

INSPECTION REPORT

BRIMSHAM GREEN SCHOOL

Yate, Bristol

LEA area: South Gloucestershire

Unique reference number: 109319

Headteacher: Mr R E Warrillow

Reporting inspector: Mr C R Warn
4293

Dates of inspection: 31 January – 3 February 2000

Inspection number: 187233

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 students: 11 to 18 years

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Broad Lane
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
at the above address

Name of chair of governors: H Gawler

Date of previous inspection: 11 March 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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			How well are students taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
			What sort of school is it?
R Jones	Lay inspector	Equal opportunities	
			Students' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its students?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
L Waters	Team inspector	Key Stage 4	The school's results and achievements?
			How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
J Alexander	Team inspector	English as an additional language	
		English	
S Horsfield	Team inspector	Mathematics	
K Martin	Team inspector	Science	
P Clewes	Team inspector	Design and technology	
M Smith	Team inspector	Information technology	
P Hall	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
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V Taylor	Team inspector	Geography	
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G Thomas	Team inspector	Music	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Brimsham Green School is an 11-18 mixed comprehensive school situated in the small town of Yate, approximately 11 miles north east of Bristol. There are 915 students on roll, of whom 128 are in Years 12 and 13. In some post-16 courses students are educated along with students from two other local schools. The number of students admitted into the school has been rising in recent years and in the current Year 7 all the 180 places available have been filled. Almost all students are of white United Kingdom ethnicity and the proportion who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average. Nearly a quarter of all students are on the register of special educational need and 7% have statements. This is a much higher proportion than in most secondary schools and is partly accounted for by the siting of a resource base for students with physical disabilities within the school. Six per cent of students in Years 7 to 11 are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is below average for secondary schools. Students are drawn largely from within a three-mile radius of the school which includes, by national indicators, an environment that is neither strongly advantaged nor disadvantaged in economic terms. The full range of ability is represented within the school although there is a rather larger proportion of students of below average than above average ability. A slightly higher than average proportion of students enter Year 7 with below average levels of attainment, especially in literacy skills.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The academic standards that are achieved are in line with the national average at the end of Year 9, are just above average by the end of Year 11 and just below average at the end of Year 13. These patterns of attainment are just above those that could be normally expected from students with the range of ability that is present in the school. Middle ability students and those with special educational needs make the best progress. Students have a very positive attitude to their learning and behave very responsibly. Almost all teaching is satisfactory or better, and in seven out of ten lessons it is good or better. As a consequence students are learning well, especially in Years 10 to 13. The curriculum offers a balanced education which is accessible to all. A shared provision with two other local schools enables a wide range of courses to be offered in the sixth form. There are very good arrangements for the care and guidance of students and parents are kept adequately informed about their son's or daughter's progress. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and has the capacity to achieve its planned improvements. It is led, managed and governed well. Resources are used in a cost-effective way, providing satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Most students make good progress from the time that they arrive in Year 7 to the time that they leave Year 11, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- GCSE results are above the national average.
- Good teaching encourages students to aim for, and often reach, high personal standards in GCSE, GNVQ and A-level examinations.
- Standards attained in design and technology and business studies are especially good.
- Students respond well to the friendly, supportive and safe learning environment that is provided by working hard and behaving very responsibly.
- Students with special educational needs and with physical disabilities are very well integrated into the life of the school.
- Good use is made of resources, including specific grants and additional funding, to improve standards.
- There is effective leadership and management from the governors, headteacher and key staff.

What could be improved

- The standard of students' literacy skills is not high enough, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- In some subjects teachers could set more ambitious learning targets, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- There is scope for the new technology now available in the school to be used to enrich learning opportunities further.
- The provision for the spiritual and cultural development of students needs to be strengthened.
- Policies and procedures need to be more consistently applied across the whole school.

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 satisfactory progress in addressing the key issues for action from the last inspection in March 1996. Decisive action has been taken to address deficiencies in the curriculum provided in Years 7 to 11 for information technology, music and religious education. Test results for students at the end of Key Stage 3 have risen in line with the national trend. GCSE results have fluctuated from year to year since 1996. The overall trend is slightly down, but results in 1999 showed an upturn. There has been an improvement in the A-level results although they remain below average in terms of the total point score per student. The considerable strengths in the quality of teaching in 1996 have been improved further. Much has been done to raise the expectations of students in Years 7 to 9, although this process of improvement is not yet complete. The accommodation has been substantially upgraded, but the deficiencies in the indoor physical education provision remain. More work needs to be done to assist students' spiritual and cultural development. Recent membership of the High Reliability Schools project has accelerated the pace of change and current development plans indicate that there is a strong commitment to further improvement. There is therefore the capacity to improve further.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
GCSE examinations	A	C	B	D	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
A-levels/AS-levels	E	D	D		

At the end of Year 9 students reach standards that are above the national average in science, in line with the average in mathematics and below average in English. Test results are lower than in schools with a similar proportion of students entitled to take free school meals. This is mostly explained by the high proportion of students with special educational needs in Years 7 to 9. At the end of Year 11 overall GCSE results (in terms of total point scores and the proportion of students gaining five or more grades A* to C) are just above the national average. Since the last inspection GCSE results have fallen slightly whilst national results have risen. Results are best in business studies, design and technology, geography and religious education. They are better than the national average in English and are close to average in mathematics and science. Governors have set targets for the proportion of students that

should gain at least one grade GCSE G grade pass (or equivalent) and an average total points score figure for 2000 and 2001 that are similar to the results obtained in 1999. However, they have set a target for the proportion of students gaining at least five grade C passes that will require an increase from 50% in 1999 to 62% in 2000, which is very ambitious. The current Year 11 students are on track to exceed 50% but not to reach 62%. At A-level results have been rising although in terms of total point scores they are still below average, mostly because students are not entered for a general studies examination. The average point score per A-level entry is in line with the national average. Between Years 7 and 11 girls reach higher standards than boys, but the reverse is the case in Years 12 and 13.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	These are very good in all respects.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is invariably good, both within lessons and around the school. Students are mature and are very considerate to others.
Personal development and relationships	Students respond well when they are given the chance to show initiative and take responsibility. More such opportunities should be provided for this to happen.
Attendance	The attendance figures are satisfactory, although there has been a recent increase in absence that has been authorised by parents.

The high standard of students' conduct is a great strength of the school. There is an outstandingly successful approach to social inclusion and the elimination of bullying and other forms of oppressive behaviour.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	satisfactory	good	good

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

The overall quality of teaching is good. In 70% of lessons teaching is good or better, in 25% of lessons it is very good or excellent and in 95% of lessons it is satisfactory or better. This represents an improvement since the last inspection and confirms that the quality of teaching an important strength of the school, particularly in Years 10 to 13. Teaching is satisfactory in English and mathematics and is good in science at Key Stage 3 and is generally good in all three subjects at Key Stage 4. Important strengths in all subjects are teachers' knowledge, the use of effective teaching methods, the management of students and the use of time and resources. Weaker aspects are the consistency and accuracy of marking, the setting of homework and the monitoring of students' progress in Years 7 to 9. There is a need to set more ambitious learning targets within some subjects in Years 7 to 9. Some teachers are good at helping students develop their literacy and numeracy skills, but there is a general need to improve this aspect of teaching in Years 7 and 8. There is scope for teachers to make greater use of new technology in their lessons. There are no subjects where a significant proportion of the teaching is unsatisfactory.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum provision is good. A broad and balanced curriculum is provided for Years 7 to 11 that meets all legal requirements. In Years 12 and 13 the range of subjects offered has been substantially increased thanks to co-operation with two other schools. GNVQ courses have been successfully introduced and are widening the post-16 curriculum further. More challenging learning targets should be included in some schemes of work for Years 7 to 9.
Provision for students with special educational needs	The provision for students on the register of special educational needs is very good in all years.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	All students are given good advice on their career choices and experience a well-designed programme for personal and social education. Their moral and social development is promoted well, but more needs to be offered to support their spiritual and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its students	The arrangements for the safety and well-being of students are very good. A notable strength is the way that students are introduced into Year 7 from their primary schools. Assessment arrangements, particularly in Years 7 to 9, need to provide students with more accurate advice on how to improve further.

All areas of the curriculum meet statutory requirements except for religious education in Years 12 and 13. Whilst there are work-related aspects in several GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11 there are no specifically vocational courses offered in these years. Parents would benefit from knowing more about what their children are about to study so that they can be more active partners in the learning process.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management are good. Managers provide a clear sense of direction and purpose which is reflected in the positive ethos of the school. Development plans show a clear insight into ways in which the school can improve although the strategies for doing this are still being evolved. Monitoring and evaluation should be strengthened.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good: governors are well informed and play an important part in shaping the direction of the school and in setting standards. They have considerable financial, business and community expertise.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory: there are many well-designed policies in place, but more needs to be done to evaluate how effectively they have been applied.
The strategic use of resources	Much of the accommodation is good, and most resources are used well. There are shortcomings in the space for indoor physical education that restrict the activities that can be offered. Some elements of design and technology are difficult to offer within the space available. Recent purchases of information technology equipment have been very beneficial.

Subject leaders and heads of years provide effective leadership. The headteacher and governors provide a clear vision of what makes the school successful and how it could improve further. Staff training is good. The principles of best value are being interpreted well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the progress that their children are making; • the high standards of behaviour and maturity that students develop; • the quality of the teaching; • the approachability of staff; • expectations that students should work hard; • the quality of leadership and management; • the particularly good care taken with students with special educational needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more appropriate and more consistently set homework; • more challenging work for the most able students in Years 7 to 9; • more information about the curriculum.

Inspectors were able to endorse all of the strengths that were identified by parents in their questionnaire forms and at the parents' meeting. Of the parents who expressed concern over homework, some felt that more should be set and others less. Inspectors considered that most homework was set in a satisfactory way, but agreed with parents that some tasks could be better designed to extend and enrich learning and to help students develop their study skills further. In some cases more challenging learning targets could be set in Years 7 to 9 and this is one of five key issues to be addressed. Governors have been informed about the wish for more information about what their children are studying and what their learning targets are.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The overall academic standards attained by students by the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with expected levels for their age. Overall standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are just above the national average, whilst standards by the end of Years 12 and 13 are just below the national average. Many students achieve well in relation to their ability as tested on entry into Year 7, especially in the foundation subjects. Standards of attainment are lower at Brimsham Green than in the majority of other secondary schools that have a comparable proportion of students who are entitled to take free school meals. However, this school has a very high proportion of students with statements of special educational need and the test scores of students entering Year 7 are below the national average. Given these factors the results are satisfactory.
2. In 1999, results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were close to those achieved nationally in mathematics, were slightly above in science but were lower in English. The results of teacher assessments also reflect this pattern. The trend since the last inspection has been for mathematics and science results to remain close to national average figures and English results to be below them. An exception occurred in 1998 when the results in English were notably higher than the national average. Observations of work in school confirm that this general pattern of attainment in the core subjects continues for current students. Given the levels of attainment on entry, this indicates that the majority of students make satisfactory gains in their capabilities within the core subjects as they progress through Years 7 to 9. However, as many students, particularly boys, are recognised as having low levels of literacy when they arrive, there is scope for a more ambitious, whole-school attack on this problem in order to raise standards of literacy further towards the norm, particularly in Years 7 and 8.
3. Students' achievements in the foundation subjects are often influenced by their literacy skills. The majority of students reach high standards in art and in information technology and very high standards in design and technology by the end of Year 9. Elsewhere, levels of attainment for most students are in line with expected levels for their age. There have been improvements in the standards reached by students in the humanities subjects since the last inspection. In nearly all areas, there is still a wider gap between the achievements of girls and boys than is the case nationally, with girls doing better than boys. By the end of Year 9 this is particularly noticeable in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages.
4. Since the last inspection GCSE results have stayed consistently above the national average although they have not reflected the generally rising trend shown nationally. The ability profile of students taking GCSE examinations has also declined slightly since the last inspection. In 1999, 50% of Year 11 students gained five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C compared with a national figure of 46%. The average total of the points scored by each student was 40 points compared with a national figure of 38 points. Within this overall figure, boys scored slightly above the national average for boys whilst girls scored well above the national average for girls. Thus the pattern of girls out-performing boys by more than the national average continues to the end of Year 11. Boys benefit from the approaches adopted in business studies and design and technology where there are well defined short term learning targets linked to a range of practical activities. The proportion of students gaining at least one GCSE grade G pass is above the national average. Currently 3% of students leave without any GCSE qualification. This amounts to approximately four students per year, some of whom are unable to be entered for GCSE examinations because of the nature of their special educational needs.

5. The 1999 GCSE results in the core subjects showed students performing close to expected levels in English language and mathematics, just above expected levels in English literature but below in science. In French, a much higher proportion of students are entered than is the norm and results are accordingly below the average for all schools but represent a satisfactory level of achievement given this factor. In design and technology, which is also taken by the majority of students, results were very high and continue the well established pattern of very high achievement in this subject. In all of the other subjects, overall attainment is always at least in line with the national average and is above this level in art, business studies, geography, history, music and religious studies.
6. In comparison with schools that have a similar proportion of students known to be eligible to free school meals, the GCSE results are below average. However, given the attainment of students when they enter the school and the high number of students with special educational needs in each year group, the results and standards observed represent outcomes that are satisfactory overall and good for many students.
7. A-level results have improved steadily since the time of the last inspection, especially in terms of the average points scored for each subject. In 1999 this figure was 5.4 points per subject entry which is close to the national average. Generally, students sit fewer A-levels than is the norm nationally. Unlike many schools with sixth forms, no Brimsham Green students are entered for an examination in general studies. This contributes to the fact that total point scores remain lower than the national average. Very few students who complete their courses fail to gain an A-level or GNVQ advanced certificate. An exception was in religious studies A-level in 1999 when five failed out of twelve entered.
8. Lesson observations made during the inspection confirm that the majority of students who are currently following A-level courses are reaching standards that are in line with their predicted grades. This is generally the case in English, mathematics, business studies, geography, information technology, music and the advanced GNVQ course subjects. Students taking design and technology continue to build on the very high standards in earlier years and achieve exceptionally well. Elsewhere, achievements are broadly satisfactory.
9. All students studying at intermediate GNVQ level make good progress on their courses and the consistently high levels of achievement are reflected in the unbroken record of 100% merit awards since the courses were started. Students who are studying for GNVQ qualifications are all taught key skills as part of their course. Observations made by inspectors in lessons confirm that standards of communication, numeracy and information technology are all high, representing commendable achievements for the students and contributing significantly to the success of the GNVQ courses generally.
10. Students with special educational needs are well supported in every year group and most make satisfactory or better progress in their learning. In particular, students with physical disabilities are well integrated and are enabled to make progress that is fully in line with their intellectual abilities. In many subjects, progress for most students with special educational needs is good and is enhanced by effective use of support staff, careful interpretation of individual education plans and teachers' knowledge of individual students' needs. In English and mathematics in Years 7 to 9 their progress is sometimes not as good as in the other subjects. Students whose reading skills and general literacy levels are below average on entry are provided with additional support through extra help in class or by separate teaching in small withdrawal groups. A small number of students, mainly from Year 8, are withdrawn from selected lessons to work at a computerised independent learning programme for three

thirty-minute sessions a week during one term. There is evidence that this enhances their ability to handle text and so improves their reading skills although many find the withdrawal from their normal lessons disruptive. Across all subjects there is a need for a more co-ordinated approach to addressing literacy problems and in remedying weaknesses in basic number skills. In the sixth form, focused support generally ensures that students with special educational needs make good progress.

11. The progress made by gifted and talented students is satisfactory. Individual subject teams provide a variety of opportunities for students with particular interests and talents in a subject to pursue these outside normal lessons. For example, students are invited to take part in a national mathematics challenge. In some classes, the nature of the activities allows students to demonstrate unusual flair and commitment within normal lessons. This is a particular strength of the design and technology department where, for example, computer-aided design software is very imaginatively used to achieve some extremely sophisticated solutions to advanced problems. In general such opportunities are more common amongst older students and such provision is somewhat limited in Years 7 to 9. A small number of students and parents reported that they do not find the curriculum in these years as challenging as it might be. Whilst overall these arrangements amount to a generally satisfactory range of opportunities, there is scope for extending and co-ordinating the ideas more consistently across subjects and throughout all years and for establishing more sophisticated strategies for identifying able students who would benefit from additional stimuli.
12. Governors set a voluntary target for 1999 of 60% of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at A* to C grades. This was too ambitious in the light of previous trends and the figure actually achieved was 50%, much in line with previous years. The equivalent target for 2000 is 62%. On the evidence of recent attainment patterns this is also very ambitious. These high targets were set in 1998 and 1999 without sufficient access to detailed information about the individual capabilities of the students in each year group. With such information now becoming available, future targets should be more directly related to more accurately predicted grades. Inspection evidence suggests that based on current performance in lessons at the time of the inspection the 2000 results are likely to be lower than the published target but could exceed the 1999 figure. Other GCSE targets for 2000 of 40 average point score and of 97% of students gaining at least one GCSE pass are both realistic and evidence suggests the school is on course to meet them. However, neither represents an improvement over the 1999 achievements. However, an analysis of the predicted grades of those students who will be taking GCSE examinations in 2001 indicates that an average total point score of 40 would be a relatively challenging target to reach. Given the number of students with particular learning and other needs, significantly raising the proportion of students gaining at least one GCSE pass much above the current figure of 97% would be hard to do.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

13. Students indicated in discussions that they enjoyed coming to school. Parents confirmed that this was the case. In every year students display positive attitudes to learning and show an active interest in their lessons and other aspects of school life. This involvement increases further as they progress through the school. Students are keen and contribute their opinions and perceptions when they are invited to do so.
14. At the time of the previous inspection behaviour was judged to be good and this still remains so. Students behave well in lessons and when they are moving around the school they act sensibly. During lunchtimes and breaks they use computers and other study resources without the need for supervision and the school site and property is treated well. Staff are working hard

to overcome an on-going problem with litter in some outdoor areas. The incidence of students being excluded is lower than that at most other schools in the local authority area and nationally. Exclusions tend to be for very short cooling off periods prior to constructive action to remedy the underlying problem. The behaviour of students, underpinned by an established structure of merit rewards and sanctions such as detentions, contributes significantly towards the creation of an orderly community where learning takes place effectively.

15. Relationships throughout the school are good. No examples of bullying or other oppressive behaviour were observed or reported during the inspection week. Students and adults, including the school counsellor, confirm that bullying is not a major issue and if it does occur it is dealt with promptly and fairly. Students with physical disabilities are fully included within social activities and friendship groups. The school's personal and social education programme successfully promotes a culture of respect for other people's differences, as demonstrated in role-play activities in Year 7 that are designed to simulate some of the difficulties that students could face. Students listen thoughtfully to the views expressed by others in lessons and on other occasions.
16. Students' personal development is helpfully promoted in a number of ways. A school council has been involved in projects to improve the school environment and provide a covered way outside the dining hall. A group of sixth formers are currently taking an initiative and undergoing training to form a peer support group to help younger students. Sixth formers also organise a senior citizens' club that meets in the school. There are a number of extra-curricular activities, charity work and residential trips that provide other opportunities for some students to participate in if they choose to. The level of student participation extra-curricular activities diminishes after Year 9 and in general is lower than in many secondary schools. Opportunities for students to develop leadership skills and exercise personal responsibility are available, but are not prolific.
17. Attendance levels are in line with national average figures. There has been a slight rise in the rate of unauthorised absence over the last three years. A major factor in this trend has been the desire of some parents to take their children on family holidays during term time. The school has taken realistic measures to try to reverse this trend.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

18. In the last inspection in 1996 it was reported that the great majority of teaching was sound or good. A minority was excellent and about 10% had shortcomings, mostly at Key Stage 3. The current inspection has found that in February 2000 teaching is satisfactory or better in 95% of lessons. It is good or better in 71% of lessons and is very good or excellent in 25% of lessons. The overall quality of teaching improves from being satisfactory at Key Stage 3 to being good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. These figures confirm that improvements in teaching have taken place since the last inspection and that the quality of the teaching is an important strength of the school. However, with 7% of teaching being unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3, there is scope for additional improvement.
19. In all years teachers' subject knowledge and understanding are good. They are able to communicate facts and concepts lucidly and in an interesting way. Good examples of this are to be found in business studies, design and technology, modern foreign languages and music. To raise standards still further, some teachers would benefit from receiving additional training to help them teach the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information technology within their subject, especially in Years 7 and 8. Some of the teaching approaches that are associated with the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies that are making an impact on raising

standards at Key Stage 2 could profitably be extended into the methodologies of teachers at Brimsham Green School. A good example of where this is already happening was seen in history where writing frames and other approaches are used to help structure pieces of extended writing. There is more scope for teachers to capitalise on the impressive potential of the recently installed information and communications technology equipment in order to enrich and extend the learning opportunities of students within lessons and in their homework activities. There is a developing pool of teacher expertise in teaching key skills in the sixth form.

20. In all years the content of lessons is planned well and in Years 10 to 13 the outcomes are usually well defined and are often communicated clearly to students. At Key Stage 3 students are made aware of their own learning targets for a lesson or a group of lessons in information technology, design and technology and modern foreign languages. In other cases, such as in English, history, science and music at Key Stage 3, there is a tendency for teachers to be less specific about the planned outcomes of their lessons and in some instances to expect relatively similar outcomes from students with a considerable range of capabilities. At present, many schemes of work do not have well defined targets for students of differing abilities to reach. As a consequence students and their parents are sometimes unsure about the specific learning targets that are being aimed for and how to reach them. In contrast, in GNVQ lessons students are made fully aware of what they have to do to achieve pass, merit and distinction standards. This knowledge helps them to assess their own progress and understand what more needs to be done to achieve a higher grade. This methodology is being extended successfully into other courses such as GCSE business studies and design and technology.
21. Teachers have appropriate expectations of most of their students in Years 7 to 11 and high expectations of students in Years 12 and 13. Teachers have particularly high expectations of what their students can achieve in design and technology in all years. Expectations are high in all subjects for those students who are on the register of special educational needs, and especially so in those subjects that have a larger practical element. Good examples of this are found in art, design and technology, geography and physical education. Where there are well-defined examination goals students are usually encouraged to aim high, as in the case of Year 10 fieldwork studies of Bristol in geography. There is a well-developed mentoring programme in Year 11 that helps selected students to achieve higher grades at GCSE. In some lessons in Years 7 to 9 where the learning goals are less clearly defined, some of the more able students are allowed to settle for more modest personal targets than they could aspire to. In subjects where girls achieve more highly than boys, greater attention needs to be given to raising the expectations of boys. These subjects particularly include English, mathematics, science, art French and German.
22. The teaching methods used are effective in all years. Expositions are clear, questioning techniques are successful and most students make substantial gains in their knowledge and understanding. Most teachers adopt an open and friendly style which greatly assists students in building up their self-confidence and which helps them to enjoy learning. Good use is made of praise and encouragement, especially in art, music and physical education lessons. Methodologies that meet the varying learning needs of students are especially good in art and history in Years 7 to 9 and in many subjects in Years 10 to 13.
23. The overall management of students in lessons is good in Years 7 to 9 and is very good in Years 10 to 13. However, the control of students in some English and drama lessons is not firm enough, resulting in some reduction in the progress being made. The one hour teaching period is used well and in the great majority of cases lessons proceed briskly and have several distinct activities within them.

24. Support staff make a valuable contribution to the teaching of students on the register of special education needs. Many enable individuals to succeed in tasks without stifling their own initiative and thinking skills. In most cases books, video programmes and other visual aids are used effectively, although there is scope for more visual materials to be used in some sixth form lessons to exemplify theoretical concepts.
25. In most cases students' written work is frequently checked and written comments are added. There are plenty of examples of constructive and diligent marking, but there are also some shortcomings in the value and consistency of the marking procedures that are currently adopted in Years 7 to 9. In many instances marks and comments tend to place an undue emphasis on students' effort and attitude at the expense of providing them with focused advice on how their work could be improved further in order to reach more ambitious learning targets. Attention to this weakness could help to improve standards further. The marking of tests, coursework assignments and essays in Years 10 to 13 is thorough and often diagnostic. In some cases students' files and exercise books that contain their lesson notes are not checked frequently enough, allowing some errors to go uncorrected or some key point to be missed. Some students beginning their GCSE courses in Year 10 and their GNVQ and A-level courses in Year 12 require more initial guidance about how to organise their notes so that important facts and concepts are summarised accurately and can be easily accessed when revising for examinations. The quality and use of daily assessment arrangements is especially good in the GNVQ courses in Years 12 and 13.
26. A minority of parents expressed a range of concerns about homework arrangements. Some considered that not enough homework was set, or that the work lacked challenge and stimulus on occasions. In contrast, others felt that their children had too much work to do at home, including during holiday time. Inspectors found that in Years 7 to 9 homework was generally set according to a published schedule, but that quite often the same task was set for every student in the class and that some could complete the work quickly whilst still at school. There were some instances noted of ambiguously worded tasks that encouraged diligent students to spend an excessive length of time working on them because they were not sure about the outcomes that they were expected to achieve. There is therefore scope for standards to be raised further by setting more intellectually demanding homework activities for more able students and in defining expected outcomes more precisely for all students. In general, there are both strengths and weaknesses in the ways in which homework tasks are designed to meet the differing learning needs of students within mixed ability classes in Years 7 to 9 depending upon the skills of individual teachers. Coursework activities are in most instances well managed and achieve successful outcomes. In all years, and especially in Years 12 and 13, students are making increasing use of the Internet and CD-ROM programs to gather additional information.
27. Students make satisfactory gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding in Years 7 to 9 and good gains in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9 most students acquire a considerable body of knowledge and most develop an appropriate range of practical skills. Students are encouraged to become confident learners and to want to continue with their studies. Some lower ability students require more assistance in developing their literacy and numeracy skills, especially in Years 7 and 8. Students in all years would benefit from having more openings to apply their information technology skills within the contexts of the subjects that they study. Opportunities for students to develop their reasoning, investigative and analytical skills could be more prolific, especially in Years 7 to 9. In all years opportunities in lessons for extended and structured debate and independent enquiry could be greater.

28. The great majority of students work hard and apply a great deal of effort to their studies. They show high levels of interest and concentrate well. They are keen to succeed and particularly respond to praise and encouragement. These factors make an important contribution to standards of attainment. Whilst some students are developing well as independent learners, there is scope for teachers to offer more support for this process, especially through the skilful setting of extended enquiry and creative tasks. Students have a reasonable knowledge of how well they are doing and what levels they are achieving in Years 10 and 11. This knowledge is good in Years 12 and 13, but is weak in Years 7 to 9.
29. Students on the register of special educational needs make good overall progress in their learning in all years. They do especially well in creative and practical subjects, such as art, design and technology and physical education, and slightly less well in those subjects that require them to make intensive use of literacy and numeracy skills. Students with physical disabilities make very impressive personal progress thanks both to their own positive attitudes to learning and also to a vast amount of support and encouragement given to them both from teachers and assistants and also their fellow students.

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

30. The school provides a broad, well-balanced curriculum, for all year groups. The 25 hour taught week is in line with national recommendations. In Years 7 to 9, all students study all National Curriculum subjects and religious studies, and receive appropriate instruction on health and sex education. The most able linguists study both French and German in Years 8 and 9. In all subjects, with the exception of modern foreign languages, students are taught in mixed ability groups until the end of Year 9. There is a need for a more comprehensive whole-school approach to improving students' literacy and numeracy skills within all subjects of the curriculum at Key Stage 3. Students who require additional help with basic skills are provided with effective support in some of their lessons by learning support assistants. A small number of students in Year 8 are withdrawn for short periods from their lessons to work on a computerised learning programme. This is having beneficial effects on improving basic skills but is interrupting learning in some subjects.

Key Stage 4

31. In Year 10, the majority of students follow nine full GCSE courses plus a short course in religious education. This is an improvement on the position at the time of the last inspection when those students who did not choose to take religious education as an examination subject did not encounter enough of the content of the local agreed syllabus to meet statutory requirements. All students study English, mathematics, science, design and technology, a modern foreign language, a humanities subject and physical education. An appropriate range of additional academic GCSE subjects is offered as options, but no dedicated vocational courses are currently provided. Music is able to be timetabled only after the end of the school day and is taken as an additional GCSE examination by about a dozen students. The time provided for physical education for all is appropriate. Some lower-attaining students take a support option that offers them extra help with literacy, numeracy and study skills, instead of one GCSE course. This is proving beneficial to the majority of students who opt for it. In some subjects, including English, history and science, students who would struggle to achieve a GCSE grade are appropriately entered for a Certificate of Achievement qualification instead.
32. All students in Years 7 to 11 are taught information technology skills and concepts through a rolling programme that cuts across the normal timetable. This is proving to be an effective

arrangement which ensures coverage of the full programme of study for the subject whilst helping to link its application to other areas of the curriculum. This represents an important improvement since the last inspection, and is making a significant impact on raising students' capabilities as users of information technology.

33. The sixth form continues to benefit from joint teaching arrangements with two neighbouring schools. This means that the choice of subjects and opportunities is enriched significantly. Eighteen A-level subjects are provided together with three advanced and four intermediate level GNVQ courses. Currently, AS-level examinations are also offered in mathematics and in further mathematics when there is a demand. There are no timetabled opportunities for students to re-sit GCSE courses at the school although special arrangements are made after school to support those who wish to improve their GCSE science grade and an evening class for GCSE mathematics is available locally. All students in Year 12 have their learning programmes enriched by time for sport, personal and social education, career advice and general studies each week. The latter provides a wide range of optional components including first aid, community service within and beyond the school and further sports activities. Students are encouraged to use these opportunities to accumulate credits towards a national youth achievement award and many successfully do so. This comprehensive and well-organised general studies programme is much appreciated both by students and parents. All Year 12 students are taught study skills as part of a valued induction course. There is no provision for religious education in the sixth form for those not taking the subject as an A-level, which contravenes current statutory requirements. The provision for the development and assessment of students' key skills of communication, numeracy and information technology for GNVQ students is excellent. Plans for introducing the new AS and A2 courses and an upgraded key skills programme next year are well advanced.
34. All students follow a comprehensive programme of personal and social education (PSE) taught mainly by their form tutor. This programme is well planned and ensures that many matters of personal development such as sex education, healthy living and the misuse of drugs and other substances hazardous to health are all fully addressed. Comprehensive support for tutors in the form of written guidance, additional colleagues in the classroom and visiting specialists all help to make this course an important and beneficial component of the curriculum. In the sixth form, the PSE course includes a powerful element that helps students become more aware of how they learn. Careers education is a strong feature of the curriculum in Years 9 to 13. It is well planned to ensure steady progression and flexibility to reflect the needs of individual students. Students are offered accurate and timely personal advice on their careers options and on how to apply for places at university. Work experience placements are efficiently organised for all students in Year 11 and many in Year 12. Overall, students gain a good understanding of employment matters through the school's provision for work-related learning. Those taking a business studies course have useful additional opportunities to learn about ways in which the workplace functions.
35. The school makes valuable efforts to enrich the taught curriculum through productive links with the local community. Regular meetings with local primary schools are well established and these are leading to improved curriculum continuity between Years 6 and 7. Induction arrangements for students transferring into Year 7 are notably good. The joint sixth form arrangements with two neighbouring secondary schools are robust and constructive and have enabled a much wider range of courses to be offered to Brimsham Green students. Very strong links with local businesses have been built up through staff and governors, which are helping to provide a realistic context for some work-related learning activities. A good example of this was seen in a Year 10 business studies lesson where a class visited a local nursery to learn at first hand from one of the owners how a small business enterprise was run. These include an

‘industry day’ at which local firms run a series of key skills workshops for Year 10 students and an interview day for all Year 11 students at which they practice being interviewed by a real employer. Overall, the contribution that community representatives make to students’ learning is impressive.

36. Students are registered during a 15 minute session at the start of each day. There is no planned tutorial programme for this session. Whilst this time is used well for individual discussions between teachers and students, it is not used productively enough for activities that involve all members of a tutorial group. In some classrooms, students are expected to read silently during one registration period each week. Whilst most students comply, this arrangement is not currently as effective as it might be as a means of improving the skills of those with specific difficulties or the motivation of more reluctant readers.
37. A particular strength of the school is the commitment from governors and all staff to ensuring equal access to the curriculum for all students. This is noticeably effective in relation to students with physical disabilities who, for example, take part in specially designed sports day events. Governors have prioritised the provision of access ramps to all parts of the school, including recently the gymnasium, to allow wheel-chair users to be included in all aspects of school life.
38. The provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory. Teachers organise a number of additional activities for students outside normal lessons. The main school study centre, which includes a new computer suite, and a separate sixth form study centre are both open for students to use before and after school and at lunch-time. These, together with formal lunch-time homework clubs and informal sessions provided by individual teachers, mean there is good support for students seeking extra help with their work. Opportunities to play and practise music are many and are appreciated by a large number of students. Sports teams attract enthusiasts, particularly in the early years, but overall, the number of students enjoying extra-curricular sport is relatively small. Similarly, the number of students participating in clubs and drama events is more limited than usual for a school of this size. A youth club on site, whose premises are used by the school during the day, attracts many Brimsham Green students to its evening sessions. School staff are heavily involved in running this club, which provides valuable opportunities for staff and students to work together in a more informal setting.
39. The overall provision for promoting students’ spiritual development across the school has not improved significantly since the last inspection. However, there have been improvements in the provision for religious studies and in some of these lessons helpful opportunities are provided for students to reflect on values and beliefs. Elsewhere such opportunities remain isolated and uncoordinated. There is no widespread understanding amongst staff of how they might stimulate students’ insights into life’s fundamental questions through their teaching, or what their collective efforts should add up to.
40. Staff have worked hard to secure an environment in the school where respect for others is the norm and in which courteous and considerate behaviour are both expected and achieved. Through the teaching of specific topics, for example, in drama and in humanities, students address issues of right and wrong and are asked to consider the consequences of their actions or the actions of others. Similarly, the clear guidance given to students about their conduct in school and the consequences of bullying all contribute to the acceptance of clear moral codes.
41. The promotion of students’ social development is also effective. Many opportunities are provided for students to consider and respond to the needs of others. Students regularly engage in organising fund-raising activities for charity. Older students act as ‘buddies’ to newcomers

and provide support in class or with small withdrawal groups. Sixth formers entertain older members of the community as part of their general studies programme and, in design and technology, awareness of others' needs is emphasised as part of the design process. The personal and social education course successfully enables students to explore roles in society and the concept of citizenship. The organisation of year councils allows some students to engage in representative decision making.

42. Since the last inspection the school has secured some improvements in the way that students' awareness of their own and others' cultural traditions are developed. Opportunities for this to happen within the taught curriculum have been identified and shared across subject teams. For example, in art and in humanities aspects of African culture are explored and in religious studies the belief systems of the major faiths and the communities in which they have influence are examined. In business studies the culture of the workplace is explored in detail. Overall, though, the lack of a co-ordinated approach means that many opportunities for promoting cultural development are missed by teachers and there is no shared sense of what should be achieved. In particular, insufficient emphasis is given to providing students with insights into the traditions and beliefs of the different ethnic groups that live in modern Britain.
43. As at the time of the last inspection, the school does not meet the statutory obligation to provide a daily act of collective worship. Year group assemblies are held weekly. These often usefully emphasise moral and ethical messages through, for example, debates about conflicting pressures on the environment, but do not consistently provide opportunities to reflect on personal values and beliefs.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

44. The procedures for child protection and for ensuring students' welfare are very good. The named person who is responsible for child protection matters is a deputy headteacher who has received the necessary training for this role. Heads of year and other staff have also been appropriately trained, ensuring good cover at all times. Form tutors assiduously monitor homework diaries and to follow up personal matters with individual students.
45. The school receives valuable support for the care of its students from visiting professional people, particularly those involved with special educational needs. The school pays for the services of an experienced school counsellor one day each week who is available to support students experiencing problems with a whole range of issues, including relationships and family tensions, which otherwise could have a detrimental effect on their learning. The school nurse also contributes valued advice on a range of health issues including drugs education.
46. Sound policies and procedures are also in place covering the requirements of health and safety legislation. There are regular safety audits and the school has carried out and documented risk assessments on potential hazards in areas such as design and technology and science. Equipment is regularly checked and first aid and fire precaution arrangements are satisfactory. An especially fine feature is the secure area for cycles which enables students to ride to school knowing that their cycle will be kept safely in the dry throughout the day. Many students take advantage of these facilities and cycle to school as a consequence.
47. Accurate attendance records are kept and these are regularly monitored by the school and also by the Local Education Authority's education welfare officer who visits weekly. Monitoring and follow up arrangements have been strengthened to check a small rise in the amount of unauthorised absence.

48. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are effective, as are those for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour. There are policies to promote good behaviour are based on a well developed system of merit rewards and sanctions. Behaviour is carefully checked and any problems are efficiently documented. The strong pastoral structure that is organised by year heads and form tutors is a key element in ensuring that any potential problems are quickly picked up and information is shared in an appropriate way with other staff.
49. The procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are generally satisfactory, although there are some weaknesses that need to be addressed at Key Stage 3. There are helpful structures in place for the monitoring of academic progress by heads of year and form tutors. In Years 7 to 9 assessment data tends to be based more upon an evaluation of students' effort than on how well they are meeting the National Curriculum attainment descriptors. Some of the assessment information is subjective and varies in emphasis between subjects. Tutors would therefore benefit from receiving more objective attainment information for students in Years 7 to 9 in order to monitor patterns of attainment more diagnostically. As identified in the school development plan, this information needs to be passed on to parents in a more precise way also. Very successful assessment methods are operated by teachers of design and technology and business studies. The monitoring system is still evolving and significant progress has been made since the previous inspection. From Year 10 onwards tutors have access to predicted examination grades which helps them to recognise when additional support is required. In all years tutors monitor students' personal development well. The individual education plans for students with special educational needs are methodically completed and provide helpful targets to be used as a measure of progress.
50. Overall students receive good advice and are well supported from the time they join the school in a caring and secure environment. There are good links and constructive academic and pastoral liaison with feeder primary schools that ensure a smooth transfer between Key Stages 2 and 3. Well-established consortium arrangements with two other secondary schools provide a range of enhanced opportunities for post-16 education and again students are well advised and supported through the transition.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

51. There is considerable parental satisfaction about the way the school works with them. Parents believe that members of staff are approachable and that any concerns that they raise are usually dealt with swiftly. The last inspection report noted that the links with parents were good and the current school development plan identifies the need to strengthen these further, particularly with respect to using assessment information to monitor individual progress.
52. Statutory requirements for the reporting of students' progress to parents are met. There is a structured programme for reporting which is linked to meetings between teachers and parents to discuss students' progress. However, nearly a quarter of the parents who responded to the questionnaire considered that they were insufficiently informed about how well their children were getting on. This programme is supplemented by information evenings on specific topics, which in the past have featured such issues as reading and drugs education. Many parents reported that they found such meetings to be very valuable. Individual student reports are detailed and personalised with space for students' own comments on their progress. Some parents said that they would value having more information about what is going to be taught in different subjects so that they can provide active help at home. An attractive newsletter with details of school events goes out regularly and other written information, particularly relating to GCSE studies is designed to help parents understand about curriculum and assessment issues

more fully.

53. Some parents help with extra curricular activities, fundraising and transport. The supportive education faculty have in the past operated a scheme for parents to come in and help with reading, but this is now in abeyance. There is an active Parents' Association which each year raises significant sums of money which have been used to good effect to buy resources for the study centre and music equipment. This expenditure can be seen to have a direct benefit on learning.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

54. In the last inspection report the school was described as being well managed and successful with a clearly defined management structure. The leadership and management of the headteacher, senior staff and governors were reported to be effective in moving the school forward. Those strengths are still very much in evidence, as indicated by such features as above-average GCSE results, good teaching, considerable parental approval for the work of the school, high standards of behaviour and a very friendly ethos. Further work is needed to upgrade the quality of monitoring and evaluation to ensure greater consistency in the ways in which policies are put into practice.
55. The headteacher continues to provide firm and decisive leadership and a clear sense of direction for the school. He is able to combine a good strategic overview with a keen eye for detail. He is fully supported by an experienced team of senior managers with complementary skills and expertise. The school has gained a great deal of insight and management training from being a partner in the High Reliability Schools project. This has been one of the factors responsible for improvements in the quality of teaching through the sharing and wider adoption of good practice.
56. Heads of year are very good at promoting good behaviour and are key people in the success of the arrangements for the guidance, welfare and safety of students. Increasingly they are working with form tutors to play an active role in monitoring students' progress and personal development. To do this more rigorously they need more reliable assessment information from subject teams, especially in Years 7 to 9. The excellent induction arrangements into Year 7, the efficient practical management of the school's commitments to the sixth form consortium and the successful teaching of the personal and social education programme are all examples of the fine work of the pastoral team.
57. Many of the heads of faculty and heads of department provide good subject leadership and offer constructive ideas about how the school could improve further. Communication between the senior management team and individual faculties is generally good. However, communication between different faculty teams is more sporadic, with the consequence that some aspects of school policy are interpreted differently in each subject area. This is particularly the case with policy statements on marking, spelling and homework. In contrast, policy statements relating to behaviour are consistently and effectively applied. Good ideas and examples of best practice are not always shared readily enough between subject teams. So, for example, the successful work undertaken by history teachers to support literacy or the high quality assessment arrangements in design and technology and business studies is not widely recognised. Opportunities for inter-faculty work is set to increase through co-operation on joint projects such as literacy, post-16 key skills and information and communication technology. Some informal monitoring of standards of attainment, the quality of teaching and the application of policy decisions takes place. As shown in some of the planning documents and minutes of team meetings, some of the conclusions of this informal monitoring are perceptive.

However, the lack of a systematic programme to review and evaluate the effectiveness of the school in a methodical way means that some aspects are overlooked. This can affect standards by not identifying some of the factors that can lead to further improvement.

58. As at the time of the last inspection, governors continue to be supportive and keen to ensure that they fulfil their obligations. They collectively have a very impressive range of expertise relating to finance, business management, engineering, buildings and grounds maintenance and community action. This expertise is well used, especially in the work of sub-committees. Governors are increasingly willing to challenge assumptions and established practices to see if there is a better way. The strong tradition of good development planning remains. The current plan has one and three year targets for both the maintenance of existing strengths and the establishment of new ones. The plan identifies five specific whole-school priorities, which are the development of an improved literacy strategy, the better use of data, improvements to the Key Stage 4 curriculum, updating the sixth form curriculum to incorporate the new post-16 qualifications and enhancing the work of tutors. Many elements of the key issues for action from this inspection are heralded within the current school development plan. Some very challenging targets have been set for the proportion of students expected to gain at least five higher grade GCSE results in 2000 and 2001 which the school is on the way to achieving. Governors have avoided the duty to arrange for the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship to be met.
59. There is an emerging culture of school improvement which is particularly visible within the work of governors, senior managers and subject teams. The school evaluates its performance mostly through informal approaches. Even so, many of its strengths and weaknesses have been accurately identified and plans are in hand to extend these strengths and deal with these weaknesses. In order to sharpen the process of self-evaluation, there is a need to develop higher levels of expertise amongst key staff in the analysis of performance data and the constructive use of it within the process of setting learning targets and monitoring the progress being made to reach them. Formal arrangements for teacher appraisal and for monitoring the quality of teaching are intended to be put in place in September 2000 once national regulations and guidelines are in place. Different faculty teams are interpreting some aspects of school policy in different ways, leading to a lack of consistency in such areas as marking, homework, assessment and literacy development. Tighter quality assurance procedures linked to more precise success criteria would help to reduce this dilemma, along with improved inter-faculty co-operation.
60. Good strategic use is made of resources, including specific grants and additional funding. A very large amount of additional funding (12% of the total income) is related to the special educational needs provision, which is used and accounted for very well. With this amount included, the school receives a larger income per student than the great majority of secondary schools with sixth forms in England. However, if comparisons are made with the mean income for 11-18 comprehensive schools based upon an average special education needs allocation, the income per student is in line with the median figure. There is a very sizeable budget surplus of £144,000. There are strategic plans for some of this to be spent on improving accommodation. Consideration should be given to using some of this surplus to address the resource deficiencies that have been identified in this report. These are to provide access to more information and communication technology in mathematics, science, music and business studies; provide more resources for art, improve text book stocks in German and religious education, provide more headphones in music and upgrade the changing facilities for physical education. A very detailed spending analysis on the large special educational needs budget has been undertaken which gives a very precise level of accountability. Governors, the headteacher, a deputy head and the finance officer together ensure that decisions on spending are suitably linked to

educational priorities. The principles of 'best value' are being applied successfully to the management of finance. A good example of this process in action may be seen in the recent decision to take out a loan to upgrade the information and communication technology provision. Even with this upgrade, more expenditure on new technology is needed to keep pace with rising demand and new specifications. A 'best value' analysis was used to estimate cost-effectiveness before and after purchasing the new equipment. The inspection findings confirm that the spending decisions that were made led directly to improved standards of attainment in information technology. The most recent auditor's report was very positive about the efficiency and accuracy of the school's accountancy procedures, and the recommendations for additional improvements have now been acted upon.

61. The proportion of the total income that is spent on staff costs is in line with the average for similar schools. The amount spent on the buildings is relatively low, reflecting the benefits of relatively new accommodation that does not generate high maintenance costs. The school spends a much higher proportion of its income on learning resources than most comparable schools. The benefits of this can be seen in better than average numbers of books and computers per student, with a clear impact on the learning opportunities that are able to be provided, as seen for example in geography, information technology and modern foreign languages.
62. Arrangements for the training and development of staff are effective, and much benefit is derived from having student teachers working in the school. The organisation of the professional development days for staff is very effective. Work is in hand to extend staff capabilities in the wider use of new technology to enhance learning and also to improve administration.
63. The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. This judgement is based on a consideration of a range of factors. These particularly include the satisfactory overall levels of achievement; the good attitudes and behaviour of the students, the good quality of teaching, leadership and management, the satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and the social indicators of the area that the school serves (which are neither strongly advantaged or disadvantaged). This means that the school provides satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

64. The school has many more strengths than weaknesses. In order to improve standards still further, the governors, senior managers and staff should:
 - i) **improve the standards of students' literacy skills, especially in Years 7 to 9, for example by:**
 - ensuring that the Key Stage 3 curriculum in English fully connects with the National Literacy Strategy developments and takes students forward towards more ambitious outcomes by the end of Year 9; *[see especially paragraphs 19, 67 and 74]*
 - providing a strong whole-school focus on the continuity and progression of literacy skills from Year 6; *[see especially paragraphs 2, 19 and 67]*
 - applying and extending students' literacy skills in a co-ordinated way across the whole school. *[see especially paragraphs 19 and 115]*
- *(The current school development plan indicates a series of initiatives designed to raise standards in literacy.)*

ii) set and reach more clearly defined and ambitious learning targets, especially in Years 7 to 9, for example by:

- designing schemes of work that have well defined learning targets for students of differing capabilities (especially the most able) to aim for; *[see especially paragraphs 11, 20, 67, 83, 90, 145 and 156]*
- providing to students and their parents clear statements of these learning targets and explanations of how they can be reached; *[see especially paragraphs 21, 26, 52, 99 and 145]*
- ensuring that marks and advice given by teachers helps students to know how well they are doing and what more they need to do to achieve their objectives; *[see especially paragraphs 25, 103 and 109]*
- assessing students' performance in relation to how well their learning targets have been achieved using National Curriculum level descriptors where relevant; *[see especially paragraphs 49, 89, 117 and 160]*
- using the improved assessment data to track students' progress more diagnostically. *[see especially paragraph 49, 56 and 59]*

**(The current school development plan refers to approaches to be introduced that will increase the effectiveness of tutors in monitoring students' progress and the use of more precise performance data.)*

iii) extend the use of the new technology now available in the school to consolidate and enrich learning opportunities across the curriculum by:

- ensuring that teachers and their students have appropriate access to information and communications technology to intensify learning; *[see especially paragraphs 27, 60, 93, 125, 143 and 160]*
- providing teachers with the requisite training so that they can use the full potential of the available technology and software. *[see especially paragraphs 60 and 125]*

iv) enrich the provision for the spiritual and cultural development of students by:

- defining ways in which students' spiritual development can be more systematically promoted across the school and ensuring that action is taken to realise these intentions; *[see especially paragraphs 39, 43 and 109]*
- co-ordinating approaches to cultural development between subjects and ensuring that a greater emphasis is placed on multi-cultural understanding *[see especially paragraphs 42, 143 and 151]*

v) strengthen the current arrangements for ensuring that policies and procedures work consistently across the whole school by:

- ensuring that subject teams interpret policies on such aspects as literacy development, marking, homework, assessment and literacy to similar standards; *[see especially paragraphs 57 and 59]*
- monitoring and evaluating the extent to which school policies and procedures are making an impact on raising standards of achievement. *[see especially paragraph 57]*

In addition, the school should:

- take steps to ensure that the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship and the teaching of religious education in the sixth form are met; *[see especially paragraphs 43, 152 and 154]*
- address the issue of inadequate indoor physical education provision that remains unresolved from the time of the previous inspection. *[see paragraph 148]*

[Note: some of the paragraph references are to examples of strengths and good practice that could be more widely shared]

across the school].

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	195
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	142

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	23	46	24	5	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons. These are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	787	128
Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals	58	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	54	3
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	202	11

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	28

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	6.3
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.9
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 students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	80	73	153

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	34	52	49
	Girls	55	57	56
	Total	89	109	105
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	59 (76)	72 (65)	69 (68)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	12 (46)	39 (37)	24 (25)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	33	51	41
	Girls	62	58	58
	Total	95	109	99
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	63 (69)	72 (72)	66 (66)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (39)	39 (45)	37 (32)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year (ie 1998).

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	73	81	154

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	26	70	71
	Girls	48	74	78
	Total	74	144	149
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	50 (42)	94 (94)	97 (95)
	National	46 (45)	91 (90)	96 (95)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year (ie 1998).

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	40 (39)
	National	38 (37)

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year (ie 1998).

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999	26	28

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	16.4	12.6	14.4 (14.7)	6.0	3.3	4.4 (0.8)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year (ie 1998).

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	5	100
	National		82.5

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those students who achieved all they studied	School	N/A	N/A
	National		N/A

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	3
Indian	2
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	905
Any other minority ethnic group	3

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	30	2
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	55.9
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	20
Total aggregate hours worked per week	460

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.1
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	22.5
Key Stage 4	20.2

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	2356441
Total expenditure	2386201
Expenditure per pupil	2700
Balance brought forward from previous year	174105
Balance carried forward to next year	144345

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	907
Number of questionnaires returned	222

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	34.0	55.0	7.0	3.0	1.0
My child is making good progress in school.	40.0	53.0	5.0	0.0	2.0
Behaviour in the school is good.	21.0	60.0	8.0	2.0	9.0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	17.0	65.0	14.0	3.0	1.0
The teaching is good.	26.0	61.0	6.0	1.0	6.0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	22.0	54.0	20.0	3.0	2.0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47.0	48.0	4.0	0.0	0.0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	52.0	44.0	2.0	0.0	1.0
The school works closely with parents.	18.0	59.0	19.0	1.0	2.0
The school is well led and managed.	32.0	54.0	3.0	2.0	10.0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	29.0	59.0	5.0	1.0	6.0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	19.0	53.0	16.0	4.0	9.0

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

65. These figures indicate that there is strong overall approval for the standards, quality and ethos of the school. There are no categories where there is a large proportion of parents expressing discontent. However, over 20% of parents expressed concerns about the information that they were receiving about the progress that their children were making.

Other issues raised by parents

66. In personal notes attached to the questionnaire forms and at the meeting held by inspectors prior to the inspection week for parents to express their views, several additional points were raised. In general, comments were very supportive of the work of the school and apparent

criticisms were mostly intended to highlight some aspects where further improvements could be made. Some concern was expressed that whilst mixed ability classes in Years 7 to 9 helped with social inclusion and gave some students more confidence as learners, some of the more able students were not always being challenged enough. Inspection evidence showed that in some subjects (such as design and technology and geography) more able students were being suitably challenged, but in some others (such as English and science) there was scope for further improvement in this respect. Some parents were concerned that their children were not doing enough work at home, whilst others felt that the reverse was the case. In general, parents were satisfied with homework arrangements, but several felt that some activities could be more imaginatively designed so as to stimulate thought and enquiry more. Inspection evidence showed that in the majority of cases homework was set and marked in a systematic way, but that tasks were not always intellectually demanding for more able students. Several parents said that they could play a fuller part in supporting their children's learning if they were given more precise information about what was being taught. There was very warm approval for the standards of behaviour, for the ways in which students with special educational needs were integrated into the full life of the school and for the cheerful and positive ethos.

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

ENGLISH

English (including literacy skills across the curriculum)

67. The standard of attainment in English is below average at Key Stage 3, above average at Key Stage 4, and well above average in the sixth form. The overall standards of literacy of students entering Year 7 have, over the past five years, been below average. The Key Stage 3 test results are considerably lower now than they were at the time of the last inspection. GCSE and A-level results have improved since the last inspection, except for the most able students. Results at GCSE are just above the school average in English literature, and just below it for English.
68. In 1999 the proportion of students who reached level 5 or above at the end of Key Stage 3 was just below the average for all schools in England, but well below the average for comparable schools to Brimsham Green. The proportion of students reaching or exceeding Level 6 in English in 1999 was well below the national average. The overall results in English are lower than those obtained by the same students in mathematics and in science. Although the standards of attainment in English of students entering Year 7 rose in 1999, it was still below that in mathematics and science, showing that the relative weakness in English is present from the time that students enter the school. Girls' results are closer to the national average than are those of boys. Inspection evidence indicates that standards have risen since last year, but that additional work still needs to be done to improve test results further. There is a particular need to enable a larger proportion of students to reach Level 6 and above. To do this, additional emphasis needs to be placed on the development of literacy skills in all subjects as well as in English lessons.
69. GCSE English results are just above the national average in terms of the proportion of students obtaining a C grade or higher. This is also an improvement on results in 1998, although there is still only a small percentage of students gaining A or A* grades compared with the national average. Boys' results are improving although girls still do significantly better overall. GCSE English literature results are not only an improvement on those of 1998 but are also above the national average for all schools. In 1999 of eleven students who were entered for a Certificate of Merit in English, eight gained a distinction and the remaining three gained merits. Attainment in Year 10 and 11 lessons was average or better in the majority of cases. The expectations of some lower ability students are less than they should be in some lessons. An example of this was seen in a small Year 11 group where students were making relatively slow progress towards quite modest targets for the lesson.
70. Students' attainment in Years 12 and 13 is consistently high both in lessons and in examinations. In 1998 and in 1999 there was a 100% pass rate at A-level English literature, although no grade A results were achieved in 1999. There is no significant difference between boys' and girls' attainment at this level.
71. Generally students of all abilities are confident and often competent speakers, particularly when given opportunities to give oral presentations. In all key stages and in all subjects they are good listeners and are able to respond appropriately to questioning. As an example of this capability being demonstrated in a subject other than English, students gave clear and interested responses to their teacher's questioning in a Year 9 religious education lesson that involved the use of Auden's poetry. They work extremely well in pairs, groups and with their

teachers to extend their thinking and learning.

72. The approach of students to reading continues to be very positive and this is very much encouraged by the consistent emphasis by the English faculty on the importance of literature and on the use of a room with a fiction library for lessons once per fortnight. Some of the least able students in Years 7 to 9 struggle to comprehend meaning in written texts and tasks. However, there is clear evidence of improved reading skills in all years, including reading aloud with expression. This was exemplified in a Year 8 English lesson where students could extract appropriate information from a large amount of text taken off the Internet. By the end of Year 9 most students are able to recount story line and subject matter and are developing skills in understanding characterisation. Good progress from Years 9 to 10 was clearly demonstrated in discussions on staging '*A View from the Bridge*' in a Year 10 lesson where the least able students could recount details of the plot and the more able students could consider Eddie Carbone's motives. In all years there is a developing grasp of literary terms and a large number of students, even some of the least able students in Years 7 to 9, are able to explain simile and metaphor and to use imagery in their poetry writing.
73. Although by the end of Key Stage 4 most students can write creatively, at length and for specific audiences, there are still many grammatical mistakes in evidence and presentation is poor, particularly amongst boys. Redrafting skills are being used well by many students, often with the aid of information technology. Some students are effective note-takers, although others need more help in structuring and summarising facts and concepts. Even so, a significant number of students have difficulties with writing, particularly in Years 7 to 9. They have particular problems in organising their writing and in spelling and punctuating correctly. Difficulties with literacy are also evident in other subject areas. However in history and design and technology teachers are providing some very helpful support to those with literacy problems, for example, by using writing frames. In Year 13, most students can take useful notes, write discursively and discuss texts with considerable confidence and understanding and are enthusiastic and supportive participants. There is not a co-ordinated approach to teaching literacy skills across all subjects, although there are examples of helpful initiatives in science, design and technology, geography, history, modern foreign languages and religious education. The last inspection report identified the need to establish a whole-school spelling policy. This has been duly drawn up, but is being interpreted to different standards by individual teachers. In some cases teachers place a strong emphasis on technical correctness whilst others look more for overall meaning and forgive inaccuracies of spelling and syntax.
74. Students' attitudes to their learning are in most cases very positive, and behaviour in most lessons is good. In the best lessons students are very supportive of their teachers and peers. In these lessons they remain interested and keen to progress and are genuinely helpful, particularly to their peers with physical disabilities. In these lessons standards of attainment are improved by students' positive attitudes to learning. In a minority of lessons there are some instances when students, particularly less able boys in Years 7 to 9, are inclined to become restless and inattentive if tasks are lengthy and inappropriate. Some students find it particularly hard to remain on-task and to use time productively where lessons last two hours. In these instances, standards of attainment are adversely affected. Even so, in only one lesson seen was behaviour consistently unsatisfactory.
75. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is satisfactory at Key Stage 3, good at Key Stage 4 and very good at post-16 level. English teachers have a good grasp of their subject, use a variety of methods, managing time, students and tasks well in the majority of lessons. Some excellent use of pace, tone and humour was seen. English teachers use resources well, including information technology where it is available and accessible. They have excellent

relationships with students, set relevant homework regularly and most have clear objectives for their lessons. However, whilst most of the assessment comments are positive and constructive some marking is very negative and does not help students to progress. Teaching is least successful in Key Stage 3 where restricted range of tasks, inappropriate challenges and confused objectives are sometimes in evidence. There is scope for lesson plans to specify more precisely how students can develop their knowledge, understanding and skills in a systematic way.

76. The English team is led by a capable and well motivated subject leader. Although there is pressure on this subject leader, because of the inexperience of a number of staff and the need to raise standards of literacy considerably, members of the team continue to provide enthusiastic, varied and relevant work for most students. Monitoring of work is done on a regular basis but tends to be informal. However, some evaluation of the work of the faculty has been carried out and led to some planned improvements. The English faculty has been commended by the examination board for the high quality of its GCSE moderation methods. The English curriculum is providing opportunities for personal development as well as developing knowledge and skills in the subject. Curricular opportunities include a Year 9 drama club and visits to the theatre, as well as a fortnightly lesson in the fiction room and a regular drama session at Key Stage 3. The statutory requirement to deliver the National Curriculum is also met.

Drama

77. Drama is part of the English curriculum for Key Stage 3 and is offered, in its own right, to GCSE level at Key Stage 4. Efforts have been made to improve the weaknesses that were recorded in the previous inspection report, but with limited success. Results at GCSE have declined from 1996 to 1999, but all students in 1999 gained at least a grade G. Attainment in lessons seen was above average at Key Stage 4, but below average at Key Stage 3.
78. Students continue to enjoy their drama lessons; relationships on the whole are positive and sessions are characterised by over-enthusiasm rather than deliberate bad behaviour. Learning is good at Key Stage 4, with students not only learning how to stage a performance, but also developing more understanding of plot, characterisation and the skill of working with others. Learning is less satisfactory at Key Stage 3 because students have not learned how to work effectively with others or how to use time sensibly. Boys tend to dominate within groups and because of the focus on performance there are too many opportunities for time wasting and students lose interest.
79. Teaching is good overall at Key Stage 4 where thoughtful planning, excellent subject knowledge, good relationships and a variety of methodologies combine to provide productive conditions for learning. However at Key Stage 3 some teaching is unsatisfactory because planning is less clearly related to developing the skills, knowledge and understanding of the students, timing is poor, boys are allowed to dominate group-work and youngsters are required to spend too long 'being an audience'. Nevertheless there has been some improvement since the last report. Most drama lessons are now taught by a drama specialist. The subject is now more tightly structured; there is more of a sense of discipline (evident in Key Stage 4 work) and overall planning is better.
80. Drama has the potential to contribute more to the key skills of 'working with others', 'improving own learning and performance' and 'communication.' It also has the potential to make an effective contribution to the development of literacy in the school. The drama teacher tends to work in a rather isolated way in a detached drama studio away from the main English

block and currently drama has few links with other subjects although there has been some work done with art.

MATHEMATICS (*including numeracy skills across the curriculum*)

81. Since the last inspection satisfactory standards have been maintained, but there has been no significant improvement in test and examination results. At the end of Key Stage 3 test results in mathematics have remained close to the national average. In 1999 72% of students, a proportion greater than the national average, attained the national target of level 5 or better. Standards of work in Key Stage 3 lessons are generally satisfactory. Work in lessons and in students' books was methodical, well presented and well organised. There is provision for accelerating the progress of more able students in year 9, but in years 7 and 8 in some lessons more able students could attain more highly. Students who experience difficulties in understanding key concepts and who lack confidence are frequently given high levels of support to help them attain more highly. The results gained by girls at the end of Key Stage 3 have been above the national average for girls for the last four years but the results of boys have been below the national average for boys.
82. GCSE results have fluctuated since the last inspection. They were above the national average in 1997 and 1999 but below it in 1998. In 1999 GCSE results in mathematics were just above the school average. Over this time the extent to which the girls' results have exceeded those of boys has been greater than is the case nationally. The above average GCSE results in 1997, though leading to a high number of A-level passes for a school of this size, produced in 1999 a proportion of higher A-level grades that was below the national average. In 1998 the distribution of grades was closer to the national average at A-level, but fewer students were entered. There was a 100% pass rate in A-level mathematics in both 1998 and 1999. Students set out their work well and make appropriate use of mathematical language. They could make more effective use of calculators where it is appropriate to do so and less use of them when mental arithmetic should suffice.
83. The satisfactory progress from Years 7 to 11 made by students is similar to that observed previously. In the last inspection report it was stated that students at Key Stage 3 found it hard to maintain interest. The situation has greatly improved and it is now the case that most students maintain interest and concentration well. Of the sample students who were interviewed during the inspection, many said that they felt they were progressing well in mathematics.
84. Since the previous inspection in 1996 the overall quality of mathematics teaching has remained satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 to 13. Lessons are well presented with an emphasis on correct language and terminology. Work is thoroughly planned and involves plenty of opportunities for dialogue between teachers and students. The majority of lessons begin with a well-presented topic using inter-active teaching approaches. Tasks are clearly defined and a strong emphasis is placed on the use of correct mathematical terminology and appropriate language. This stimulates questioning and sharpens mental arithmetic skills. Students generally respond well to the methodical approaches that are used. There are a few instances of unsatisfactory mathematics teaching where the weaknesses include the use of incorrect notation and demonstrations of a principle that are not followed through into the subsequent exercises. In general, there is too little use of information technology and an inappropriate use of individual work when groups would have collected results more rapidly. There are high standards of learning and progress particularly in Years 10 to 13. In Years 7 to 9 teaching is less well matched to individual needs and while there are arrangements for more able students in Year 9 to do more exacting work, this does not always happen in practice. A

grade A result in further mathematics at A-level in 1999 indicates that the school can provide for the mathematically talented. Test results tend to show better progress for girls, but there are significant variations. A greater emphasis on visual presentations with less reliance on pure language and symbols would help some students (especially boys) to make better progress. Mathematics teachers make a particular point accommodating and managing the personal learning requirements of students with special educational needs.

85. Numeracy is well taught in mathematics lessons particularly through clear lay out of work and the use of oral questions. There are some limited examples of numeracy teaching in other subjects, particularly science, design and technology and geography. Students' work and their questions in class show steadily developing competencies from Years 7 to 9, but more rapidly developing competencies from Years 10 to 13. An example of a particularly effective mathematics lesson showed how practical resources could be used to demonstrate the difference between square centimetres and square metres using dynamic and visual methods.
86. The leadership of the subject team is purposeful and positive. A thoughtful subject development plan has been produced in which strengths have been recognised and future improvements identified. Effective procedures have been evolved to monitor the progress of students and work is in hand to set individual pupil targets. The systems for monitoring students' performance in the subject are developing. Experimental use is being made of the numeracy component of the "*Successmaker*" integrated learning software as a means of supporting selected Year 8 students. The information technology suite in the mathematics area was updated in July 1999 and the equipment is now adequate. Progress is being made to integrate information technology into mathematics teaching, although this being held back by insufficient mathematical software either for full coverage of the National Curriculum or the highest standards of teaching at A-level. Considerable improvements have been made in the quality of assessment and progress records for students since the last inspection.

SCIENCE

87. Overall standards in science are above the national average at the end of Key Stage 3. They are below the national average at the end of Key Stage 4, and in line with the national average at the end of Year 13. At GCSE in 1999, science results were just below the school average. Overall standards have risen slightly since the last inspection. Students enter the school with standards of attainment in science that are broadly in line with national standards. In 1999, students' results in standard assessment tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were well above the national average for all schools and were broadly in line with the average for schools with a similar proportion of students entitled to take free school meals. Almost a quarter of students reached Level 6, and this was above the national average. The attainment of girls was slightly better than that of boys in 1999, but over time there is little difference in the performance of boys and girls at Key Stage 3. By Year 9, students demonstrate that they have reached average levels of attainment in their lessons. Practical skills are well developed and all students can use a range of laboratory equipment safely and effectively. They are suitably extending their knowledge of materials, living things and physical processes. In Year 7, students can describe the properties of materials and are beginning to experiment with heat and electricity. Year 8 students are able to link the properties of copper to its different uses and are investigating forces and the effect of levers. Students in Year 9 can identify the characteristics of living things and are comparing the skeletons of different animals. By the end of Key Stage 3 students know many scientific facts but are not always able to apply what they know in ways that show that they understand the underlying concepts sufficiently. This is particularly apparent in when students undertake scientific enquiries and when they seek to justify the

outcomes of experiments.

88. The proportion of students gaining A* to C grades in GCSE double award science in 1999 was below the national average, but was an improvement on the previous year. Girls achieved higher standards than the boys did, but overall the students did less well in science than in most other subjects in the school. However, all students entered for GCSE science examinations gained a GCSE grade. In Years 10 and 11 students carry out investigative work and undertake guided research using books and other resources including the Internet. In Year 10, students are finding out about osmosis and experimenting with electricity and magnetism. Students in Year 11 are gaining an understanding of atomic structure, the properties of waves, and cloning. By Year 11, students are demonstrating average attainment in relation to the course requirements. As in Years 7 to 9, there is scope for a greater emphasis on the development of investigative and analytical thinking skills.
89. Only a small number of students study A-level sciences in the sixth form. In 1999, the proportion gaining A to E grades was broadly inline with the national average and the percentage of students getting A and B grades was an improvement on the school's 1998 figures. As examples of the standards being reached, in biology, students know about gamete formation and respiratory quotients. In chemistry, they are investigating the properties of carbohydrates and, in physics, are studying the effect of X-rays on the human body. Psychology students know about the different research methods used in the discipline.
90. Teaching across the science faculty is frequently good and arises from the teachers' comprehensive subject knowledge, good relationships, purposeful organisation and skilful use of questions. Students with physical disability are well integrated and are suitably supported to enable them to take a full part in lessons. In Years 7 to 9 lesson planning is largely linked to the organisation of activities and does not always specify a range of targets for the full range of abilities within a class to meet or how students can show what they understand. Homework is used well in Years 7 to 9 to support literacy and to reinforce scientific facts, but in Years 10 and 11 the use of too many low-level tasks does not help students apply their knowledge sufficiently in order to show understanding. Some teachers do not stress the need for good presentation enough and this leads to cases of untidy work with poor layout.
91. Students of all ages show an interest in science and work with a sense of purpose to acquire new knowledge, sometimes independently of their teacher. Many are willing to talk about what they have done and older students are able to identify their own particular strengths and weaknesses. Students on the register of special educational needs and those with physical disability draw on the support they receive to take a full and active part in their lessons. Younger students are still learning how to organise themselves and their work, and this sometimes leads to haphazard experimental procedure and poorly presented written work. Gains in scientific understanding are emerging slowly and where work is either too easy or too challenging the pace slips and productivity suffers.
92. Boys and girls make equally satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9. Those students on the register of special educational needs and those with physical disability make good progress as a result of the high quality support that they receive. Students are very knowledgeable by Year 9 and use an extensive range of scientific vocabulary. This is suitably built on in Years 10 and 11 with high attaining students beginning to apply what they know to show better understanding. Progress continues for those students who stay on to study in the sixth form, where they work systematically to consolidate their knowledge and to apply it in a variety of ways.

93. The head of science provides clear leadership and subject staff understand their roles and their contribution towards the team's effectiveness. The technicians make a valuable contribution to the work in science, as do the learning support staff who work alongside students on the register of special educational needs and those with physical disability. Whilst measures have been introduced to allow the faculty to review its effectiveness there are inconsistencies in practice which need attention and any actions taken evaluated to assess their effectiveness. Information and communication technology is under utilised within science both in terms of improving efficiency (for example in storing and analysing data) and in enriching teaching and learning.
94. The science faculty has made satisfactory improvement in a number of key areas identified in the previous report. In Years 10 and 11, these include extending the availability of text books to students, creating ability sets taught in rotation by suitably qualified and experienced staff, and paying particular attention to the coursework element of the GCSE course. Transition between Key Stage 2 and 3 is being effectively addressed through a well received primary school programme which includes the use of activities to support the movement of students from Year 6 to Year 7. The use of key words and an appropriate emphasis on scientific vocabulary is supporting literacy development, but the same attention is not being given to numeracy. The disposal of BBC computers and their replacement with donated personal computers has actually hampered the use of information and communications technology across the faculty in the short term. The introduction of A-level psychology in the sixth form extends students' choices post-16. Development planning now guides the actions of the faculty and steps are being taken to review the effectiveness of staff.

ART

95. Overall standards of attainment in art by the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4 are good and have improved since the last inspection. By the end of Key Stage 3 the majority of students reach standards that are at least in line with national expectations, with some achieving beyond this. Work based upon studies in colour and pattern is particularly effective. Most students develop a sound approach to learning about contemporary Western art and the crafts of the Maori people. Drawing from direct observation lacks sufficient technical accuracy in both the portfolios and the sketchbooks. The standards that are reached by the end of Key Stage 4 are good and show a steady improvement from the end of Year 9. In 1999 the proportion of students who gained a GCSE A* to C grade in art was only slightly below the national average, with girls out-performing boys at the high grades. Standards at GCSE in 1999 were just above the average for the school. Students' projects are thoroughly researched in terms of material, image and context, mainly from art of the 20th century. Presentation of completed project work is well planned and executed. Drawing from direct observation again is not strong in the portfolios.
96. Standards of attainment at A-level have been consistently good in recent years with all students gaining grades A to C grades in the past three years. Standards of attainment are in line with national expectations. Students are good at image manipulation and colour, informed by the work of contemporary artists. Experimental work is rather tentative, and does not explore expressive ways of working with materials or images sufficiently. The work appears limited in scale and much of it is rather formal. The relationship of much of the work to that of major artists is rather superficial, and lacks a deep understanding of what they are trying to achieve. Although the students have a reasonable graphic ability, their drawings lack expression and panache.
97. Overall there has been a marked improvement in art since the last inspection. The range of

materials available to students is appropriate to each task. The planned projects encourage the development of two and three-dimensional practical skills, and encourage appropriate investigation, research and evaluation. Students in all years show interest and enthusiasm when they are in the art studios and respond positively to their teachers. Expectations of students are appropriate to their age and ability. The tasks encourage independent decision-making in the planning and execution of work. Although the assessment criteria for work at Key Stage 3 is clearer than during the last inspection, clarification of the learning objectives is still needed. Studios are now well furnished, and students have access to quality visual and practical resources. Resources for researching aspects of knowledge and understanding are now appropriate in range and amount, and are available in each studio and in the school library.

98. The standard of teaching is good in all years. Staff work hard to ensure that students understand the objectives of each lesson, the best of which includes practical demonstrations and good questioning techniques, matched with good quality visual stimulus. Students are presented with a variety of challenges in terms of content, material and contextual references, which vary from Pop Art to Maori artefacts. Lessons are well researched and organised, and are suitably resourced. Discipline is low key and effective and teachers readily establish a good relationship with their students. Units of study are appropriately matched to student needs and abilities, although a greater differentiation in content and pace is required, especially with the present Year 9 groups. Homework is consistently set and marked. However, some of the teachers' comments lack the rigour to be of significant value when setting targets for individuals. Although the structure of the Key Stage 3 planning is clearly laid out, it is difficult to track progression of learning in the planning matrix, where the learning and assessment objectives need greater clarity.
99. Students at Key Stage 3 make good progress in developing practical skills for a variety of purposes and in establishing an understanding of the language of art. This good progress is largely the result of a combination of enthusiastic teaching and positive students' attitudes to learning. They systematically address the visual elements in their practical work and project evaluations. They develop their knowledge of art mainly from a contemporary perspective. The work of women artists and art from earlier periods does not feature much in the schemes of work. Most students work at a steady pace, and concentrate well on the tasks they are set. Some students in Year 9 rely too heavily upon the teacher, showing a lack of confidence in their own ability and understanding of the lesson requirements. Students with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress in the practical aspects of the work, and try hard with the research and evaluation of projects. Students at Key Stage 4 show a positive response to gallery visits and use the information gathered to inform practical activities. Some of the students apply knowledge gained from downloading information from information and communications technology sources.
100. The art department belongs to a larger faculty structure, although there is no inspection evidence to illustrate the benefits of this arrangement. Schemes of work require more precise learning targets for students of different abilities to aim for. Extra curricular learning opportunities are available for students to develop other interests in art, or to extend class and homework in an informal setting. The amount of money allocated to the subject is insufficient to meet the visual and consumable resource needs for teaching and learning as well as responding to new curriculum opportunities. Teachers keep good visual records of their work, which is a valuable resource to show developments over time and for purposes of monitoring the programmes of study. Art currently appears in only one option column for Key Stage 4, resulting in reduced numbers taking the subject in Year 10. This may affect A-level student numbers in due course. Students work is celebrated by good quality displays in the studios and

many other places around the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

101. Standards of attainment are well above national average levels by the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4 and also by the end of Year 13. At GCSE results are significantly above the school average. The strengths reported in the last inspection have been improved upon still further. Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 indicate that four fifths of the year group are achieving or exceeding Level 5, a proportion that is well above the national average. Students' skills in refining design ideas from initial concepts to final proposals have improved considerably since the last inspection. Students can identify and analyse problems competently and can use an appropriate variety of research techniques to gather information to assist with design solutions. Students' final solutions to design tasks are nearly always well presented and are communicated effectively. Students work with great care and high degrees of accuracy in the construction of their work. In Year 8 electronics, for example, students assemble circuit boards and solder components together to very high standards. All students, including those with special educational needs and those who are especially gifted and talented make very good progress. There is a very good use of computer aided design through a Year 9 project in which students' design quite sophisticated folding pencil holders as promotional products. However, students do not have the opportunity to experience the subsequent making process using computer aided manufacturing.
102. At Key Stage 4 all students follow design and technology courses either in food or resistant materials. Standards are very high and have remained so since the last inspection, with students of all abilities achieving well above the national average. In 1999 58% of students achieved a GCSE A* to C grade compared with 49% nationally. Students work in a wide range of materials often attempting to design and make solutions to original problems and having a high degree of success. For instance one Year 11 student had designed a swimmers 'metronome' training aid to support them in maintaining a steady stroke. Another example of very good practice was the production of designs for a range of nutritious, tasty and inexpensive food dishes for a university student by a Year 11 student with physical disability.
103. Students studying A-level design and technology have maintained a 100% pass rate since the last inspection. Many students on this popular course have achieved the highest grades. Several past students have also won prestigious, national and local, design competitions. The standards of designing and making are both excellent. Students demonstrate very mature levels of skill and understanding. The design problems that they attempt to solve for major projects often take into account ways in which the product might contribute to improving environmental conditions. Examples of this include a hill walkers' waste disposal system and a plan to improve an area of the school grounds. Students following courses in GNVQ health and social care have also achieved good results and demonstrate high levels of maturity in their research gathering techniques and in their contribution to the life of the school through organising sports events for example.
104. Teaching has improved from a previously strong position at the time of the last inspection and is now consistently very good in all years. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding which is very well applied to encourage students to set themselves high expectations. Teachers' planning is done well and takes account of the learning requirements of all students. Particular attention is given to meeting the specific requirements of students with special educational needs who are, as a consequence, well integrated into the classroom situation. Teachers do now target specific designing skills through Key Stage 3, which was not the case at the time of the last inspection. Teachers maintain good levels of pace, interest and variety in the classroom and as a result students' behaviour is consistently of a very high order and this has an important positive impact on standards. They assess students' work frequently

and provide very good feedback. This is done after a project is completed in Years 7 to 9 and through individual reviews in Years 10 to 13. Towards the end of each course students of all abilities increasingly take responsibility for their own learning and are able to plan what they need to do to complete their work showing very good levels of analysis and on-going evaluation. High standards in Years 7 to 9 could be raised even further if students were better informed about their learning targets and the criteria used for their assessment. The teaching of GNVQ health and social care is very well planned and organised with a variety of activities and learning styles employed.

105. Through the well-planned courses students learn very effectively and quickly become confident design-technologists. The rate by which students acquire skills and knowledge is very high and is a strong feature at the start of all courses. This is the direct result of very effective teaching. Courses are well matched to the requirements of the National Curriculum but the range of areas studied is narrow, which limits students' opportunities to develop their design and technology capability in other media such as textiles, systems and control or graphic products. The subject team is aware of the many potential uses of information technology in design and technology and has made some significant advances in this area. However there is a need to plan for the development of the further use of computer hardware and software in all areas of the subject. The subject makes a significant contribution to literacy through a variety of strategies used within Key Stage 3, including an emphasis on the use of written instructions, technical vocabulary and evaluative language. The resources in the department are very efficiently used and both very well cared for and maintained, though the lack of technician time commented on in the last inspection report has not improved significantly. The extensive provision for students with special educational need is a notable feature. The quality of the leadership and management of the subject team is excellent. There is a clear sense of direction within a very capable and united team.

GEOGRAPHY

106. Standards of attainment in geography are good. Since the last inspection standards achieved by the end of Key Stage 3 have risen whilst previously high standards at the end of Key Stage 4 and Year 13 and have been maintained. By the end of Key Stage 3, students reach levels of attainment are slightly above national expectations. By the end of Key Stage 4, levels of attainment are well above both the national and the school averages. In 1999, over 70% of students gained GCSE passes at grades A* to C. Students also attain high standards at A-level and in 1999 all students secured an A, B or C grade. The results compare favourably with other subjects in the school and reflect the efforts of a hard-working and committed subject team who have responded positively to the areas of improvement set out in the previous inspection report.
107. By the end of Year 9, most students are able to present neat, accurate, annotated diagrams. They can identify important physical features on maps and photographs. Students are generally stronger at human geography than in the other aspects of the subject. For example, many show considerable reasoning skills when considering factors that explain variations in population density or in evaluating some of the problems and benefits of tourism. By the end of Key Stage 4 students have increased confidence in the use of geographical terminology. They have a good understanding of human and environmental impact on the landscape, and the effects and consequences of urban redevelopment. At A-level, students have appropriate analytical skills and well-developed literacy, numeracy, and information and communications technology skills. In a lesson on coastal erosion students had a good grasp of possible solutions to reducing the effects of cliff recession at a specific location and could confidently discuss concepts such as

hard and soft engineering and managed retreat.

108. Most of the teaching is good or very good, which has a positive impact on learning. This represents an improvement since the last inspection, particularly at Key Stage 3. Where teaching is very good, particularly in Years 10 to 13, lessons are well planned and well paced. Students are effectively engaged in learning, with a variety of tasks that are well suited to a wide range of learning styles and levels of capability. Good examples were seen in Year 10 lessons that involved studies of the redevelopment in Bristol where slides, photographs and careful reviews of previous fieldwork were used imaginatively to reinforce and further develop students' knowledge, skills and understanding. In a Year 9 lesson about earthquakes video excerpts were well used and tasks requiring varying levels of response were set for students of differing abilities to achieve. Students with special educational needs and students with physical disabilities benefit greatly from the support in lessons provided by learning support assistants. On the occasions when teaching is less effective (though not unsatisfactory) parts of lessons lack pace, skills that have already been established are unnecessarily repeated and there is insufficient challenge for higher attaining students.
109. Students have a very positive attitude towards their studies of geography. Good classroom management and staff enthusiasm for the subject help to create a stimulating learning environment for students. The quality of learning is therefore good. Students make sound progress in Years 7 to 9 and good progress in Years 10 to 13. The subject provides many valuable contexts for the development of numeracy and literacy skills. There are frequent examples of students producing good quality extended writing related to such topics as volcanoes, data analysis and fieldwork findings. Students are polite, well behaved and keen to discuss their work. They are generally supportive of each other and when given the opportunity work well together. Evidence of this was seen in Year 10 where students worked in groups to gather and share information, and in Year 9 where students helped each other to interrogate the Encarta information and communications technology program. Students show respect for exercise books, textbook, and wall displays, all of which are in good condition. Students' good attitudes to learning have a positive impact on standards.
110. The subject team is well managed and effectively led. Teachers are beginning to gather data on the attainment patterns of their students but are not yet making enough use of it to shape the planning of their future lessons or to predict and target future results. Schemes of work are in the process of being re-written but currently lack clarity on cross-curricular themes and appropriate attainment levels for students of different abilities. Monitoring and associated procedures are not yet sufficiently embedded in practice to have had an impact on raising standards. The subject contributes well to students' moral and social development. Typical examples were seen in work on population, inner cities, and the dilemmas of economic and social benefits and problems caused by tourism. The subject makes little contribution towards students, cultural or spiritual development and there are currently no indications for this provision in schemes of work.
111. Since the last inspection substantial improvements have been made to this subject. While the subject now has resources which meet the needs of students of different abilities there are still instances of lack of challenge for more able students in a few lessons.

HISTORY

112. Standards of attainment in history are higher than standards nationally by the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4 and are broadly in line with the national average by the end of Year 13. At GCSE standards in history are just above the school average. This represents an improvement

since the last inspection, particularly at Key Stage 3. In the end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments in 1999 77% of students reached Level 5 or above compared to the national average of around 60%. In 1999 59% of the students who were entered for GCSE secured a grade C or above compared to the national average of 56%. This figure represents a significant rise from the 1998 performance, which had been unusually low. However, girls have outperformed boys at GCSE for some time. In 1999 all of the students who were entered for A-level history passed, with two gaining higher grades.

113. At Key Stage 3, students have a wide range of historical knowledge and can analyse important characteristics of a particular period. They have a good grasp of the reasons for changes in the way people lived, and some reflect on the significance to society of these major changes. A few more perceptive students can, after questioning, make links between different periods of history, as with a Year 8 group who noted the similarities between Charles I and Louis XVI. Their work on the role of individuals such as Oliver Cromwell and Robespierre enables all students to consider different historical interpretations. A few students are beginning to develop skills of analysis in the use of sources. However, the majority of students at this key stage are less secure in their grasp of chronology or in their understanding of the difference between primary and secondary sources.
114. At Key Stage 4 students across the ability range are able to recall knowledge from previous units of work and apply it to their current studies. The significant majority confidently use and evaluate different sources of evidence, whilst many sensitively reflect upon and consider the current situation in the light of past events such as the Northern Ireland Peace Agreement and 'The Troubles'.
115. Students following the A-level course are able to synthesise and make notes from difficult texts. They are developing straightforward essay writing skills and a few students are beginning to think analytically and construct lucid arguments. At both key stages however, students find it difficult to make inferences from a range of more complex sources.
116. The concerted adoption of writing frames, the use of cue cards, mapping techniques, and spider diagrams, has taught students how to recall, select and deploy historical information and to organise their thinking much more effectively. This has resulted in the production of better quality pieces of extended writing, an area that was criticised in the previous inspection. The increased emphasis on using writing frames to support different forms of writing is helping to raise standards of literacy in Years 7 to 11. Key words are frequently 'flagged up' on the board or put on wall displays. Students' learning could be supported yet further with the introduction of word banks for each unit of study to include definitions of the most important and frequently used historical words and phrases.
117. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory and is good or very good in two thirds of lessons. The quality of learning is equally as good. In the best lessons, targets are written on the whiteboard at the beginning of the lesson and revisited at the end. Effective learning takes place because students know what they are going to do and think about how to apply their prior learning to the new topic. Teachers' explanations are clear, and amplification of teaching points are well made. This enables students to make good progress because they settle down to their learning tasks quickly and confidently. Good lessons are characterised by methodical, well-informed teaching, and tasks that are designed to meet the learning needs of different ability groups. Students across the age and ability range succeed and make progress because the framework for their historical thinking and written work is well structured, enabling them to practise their study skills and information retrieval methods. The department works closely with members of the supportive education department to provide well-designed support for

students with special educational needs and physical disabilities. They are fully integrated into lessons at all key stages and make good progress as a result. Where teaching could be improved yet further, questioning needs to probe understanding more deeply and students require more scope to respond to ideas and information. In addition, the subject team has as yet to adopt systematically the school policy on spelling. Imprecise marking at Key Stage 3 results in some students of above average ability receiving insufficient subject specific guidance on how to improve.

118. The subject leader for history is also the faculty leader for humanities. The dual roles are complementary and sound leadership is provided in relation to support for teaching and learning, the provision of resources, and curriculum organisation. There is good leadership in fostering a sense of shared purpose within the subject team and sound development planning that sensibly reflects school priorities. Some systems are in place to monitor performance in history and some useful evaluation takes place, particularly at GCSE. This is not yet embedded within team practice and there is a need to monitor outcomes on a more systematic basis. The quality of history schemes of work is too variable. There is no methodical identification of key historical skills and concepts that are derived from the syllabuses used, and no indication of what level to pitch assessment tasks. There is a need to revise these schemes of work to include specific reference to the aspects of historical knowledge skills and understanding to be taught in each lesson or series of lessons. There is also a need to review current common assessment tasks to include assessment of historical knowledge skills and understanding more frequently and more systematically. The subject team has responded positively to issues raised in the last inspection report. Particularly noteworthy is the success in evolving new methods and tasks to support the learning of students within mixed ability classes.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

119. Standards of attainment in information technology have improved greatly since the last inspection, particularly at Key Stage 3. By the end of Key Stage 3 levels of attainment are above the national average. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards are currently below the national expectation, but are rising quickly. Standards in the sixth form vary considerably between students, but overall they are in line with those expected nationally.
120. By the end of Key Stage 3 the attainment of students is above national expectations. The introduction of a new scheme of work and a new computer network has had a very significant impact upon raising standards. Students are now becoming capable independent users of information technology who can access and use a variety of applications and who are aware of the intended audience. For example, in Year 7 students obtain relevant information from an encyclopaedia on a CD-ROM and the Internet and use cut and paste procedures to develop a high quality word-processed document. They are all confident and competent users of e-mail. By the end of Year 9 students are able to import text, pictures, word art and resources from the Internet to design their own web pages related to their work in English on Shakespeare. Students are confident about changing the background and foreground of their work and can layer their document to ensure all elements are visible. They can use computer aided design software effectively, within design and technology lessons and some elements of measurement and data capture within science lessons.
121. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 has been below the national expectation since the last inspection, but recent improvements in the provision and teaching of information technology are quickly putting an end to that situation. Students have made rapid progress in Year 11 since the recent installation of new computing facilities. The work observed in folders from

students in Year 10 contains clear indications that they will be above national expectation by the end of Year 11. Students in the current Year 11 use information technology to enhance their work in humanities effectively. They are able to combine elements from their research and use of Internet resources, to construct a time line for the American Civil Rights movement and to formulate an in-depth study of volcanoes. Within other subject areas they can use spreadsheets effectively and are able to introduce graphs in documents. Elements of measurement and control are covered within both science and design and technology but these need to be developed further and extended throughout Years 7 to 11.

122. Overall standards of competency in the use of information technology within the sixth form are satisfactory. The students in Years 12 and 13 who are studying GNVQ information technology have well-developed information technology skills as have some others who have developed their own skills independently. These students can use high level skills to extend their work well, such as searching for sources of information on the Internet. Other sixth form students do not always realise the extent to which information technology can enhance their work. For example, they do not always use the copy, paste and edit controls efficiently. Other students, particularly those who have developed their computing competencies independently have high level skills which they use well.
123. Students can and do make very good use of information technology within other subjects in all years, especially for independent study. Students were observed effectively accessing information technology within the study centre to enhance coursework within design and technology food and geography. Within art, students often make good use of both the Internet and CD-ROM to enhance their preparatory work. Excellent use is made of information technology within English where completed pieces of both prose and verse are word processed and decorated by imported artwork. In mathematics students use their own network to look at the use of spreadsheets and to use appropriate programmes to support students' learning. Although many teachers and subjects are making effective use of information technology the school now needs to improve the use of new technology across all subjects so that it is seen as an integral part of all curriculum areas. This is particularly the case in science, music and business studies.
124. Students make good progress in lessons. Since the introduction of new equipment and revised schemes of work in September 1999 students in Year 11 have made rapid progress to help overcome their lack of progress in previous years. Students on the register of special educational needs make good or very good progress within lessons. For example, a girl with physical disability had individual support and used the computer to overcome her disability and produce an excellent document. A boy with registered emotional and behaviour difficulties concentrated and persevered for the full hour-long lesson to produce a creditworthy piece of work.
125. Since the last inspection improvement has been very good. Designated information technology teachers effectively deliver information technology in five lesson blocks. Students are extracted from other curriculum areas and well supported by the teacher who would normally be teaching them. This arrangement has been successful as a means of increasing students' competencies quickly. Students' attitudes are now at least good in all lessons and all take an active interest and pay full attention. Progress for lower and middle attaining students is now good but more needs to be done to stretch the most able. This accords with the perceptions of parents. Arrangements for assessing and reporting students' work now meets the requirements of the National Curriculum but more needs to be done to give students advice on how to improve and to set individual targets.

126. The quality of teaching is good in almost all lessons and is satisfactory in the remainder. Very good use is made of e-mail to share the learning objectives and work with students so that they can make a focused and meaningful start to lessons. Lessons are well planned and supported by well-researched resources. Relationships are good and the support from other teachers helps both students and the teacher within the lesson. As teacher expertise increases all staff should take increased responsibility for their autonomous delivery of information technology across the curriculum. Other support for individual students on the register of special educational needs is co-ordinated and effective and the information technology technician makes an excellent contribution in supporting students within the lesson as well as overcoming technical problems. However, assessment of students' work does not support individual targets of improvement and the most able students are not being systematically challenged.
127. Thoughtful consideration is given to spiritual, moral, social and cultural elements within some information technology lessons. As an example, the spiritual concept of the life of Martin Luther King was positively discussed within year eleven work and the cultural influences of Malcolm X significantly added to students' understanding of multi-cultural issues. Students were constantly reminded of the sustainability of resources and their printing budget was a very effective way of increasing understanding of this social issue. A clear and well prepared moral code of Internet and e-mail use is displayed in all rooms and the oversight by teachers of where students visit on the Internet, even when in a different room, supports their moral education.
128. The subject is well led by a very effective and efficient subject leader ably assisted by a coherent and supportive team. There are clear plans for raising standards further, but there is a need for a sharper strategic overview of the future impact of information technology on learning from senior managers and for more extensive arrangements for monitoring the use of information technology within subject lessons. Recently the information and communications provision of the school has been very considerably improved by the major expenditure on a networked system. This expenditure has had a very beneficial impact on standards. Even with this upgrade, there is a need for still more expenditure on new technology equipment to keep pace with increased demand and new innovations.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French and German

129. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards in both French and German are just below the national average. This is partly because the more able third of students give up some of their time for French in order to take a course through Years 8 and 9 in German as well.
130. During Years 7 to 9 students learn the basics of the foreign language, gaining a grasp of simple everyday words and phrases which they can understand and use in short conversations. Although their understanding of what they hear or read in French or German develops at a satisfactory rate over the three years, they don't get quite enough intensive and sustained oral practice in the language. As a consequence, the key skill of speaking is not as strong for most students as it should be by the time they embark on Key Stage 4 work. On the other hand, they have a reasonable grasp of some important grammar and syntax in the language, and many of them can write interesting and well structured letters and accounts in French or German on topics of personal interest. These are accurate and well presented as, for example, in letters to Père Noël in Year 7, or reports of a holiday using past tense in Year 9.
131. When students reach the end of Key Stage 4 their GCSE results are broadly in line with the national average. A particular strength at the school is that a far bigger proportion of students

are entered for a full GCSE in a modern language than is currently the case nationally. This has the result of making the standards appear to be below the national average if a direct comparison is made with the national average using the proportion of A* to C grades gained as a percentage of those who are entered. Nationally this figure is higher than at Brimsham Green. If the measure of the average point score for each student entered for the subject is used the same comparison (below the national average) also applies. However, the proportion of the whole year group of 16 year olds who finish their compulsory education with a C or better GCSE grade in a modern foreign language compares well with the proportion nationally (42%, compared to a national figure of 40%). Equally, a considerably higher proportion of Brimsham Green students (over 90%) gain at least a G grade pass than the average nationally (below 80%). Girls perform better in both French and German than do boys by a margin that is a little wider than the picture nationally. Only very few students gain the very highest grades.

132. During Years 10 and 11, progress in listening and speaking skills continues, with satisfactory standards attained by most students. Students in higher sets extend their grasp of grammar, and they produce some reasonably impressive pieces of written work in both French and German which have a range of structures, tenses, vocabulary and idiom. Many examples of this are on display for all to see in the pleasant modern languages rooms and adjacent corridors. As in Key Stage 3, though, rather too many students remain too limited in the amount they can say confidently and fluently in the language without needing to rely on prepared scripts and notes. Throughout the school, lower attaining students and those on the register of special educational need achieve well in modern languages. The work they do is appropriate, thanks particularly to the valuable learning support that they receive from both specialist staff and from members of the supportive education department.
133. Since the previous inspection, many improvements have been made. The extent and rate of the improvement are both satisfactory, and the subject faculty is clearly capable of sustaining improvements and continuing to raise standards in the future. Levels of attainment have been at least maintained across the board, and in the case of writing there is clear evidence of higher expectations and better performance. There are now more opportunities for students to work independently. The majority of students now reach expected standards whereas previously a significant minority under-achieved in both key stages. There is a much better provision of equipment, such as overhead projectors, which make a positive impact on certain aspects of classroom work, and the previous shortage of text books is now less of a problem. The quality of marking is now higher, and the ways in which students are grouped, setted and timetabled are all contributing to more effective learning and teaching. On the following fronts, however, things have not yet improved as they should. Inadequate use is made of computer facilities to help learning in the subject. The involvement of students in modern languages study post-16 is very small. Teachers' skills and procedures for monitoring and evaluating effectiveness are not good enough to have the positive impact on subject improvement that they should.
134. Overall the modern languages teaching is good in both French and German, and in both Key Stages 3 and 4. No post-16 teaching was able to be observed. There were no unsatisfactory lessons seen during the inspection. Teachers know their subject well and understand how to teach it. Lessons contain a variety of activities and methods, and the objectives are usually well thought out by teachers and clearly understood by students. A good range of materials is often complemented and enhanced by resources, for example, worksheets, supportive notes, and pictures, which the teacher has made or adapted specially, in order to tailor the work to the needs of the particular group. This is effective practice and has a beneficial impact on standards, but the presentational quality of some of these home made materials varies from really high to relatively poor.

135. Expectations are appropriate, with suitable variations being made to cater for different abilities of student. Teachers often draw on a range of imaginative and creative tasks, such as pair work, group-work arranged as a series of different mini-tasks, preparing playlets and performing them in the foreign language, or extended role-plays. In every lesson, teachers build and maintain a supportive and conducive rapport with students, encouraging them with praise and patience.
136. Lesson planning is effective, although on too many occasions the limited contact period is not exploited fully to ensure that students spend the maximum possible time actively practising the new bits of language orally in an intensive and sustained way. Teachers often challenge their students to concentrate hard and to improve their listening skills by using the target language for the majority of the lesson. Even so, practice here is not consistent, and in some lessons there is simply too much unnecessary English being used by teachers and consequently by students. The overall effect of these two things is that the pace of learning is not always as good as it could and should be. Learning is enhanced in the subject for quite a number of students by taking part in the study visit to France or in the home-stay exchange with Germany, and by working with the school's part-time French language assistant.
137. Students respond well to the work that teachers organise for them. There was no evidence at all in lessons of any antipathy to the subject or of antagonism towards teachers. Students are generally attentive and listen carefully to instructions and explanations. Most try hard to complete the tasks set, and the majority show a capacity to work independently once a framework has been set by their teacher. They get on well with each other in class, co-operating in pair and group activities when required, and sometimes helping each other. Most students are happy to have a go at saying things and writing things in the language within topics that they have had some good help and practice with. The combination of generally good teaching and the usually good response of most learners goes a long way to ensuring that steady and effective progress is maintained.
138. The high quality of the accommodation makes a positive contribution to students' learning and progress. This is enhanced too by a very high quality of subject displays. Resources are broadly adequate and appropriate, for example, a wide range of challenging fiction to support independent reading in both languages, although there is a pressing need to replace some worn and outdated books for some German groups, as these are not helping to raise standards. Standards are helped by good experienced leadership and management of the subject: the faculty of well-qualified and committed specialists share aims and values and pull together well, with each member contributing with commitment to the common cause. Further work on monitoring and evaluation subject performance within the faculty will help to move the effectiveness of teaching and learning from good to very good, which will have the biggest influence on standards.

MUSIC

139. By the end of Key Stage 3 the overall standard of attainment in music is in line with nationally expected levels. Those who opt to study music at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form reach standards that are above the national average. Standards have improved at Key Stages 3 and 4 since the last inspection.
140. At Key Stage 3 very few students reach high levels of attainment. The majority work at or just above the standard expected nationally with a significant minority achieving below it. Key Stage 3 students were at their best in whole-class band lessons in which all students of all abilities were learning to play an instrument and were becoming confident in their reading of

staff notation in the appropriate clef. They are able to sight read within their technical abilities and display a good sense of ensemble with awareness of dynamics and phrasing. Students in Years 8 and 9 do not apply the same dedication or concentration in other types of music lesson, especially keyboard. GCSE results over the last three years have been good with over half of those entered securing a grade C or above. GCSE results have shown an upward trend since the last inspection with those of the last two years being significantly above the national average. Boys regularly out-perform girls by the end of Year 11. GCSE classes are well motivated and students work well on their own in a variety of composing tasks. Year 11 students were able to demonstrate their understanding of Webern's *Variations Op.27* through accurate and often fluent writing in a 12-tone idiom, using all four versions of the row without transpositions. They are not yet confident enough to include frequent rests to replicate the sparseness of texture of the original. A-level results, albeit based on very small groups, are good with 100% of students gaining grades A to E in recent years. A-level students are making good progress in their work on Bach chorales and baroque two-part writing, particularly in their understanding of cadential sequences and implied harmonies and modulations.

141. Since the last inspection there have been improvements in accommodation, which have assisted in the fulfilment of National Curriculum requirements, particularly in performing and composing. The subject leader now incorporates a structured monitoring system into the band teaching system that identifies levels and progression. These changes have helped to raise the quality of teaching since the last inspection, and consequently results. There are still improvements to be made, however, including ensuring that Key Stage 3 lessons are as good as those at Key Stage 4 in terms of rigour, pace, expectation, information and level of task.
142. The overall quality of teaching is good, although there are some weaknesses at Key Stage 3. Teaching for GCSE and A-level is of a particularly good standard and students benefit from the excellent subject knowledge of the teachers. Preparation for examinations is thorough whilst the band system is directed with enthusiasm and skill. The quality of day-to-day assessment in Years 10 to 13 is good and the work of these students shows that marking and monitoring of progress is rigorously undertaken. Teachers need to ensure that students in Years 7 to 9 benefit from the same thoroughness in all aspects of assessment, recording and reporting. There is insufficient challenge within Key Stage 3 lessons for more able students. Learning is mostly satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and is good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Progress at Key Stage 3 could be accelerated with better use of time. Both learning and progress are hampered by the lack of appropriate information and communications technology equipment in the subject area.
143. When teaching is good or better, the lesson has a well-structured opening, with clear instructions, the use of music vocabulary is encouraged, musical techniques are reinforced and students are encouraged to extend their learning in new but related contexts. Where teaching is ineffective, targets are not challenging, too much time is allowed for a simple activity, pace is slow and sharing of keyboards is inappropriate. The subject team needs to improve the Key Stage 3 curriculum as a whole and develop strategies that challenge all students. All lessons need to contain explicit objectives and activities should be well paced and focused. The learning requirements of students with differing capabilities should be more carefully addressed in mixed-ability lessons. Listening in detail has improved since the last inspection but this skill can be improved still further. Marking and teacher comments should be aimed at helping students make better progress; and attention to techniques and presentation should be more rigorous.
144. The subject is efficiently managed. Students are given plenty of opportunities for ensemble work, competitive events and for touring abroad. Peripatetic teachers make a positive

contribution to the instrumental teaching in a wide variety of disciplines. The ethos of the music block is lively and conducive to musical activity. In order to improve further, the Key Stage 3 curriculum needs to be revised to give more attention to listening, singing and multi-cultural music. Learning in the music block would be enhanced with the provision of several computers and relevant peripherals and software, particularly for composing. There are insufficient headphones which creates a noisy learning environment when several groups of students are listening to different pieces of music or are composing.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

145. By the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4 the attainment of most students is broadly in line with national expectations. Some students at Key Stage 3 are exceeding national standards in games activities where they demonstrate increasingly refined skills. At Key Stage 4 most students can select and apply appropriate skills within a game situation and high attaining students can perform at pace and under pressure. The attainment of most students studying GCSE physical education is broadly in line with the national average. Boys' examination results have fallen over the last three years but the overall performance of students in physical education has improved in relation to other subjects. The standard attained in the post-16 recreational physical education studies is good. Standards in the subject have remained comparable to those reported upon in the last inspection.
146. The overall quality of teaching is good, and remains comparable to the position reported at the time of the last inspection. Some teaching is very good, but there is a small proportion of teaching that is unsatisfactory. Where teaching is good or better classes are managed well and relationships between students and members of staff are good. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of the subject and have high expectations of students who they consistently praised for their effort and achievement. Good use is made of general assistants for students with special educational needs, including those with physical disabilities. These factors enable most students to learn in well structured lessons in which they are encouraged develop and refine their skills through progressive tasks. In the best lessons students are given opportunity to celebrate their achievement. In the small minority of lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, difficulties largely arise from inadequate subject knowledge and the absence of clear learning objectives. In lessons where teaching is satisfactory there is sometimes scope for tasks to be more closely matched to students' levels of attainment and for more opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. Where teachers from other subject areas are deployed in teaching physical education lessons greater support and training is necessary to ensure they have an adequate knowledge of the subject and teaching methods.
147. The management of the subject is sound and a positive learning ethos is encouraged by the enthusiasm and commitment of the subject leader. Development planning, policies and schemes of work provide a broad structure for the work of the subject team but greater detail is required in all of these aspects to ensure clear focus and consistency of practice across the subject. For example, guidance on the marking of GCSE theory work is necessary to ensure students are aware of the action necessary to increase their knowledge and understanding. A formal system of monitoring and evaluating the success of the work of the subject team is required to enable staff to share good practice more systematically.
148. In Years 7 to 9 games and athletics dominate the curriculum, so restricting opportunities for learning in other areas of activity. This is mostly caused by inadequate indoor physical education facilities. This clearly limits opportunity and so reduces overall standards. In Years 10 and 11 greater breadth and balance is provided through the use of external facilities. The provision of post-16 recreational physical education studies is very good with a broad range of

activities being offered. Opportunities for extra-curricular activities are good. A wide range of activities is provided for students and there is a strong commitment on the part of staff. The subject team often work in partnership with colleagues from schools through the organisation of an indoor athletics competition and local festivals and sporting events.

149. The extensive outdoor facilities provide a good environment for learning, although the football pitches drain poorly. In contrast the limited indoor accommodation identified in the last inspection continues to restrict opportunities for learning. The changing rooms are crowded and the run through showers do not provide students adequate privacy. The standard of cleaning in the boys' changing room is poor and the mud outside presents a hazard to students and staff travelling between the changing rooms and the field. A greater range of equipment is necessary to strengthen further the provision for students with special educational needs (including those with physical disabilities) and to provide increased learning opportunities in which students can work independently, refine their techniques and gain success.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

150. The attainment of students by the end of Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with the expected outcomes within the local agreed syllabus. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards are above the national average for those entered for GCSE examinations. The majority of students meet the required standards within the agreed syllabus. Standards achieved by the students who take the subject at A-level are in line with the national average. These standards are similar to those reported on in the last inspection.
151. By the end of Key Stage 3 most students have a reasonably secure knowledge of aspects of Christianity including events in the life of Jesus, patterns of worship and the lives of famous Christians like Mother Teresa and Martin Luther King. Their knowledge of the religious traditions of Islam, Judaism and Buddhism is however less secure. Although students tend not to confuse one religion with another their knowledge is mainly confined to factual information. For example, although students can recall what Muslims do when on pilgrimage their understanding of why Muslims go on pilgrimage is often limited to vague generalisations like, "It makes them more religious." However, students show a particular strength in being able to raise serious questions and express personal views. For example, one girl in Year 9 suggested that the death of a friend could raise doubts about God's love by volunteering the comment, "You may think that God has turned against you."
152. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards are generally above expectations. This is true of both boys and girls although girls achieve particularly high standards. GCSE results have been consistently well above the national average since the last inspection. The attainment of students involved in the GCSE short course is broadly in line with expectations. Students continue to show confidence expressing their own personal beliefs and values. For example, a student in Year 11 spontaneously volunteered his doubts about the long-term benefits of cancelling debt owed by developing countries. However, students are less secure in their understanding of the different views that exist within a religion on moral and social issues like abortion or divorce. They are also less secure in their understanding of how a member of a religious faith may use religious principles or sources of religious authority to argue for a particular view. For example, in a discussion on jihad students were uncertain of the line of argument a Muslim might adopt to justify the use of force.
153. There are a limited number of students that choose to pursue a course in A-level religious education and they generally make satisfactory progress and achieve results that are in line with the national average. However, the results in the A-level examination in the summer prior to

the inspection were below the national average. This outcome can largely be explained by the specific personal circumstances of particular students rather than by factors that lie within the control of the school. Although students involved in the A-level course continue to question and express their own views they demonstrate a weak understanding of the ideas and lines of classical philosophical argument being explored. Students who are not studying religious education as an A-level course receive no further lessons in the subject in Years 12 and 13 as they should, by regulation, and so make no further progress.

154. The standards of attainment reported on in the last inspection have been maintained, as has the quality of teaching. Students are continuing to make satisfactory progress in Year 7 and Year 8 and in the A-level course as reported in the last inspection. However, there has been an improvement since the last inspection in the attainment of students in Year 9 and more students in Years 10 and 11 now making good progress.
155. The issues raised in the previous inspection report have been attended to well. The school is now meeting statutory requirements at Key Stage 4 by the introduction of a GCSE short course for all students. The review of the deployment of teachers of humanities at Key Stage 3 has resulted in the use of specialist teachers in Year 9 and this has had a favourable impact on the quality of teaching and learning. The subject team has attempted to improve its contribution to students' spiritual development within the school by, for example, developed a meditation activity for students in Year 7 in association with a visit to the Avebury stone circles. However, there has been no progress on meeting statutory requirements for religious education in Years 12 and 13. Some valuable progress has been made in developing students' information and communications technology skills by encouraging more word processing and the use of identified Internet web-sites.
156. The overall quality of the teaching that was seen was good. In the week of the inspection there were no religious education lessons being taught in Years 7 and 8. Most students make at least satisfactory progress and many learn well. Teaching is never less than satisfactory. Where teaching was particularly effective use was made of a well-ordered variety of strategies. For example, in one Year 9 lesson a number of brief activities were planned beginning with a well managed review of the homework assignment and an opportunity for students to share their work. This was followed by a short, effective video clip that led into a well managed class discussion. The discussion was sustained by the use of imaginatively focused and uncomplicated questions, for example, "How might a Christian respond to the death of a friend?" Where teaching was less successful the lesson consisted of virtually only one activity which was sustained for too long. There was a lack of time targets to give pace to the lessons. Some lessons tended to rely too heavily upon teacher instruction or worksheets for information.
157. Generally teaching is adept at meeting the needs of students of different ages, gender and ability. Good assignments are arranged for students with special educational needs and appropriate extension activities are used to provide stimulus for students who are gifted or talented. The teaching of literacy skills is good. The subject is well led by a subject leader who has a flair for teaching and who is well supported by a capable and united team. There is a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the work of the subject team. Monitoring and evaluation of the subject is generally satisfactory although it is insufficiently developed in Years 7 and 8 to ensure that work is challenging and relevant. Accommodation is good but there is an inadequate stock of text-books and sets of books to permit independent learning. Although work is marked regularly assessment and guidance of students, particularly in Years 7 and 8, are insufficiently developed.

BUSINESS STUDIES

158. The standards attained in the GCSE business studies courses are well above the national average. This is also the case by the end of Year 13 for students who take either a GNVQ Advanced course or an A-level course. At GCSE students do better in this subject than in most of the other subjects that they take. Although this subject was not reported upon in the last inspection, the current high standards have been maintained for the past four years. These fine results are the end product of effective teaching and learning.
159. In 1999 65% of the Year 11 students who were entered for the GCSE examination secured a grade A* to C, which is well above the national average. This result is even more impressive because nearly half of Year 11 were entered for the examination compared with under one fifth nationally. Students have especial strengths in the areas of marketing and individual research. Both boys and girls both attain highly. Students who completed the GNVQ advanced course in 1999 achieved results that were in line with their personal targets. At A-level in 1999 all 20 students who were entered obtained a grade A to E, with a quarter obtaining a grade A or B. The results in 1998 were similarly good. In all courses students gain from access to relevant and stimulating facts and concepts that are presented to them in a lively and stimulating way. In a Year 10 lesson students were able to equate the theories of running a small business to the practicalities of managing a garden centre. GNVQ students could classify and evaluate different forms of communications within both large and small businesses whilst Year 13 A-level students could successfully evaluate the relative merits of management theories.
160. In all courses teaching is good. It is characterised by lively, well informed and stimulating approaches. Lessons are carefully planned to meet precise objectives and usually involve carefully prepared instructional sessions using plenty of examples. Students are attentive and show a strong interest in the subject matter being studied. They work very hard to complete coursework assignments to a high standard. In GNVQ courses students have a very clear picture of what they need to do to secure a pass, merit or distinction and play a very active part in determining which of these standards they work towards. The successful GNVQ methodology has been partially adapted to the demands of the GCSE syllabus to very good effect. In some lessons was a tendency for teachers to adopt a lecture style format that, whilst being highly informative, gave students insufficient opportunities to discuss and synthesise their findings or justify their opinions. There is also scope for a greater use of visual materials in lessons as well as a fuller use of new technology as a means of enriching and extending learning. Increasingly students are using the Internet to gain access to business information within their personal study time.
161. Assessment and monitoring arrangements in business education are very good. Students are given a detailed overview of the curriculum and its mark schemes. They are encouraged to evaluate their work using objective assessment criteria with the active help of teachers. They consequently understand clearly how well they are doing and how to improve further. There were frequent instances seen where students had returned to a piece of work to upgrade it once they knew how to do this. Good use is made of local businesses as case studies, as in the case of a Year 10 lesson that was held in a local nursery for students to witness at first hand the conditions that are necessary for a small business to prosper. The subject makes a valuable contribution to students' moral and cultural development through the evaluation of ethical and moral concerns that affect business decisions and in a consideration of contrasting business and management cultures. A high proportion of the students who have taken the A-level course have subsequently gone on to follow a degree course in a business related subject. The highly effective management of the subject is demonstrated very well in the many positive indicators of success.

THE PROVISION FOR PHYSICALLY DISABLED STUDENTS

162. The provision for physically disabled students is outstanding with all the students being totally included into all aspects of school life. The support offered to them from the Supportive Education Faculty is of a very high standard, particularly that from the general assistants who display a good knowledge of the students and total commitment to their needs in school. Students are encouraged to be as independent as possible and are given discreet support in class to enable this. There is much evidence of peer support and the students are treated with respect and understanding throughout their school career. All of the school is accessible to wheelchairs and so the students have an equality of choice regarding which curricular areas they wish to study in Key Stage 2. The specialist facilities are very good with disabled toilets with hoists, lift, dedicated physiotherapy room and other facilities all of good quality.
163. Teachers' expectations of these students are generally high and teachers display a very good knowledge of the students and their learning targets. The support in physical education is particularly impressive and all students with a physical disability participate wherever possible, or alternative but appropriate programmes of work linked to the physical education curriculum are provided by the very able classroom assistant attached to the physical education department. Parents are well supported and welcome to attend the school and social events are arranged for families. Parents are involved in the Annual Review of the students, all of whom have Statements.