school's documentation, including newsletters, helps parents to know about the school's organisation, activities and development. The school holds a very good range of meetings to inform parents about, for example, the curriculum for each key stage, examinations and careers advice. These meetings are well attended by parents.

68. The school makes a very good commitment to its partnership with parents through its home-school agreement and, as a result, parents make a very good contribution to their children's learning at school and home. There is very good attendance at the review and learning support meetings and parents liaise well with tutors and Heads of Houses when they have any concerns about their child's welfare or progress. Homework arrangements promote parents' participation in their children's education. Each pupil has a handbook which clearly sets out expectations for homework and which many parents regularly sign, indicating

that they are monitoring their children's work. The school offers parents opportunities to support school events such as concerts, plays and displays of work.

69. Parents are encouraged to participate in the life of the school through invitations to open and information evenings, by supporting fundraising and social activities run by the Parent Teacher Association and as members of the Parent Focus Group and the governing body. The school is keen to seek the views of parents as part of its development planning process and consults with them through questionnaires. As a result of parents expressing some concerns at a meeting, the Focus Group was set up to discuss issues such as homework, behaviour and uniform. The group provides an important link between parents, the governing body and the management of the school and ensures that parents' views are heard.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

70. Leadership and management are very good, overall. The new headteacher has a very clear vision for the school. He has made an excellent start and is managing change very effectively. He is popular, liked by staff, pupils and parents alike. He has a non-confrontational approach, which is blended with a steely determination that assures the integrity of his position is not only maintained but also promoted.

71. Each member of the senior management team is a very good manager and gives strong support. The team has been extended to five, an appropriate size for this school. Pastoral managers and heads of department are mostly well established and are, with senior managers, committed to improvement. The governing body is very capable. Governors have a broad base of experience from the professions and business that complement their roles on the many committees, which ensure all aspects of the school are thoroughly monitored. Some new governors are still establishing themselves; these need to gain more understanding of the workings of the school and eventually link with departments where they can give appropriate support and aid communication with the senior management group. Both governors and senior staff are instrumental in the formation of the school development plan and are, therefore, kept fully informed of the school's priorities. The plan is well described and appropriate to the needs of the school.

72. The school has excellent procedures and systems to monitor and evaluate its progress. This includes a regular contact with the local education authority, which together with the senior management team, periodically review departmental practices. Such rigorous monitoring has resulted in standards of attainment rising and very good pupils' attitudes. Appropriate targets are set for examinations and are effectively met and occasionally exceeded.

73. The management of provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The special needs co-ordinator manages support staff effectively and ensures that teachers have all of the information they require to meet pupils' needs. Appropriate priorities for the development of special needs provision have been identified. These include the need for increased staffing to ensure, for example, that the needs of pupils with literacy difficulties can be met more effectively. Some pupils with specific literacy difficulties (dyslexia) would benefit from computer software to help them express their ideas more readily in writing. The special educational needs policy meets most of the requirements of the Code of Practice. However, the allocation of resources to support pupils on the special needs register is not explained and criteria for evaluating the progress of these pupils need further development.

74. Financial control is secure. The headteacher, governors and bursar ensure that systems are kept in good order and are able to support teaching. Grants, which have a

specified destination, are used appropriately with folders kept to explain in detail the allocation of monies. Funds for special educational needs are adequate and used with propriety.

75. The school is careful to seek best value. Not only does it insist upon three quotes for major purchases but it is very careful to compare itself with other schools and mirror best practice. A strong parent/teacher association contributes greatly to the smooth running of the school by raising considerable funds, which buy, for example, the Minibus.

76. A deficit occurred as a result of a falling pupils numbers some years ago. In discussion with the local education authority, procedures have been established to reduce of this initially dramatically and then more slowly. For the financial year 2001 to 2002, less reduction is planned. This is deliberate and ensures that departments are not starved of resources for too long a period at any one time. The need to reduce staffing levels as a result of the deficit has meant that the percentage of time teachers are in contact with pupils is too high (90 plus per cent). The good ethos in the school enables this to happen without too much disruption, but is far from ideal.

77. The school has an adequate number of well-qualified teachers and support staff to deliver the curriculum. An excellent induction programme for new staff, both experienced and newly qualified, ensures that they receive the necessary support to carry out their roles effectively and efficiently in the shortest possible time. There is very good monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching with a well-structured programme of lesson observations in place. The latter forms part of the school's performance management programme through which all staff, teaching and non-teaching, have objectives in place for the current cycle. Performance management is supported by an effective system of continuous professional development, which is linked to the school improvement plan. The effectiveness of professional development in the school has resulted in re-recognition as Investors in People. The learning culture that has been established in the school, through effective staff development, links well with the good levels of teaching.

78. The overall quality of the school site, buildings and specialist accommodation is satisfactory. Since the last inspection, improvement has been made in the laboratory space for science and there has been further development of space for the teaching of information and communication technology. There is good indoor and outdoor accommodation for physical education although the changing rooms are in need of upgrading. The school has a bright and attractive library and careers area, which is centrally placed and allows all pupils ease of access to research information. Good quality displays of pupils' work improve the appearance of classrooms and corridors, particularly where some areas are in need of re-decoration. Maintenance and cleanliness of the school is satisfactory. However, pupils are unhappy about the toilets, which they feel are inadequate in number and are in a poor state of repair and decoration. The outside area is reasonably well maintained although there is an ongoing problem with the uneven paved surfaces.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

79. In order to improve the school, governors, senior staff and staff of the school need to take the following action:

- 1 Raise standards further in physical education in Key Stage 4, music in Key Stage 3, information and communication technology (ICT) across the school. Paragraphs 143, 144, 163, 169, 171
- 2 Improve pupils' basic skills by:
 - Equipping pupils with a full range of IT skills as required by the National Curriculum programme of study. Paragraph 148
 - Enabling pupils to use these skills in subjects across the curriculum. Paragraph 148
 - Improving pupils' writing and spelling. Paragraphs 81, 82
 - Implementing the numeracy policy so that all departments partake consistently in the development of numeric processes. Paragraphs 34, 35, 44
- 3 Improve assessment procedures across the school by:
 - Sharing the very good practice developed in the English department. Paragraph 59
- 4 Improve standards of behaviour of a small but disruptive group of pupils, by:
 - Sharing good practice in behaviour management by adopting a consistent approach. Paragraph 22

Subsidiary issues:

The school does not meet requirements by providing a daily collective act of worship. Paragraph 51

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	143
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	75

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	32	43	22	0	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	813	n/a
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	25	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	12	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	143	

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	19
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.3
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.0
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	85	82	167

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	59	58	56
	Girls	69	57	54
	Total	128	115	110
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	77(78)	70(73)	66(65)
	National	63(63)	65(62)	59(55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	39(39)	47(51)	34(36)
	National	28(28)	42(38)	30(23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	50	62	55
	Girls	61	61	57
	Total	111	123	112
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	68(65)	76(73)	68(66)
	National	64(64)	66(64)	62(60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	28(22)	45(47)	33(37)
	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	86	83

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	52	83	83
	Girls	50	75	78
	Total	102	158	161
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	60(50)	93(93)	95(97)
	National	47.4(46.6)	90.6(90.9)	95.6(95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	44
	National	38.4

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0
	National	n/a

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	6
Indian	0
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	1
White	800
Any other minority ethnic group	2

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	48	2
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	45.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.46

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	378

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	91.9
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	22.8
Key Stage 4	20.1

Financial information

Financial year	2001
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	£
Total income	2,316,731
Total expenditure	2,253,309
Expenditure per pupil	2,721
Balance brought forward from previous year	-129,133
Balance carried forward to next year	-65,711

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	813
Number of questionnaires returned	344

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	21	69	8	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	29	64	5	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	14	66	12	2	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	64	12	2	6
The teaching is good.	19	70	5	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	26	57	13	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	39	57	3	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	41	55	3	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	22	58	16	1	3
The school is well led and managed.	28	60	4	1	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	27	63	7	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	16	52	15	3	14

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

ENGLISH

80. On entry to the school standards in English are average. Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9. In 2000 results in Year 9 National Curriculum tests were well above the national average and in line with results in similar schools. Results have improved significantly since 1997 when they were around the national average. Pupils achieve higher standards than in mathematics and science. Results at GCSE have also improved since 1997. The proportion of pupils attaining GCSE grades A* to C in English and English literature in 2000 was well above the national average. This was in line with attainment in similar schools and pupils did as well in English as in most of their other subjects. In most years girls attain higher levels than boys, in line with the difference found nationally.

81. The standard of work seen during the inspection was in line with last year's results. By the end of Year 9 pupils' speaking and listening skills are well above average. Most express their ideas in standard English confidently and fluently. They listen to each other's ideas in class discussions and when they work in pairs or small groups. Boys were able to maintain their role as newspaper reporters and ask suitable questions of others who played the role of detectives as a response to reading Roald Dahl's *Lamb to the Slaughter*. Girls expressed clear views about the stereotypical character of the housewife in the same short story. Standards of reading are also high. Many pupils read widely. High attaining pupils identify literary devices such as metaphor and alliteration used by poets and they are beginning to comment on their effect on the reader. Most pupils make good reference to the text to show their understanding of characters. For example, they can explain how the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth changes after the murder of Duncan. Standards of writing are not quite so high. More able pupils, of whom there are many, write effectively in a range of styles. They make good use of their notebooks to plan, re-draft and improve their work. Most middle and lower attaining pupils are also able to write at length and interest the reader but much of their writing lacks accuracy. They make many spelling and punctuation mistakes, even when copying from the board.

82. No Year 11 pupils were present during the inspection because of forthcoming examinations. In Year 10 standards of speaking, listening and reading are high. High attaining pupils use fluent standard English. Those in low attaining classes often give short responses to teachers' questions but are prepared to offer their own views about poems they discuss in class. High attaining pupils have a very good understanding of plot and characters in the texts they study for GCSE. For example, they explained how Willy Russell, in *Educating Rita*, portrays Rita's academic and social development. They provided good evidence for their views through close reference to the text. They develop good analytical skills and can, for example, analyse the style and use of language in a newspaper article. Many middle attaining girls are able to explain how the structure of a poem often relates to its meaning. They explained how the long lines in the first stanza of *Ninetieth Birthday* related to life's long journey. Boys in middle and low attaining classes tend to describe what they read and find analysis more difficult. As in Year 9, writing standards are not so high but they are still above average. High and middle attaining pupils structure essays for coursework very well. They can adapt their writing style confidently for different purposes. For example, pupils wrote letters from Tony Kytes in typical 19th century style when responding to Hardy's *Tony Kytes, the Arch Deceiver*. However, many middle and low attaining pupils continue to make numerous spelling and punctuation errors.

83. Standards have improved since the last inspection. Pupils now achieve well in all years. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress over time and all achieved a pass grade at GCSE last year. The good quality of teaching has been maintained. Lack of progress by some average attaining pupils was criticised in the last inspection report. The English department has responded by creating separate classes for boys and girls in the middle attaining bands in Years 9 and 10. As a result, teachers now plan work more carefully to meet the needs and interests of these pupils. They now make progress in line with other pupils and boys' behaviour has improved. The teaching of information and communication technology through the English curriculum has improved and the department makes an important contribution to the assessment of information technology skills in Year 7.

84. Most teaching is good. In a few lessons it is very good and it is never less than satisfactory. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They extend their understanding by asking good, incisive questions that help pupils to build on their initial ideas. They manage classes very effectively, insisting that pupils follow instructions and listen to each other so that they make the most of the available time in lessons. This is particularly noticeable in some classes where boys are taught separately and require firm management to ensure that they concentrate. Teachers know pupils' levels of attainment well. This allows them to set work at an appropriate level and, in several lessons, to group pupils according to attainment. As a result, the work is sufficiently challenging to enable all pupils to make good progress at their own level. Teachers mark written work regularly and provide good advice so that pupils know what they have to do to improve. They ensure that pupils note the task and its focus or objective at the beginning of each piece of writing. In the best lessons, teachers explain the purpose of the lesson clearly to the class. Sometimes, however, the objectives lack clarity and although pupils know what they have to do, they are not sure why, or what they are expected to achieve. Similarly, in some lessons, teachers do not leave enough time to sum up what pupils have learned. Some teachers do not teach basic literacy skills effectively. Pupils with reading and writing difficulties learn well when a specialist teacher teaches them in Years 7 and 8. However, in other lessons, teachers often miss opportunities to refer, for example, to the spellings of keywords, spelling patterns and the structure of sentences. As a result, many lower attaining pupils do not improve their spelling and punctuation quickly enough. When teachers show enthusiasm, pupils respond with equal enthusiasm and are more eager to share their views with the teacher and each other.

85. The head of department provides very good leadership for a team of teachers who are committed to improving standards further. For example, teaching is well monitored and teachers share the targets that they set for improving their own work. Schemes of work are very well planned and provide a good range of activities to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. However, pupils would benefit from more opportunity to study literature from other cultures, especially in Years 7 to 9. Assessment procedures are very well organised to ensure that pupils' progress is regularly reviewed. As a result, any pupils who appear to be underachieving are quickly identified and teachers monitor their progress carefully.

Drama

86. Standards in drama are very good. In Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils make good progress, which helps them to achieve outstanding results in GCSE. In 2000, 95 per cent of pupils gained grades from A*-C and of those 55 per cent achieved either A* or A. This high standard of GCSE achievement has been sustained for a number of years and is resulting in an increasing number of pupils choosing drama as an option in Years 10 and 11. There is no difference between the achievement of boys and girls.

87. In Years 7 to 9 drama is taught to all pupils in mixed ability groupings and then offered as an optional subject in Year 10. Except for two groups in Year 7, specialist teachers teach drama, consequently addressing a criticism in the last inspection report. This has ensured that the subject, praised in the previous report, has maintained its success.

88. Pupils clearly enjoy their drama lessons and value the subject. There are clear expectations from the teachers during lessons and well-established classroom rules and procedures. Pupils make good progress and display good knowledge of the conventions of drama and are able to develop skills in listening, teamwork and presentation. A Year 10 lesson involving characterisation through the use of masks illustrates this particularly well as the pupils performed in character and then sensitively and constructively analysed their work. In a Year 8 lesson a lively group made significant progress as it discussed and made decisions in a role-play about pioneers in the American west journeying along the Oregon Trail.

89. The teaching is very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and display effective classroom management. Lessons are brisk and purposeful employing a wide range of teaching techniques including whole class, group and paired work, to keep pupils interested and working hard. There are clear learning objectives for all lessons that are made explicit to pupils and referred to regularly during the course of the lesson and at the end during the recap. There is ongoing assessment throughout the modules of work with a formal assessment at the end. This ensures that pupils know how well they are doing and how they need to improve further. Relationships between pupils and teachers are excellent and this, coupled with the high expectations of teachers, ensures that most make very good progress.

90. The drama department is well led and effective. It makes a vital contribution to the wider life of the school. The department works well with other curricular areas to enhance pupils' learning experiences. An example of this includes the Year 8 work on the North American Indians with the history department. There are two performances a year and auditions and rehearsals are currently taking place for the summer production of *Titanic*. In addition outside drama groups are encouraged to visit the school and there are trips to local theatres for pupils. Drama is a part of the school curriculum that is clearly valued by pupils.

MATHEMATICS

91. Pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds in the year 2000 were close to the national average for those attaining level five or more and above national average for those gaining a level six or more and compared with national average points score. When compared with the results obtained by pupils from similar schools, results were below average. The years between 1996 and 2000 saw consistent improvement with boys performing better than girls. The average of results in mathematics over the years 1998 to 2000 was better than that nationally and improved at about the same rate.

92. Up to the age of 14 pupils' mathematical skills show good improvement. Attainment is broadly in line with national norms when pupils join the school at the age of 11 and improves over the first three years so that it is above average for 14 year olds. The work of many higher attaining pupils in year nine showed them capable of obtaining grades seven or eight in the coming summer National Curriculum examinations. They display good understanding of basic loci. They can solve simultaneous linear equations both algebraically and by graphical methods. They make rapid progress in learning how to use graphic calculators but have yet to master how to change the scales on the axes when doing so. Scarcely any have developed an understanding of infinity in numerical terms. Middle attainers show that they are on line for a level 5 or 6. They solve quadratic equations by trial

and improvement answering to a given number of decimal places, and deal confidently with ration and proportion. Lower attaining pupils can operate the four rules of number, including division, with decimals. Basic numerical work is of a good standard.

93. GCSE results in 2000 were well above national averages for pupils scoring between A* and C. Boys performed better than girls. Results have shown a rapidly rising trend with improvement of 21 per cent for those achieving grades A* to C in 2001 over those of 1997. The percentage of pupils gaining a grade G or higher was broadly in line with national figures. Mathematics results compare favourably with other subject results in the school. These figures reflect an improvement, which is well above national figures comparing schools' Key Stage 3 test results in 1998 with GCSE outcomes for the same pupils two years later.

94. The standard of work for pupils aged over 14 as seen during the inspection is well above that attained nationally. Over three in every five show the capacity to obtain grade C or better at GCSE. High attaining pupils showed very good algebraic skills including the ability to solve quadratic equations by completing the square, but some were ready to use a calculator when they could have arrived at an answer mentally, as for example, when evaluating the square root of "9/4". Middle attainers have a good grasp of curve drawing for quadratic and cubic functions and can predict the effect of changing constant values in each. Lower attaining pupils can measure and draw angles correct to a degree and can draw a pie chart from a table of simple data although they do not always label their work clearly.

95. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. Pupils achieve above average standards at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 making very good progress to do so. Pupils with special educational needs, make good progress at Key Stage 3 and very good progress at Key Stage 4 in line with their peers. Good classroom support by assistants and teachers is a strong feature contributing to this progress. No pupils with English as an additional language were seen during the inspection.

96. Teaching was good or better in over 80 per cent of lessons seen. There were no unsatisfactory lessons. Teachers plan lessons effectively, and have appropriate expectations of what the pupils should be achieving. They use a range of strategies to ensure the pupils are learning in their lessons and manage the pupils well so that no time is wasted. Lessons seen during the week of the inspection did, however, lack sparkle. Opportunities were missed to introduce pupils to the mystery and magic of aspects of mathematics such as the nature of infinity and what is the square root of a negative number.

97. Most of the pupils' homework and all of their investigational work is corrected. There is some very good practice within the department in this respect. In addition to indicating whether the work is right or not teachers comment fully on how it might be improved and make good use of the school's reward system. Departmental policy, quite properly, does not insist that the teachers mark every piece of classwork; it is desirable, however that all work be corrected and that where pupils mark their own work their efforts are checked. This is not always the case.

98. Behaviour in lessons was never less than satisfactory. In three quarters of the lessons seen the pupil's attitudes to their work and their behaviour were good or better. In almost all situations pupils concentrated hard while listening, and at written and graphical work. This good behaviour stemmed from pupils responding well to good teaching. Where teaching was less good, behaviour was less good too. Relationships in the classroom are good. The quality of these relationships does much to contribute to the pupils' successful progress.

99. Departmental leadership is very good. The head of department is a very capable teacher. She is extremely well thought of by her colleagues and the pupils. Departmental meetings are closely focussed on improving teaching and learning. Standards are improving because of good effective arrangements for improving teaching performance based on regular performance review. Very good clear departmental documentation clarifies what is required of teachers and provides useful guidance to those new to the profession or the school. The accommodation for teaching mathematics is good. Classrooms are close together, and there is the capacity to create a large classroom from two by moving the curtain partition between them. This allows for team teaching and for extra support for supply and less experienced teachers when needed. The need for enhanced information computer technology equipment within the department is acute. Access to the school networked-classroom is under heavy demand.

100. Improvement since the last inspection in the mathematics department has been good. Examination results have improved both at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Teaching has improved, and teachers have a better grasp of the use of information and communication technology as a teaching tool.

101. Statutory requirements are met.

SCIENCE

102. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' performance in the 2000 National Curriculum tests was above the national average. The proportions of pupils who obtained level 5 and higher and level 6 were both above the national average. There was little difference between boys and girls performance. In comparison with similar schools, pupils' performance was below average. Pupils' performance in science was slightly below that in mathematics and English. Over the last three years pupil performance has stayed roughly at the same level.

103. In 2000, the proportion of pupils who obtained A*- C grades in the GCSE was above the national average and the proportion gaining A*- G was also above the national average. Boys did slightly better than girls overall and significantly better than girls in obtaining the top grades. Pupils did slightly less well in science than in mathematics and English. Over the last three years the proportion of pupils achieving A*- C grades has increased.

104. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are broadly in line with those expected nationally and by the age of fourteen they are achieving levels that are above the national average. This represents good achievement over a period of time and this level of achievement is sustained to the end of Key Stage 4.

105. The standard of work seen is good. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils know and understand the principles of electromagnetism, combustion, diffusion and chemical equations in word form. The highest attaining pupils can manipulate symbolic equations. In scientific investigations they are able to carry out experiments safely and competently, making and recording accurate measurements. They are able to predict the outcomes of their experiments based on secure scientific knowledge, carry out fair tests and process their results using sound graphical techniques. They use information and communication technology to word process topic work and are able to access electronic sources for information. Although the subject content of work seen represents a good standard, the overall quality of presentation of written work and diagrams could be improved. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils have extended their knowledge and understanding to include knowledge and understanding of the body's control systems, the reactivity series and electrolysis. The highest attaining pupils are able to understand and manipulate ionic equations. Pupils use

information and information technology effectively to word process their scientific investigations and the presentation of written work is of a much better standard.

106. The quality of teaching seen was good overall and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. Three quarters of the lessons seen were at least good and a quarter of the lessons seen were very good or better. The teaching was better at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4 all the lessons seen were at least good with half of them being very good. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their subject. They plan their lessons well, set high expectations, ensure that they have clear objectives that pupils can understand and provide the necessary resources for the tasks involved and this results in pupils making good progress in lessons. Very good lessons were well structured and included skilful questioning that constantly checked pupils' acquisition of concepts before progressing on to more difficult ideas. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on food webs, the teacher ensured that all pupils understood perfectly the food chain principle before extending this to the idea of food webs using searching questions and a series of over head projector transparency overlays. As a result pupils were able to construct food webs for themselves, using a series of statements, by the end of the lesson. In an excellent Year 9 lesson on investigating the best ways to keep a container of water hot, the teacher used a well-structured, well-timed, series of steps to guide the pupils, whilst giving them the main responsibility for their planning. These aspects, together with the excellent range of insulators made available to each group and the high expectations of the teacher, enabled them to produce thorough plans which included predictions based upon scientific knowledge. High expectations characterise much of the teaching and pupils are given information on the national curriculum levels they are expected to achieve. For example, in a very good Year 10 lesson on measuring, observation and analysing experimental results, the teacher explained the term 'anomalous' very clearly and checked that all pupils understood the term. By the end of the lesson, all pupils were able to identify anomalous results from their findings and explain them. In addition they knew the level at which they were working. As a result of good classroom management, behaviour and attitudes towards the subject are good enabling all pupils to participate in lessons without undue distractions and to make good progress.

107. The statutory requirements are met at both key stages and schemes of work are in place for both key stages. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The Certificate of Achievement in Science is being developed in Key Stage 4 and some examples of very good practice were seen when the teaching materials were tailored to meet the needs of pupils with specific learning difficulties. For example in a Year 8 lesson on the lungs, the teacher designed 3 different activity sheets to address the needs of pupils with specific learning difficulties. As a result, all pupils were able to access the material, and make very good progress. The teaching of literacy and numeracy, whilst generally satisfactory needs to be applied consistently across the department. The use of information and communication technology for word processing and spreadsheet needs is generally satisfactory but the use of information and communication technology for data logging needs to be developed. Departmental plans are in place for this.

108. The monitoring of pupils' academic performance is good. Individual pupil records of test results and targets are in place. However, pupils' progress towards these targets is not always tracked. The marking of pupils work is satisfactory but inconsistent. There are some very good examples of comments that explain to pupils what they need to do to improve and this practice needs to be spread across the department. Safety in the laboratories is satisfactory with some examples of very good practice in lessons. However, risk assessment procedures need to be formalised and embedded in schemes of work and lesson plans. Safety issues in relation to gas isolation switches in two of the laboratories have been dealt with effectively. Hazardous chemicals and radioactive materials are regularly checked and are stored in accordance with statutory regulations.

109. The recently appointed head of department shows potential for very good leadership. An effective team of experienced, well-qualified teachers and laboratory technicians share his vision and commitment to raising standards. Although new in post, departmental staff are already benefiting from his support and encouragement.

110. Resources are good, including library provision. The laboratory technicians are highly valued by the teaching staff and have a direct impact on pupils' learning by the preparation of good quality resources for lessons. The accommodation is adequate to fulfil the needs of the curriculum although water taps and drainage are in need of attention in some laboratories.

111. Since the last inspection the proportion of pupils attaining grades A*- C in the GCSE at the end of Key Stage 4 has increased. The majority of teaching has improved. There is no unsatisfactory teaching and the range of teaching and learning activities is good. The accommodation has been improved and two partially adapted classrooms are now fully equipped laboratories.

ART AND DESIGN

112. Teachers' assessments in art of 14 year olds were below average for 2000. These did not accurately reflect pupils' attainment, which is better overall. Equal proportions of boys and girls attain the expected standard though, nationally, girls would be expected to do better. Results in GCSE examinations in 2000 were well above average. Three out of four pupils attained the higher A* to C grades compared to around three out of five pupils nationally. Attainment of A* to C grades by the relatively small group of boys is above the national average for boys, while the larger group of girls attained slightly above the national average for girls. These GCSE results maintain the high standards attained by the art department over recent years and represent a significant improvement since the last inspection.

113. Standards of work of 14 year olds observed during the inspection were average overall. Year 9 pupils attain in line with national expectations and Years 7 and 8 above. There are significant strengths emerging in graphics related projects that include the use of computers. A striking display of small posters on a "space travel" theme is displayed in the computer room. The careful structuring of the project allows all pupils to create successful images while giving higher attainers the opportunity to produce more complex work. A small proportion of pupils show a very good level of skill and imagination in developing a comic book style of drawing that is appropriate to the projects. A much larger proportion however produced simple cartoon drawings of a lower standard. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 require clearer targets to challenge them. Standards in the work of 16 year olds observed during the inspection were well above average. A notable strength at this age is the pupils' ability to express feelings and opinions through their artwork, particularly in the form of installations and large paintings. The quality of folders and booklets that pupils create about artists and photographers is generally very good and sometimes excellent with thorough personal research and meticulous presentation.

114. Achievement across Years 7 to 9 for pupils as a whole is satisfactory though there are considerable variations between year groups. Many pupils in the present Year 9 show less motivation than those in other year groups. This is attributable in part to a lack of continuity in their timetable for art lessons in earlier years. Pupils in Year 7, with regular art lessons, are achieving very well. They work with enthusiasm and quickly assimilate new skills and knowledge. In one lesson they explored the technique of using paper pulp to create pictures, often showing a sensitive use of neutral colours and natural materials such as leaves and petals. Many Year 7 pupils are producing work that is well above the expected standard for their age. Achievement across Years 10 and 11 for pupils as a whole is very

good. Within this age group many pupils develop a mature and individual approach to art and learn how to use their artwork as a form of personal expression. The setting of Year 10 pupils by ability is proving very effective for lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs in enabling teaching to be accurately pitched for maximum achievement. The teachers are rightly proud of the successes of these pupils who often achieve much higher grades in art than in their other subjects. Gifted and talented pupils are not specifically identified but higher attaining pupils are encouraged to explore new forms of artistic expression taking them well beyond the closely guided projects of earlier years. Pupils are given the opportunity to work on large-scale installations where they create an environment with furniture and objects. The objects they create show deep reflection over issues such as the environment, child abuse and the nature of fame. Very strongly felt emotions are evident in many of the works.

115. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Standards of attainment in GCSE examinations have risen from around the national average to well above the national average for A*- C grades. The range of media, materials and techniques has been extended, particularly in Years 10 and 11, allowing pupils a wider scope for personal expression. GCSE photography has been introduced, along with GNVQ art and design, allowing pupils further opportunities to match their strengths with an appropriate course. Work remains to be done on clarifying assessment procedures, especially in Years 7 to 9, to establish clear standards of attainment and to set clearer targets for pupils' attainment.

116. The quality of teaching in art is good throughout the age range. Particular strengths in teaching in Years 7 to 9 include the teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and their enthusiasm to share it with the pupils. The teachers make very good use of appropriate language when introducing or discussing topics with pupils. Vocabulary is well pitched for pupils' abilities and makes frequent reference to art-specific terms, which the pupils learn and use confidently in their own answers and comments. Areas for improvement include the need for clear examples of the standards of work expected from pupils to set clearer targets, particularly for Year 9. Similar strengths are seen in teaching in Years 10 and 11 where teachers have high expectations of their pupils' effort and commitment. The very good quality of relationships between teachers and pupils is an important factor in the department's success giving pupils the confidence and support they need to find their individual style. Pupils in Year 11 feel relaxed and at home in the art rooms and they are very appreciative of the extra time that the teachers make available for them. Visits to galleries, at home and abroad, are often made during school holidays. GCSE pupils are aware of their predicted grades but they are not clear about the criteria for grading and have little involvement in the assessment of their work.

117. The head of art provides excellent leadership with a clear philosophy for the department that is delivered with an infectious enthusiasm by both teachers. All the stated aims of the school are strongly embodied in the work of the art department, particularly in Years 10 and 11 where personal development, self-reliance, creativity and independence of thought are at the forefront.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

118. Attainment at age 14 is above national expectation. This is shown through lessons seen and the record of teacher assessments. Through a series of focused tasks and design assignments pupils build up a resource of skills, knowledge and understanding. Work in folders is varied and includes opportunities for pupils to generate and develop their ideas in different product areas. The quality of graphics varies throughout the key stage and staff should ensure that all pupils have the skill and techniques to fully represent their ideas effectively. Pupils use their skills in information and communication technology, and experience a module in control technology. However, limited provision and sometimes difficult access to computers holds back the pupils' development of these skills within the context of subject studies. Pupils experience two concurrent programmes within this key stage, one in food and textiles and the other in resistant materials, control and graphics. They develop key planning skills and techniques alongside a range of practical skills, which provide a basis for more open-ended work in the GCSE course. Pupils show interest in the design assignments and many are beginning to develop a personal style. They are confident in practical situations and they use tools and equipment sensibly and effectively. There is much good work and pupils obviously enjoy the challenge. Pupils are aware of assessment criteria and what they need to do if they are to improve their work. Teachers review the progress of pupils regularly and details of National Curriculum levels attained, progress made and targets for improvement are communicated to parents. Pupils achievements are good.

119. Attainment at age 16 is above the national average. Pupils opt for a GCSE course from food, textiles, graphics or resistant materials. There is a further option in catering. These programmes make different demands on pupils although they work to a common framework for the presentation of their work. Graphics is a skill which all pupils use effectively and there is evidence of greater use of ICT, particularly in the folder work in the resistant materials and graphics courses. There is need to develop ICT further within the context of subject studies, particularly in manufacture. Design folders are of a very high standard and there is evidence of considerable depth of research and analysis as pupils plan their work. Presentation is good and there is much evidence of attractive and innovative design work. Practical work is done carefully and pupils use tools, equipment and machinery with confidence. The quality of design products overall is good and reflect a wide range of pupil styles and interests. Health and safety matters are given high profile and pupils use appropriate guards, eye protection and clothing. In 2000, the number of pupils gaining higher grades in GCSE examinations (A*- C) was well above the national average. Pupils gained in food 89 per cent; in catering 75 per cent; in graphics 64 per cent; in textiles 55 per cent and in resistant materials 55 per cent. Pupils achieved well.

120. Pupils' attitudes are positive and many demonstrate enthusiasm for, and enjoyment in, their studies. They are attentive and show interest in the challenges and assignments offered. Pupils respond positively to codes of conduct in specialist rooms and their behaviour is very good. Relationships between pupils and with teachers are good. Pupils are able to concentrate for appropriate periods of time and they are keen to succeed. Those with special educational needs are clearly identified by staff and copies of individual education plans are used to focus work more closely to the needs of the individual. Special educational needs pupils make good progress and achievement is good. Assessment profiles and periodic review meetings provide all pupils and parents with important information about progress and attainment.

121. The quality of teaching overall is very good and there are examples of excellent teaching. Teachers have created a positive and attractive learning environment within which many pupils find interest and stimulation. The teaching team is experienced and hard working. Work is well managed, resources appropriately organised and lessons well

prepared. Schemes of work are structured and progressive and they also enable pupils to introduce their own ideas and influences. Assessment is detailed and provides important information to pupils and teachers about progress and development. There were many very good lessons seen which had pace, expectation, structure and purpose and teachers used their enthusiasm and personalities effectively to stimulate pupil behaviour. Homework is integral to current work in class and diary/planners are used to communicate with parents. There are links with the community outside school and the curriculum is enriched through these contacts. Teachers use display well and this contributes considerably to pupil interest and the development of ideas. Of the 13 lessons seen during the inspection 12 were good, or better. However, the team has insufficient technician support and this throws a heavy burden of preparation tasks on the teachers.

122. The department is well led by an able and enthusiastic teacher who, together with a senior colleague, has coordinated the efforts of two previously separate groups. Administrative procedures are good and documentation full and detailed. Schemes of work are undergoing some revision. The standard of accommodation has been improved since the last inspection and, although some specialist rooms are rather small, the quality is good. Some minor up grading is required in the workshops. A major area of curriculum development for the future is ICT where there is a need for improved provision and the introduction of CAD/CAM facilities. The introduction of a systems and control GCSE course would be appropriate also. The department has addressed the issues listed in the last inspection report and there have been a number of improvements. Resourcing for the department is barely adequate for the changes anticipated and the provision of everyday learning resources. Leadership is positive and the management system effective and these are reflected in the steady progress, which has been made since the last inspection.

GEOGRAPHY

123. Standards of attainment are above average at the end of Year 9 and well above average at the end of Year 11. Teacher assessments at age 14 show that the percentage of pupils reaching Level 5 and above has been above national expectations for the last three years, with an improving trend. More girls than boys have achieved this level. At age 16 the proportion of pupils attaining GCSE results of grades A* to C has been well above the national average for the past three years and has improved steadily. Every pupil, including those on the register of special educational needs, has gained a pass in the A* to G range. In 2000 the number achieving A* grades was twice the national average and subject results were significantly higher than the results for other subjects in the school. One pupil was amongst the four national finalists for the Bristol Project coursework prize. The performance of girls was better than that of boys up to 2000, when the difference was reversed. The trend is one of steady improvement.

124. Standards of work seen during the inspection are also above average by the end of Year 9, with some pupils reaching the highest National Curriculum level. Pupils of all abilities have a very good command of geographical vocabulary and can explain and discuss their work. However, work of the slower pupils is sometimes poorly presented with poor writing and spelling skills. Year 11 GCSE coursework studies about coastal erosion in the Swanage area, reservoirs, and the development of Newbury and Basingstoke show the ability to collect and analyse data and arrive at sound conclusions. Much of the work is very well presented but weaker pupils have been unable to think through their work properly or present it attractively.

125. Pupils' achievement is good at both key stages, showing a steady progression of knowledge and understanding. By the end of Year 9 they have learned about the causes and effects of natural phenomena such as hurricanes and volcanoes and have a good

understanding of the concepts of hydro-electric power, the conservation of natural habitats, and cost-benefit analyses of development issues. Pupils in Year 10 understand the causes and effects of flooding and the principles of river management through case studies of major rivers.

126. Because much of the learning is through either group work or skilled teacher-led discussion, which draws everyone into the lesson, pupils with special educational needs make good progress. No pupils were observed whose knowledge of English prevented them from playing a full part in the lesson.

127. The standards of teaching and learning are very good at both key stages. All lessons observed were good or better and two-thirds were very good or better. Pupils learned particularly well because of the consistently good planning and pacing of the lessons, which held their interest at all times. Assessment of learning through questioning is very good and all pupils are involved in their own self-assessment, with clearly understood targets for improvement. They are often able to take responsibility for their own learning, for example, when formulating their own set of questions for study about the Mississippi floods. Resources are always appropriate and imaginatively used: in one excellent lesson pupils were 'transported' into the situation of experiencing a volcanic eruption through imaginative use of multi-media resources. Management of pupils is very good at all times, with good relationships, which produce a calm and secure working environment. Strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are not well developed through much of the teaching and, because of difficulties accessing equipment; information and communication technology is not at present used as a tool for teaching and learning, though plans are in hand to improve this situation.

128. Leadership and management are very good, with good improvement since the last inspection. Standards of teaching and attainment have risen and new assessment procedures for Years 7 to 9 are in place, with portfolios of National Curriculum level work constantly being refined. Members of the department work well together with a strong commitment to making sure that pupils' experience of the subject is of the highest quality. The newly qualified teacher is very well supported. Overall this is a strong and improving department.

HISTORY

129. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils are achieving the national expectation in teacher assessments. A substantial majority of pupils achieves above this, reaching levels 6 and 7 of the National Curriculum for history.

130. At Key Stage 4 standards at grades A*-C, (50.7 per cent of those entered) were below the national average of 57.5 per cent in 2000. Standards at A*-G were in line with the national average. The number of pupils obtaining grade A* in 2000 was eight which reflects the gradually rising number achieving A* over the last three years. Over the last three years results in history at GCSE have varied slightly at grades A – C and remained constant at grades A – G.

131. Standards of work seen in lessons at Key Stage 3 are good. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress. Teachers' expectations of pupils' ability to succeed in learning are consistently high and reflected in the purposeful learning atmosphere in lessons. Learning activities are well matched to pupils' capabilities. All pupils are given work, which challenges them, and their progress is carefully monitored and tested. Inspection of samples of pupils' work across the key stage shows that pupils are achieving well and making good progress in knowledge of the periods studied, understanding of how

the past is investigated and judgements arrived at, and developing appropriate skills for analysing evidence from a variety of sources which include written, photographs, film, pictures, letters and posters. For example in Year 7 pupils can identify ways in which medieval attitudes about dangerous illnesses were different from today's and suggest reasons for this. Others have investigated different ways in which leaders in the Crusades such as Richard the Lion-Heart and Saladin have been portrayed and used evidence to make their own judgements. Year 8 pupils are using written and pictorial sources to discuss stereotypical images of native North American peoples, and Year 9 pupils can contrast attitudes today with those of people in Nazi Germany and account for the differences.

132. Progress is assessed regularly by tests and levels of attainment awarded according to National Curriculum guidelines. Results of these tests are shared with pupils, and, together with class and homework, used to identify strengths and weaknesses and form the basis for learning targets.

133. Written work is good. By the end of Year 9 most pupils are able to write detailed essays, make their own notes, draft answers to questions and produce a pleasing range of types of writing such as newspaper reports, letters, diaries, and to use evidence to inform imaginative reconstruction of life and attitudes in the past. For example Year 9 pupils have written about slavery from the point of view of slaves, and Year 8 pupils about the Reformation as though by an eye-witness. Year 9 pupils are required to write personal study-projects based on research using reference books and the Internet. These are well organised and well presented. Lower-attaining pupils benefit from using writing frames and more structured questions, and from strong support and advice by teachers and special needs assistants. Higher attaining pupils have extension activities to challenge their thinking and extend their skills.

134. At Key Stage 4 standards in lessons are in line with the requirements of GCSE. Pupils are able to build on the very good foundations in skills and understanding laid at Key Stage 3. Year 10 pupils are able to distinguish between long and short term causes of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and to assess their relative importance. They can also evaluate Lenin's actions and achievements in the light of historical circumstances in the period 1917-1924. Examination of samples of Year 10 written work show detailed written work including analysis of cartoons about the Peace Settlement of 1919-20 and carefully-written newspaper reports on the Treaty of Versailles written from the point of view of Germany. Pupils use writing frames to help them with GCSE examination questions; for example how to support their own judgements by reference to evidence whilst indicating variant opinions and factors, which need to be taken into consideration.

135. From inspection of samples of Year 11 coursework (it was not possible to see Year 11 lessons) it shows good standards of achievement. More able pupils have produced analyses of sources about the use of the atomic bomb in 1945 and evacuation in Britain during the Second World War, which contain mature and perceptive judgements based on interpretation of a range of sources and their reliability as historical evidence. Their work was well written and they were able to express their own opinions supported by reference to evidence.

136. The history department, through history lessons at both key stages and by contributing to GCSE Integrated Humanities, makes a useful contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development. For example Year 8 pupils are learning about the ways in which different cultures interact by studying contacts between Europeans and Native Americans in the 16th century. Year 7 pupils are able to reflect on their own feelings about illness and death as part of their study of the Black Death. In Year 9, pupils consider how advertising and propaganda attempt to influence and sway public opinion. In Year 10, pupils

examined the complexity of issues about use and misuse of rain forests, and the role of governments in trying to balance needs and the demands of different interest groups.

137. The quality of teaching at both key stages is consistently good. In over half of lessons seen teaching was very good. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed. The quality of teaching has clearly improved on the good standards identified at the last inspection. All the teachers are subject specialists with a very good knowledge of the subject and keep up to date with new ideas on teaching it. Their interest, enthusiasm and enjoyment are communicated in lessons to pupils. Planning of lessons is thorough and rooted in detailed schemes of work, which are regularly evaluated and revised to take account of new developments. All lessons have learning objectives, which cross-refer to the attainment targets of the National Curriculum and GCSE syllabus. Planning is structured to encourage progress and maintain standards. Teaching makes an important contribution to personal and social education, Citizenship and the teaching of basic literacy skills. All lessons include a balance of teacher explanation and pupil activities. There is a strong emphasis on discussion with high expectations of pupils' ability to listen, speak, read, write and contribute. Teachers are very skilful in making sure that all pupils are involved and included in oral and written work. Activities are differentiated and match ability. Resources are varied to ensure pupils of all abilities have access to tasks, including in Key Stage 4 GCSE work. Pupils are given opportunities to work co-operatively in small groups. Teachers' management skills are a strength of the department and ensure that behaviour in all lessons is good. Low-level tasks are avoided unless absolutely necessary and there is little use of work sheets. All work is marked and there is appropriate written and oral feedback. Pupils' ideas are valued and made use of and relationships with teachers are good.

138. Learning is good and almost all pupils, both boys and girls, are good making progress. Both sexes contribute to discussion and produce good written work. The department, however, makes sure that attention is given to developing strategies for improving still further the performance of boys. Pupils work hard and productively. They are attentive and concentrate on their work. No time is wasted in lessons.

139. The head of department provides excellent leadership which is marked by provision of detailed documentation and schemes of work. Excellent assessment procedures and use of data inform teaching and the setting of targets for pupils. There are regular meetings to share information and good practice, and the department has very good resources. Staff are committed to raising standards and to making history interesting and enjoyable. A portfolio of examples of pupils' work at different levels is being built up. Teaching is monitored. The quality of display in each history room is very good, includes written and practical work. Liaison with primary schools is good with sharing of ideas and good practice. Primary pupils visit the school to work with Year 9 pupils on evacuation. There are opportunities for fieldwork in Year 7 and Year 10 and the visit to Belgium and First World War sites by Year 9 pupils contributes to raising interest in the subject and enthusiasm for opting for GCSE history.

140. Since the last inspection there has been good progress with information and communication technology being developed (although access to computers is still not always satisfactory). The department uses the Internet to ensure pupils in each year group have access to good quality activities. Further progress has been made in the area of assessment and the outcomes are made good use of to help pupils identify weaknesses and to set learning targets. The quality of teaching has continued to improve through professional development and keeping up to date with new ideas. The principal areas for development in the future are the department's contribution to basic numeracy skills and continuing the work begun on helping pupils in Year 11 who are potential borderline Grades C/D achieve C's.

141. The department makes a significant contribution to teaching integrated humanities GCSE at Key Stage 4. Lessons observed were well planned and resourced; interested the pupils; the subject contributed to personal and social development and was a useful preparation for adult life and the world of work.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

142. In the 2000 teacher assessments of Year 9 results were below national averages. This reflects the standards seen during the inspection. Results in the 2000 GCSE Information Technology examination, taken by about a quarter of the year group, were well above national averages. Results in this course have shown substantial improvement over the past three years.

143. Standards by age 14 seen during the inspection are below national expectations. Pupils in Year 9 develop satisfactory skills in word processing and desktop publishing through the work they do in a number of subjects. For example in English they draft and redraft written work using the computer. They combine information from different sources in a range of subjects including geography and science when they produce booklets and other materials aimed at particular audiences. Only a few individuals as yet make use of multimedia software to present information. Pupils make sound use of the Internet for research and they learn that they need to frame their questions carefully in order to get the information they seek. However, they have little knowledge and understanding of databases and few know how to create or maintain them and this is a significant weakness. Pupils in mathematics lessons make good use of spreadsheets to model information when they explore solutions to equations by trial and improvement. Pupils also model information in an exciting and challenging project in art when they create computer screen environments featuring images of the physical models they have built. A major weakness is the lack of computer control technology or data logging. Overall progress is unsatisfactory for all pupils including those with special educational needs because they do not cover the programmes of study set out in the National Curriculum.

144. By age 16 the majority of pupils attain standards that are below national expectations. Around a quarter follow a GCSE course in information technology (IT) and attain good standards. The pupils who do not follow the IT course get their ICT in a largely unplanned way. There is no whole school scheme of work for IT in Years 10 and 11. Some of the IT provision they experience is satisfactory and leads to satisfactory standards such as in the research of Internet databases in religious education and drama. However their experience of databases does not develop beyond this and they have no experience of control technology or data logging. Overall they make unsatisfactory progress over the range of National Curriculum requirements and standards are below national expectations.

145. In the GCSE IT course pupils make good progress and attain high standards. They produce good solutions for the business problems they are given. For example they construct and test a customer database for an imaginary cinema. They evaluate the solutions well and make changes when they are necessary. Through their projects they develop a good level of knowledge and understanding of the range of hardware and software used in the commercial world and become aware of a range of issues related to the use of information technology such as the importance of security of the data that is held.

146. Teaching is satisfactory overall though in the GCSE IT course it is good. Teachers have adequate knowledge of IT and plan well for lessons. They are well prepared. For example in lessons featuring Internet use they offer a range of relevant web sites so that pupils do not waste time randomly searching for information. In this way learning is more effective. Teachers are generally patient and persistent and this helps pupils to settle down

and to make the most of the time they have for the lesson. They work around pupils giving individual guidance, which promotes their learning more effectively. Teachers generally have sound expectations of their pupils though a lack of subject knowledge in some lessons leads to lower levels of challenge. This is in part due to ineffective co-ordination of cross-curricular IT over recent years. Because of a lack of overall planning pupils are producing too many leaflets and brochures where the challenge of, for example, multimedia presentations could be introduced to retain their interest and extend their skills. In some cases the lack of sufficiently challenging material causes some minor misbehaviour and inhibits learning.

147. The management of ICT has been taken over by the design technology department. The new manager has come to the job with a clear, well-developed vision for the future of ICT in the school. A top priority he has begun to address is assessment which is presently unsatisfactory and which was unsatisfactory during the last inspection.

148. The decision to run a key skills course in ICT for 15 and 16 year olds promises to address the low standards presently attained by the older pupils in the school. However the ICT curriculum for Years 7 to 9 does not equip younger pupils with the full range of ICT skills as required by the National Curriculum. A scheme of work which addresses the range of basic skills and which makes sure that these are applied and consolidated in the range of subjects is required.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

149. Almost all pupils study French or German as a first foreign language in Year 7, and they continue with this language until the end of Year 11. There have been staffing difficulties in the department for some years, but these have now been resolved.

150. In French, teacher assessments at age 14 were above national standards in 2000. A significant number of pupils in the current Year 9 in May 2001 have already reached level 5 in French in listening, speaking, reading and writing, in line with national standards. French GCSE results were above national standards in 2000, and it is expected that they will be well above in 2001. GCSE results in French were higher than standards in similar schools in 2000. However, they were lower than most other subjects in the school. In lessons seen in Year 10, pupils worked above national standards. At both Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils are stronger in listening, speaking and reading, and weaker in writing.

151. When listening to a French tape, a Year 7 class could identify subjects and times on a school timetable. Pupils in a Year 8 class were able to write down which clothes their partner preferred and give reasons why. Most in a Year 9 class were able to read and understand detailed opinions about different films. When speaking, pupils in a Year 10 class were able to say which food and drink they preferred. In French, overall, there are a satisfactory amount of written exercises and sustained writing: however, pupils make errors in spelling. Pupils do not check their written work carefully enough; the errors pupils make in written work are preventing pupils from achieving higher standards. Boys usually attain as well as girls, and boys attain better results than in most other schools. There are no significant variations between pupils of different ethnicity, background, nor ability. Pupils have regular reading sessions; these contribute to their general literacy and develop their French skills and knowledge, including the use of dictionaries. Pupils have limited access to computers, but use them well when they have the opportunity.

152. German results were below national standards in 2000. GCSE results German were lower than standards in similar schools in 2000. They were also lower than most other subjects in the school. Teacher assessments at age 14 were above national standards in German in 2000. A significant number of pupils in the current Year 9 in May 2001 have

already reached level 5 in German in listening, speaking, reading and writing, in line with national standards. In lessons seen in Year 10 showed pupils working above national standards.

153. In German at both Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils are strongest at listening, speaking and reading, and weakest in writing. Pupils in a Year 8 class were able to read a menu in German and understand the food and drink on offer. In another Year 8 class, they were able to write a letter about their personal life to a pen friend. When listening to a German tape, a Year 10 class could identify the medical ailments suffered by different people. When speaking, pupils in another Year 10 class were able to create a conversation in pairs about a visit to a bank and perform it for the rest of the class. Overall, there are a satisfactory amount of written exercises and sustained writing: however, pupils make unnecessary errors in grammar and spelling. As in French, pupils do not check their written work carefully enough and such errors are preventing pupils from achieving higher standards. Boys usually attain as well as girls, and boys attain better results than in most other schools. There are no significant variations between pupils of different ethnicity, background, nor ability. Pupils have regular reading sessions: these contribute to their general literacy and develop their German skills and knowledge, including the use of dictionaries.

154. In both French and German, pupils spend most of their time using the foreign languages in listening, speaking, reading and writing; this contributes to their literacy skills, but these are at lower levels than they would be in English. Numeracy activities have been incorporated successfully into schemes of work, and are used by teachers. Pupils have limited access to computers, but use them well when they have the opportunity. The department is trying to set up e-mail links with its partner school in Germany and France.

155. The overall quality of teaching in French is good. At Key Stage 3 the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory, often good, and sometimes very good. In the one lesson seen Key Stage 4 it was very good. Almost all of the lessons seen were good or better. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The quality of teaching is improving standards and ensures good progress. The teachers plan a sequence of activities, are proficient in French and have good accents; they project their voices clearly.

156. In German, the overall quality of teaching is good. At Key Stage 3 it is good or very good. At Key Stage 4 it is good or very good. All of the lessons seen were good or better. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The quality of teaching is improving standards and ensures satisfactory or good progress. The teachers plan a sequence of activities, are proficient in German, project their voices clearly, and have good accents in German.

157. In both French and German lessons, pupils use the foreign languages for parts of the lesson, but sometimes use too much English. Some use overhead projectors well, but others do not use them sufficiently. They use other resources effectively to increase learning. Standards of discipline are generally good, but a few pupils find it difficult to concentrate sufficiently. Time is used well, and teachers are good at encouraging oral work in pairs: however, sometimes they do not use pair work sufficiently. Staff display pupils' work, maps, posters, and other authentic material, which increase the pupils' knowledge of the languages and countries concerned. However, more maps and display are needed in some classrooms. Pupils' work is assessed regularly, and results inform subsequent teaching. Useful homework, which consolidates learning, is set regularly. The teaching of those with special needs is good, and meets the needs of these pupils as well. Teachers manage classes well, and give pupils a variety of experiences in the classroom, including songs, role-plays, videos and class surveys.

158. The vast majority of pupils behave well. They show interest in their work, sustain their concentration, and develop good study skills. Their response is at least satisfactory and often good or very good at Key Stages 3 and 4. Many pupils show an obvious sense of enjoyment in lessons. They work well in pairs, and sometimes have opportunities to use their initiative in creating role-plays and working independently. Their positive attitudes are enabling them to improve their performance. However, a few pupils find it difficult to concentrate and achieve their potential. Most pupils, including the most and least able and those with special educational needs, make good progress in lessons at both key stages.

159. The organisation of the curriculum meets statutory requirements. The head of modern languages monitors the progress of pupils in French and German. The department is very well led and organised, has prioritised development plans, and works well as a team. The department lacks sufficient textbooks, readers, magazines, computers, and computer software. Visits to France and Germany encourage social interaction and personal responsibility, and improve language competence. The textbooks and other materials used, together with the visits abroad, help develop awareness of the diversity and richness of other cultures. The quality of most teaching, the attitudes of most pupils, visits abroad, and the leadership of the head of modern languages have a positive effect on standards. However, insufficient use of pair work; the foreign languages by teachers' lack of resources and the errors pupils make in written work are preventing pupils from achieving higher standards.

160. The department has addressed all the issues raised in the previous report. The quality of teaching and learning has improved, and this has improved standards at all levels. However, resources are still lacking.

MUSIC

161. Teacher assessments in Year 9 show that the majority of pupils achieve the national expectation these may be a little too generous. GCSE results are good but numbers are small and cannot be compared with the national. Uptake has decreased since 1997. There is no significant difference in the results of boys and girls at both key stages.

162. Year 11 pupils were not in school during the inspection week. Standards in Year 10 in lessons and work seen are broadly average. Progress is good. Pupils achieve well and show a willingness to work. In one Year 10 instrumental lesson, where the pupil was working at above average levels, there was good progress made in learning to play the high notes on the flute.

163. Standards in lessons and work seen in Years 7 to 9 are overall below average because pupils enter the school with a limited amount of knowledge in music and little or no experience in playing instruments. In addition, the pace of lessons is often too slow and pupils' time is wasted setting up the keyboards, which they have to share, and putting them away.

164. A small minority of pupils achieve above average levels. These pupils are supported in their learning by instrumental lessons and opportunities to play in performances throughout the year.

165. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Staff demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Planning of the lessons is satisfactory but does not always include effective ways of grouping pupils, which would encourage good learning. For example, in one Year 7 lesson seen, three pupils with special educational needs sat together unsuccessfully sharing one small keyboard. This resulted in unsatisfactory progress for these pupils. Links to pupils' prior learning are written in teachers'

planning but pupils are not given the opportunity to consolidate their knowledge, especially at the beginning and end of lessons. The quality of teaching is good in Year 10 and relationships are less tense. This leads to good progress being made by all pupils. In one lesson seen, the aims of the lesson were made clear to pupils. Through question, answer, listening and discussion, pupils made good gains in understanding the concept of music for a special occasion and how the occasion and the venue determine the special features of the piece.

166. The department makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. This is planned for in every class music lesson. All pupils study music from other cultures. For example, Year 8 pupils listen to music from Indonesia. The project on jazz and blues in Year 9 gives pupils an opportunity to reflect on issues of slavery. This leads to a greater understanding of the words of spirituals, work songs and blues. A few Year 10 pupils expressed a feeling of being uplifted whilst listening to a fanfare. There were no extra-curricular opportunities for pupils during the inspection week. Pupils who generally support activities are given the opportunity to take part in concerts and shows.

167. Leadership is overall satisfactory. Lessons are well planned and assessment procedures are in place. The management of learning resources and equipment is unsatisfactory. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not have access to computers in the department. Because numbers are small, pupils in Years 10 and 11 are able to access the one computer in the department. Keyboards are inadequate because the keys are too small for pupils of this age and they are also insufficient in number. There is a shortage of percussion instruments with a broad cultural base. The department is untidy and the environment is bland with a need for bright visual display material that is conducive to good music making. The department is aware of the need to continue to update schemes of work in order to meet the requirements of the national curriculum.

168. The department has made satisfactory progress since the previous report. Standards have been maintained in both key stages. However, there are still some shortcomings in the teaching in Years 7 to 9.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

169. In GCSE examinations in 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C was well below the national average, with only a quarter of the cohort gaining these grades. Over the last three years GCSE results have followed a similar pattern. These results reflect weak practical performances across different activities and the new teaching team have already taken steps to improve this situation.

170. In work seen in the inspection, by the age of 14 many pupils are attaining standards of performance at least in line with nationally expected levels for their age in athletics and cricket. Boys are developing a range of shots in cricket and both boys and girls show determination in refining relay techniques and improving times on the running track. In tennis many girls' levels of practical performance are below expectations for their age although knowledge and understanding of rules is satisfactory. Many pupils recognise how to prepare for activity and some are able to lead groups of colleagues. Pupil progress is good in Years 7 to 9 and they achieve well in relation to the mixed pattern of previous experience when they enter the school.

171. The attainment of some pupils in Year 10 is generally in line and in some cases well above the nationally expected levels for their age in athletics. Some individuals show very good technique in shot putting and sprinting while others, generally those with poor levels of motivation, struggle to record worthwhile scores. The ability to analyse and evaluate their

own and others performance is underdeveloped. Attainment in physical education theory lessons is patchy with some pupils researching topics thoroughly while others are less committed. The number of girls taking GCSE is low although efforts are being made to increase their interest in the subject.

172. Pupils with special educational needs make particularly good progress, attaining standards commensurate with their ability. There are very good strategies to involve learning support within the department and to maximise use of staff expertise and help the lower attaining pupils. The participation in relay running by one assistant served both to support and inspire her pupils as they explored and practised changeover techniques.

173. Some pupils extend and refine their skills further in the extra-curricular programme, particularly in cricket, tennis and athletics. Expansion in this area is difficult but it would further compliment the work of the department. Incidence of non-participation is minimal and reflects the measures taken to reduce it since the last inspection where it was highlighted as a serious problem.

174. All of the teaching is at least satisfactory with much of it good. Teachers have good knowledge of the activities they teach allied to accurate knowledge of their pupils, enabling them to promote realistic expectations. Lessons are well planned and stimulating demonstrations combine with worthwhile interventions with individuals in the good teaching. This has promoted development in athletics and cricket. Boys are refining their natural desire to attack the ball in cricket and recognising the need to play defensively on occasions. Tasks in some games teaching however, particularly tennis, do not always match the level of skill performance and different outcomes need to be considered. In athletics some sessions are too technique based and ignore the context of the activity. As a result pupils are sometimes unsure 'why' specific techniques should be employed and lose interest. The origins of this are the units of work, which need reviewing in the light of ongoing assessment. The department could do more to support the development of literacy skills through the writing and explanation of key words and specialist vocabulary. Teachers provide good role models but the opportunity to share individual teaching strategies and strengths needs developing further.

175. Despite teacher intervention the attitude of a small number of pupils is poor. They continue to chat while the teacher or others are speaking and fail to realise the irritation and low level disturbance their actions are causing in some lessons.

176. Facilities are good but changing rooms still need upgrading. In their present state they give the wrong messages to pupils about health and hygiene and undermine the standards being set.

177. Since the last inspection the department has been through a difficult period of transition. The reduction of specialist staff has had a negative effect on standards. A new team has now come together and standards of teaching and learning are improving across all aspects of the subject.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

178. In the face of significant difficulties the subject is well led with hard work and commitment by a team of non-specialist teachers.

179. Pupils enter the school with below average attainment and often little prior learning in this subject. From this low start pupils' learning develops well and they make good progress. By the age of 14 most pupils are close to the standards expected by the local authority's

guidelines for religious education. Pupils with special educational needs do well and are well supported in their learning by all staff. Pupils acquire a broad basic knowledge of Christianity and the main world faiths. They learn the correct terminology well, and this is helpful to pupils' literacy skills. Orally they are responsive and show good knowledge and understanding. There are examples of pupils' learning through writing extended passages, diaries, poetry, letters and newspaper reports. In work seen, pupils with special educational needs often produce thoughtful words on, for example, the Holocaust. Overall, pupils' achievements are good.

180. Years 10 and 11 pupils study religious education as part of integrated studies. In this module, they study religious and moral issues. In one lesson seen where pupils were studying the Rites of Passage of Christianity and Islam, they were given the opportunity to learn through valuable question and answer sessions, discussion, research and presentation. Pupils responded well and were keen to learn. In lessons seen, pupils' attainment was broadly average. Even though pupils' previous knowledge is overall weak, they make good gains in lessons, grasping new knowledge and the vocabulary of both religions at a quick pace. Pupils' achievements are good. There are, however, limited opportunities for pupils to use computers in lessons or to gain knowledge from a library of books or the use of artefacts.

181. The quality of teaching is overall good. Pupils are taught by a dedicated team of non-specialist teachers who meet regularly and have received valuable guidance on the teaching of religious education and developing to curriculum at both key stages.

182. Teachers are skilled practitioners, yet non-specialists, and this is reflected in the good response and enthusiasm from the pupils in all lessons. In one lesson seen where the quality of teaching was very good, pupils made good gains in their knowledge about the Holocaust. However, there was no reference to religions in the lesson although the moral issues had been covered in depth. The guidance of a specialist teacher would enable staff to turn the lesson to the pupils' own experiences, and to draw out the spiritual implications of what is taught so that pupils get more help with regard to the ultimate questions of life. As a result, the spiritual development of pupils in lessons would be improved.

183. There are many strong features to teaching in all lessons. Lesson aims and objectives are made clear and returned to at the end of the lesson so that pupils evaluate what they have learned. Relationships are good, teachers establish an atmosphere of trust in which pupils will speak openly and also listen to each other. Questions and answer sessions are conducted well to consolidate learning and to help pupils to think. Teachers know their pupils well and are very aware of those with special needs including the higher attainers. Religious artefacts are not used often enough to enliven lessons. For example, in one Year 8 lesson, where pupils were studying aspects of Islam, some pupils said that they had not seen the Qu'ran or visited a Mosque. Suitable homework is set and marking is thorough and encouraging. In Year 10, effective group work encourages the development of social skills, independence and confidence. The response, behaviour and attitudes of the pupils are very good. Most pupils are interested and well engaged. This is a reflection of teaching skills, as the teachers work hard to gain the pupils' respect and co-operation, and their management skills are very good. The pupils' personal development is good. Opportunities for moral development are very good, as is their education about cultural diversity and the need for mutual respect for those different from themselves.

184. The schemes of work have recently been revised and are very good. There are occasional visits out and visitors. Assessment procedures are satisfactory and levels are being introduced in line with other subjects in the school.

185. The overall improvement is good, especially during the past year. The quality of teaching has improved and there is now more consistency in staffing. Time allocation is satisfactory. The department is managed well. To raise the profile and standards of religious education further, the school needs to ensure that at least one member of the team has the qualifications and expertise to match the subject.

INTEGRATED HUMANITIES

186. All pupils follow the Integrated Humanities GCSE course in Year 10 and Year 11. In 2000, 5 per cent gained an A* grade, 55 per cent gained a pass in the A* to C range and 100 per cent in the A* to G range, all above the national average and in line with the results for other subjects in the school. Work seen during the inspection, in lessons and samples of coursework, is also above average.

187. The course content provides a continuation of the personal and social education course in years 7 to 9. As well as economic and industrial understanding, environmental issues, health and citizenship, there is work experience preparation and follow-up, and religious education. All the staff, involved in the teaching, jointly prepared Schemes of work based on the OCR syllabus.

188. In the lessons seen the standard of teaching and learning was all good and better. The lessons are well prepared. Well-paced and interesting tasks mean that pupils' attention is held throughout, so they learn to think about the issues presented to them. Sensitive topics such as divorce and relationships are handled well, enabling pupils to put their own experiences into the context of how others feel. A lesson on the environmental destruction of the Aral Sea, looked at both sides of the picture and deepened pupils' understanding of the effects of economic issues on the environment.