

# INSPECTION REPORT

**King Edmund Community School**

Yate

LEA area: South Gloucestershire

Unique Reference Number: 109299

Inspection Number: 184118

Headteacher: Mr J Dourneen

Reporting inspector: Mr T Dillon

5733

Dates of inspection: 15-19 November 1999

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	County
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Sundridge Park Yate South Gloucestershire BS37 4DX
Telephone number:	01454 862626
Fax number:	01454 862627
Appropriate authority:	South Gloucestershire Council
Name of Chair of Governors:	Mr B Gregg
Date of previous inspection:	December 1994

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr T Dillon Registered Inspector		Attainment and progress Teaching Leadership and management
Mr J Chapman Lay Inspector		Attendance Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Partnership with parents and the community The efficiency of the school Support, guidance and pupils' welfare
Mr H Wilkie	Mathematics	Resources
Mrs J Strickland	English Drama	Curriculum Accommodation
Mrs V Smith Mr B Munden	Science Design and technology Information and communication technology	
Mrs G Everson Mrs S Matthews Mr J Everson Mrs J Simms	Modern foreign languages History Geography Art	Sixth form Staffing Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Assessment
Mrs A Cawthera Mr B Simmonds Mr M Gill Mrs K Cannon Mrs A Bridges	Music Physical education Religious education Special educational needs GNVQ	Equal opportunities

The inspection contractor was:

CfBT Education Services  
London House  
59-65 London Street  
READING  
Berkshire  
RG1 4EW

Tel: 0118 952 3900  
Fax: 0118 952 3904  
E-mail: ukops@cfbt-hq.org.uk

Any comments, concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with David Banham, Senior Operations Manager at CfBT Education Services. Complaints which are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Registrar  
The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

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## **MAIN FINDINGS**

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

- Standards of attainment are very good in geography at Key Stage 4 and good in mathematics and music in the sixth form.
- Teaching in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form is good.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good and they make good progress in their studies.
- The ethos of the school is good and staff morale is high.
- The Headteacher provides clear direction for the school and is well supported by his senior management team.
- Most middle managers manage their colleagues well and run their departments efficiently.
- The whole-school assessment system is good. Pupils' performance is analysed effectively and provides detailed information upon which the school bases predictions of future performance.
- Pupils have good support and guidance, especially in relation to careers, and good provision for their social and moral development.
- Staff development and induction are excellent.
- The school has effective extracurricular provision.
- Resources are good in English, physical education, religious education and the learning resources centre offers good provision.
- Financial and administrative controls are efficient and effective.

### **Where the school has weaknesses**

- I.Attainment in public examinations at the end of Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is below average. Pupils' attainment observed during the inspection was unsatisfactory in the majority of subjects, including English, mathematics, science, numeracy and literacy at Key Stages 3 and 4.
- II.The governing body has not provided sound strategic management.
- III.A minority of pupils have poor attitudes to study and on occasions adversely affect the progress of other pupils.
- IV.The provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory.
- V.The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is not rigorous enough.
- VI.Job descriptions are generic rather than specific to individuals and so the staffing structure is not defined with sufficient clarity.
- VII.Resources in science, information and communication technology and music are limited.
- VIII.The school does not fulfil all statutory requirements. For example, all the necessary information is not included in the governors' report to parents and the school prospectus, and the school does not provide a daily act of collective worship.
- IX.A number of health and safety aspects are unsatisfactory.

The school has more strengths than weaknesses. The weaknesses will form the basis of the governors' action plan, which will be sent to parents and guardians of the pupils at the school.

• **How the school has improved since the last inspection**

The school has made good progress since the last inspection and has the potential to continue to make good progress. Standards in art have been raised and are now satisfactory at all stages. The curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 is broad and balanced, though regular teaching in the full range of skills is not yet available to all pupils in information and communication technology (ICT). The sixth form consortium ensures a broad range of choice for students, though the school does not provide religious education (RE). The expansion of vocational education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form has further broadened curricular provision. The school's use of performance indicators has improved dramatically since the last inspection. The analyses carried out externally and internally provide very good information on which to predict pupils' future performance. The school is able to show the extent of the progress or otherwise made by pupils in a clear and comprehensible way. The information is being used to identify priorities. For example, the weaknesses in literacy identified amongst pupils on intake have led to the introduction of a literacy strategy in Key Stage 3. Provision for pupils with SEN has improved markedly since the last inspection and is now good. The national Code of Practice is followed, pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) are well structured and pupils are making at least sound and often good progress. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and 92 per cent of teaching is at least satisfactory, compared with 80 per cent in 1994. More opportunities are given for pupils to take personal initiative in their learning, though the predominant style remains one in which the teacher directs pupils' learning. The school's overall assessment system is good, and most departments have effective approaches, particularly at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. This has enabled individual targets to be set for pupils and their progress to be monitored. The introduction of this term of individual interviews for every pupil about their work and progress is an outcome of this development.

The school has still to tackle with sufficient thoroughness a number of issues highlighted in the last report. Although provision for pupils' cultural development is now satisfactory, the opportunities provided for spiritual development are still unsatisfactory and the school does not fulfil its statutory obligation to provide a daily act of collective worship or religious education in the sixth form. Work has been done on monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning, and senior and middle managers observe lessons. However, the system is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that all the factors that could lead to raising standards are identified and explored.

• **Standards in subjects**

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds in national tests, GCSE and A/AS level examinations in 1998:

<b>Performance in:</b>	<b>Compared with all schools</b>	<b>Compared with similar schools</b>	<b>Key</b>	
			<i>well above average</i>	<i>A</i>
			<i>above average</i>	<i>B</i>
			<i>Average</i>	<i>C</i>
Key Stage 3	D	E	<i>below average</i>	<i>D</i>
GCSE examinations	C	E	<i>well below average</i>	<i>E</i>
A/AS levels	D	n/a		

The results should be judged in the light of the levels of attainment of many pupils on entry to the school, which are well below average. Results in Key Stage 3 tests in 1998 were below national averages. They were very low in English and well below in mathematics and science in comparison with the averages for similar schools, that is schools in which a similar proportion of pupils is entitled to free school meals. In the 1999 tests, the percentage of pupils reaching Level 5 or above was close to that for 1998 in English and science, but declined in mathematics. The trend over the last three years has been consistent in English and science, but more variable in mathematics.

Results in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) were in line with national averages in 1998, but fell well below in 1999. The school is optimistic about the results in the Year 2000 and is predicting results closer to the national averages. The school's results were below those of similar schools in 1998 and 1999.

In the General Certificate of Education Advanced (A) level, the average points score of the relatively few candidates entered for two or more subjects has been well below the national average over the past three years. Even so, of those who entered in 1999, all gained grade A-E passes in biology, chemistry, physics, art, psychology, and music, though few gained the higher grades.

· **Quality of teaching**

	<b>Overall quality</b>	<b>Most effective in:</b>	<b>Least effective in:</b>
Years 7-9	Satisfactory		Drama Modern foreign languages
Years 10-11	Good	Geography	ICT Modern foreign languages
Sixth form	Good	Mathematics	Design and technology
English	Satisfactory		
Mathematics	Good		

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. It was at least satisfactory in 92 per cent of the 203 lessons observed. In 45 per cent of lessons it was good and in 10 per cent it was very good. The teaching in one lesson was poor and in 15 it was unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching was best in the sixth form and better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. The quality of teaching varied within and across subjects and most had examples of good and unsatisfactory teaching.

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

· **Other aspects of the school**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Behaviour	Overall satisfactory. Many pupils behave well, but a minority misbehave on occasions and adversely affect the progress of others. The number of exclusions declined last year.
Attendance	Attendance is in line with national norms. Lateness is a problem with a few specific pupils in the mornings and pupils are often late to lessons during the day.
Ethos*	The school has a positive ethos. Relationships are good. Most pupils have a positive attitude to their studies and to the school. The staff is hardworking and committed to raising standards.
Leadership and management	The Headteacher provides very good leadership and is well supported by the senior management team and staff. The school is well managed, though the governors do not yet play a sufficiently influential role.
Curriculum	Overall, the curriculum is well balanced and broad. However, statutory requirements are not met fully in ICT and in religious education in the sixth form.
Pupils with SEN	Good. Support is well planned and implemented.
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Moral and social provision is good, cultural satisfactory, but spiritual unsatisfactory.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	The school has sufficient appropriately qualified staff. It has sufficient accommodation, but has inadequacies in some areas, for example design and technology (DT) and art. Resources are inadequate in several subjects including art and science.
Value for money	Satisfactory. Despite the below average attainment, the school adds value through the quality of teaching and the progress it helps pupils to make.

\* *Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

· **The parents' view of the school**

**What most parents like about the school**

- X. The school caters for the whole child
- XI. The school is friendly and approachable
- XII. The school keeps parents well informed

**What some parents are not happy about**

- XIII. A minority of pupils misbehaves
- XIV. Homework is not always consistently set
- XV. The school does not keep parents well informed

Inspection evidence supports the views expressed by parents in the main, except that they found that the school communicates well with parents and that homework is set to a timetable in the main and is usually appropriate.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

In order to deal with the weaknesses identified in this report and continue the improvement the school has made since the last report, the governors and staff should:

a) raise standards of attainment across the school by:

- ensuring that in-service training for teachers is directed to improving their ability to teach basic literacy and numeracy skills; (24)

- concentrating on measures to improve the behaviour of the minority of pupils who have poor attitudes to study and who on occasions adversely affect the progress of other pupils; (17)

- raising the expectations of pupils and parents; (17, 52)

- a) introduce more rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning and ensure the outcomes are properly recorded and used to improve the quality of teaching over the longer-term; (60)

- b) provide person-specific job descriptions in order to clarify roles in the staffing structure, and avoid any confusion over accountability and responsibility; (63)

- c) ensure that the governing body fulfils its responsibilities to provide overall strategic management for the school; (58, 73)

- d) seek to improve resources in those subjects in which they are limited, for example, in science, ICT and music; (66, 67, 105, 158)

- e) provide effectively for the spiritual development of pupils by including strategies designed to achieve this in all schemes of work and monitoring to see that they are implemented; (39)

- f) ensure that all statutory obligations are fulfilled, including the provision for ICT and of a daily act of collective worship, and attend to the health and safety issues mentioned in the report. (30, 46, 48, 51)

In addition to the key issues above, less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan. These are to be found in paragraphs 21, 24, 50, 64 and 74.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Characteristics of the school**

1. King Edmund Community School is situated in Yate, to the north of Bristol, the nearest major town. The school has 768 pupils of which 92 are in the sixth form; 371 are boys and 397 girls. It draws pupils mainly from the local primary schools. The socioeconomic background of pupils is less favourable than that for most schools, and at the time of the last inspection. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average at 11 per cent. This figure is misleading, especially when used to compare the school's examination results with similar schools, in that most pupils come from homes of lower paid manual workers and few come from high or middle social class households. The great majority of pupils are white. Few pupils, less than one per cent, come from homes where English is not the first language. The percentage of pupils identified as having SEN, about 22 per cent, is above the national average, and the school has seven per cent of pupils with statements of special need, well above the national norm. The level of attainment of pupils on entry over the past few years has been very low. The school has many more lower-attaining pupils than is the case in most secondary schools and few higher-attaining pupils.

2. The majority of pupils, 62 per cent, stayed on into full-time education at the age of 16 in 1999, and about 40 per cent stayed on into the school's sixth form. A small proportion of pupils (six per cent) joined Youth Training Schemes, and about a quarter went into employment. Most of those who enter the sixth form do at least two years and about a third continued into higher education in 1999.

3. The school aims to provide pupils with a high quality, balanced educational experience based on appropriate teaching approaches. Its involvement with the High Reliability School's Project is seen as contributing to these aims. The school undertakes to develop self-esteem among pupils, especially through the way it values them. It also has a list of priorities that includes raising expectations of pupils, parents and staff, involving parents more systematically in the education of their children, and encouraging further involvement of governors in the school. The school development plan is well constructed and includes appropriate priorities. The emphasis is rightly on raising attainment through improved teaching and learning.

4. The specific target for the year 2000 is for the proportion of pupils who reach five or more grades A\*-C to be raised to 44 per cent, an increase of 18 per cent on the 1999 figure. Other longer-term targets are:

- to raise the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more grades A\*-G in GCSE to 98 per cent;
- a minimum of 50 per cent of pupils achieving 5+ grades A\*-C;
- an average A-level points score of 15;
- and a minimum of 50 per cent of pupils staying on into the sixth form.

## Key indicators

### Attainment at Key Stage 3<sup>1</sup>

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year: 1999	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	49	74	123

National Curriculum test/task results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	16	17	16
	Girls	50	38	40
	Total	66	55	56
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	53 (54)	44 (54)	45 (46)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	22 (8)	20 (23)	9 (17)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teacher assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	18	16	18
	Girls	48	41	41
	Total	66	57	59
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	53 (52)	45 (59)	47 (47)
	National	64 (61)	64 (64)	60 (61)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	12 (18)	23 (23)	12 (18)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (30)

### Attainment at Key Stage 4<sup>2</sup>

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest Reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	67	62	129

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	18	62	65
	Girls	16	57	61
	Total	34	119	126
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	26 (36)	92 (90)	98 (93)
	National	48(46)	89(88)	94(93)

### Attainment in the sixth form<sup>3</sup>

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 who were entered for GCE A/AS examination in the latest reporting year:	Year	Male	Female	Total
	1999	13	15	28

Average A/AS

For candidates entered for

For candidates entered for fewer than

<sup>1</sup> Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

<sup>2</sup> Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

<sup>3</sup> Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

points score per candidate	2 or more A levels or equivalent			2 A levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	11.7	9.3	10.5 (13.8)	4.0	1.3	2.0 (3.5)
National			19.3 (17.6)			3.3 (2.8)

Number in final year of approved vocational qualifications and percentage of <i>such students</i> who achieved these qualifications:	Number	% success rate
School	4	100
National		

### Attendance

Percentage of half-days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:	Authorised absence	School	%
		National comparative data	8.3
	Unauthorised absence	School	9.0
		National comparative data	0.4
			1.1

### Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:	Number
Fixed period	30
Permanent	3

### Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:	%
Very good or better	10
Satisfactory or better	92
Less than satisfactory	8

## **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

#### **Attainment and progress**

1. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is measured with a variety of tests which include National Foundation of Educational Research (NFER) tests and Cognitive Attainment Tests (CATs). These show that the intake is heavily skewed towards the lower-attainers and that the school's intake contains few higher-attaining pupils. The Key Stage 2 national tests indicate that pupils are usually about a year or year and a half below expected levels on entry. Most pupils have particularly weak literacy skills.

2. In the end of Key Stage 3 national tests in 1999, the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 or above was well below the national average for all schools in mathematics, and below in science and English. Average performances over the last three years have also been below the national average in all three subjects. The overall trend has been consistent, against a rising national trend, though English and science have declined in the last three years, and mathematics showed some gains in 1998.

3. Comparing the school's performance in the 1999 national tests with similar schools, that is schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, results in English, science and mathematics were well below average. Girls and boys performed similarly in English. In mathematics and science over the past three years girls performed less well than boys but the difference is now less significant. The very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds did not perform any better or worse than other pupils. This has been the trend over the last three years.

4. In the GCSE examinations, the average total points gained per pupil over the last four years has varied year by year, a reflection of the average attainment levels of pupils on entry to the school, though other than for 1996 when they were above, they have been below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have gained five or more GCSE grades A\*-C has been below the national average in recent years, though the percentage gaining five or more grades A\*-G has been above the national average. Compared with similar schools, the school has also performed below average. The school's results in 1999 were the lowest for some years, though they were predicted in the school's Year Eleven Information System (YELLIS) analysis. In 1999, 26 per cent of candidates gained five or more grades at A\*-C, well below the national average and the average for similar schools. The proportion gaining five or more passes at A\*-G was broadly in line with the average. In English, results were below the national average, while in mathematics and science they were well below. The percentage of pupils gaining a grade A\*-C in art and humanities were above the national average in 1999, and in geography and religious education it was close to it. Elsewhere, they were below or well below. The relative performance of boys and girls varied from subject to subject.

5. At A level or the Advanced Supplementary (AS) level equivalent, the average points score of candidates entered for two or more subjects has been well below the national average over the past three years. The results in 1999 were lower still. However, most students achieved a pass grade in the subjects they took, though few were at the higher grades.

6. On the evidence of inspection, overall attainment at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 is below expectation. In about 60 per cent of lessons, standards were at least sound, and in 15 per cent of these they were good, but when all the work of pupils is taken into consideration, standards are below expectations. This picture is similar to that reported in the last inspection. Overall standards are sound in art and the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) throughout, and very good at Key Stage 4 in geography. Standards are satisfactory in PE, RE, DT, and geography at Key Stage 3; drama, music, PE and RE at Key Stage 4. Elsewhere, standards are unsatisfactory. Standards are satisfactory in almost all subjects by the end of Year 13. They are good in mathematics, business studies and music, and satisfactory in all other subjects other than DT.

7. Parents rightly express satisfaction with the progress their children make. The sound progress that pupils make is difficult to explain in light of their examination performance. However, the decline in GCSE results in

1999 is a reflection of the more than usual number of pupils in that particular cohort who entered the school with low literacy and numeracy skills. The school's prediction for the year 2000, based on its own analysis and YELLIS, is for a much higher pass rate at A\*-C, though it will still be below the expected national average. This is more in line with inspection findings. In 85 per cent of lessons pupils make at least sound progress; in half of these, progress is good. Pupils make good progress in art, mathematics, PE, and RE at Key Stages 3 and 4. They make very good progress in geography at Key Stage 4 and good progress in music and in the GNVQ. Elsewhere it is satisfactory, other than in modern foreign languages and ICT at Key Stages 3 and 4 and drama at Key Stage 3, where it is unsatisfactory. In the sixth form, students make good progress in mathematics, history, geography, music and GNVQ, and satisfactory progress in all other subjects, other than DT, where it is unsatisfactory.

8. The previous inspection report observed high gains in the progress of pupils with SEN. This standard has been maintained. Throughout Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress through constructive reading and focused literacy programmes. Where literacy is linked to Successmaker, a computer package for the progressive development of English and mathematical skills, reading ages rise dramatically. By the end of the key stage, the reading levels of most of the SEN pupils have risen by at least 18 months, and frequently more. In one case, a Year 9 pupil, whose reading age was eight on admission, improved his reading level by almost eight years. Records show that the pupils' spelling ages also increase at a comparable rate. Dyslexic pupils achieve success through a graded programme of reading plus hand and eye coordination exercises. Hearing impaired children make satisfactory progress in their communication skills, improving their vocabulary and understanding that letters make words.

9. At Key Stage 4, all pupils with special needs follow GCSE courses and an accredited Youth Award Scheme for bronze and silver awards. Of the 30 pupils entered in 1999, 28 achieved at least five grades A\*-G in GCSE, with ten of these achieving a number of passes at A\*-C grades. This represents very good progress.

10. Pupils' language skills are well below average on entry and their unsatisfactory levels of literacy inhibit their attainment in many subjects, particularly in Key Stage 3. Although many pupils improve their skills steadily, and most pupils with SEN make good progress, their understanding and use of language continues to be a factor in below average levels of attainment in a number of areas. Only in history and religious education were reading standards satisfactory. Writing is weak in modern foreign languages, science, history, geography, music and art. However, good efforts to develop vocabulary are being made in subject areas. Key words are displayed and emphasised in several subjects, including science, RE, music, geography and PE. The history department is planning a focus on the development of literacy and the English curriculum now includes a literacy hour in Year 7, which builds on the work of the Literacy Strategy in primary schools. Oral skills are satisfactory in five subjects but in science, history, modern foreign languages, English, technology and art they do not yet contribute enough to pupils' learning, confidence and progress. Pupils have limited opportunities for discussion, and during the week of inspection, they did not take an active part in assemblies, where their role was that of listener and not speaker, reader or presenter.

11. Standards of numeracy on entry to the school are generally poor in all but the highest-attaining pupils. The school is sensibly adopting strategies in line with the National Numeracy initiative to try to raise standards. Pupils use their knowledge of mathematics effectively in several curriculum areas. These include plotting loci of cam followers in the engineering option of DT, manipulating formulae in science and geography, plotting graphs in science and geography and the general use of data handling techniques in GNVQ courses.

## **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

12. Pupils' attitudes to learning vary considerably. They are satisfactory overall. In some subjects and with some teachers, pupils are enthusiastic for learning and want to work hard in lessons. Examples of this are seen in mathematics, RE, art and PE throughout the school and in business studies and GNVQ in later years. Pupils' positive attitudes in these subjects contribute to sound progress in lessons and over time. Pupils with SEN show good attitudes towards their learning, leading to good progress by many of these pupils. In a number of subjects, for example, science, modern foreign languages, history and in the early years of geography, many pupils' negative attitudes to lessons and learning too frequently hinder their progress and lead to low attainment.

13. These attitudes to different subjects are reflected directly in overall patterns of behaviour in lessons, and more particularly in the continuing poor behaviour of a minority of pupils, usually boys, which was described in the last report. This still inhibits learning in some lessons and is rightly identified by parents and pupils as a concern. Outside classes, some pupils exhibit potentially volatile behaviour, with a readiness to over-react to minor provocation that leads to a physical reaction, again from a small minority of boys mostly. However, the passive response of the majority to the minority, who show scant respect for the attempts of others to get on with their studies, is unhelpful in overcoming the problems of behaviour. Most often though, pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. They respond well to their teachers in most lessons, often concentrating for lengthy periods and trying hard to be successful. They are orderly around the school and the improvement that is taking place is reflected in the significant reduction of exclusions last year. Many examples of courtesy and politeness from pupils were evident during the inspection. Pupils spontaneously hold open doors for adults, for example, and readily enter into discussion about their work in lessons and elsewhere.

14. Good relationships exist between pupils, and between pupils and staff. Most pupils respond well to firm discipline, and respect teachers who administer this with consistency. Younger pupils mix well with older pupils and girls and boys interrelate well. Pupils' respect each other's views and values and there is no sign of racial tension. Pupils also act responsibly in the local community. Incidents of poor behaviour in the nearby town centre at lunchtimes, for example, have all but disappeared.

15. Pupils respond well to the opportunities they have for taking responsibility. Prefects take their responsibilities seriously; the Year 8 pupils look after the new incoming Year 7 very effectively; many pupils help younger ones with reading; the Youth Award Scheme shows team leaders successfully leading aspects of some lessons; and the sixth form committee enables students to contribute to aspects of school life. All these activities, along with pupils' positive response to the school's good provision for extracurricular activities and social and moral development, contribute to the good personal development which pupils make. Pupils also demonstrate a good level of public responsibility by contributing well to charities.

## **Attendance**

16. Attendance is satisfactory and broadly in line with national averages. The unauthorised absence at 0.4 per cent is about one-third of the national average of 1.1 per cent. There are no particular patterns to absence. Attendance has improved since the last inspection. The attendance in all years is now at least 90 per cent.

17. Lateness at the beginning of the day is confined to a small number of pupils. However, the length of the registration period means that some degree of lateness has little or no effect upon the pupils' education. Of more concern is lateness to lessons during the school day. Many lessons start late and on occasions pupils' learning is slowed while the teacher waits for pupils to settle down.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

### Teaching

18. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is better than recorded in the last inspection report, the result of closer monitoring, focused in-service training and the school's involvement with the High Reliability School's Project. In 92 per cent of the lessons observed, it was at least satisfactory. In 45 per cent it was good and in 10 per cent very good. At Key Stage 3, 90 per cent of lessons were at least satisfactory, 46 per cent good and eight per cent very good. At Key Stage 4, 93 per cent of lessons were satisfactory, 64 per cent good and 14 per cent very good. In the sixth form 97 per cent were at least satisfactory, 59 per cent were good, and six per cent very good.

19. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Lessons are well planned and teachers provide suitable activities. They give clear direction to pupils so that they know what is expected. Often they are enthusiastic and through their effective questioning and own attitude encourage a positive response from pupils which is helping their progress. For example, in a science lesson on the female reproductive organs, the teacher included information about recent operations in the womb of babies with spina bifida and firsthand information from a pupil who was herself a blue baby. The addition to the lesson of this supplementary and personal information captivated the pupils and the follow-up questions elicited a very good response. Resources are well used, for example the use of a video in geography and the good range of materials and activities provided in a history lesson when pupils were studying the complex issue of the Balkan wars prior to 1914. Teachers' planning is good and based on schemes of work. They make good use of previous learning and in the best lessons draw attention to what has been done in previous lessons and review what has been covered in the current one. In a successful Year 13 lesson in mathematics, for example, the teacher recapped on previous learning on Newton's Second Law before encouraging the class to apply it to some complex situations. The teacher neatly summed up the key points of the general method of solving such problems, using effective questioning to probe the students' understanding of the method. Occasionally use of extension work as in geography helps the higher attainers, but overall failure to address their needs is an unsatisfactory feature of the teaching. Classes are well managed. Teachers' relationships with pupils are overall good and pupils appreciate teachers' support.

20. The main weaknesses include a lack of consistency across the school in tackling the difficulties pupils have with literacy and numeracy. Another factor is the lack of clear objectives in planning that makes it difficult for teachers to evaluate how successful a lesson has been. In the least successful lessons, teachers do not conclude with a review of what the pupils should have learned and the lesson, therefore, lacks an effective structure. In several lessons, tasks were inappropriate and pupils either could not cope with the work or it was too easy. In a few lessons, teachers failed to explain clearly enough for pupils to be able to get on with their work or do the task, as in music, drama and modern foreign languages. As a result, the pace of learning is slow and pupils make unsatisfactory progress. In a few lessons, classroom management is not effective, for example in IT, the way pupils were placed in one lesson was inappropriate and occasionally teachers had difficulty managing naughty pupils.

21. The system for supporting pupils with SEN is good and the position reported in the last inspection has been sustained. The quality of all teaching in lessons specifically provided for SEN pupils is at least satisfactory, mostly good and on occasions very good. Teachers and support assistants set high standards, with challenging but realistic expectations. Lessons and sessions are well planned and structured to retain interest and promote learning. The teachers have a good knowledge of their pupils and teaching strategies are varied well to retain and promote interest. Behaviour management is good overall. In withdrawal sessions and where there is in-class support, work is matched to the pupils' individual education plans (IEPs), which for statemented pupils, accurately reflects the recommendations of their annual reviews. In-class support offers good quality help in most subject areas to all SEN pupils. However, in classes where extra support is not available, or in classes where the pupils are not set on the basis of their prior attainment, insufficient attention is given to individual needs. In music, extension work is available for higher achievers, and deaf pupils in Year 8 are well supported. In English, science and mathematics, where pupils are set by attainment, appropriate work is generally set. Some teachers also use selected worksheets with simplified text. However, in DT, modern languages and art, insufficient consideration is sometimes given to special needs.

22. Hearing impaired pupils receive support from a fully qualified teacher of the hearing impaired, who occasionally uses British sign language to reinforce aspects of lessons. Such pupils are also taught extra subject and vocabulary skills on a one to one basis in the hearing impairment unit. Lessons within the unit are further reinforced through the use of television, video and Successmaker via radio hearing aid attachments to the machines.

23. Pupils' work is marked regularly, though teachers vary in how they approach their marking. Pupils' books contain examples of detailed comments designed to help them improve their work and encourage them to greater efforts. However, teachers do not do this consistently enough, a criticism in the previous report that has not yet been tackled fully. Teachers use day-to-day assessment to aid their planning, but this does not result in teachers providing different work for the pupils of different levels of attainment regularly enough.

24. Teachers set homework regularly and according to the timetable. It is usually appropriate. Teachers use a suitable range of strategies, which include finishing off classwork, carrying out research or completing projects. Homework is varied, and helps pupils to make progress.

### **The curriculum and assessment**

25. The curriculum in Key Stage 3 is broad and balanced, more so since the last inspection with the addition of drama and ICT, and provides satisfactorily for pupils' needs. All requirements of the National Curriculum are met. All pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 take English, mathematics, science, DT, ICT, art, geography, history, music, RE and PE. All study one modern language; French and German being offered in alternate years, and there is an option for a second language in Year 9, which does not work effectively because of the short time given to teaching. In Year 7 all subjects are taught in mixed ability classes except in mathematics which is set. In Year 8, mathematics, science and languages are set by ability and in Year 9 all subjects except humanities, PE, art and music are taught in banded or ability sets. These grouping arrangements work well.

26. In Key Stage 4, all pupils study English language and literature, mathematics, science, humanities, DT, a modern foreign language, RE and PE. In addition, they choose from art, drama and music. There is no second language programmed for Years 10 and 11 because of low take up. In Year 11 all pupils currently follow the double science programme but in Year 10 a small group of lower-attaining pupils take single science. These pupils also follow a GNVQ leisure and tourism foundation course. In Year 11 the school offers an ASDAN youth award scheme to those pupils not studying the full range of GCSE subjects. In Years 10 and 11, English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages are set by ability; all other subjects are taught in mixed ability groups. The curriculum overall is broad and balanced and provides appropriate opportunities for pupils of all levels of attainment. All statutory curriculum requirements are met other than in ICT where individual subjects have the responsibility for this but do not always fulfil it.

27. There are currently 19 A or AS level and eight GNVQ courses within the sixth form curriculum. The school is part of a three-school consortium for the sixth form. Courses leading to A levels in physics, chemistry, biology, geography, history and advanced GNVQ are shared by all three schools and taught by teachers from all three schools. The link works well. Current Year 12 pupils are following courses chosen from 15 A levels and GNVQ. They also have lessons in general studies and PE. There is no provision for RE as required by statutory regulations.

28. All pupils have a weekly lesson in personal, social and health education (PSHE). This incorporates sex education in accordance with the school policy, health education including guidance regarding drug abuse, and careers education. Work experience is offered to all Year 10 and sixth form pupils. The provision is good and ensures that the school meets statutory requirements as well as contributing effectively to pupils' personal and intellectual development.

29. Curricular provision for pupils with SEN is good overall. All pupils with SEN have appropriate IEPs. In Year 7 there are literacy groups that follow National Literacy strategies and are taught by learning support staff within English lessons. In Year 8, learning support staff provide corrective reading groups. In Years 10 and 11 learning support staff are responsible for teaching English and mathematics to the lowest attaining groups. In

addition, most pupils with severe learning problems receive some in-class support in the core subjects. Pupils identified as underachievers are withdrawn from lessons to complete an IT course Successmaker, which is designed to encourage achievement in literacy and numeracy. Pupils are also withdrawn for short periods to complete courses on spelling and in social skills. The learning support staff also runs the Youth Award Scheme in Key Stage 4 with help from other curriculum teachers. Setting and smaller teaching groups in subjects such as mathematics and science benefit the progress of SEN pupils.

30.The school allocates 24.75 hours per week to the teaching of the curriculum, which is just below the 25 hours recommended by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). Lessons are mostly 60 minutes in length. The time allocated to the subjects of the curriculum is in most cases adequate, but slightly insufficient time is given to teaching double science in Key Stage 4. The timetable is spread over a two-week period to allow flexibility in the allocation of curriculum time and this appears to work satisfactorily. The setting arrangements are beneficial to pupils of all levels of attainment but in subjects where setting is not possible there is insufficient attention given to the needs of pupils at both ends of the attainment spectrum.

31.There are satisfactory schemes of work in all subjects designed to ensure continuity and progression between key stages. There is still some variation in quality, however, and some gaps in the programmes of study, for example in drama. Apart from the provision for boys and girls in PE in Key Stage 3, boys and girls have equal access to all aspects of the school curriculum.

32.Extracurricular activities form an important part of the school's enrichment programme. These include sport, art and music and are well supported. Many staff give freely of their time to homework and revision clubs, all of which contribute to the efforts being made to raise standards but insufficient numbers of pupils take advantage of the opportunities. There are many very valuable curricular visits and field trips in RE, languages, biology and PE. The RE department also makes good use of local community links.

33.Whole-school assessment procedures are good and much improved since the last inspection. In Key Stage 3 the school uses NFER tests, CATs and Edinburgh reading tests to judge base-line standards. These, together with Key Stage 2 SATs results, are used to identify different levels of attainment and to set targets for the school and individual pupils. In Key Stage 4, the school assesses all pupils using YELLIS. As a result of this cumulative assessment data, each pupil in Year 10 and 11 has a GCSE target grade in every subject This makes it possible to analyse results for value added and present them in a way which teachers can interpret quickly and accurately. For example, the relative points scores for pupils who entered the school in 1996 and took end of Key Stage 3 SATs in 1999 are used to measure the amount of progress pupils have made over time. The figures are used to show individual performance as well as the performance of the year as a whole. The progress which pupils are making towards their targets is reviewed through personal meetings with tutors each term. If necessary, targets are revised. The system is tightly focused and provides good academic support that should start to be reflected in future examination results.

34.Within individual subjects the policies for assessment are mostly good. The implementation of the policies is satisfactory overall, but good in mathematics and science and unsatisfactory in DT. Most marking is carried out regularly and linked with increasing frequency directly to the pupils' target grades. This is particularly so in Key Stage 4, where much of the marking gives pupils a very clear indication of their current level of attainment and likely level of achievement. The teachers' comments that accompany much of the marking are positive and constructive. Good central and individual subject records are kept and used effectively in keeping pupils and parents up to date. Parents and pupils are well informed as to the meaning of the grades and levels awarded.

### **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

35.The school's provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Very little time is given for reflection or consideration of the sort of questions that should give rise to spiritual awareness. Schemes of work do not refer to how different subjects might raise pupils' spiritual awareness, and many opportunities are missed in lessons. Only in art is there any evidence that the work evokes a sense of inner meaning and wonder. Here the use of colour to represent mood and an awareness of the symbolic significance of cultural icons stimulates spiritual awareness. In few other subjects are opportunities taken to evoke a sense of awe and wonder, although the encouragement to pupils to consider the significance and reality of the sky goes some way. Individual pupils evoke for themselves a spiritual response to poetry and music, but the school provides little stimulus. Assemblies during the inspection were devoid of spiritual content and the pupils' belief systems and spiritual values derive little from anything they get at school. The school makes scant use of resources such as local clergy in assemblies to provide a spiritual context and there is little or no use made of symbolism. There is no provision for collective worship.

36.The provision for pupil's moral development is good. The school has a well-developed moral code and encourages pupils to evaluate choices as right or wrong. It works hard to ensure that pupils know the difference between good and poor behaviour. The school also encourages pupils to see the moral consequences of environmental issues and to recognise the importance of the public conscience. Matters of public concern such as drugs and pollution, therefore, are seen as being of relevance to everyone. Pupils are helped to see and understand the need for rules and that irksome limitations on a person's personal freedom have to be accepted sometimes for the benefit of all. Moral themes are explored and explained well in the context of literature, the humanities and business ethics. The result is a positive ethos that benefits the whole school community.

37.The school makes good provision for social development. In Year 7 pupils are taken on visits to enable groups to bond and new friendships to develop. In many classes, pupils work harmoniously in groups and cooperate well. In art, collaborative projects have produced some spectacular results, for example a series of Aztec calendars. In PE team sports are encouraged and the belief in the team as a social entity rather than one in which pupils simply show individual prowess. Pupils have opportunities to develop social confidence. Year 7 pupils return to their primaries to speak with Year 6 pupils about the school and how they might prepare for an easy transfer. Year 8 pupils help Year 7 pupils settle in to their new school environment. Sixth formers help in classrooms and Year 11 pupils assist with hearing Year 7 pupils read. The school council provides occasional opportunities for pupils to speak on behalf of other pupils and to learn the art of negotiating with others, and the sixth form committee takes responsibility for organising the social life of other students. Of particular note is the help which pupils give in the careers centre and the learning resource centre. However, opportunities are missed. For example, pupils were given no opportunities to participate in assemblies during the inspection.

38.The school makes satisfactory provision for developing pupils' cultural awareness, their own and that of others. The personal development of pupils is one of the school's aims. References to culture are made in assemblies and in lessons. Through English, history, art, and music for example, pupils learn about past and present cultures which impinge on their own lives. Visits to Bath and Bristol bring their ancient and more recent cultural heritage to life. They also learn about distant cultures. They study life in Japanese cities and this is complemented with work on Japanese art forms. In art, they design African and other masks on the basis of their research into the cultural background from which they emerge. The masks are of sufficient merit to be deemed worthy of display in the Millennium Dome. The relatively few pupils of non-English origin are welcomed and valued for the cultural diversity they bring to the school.

## **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

39. The school provides very effective support and advice for all of its pupils. Heads of year and their efficient teams of tutors monitor the academic and personal development of pupils thoroughly. The setting of targets for Key Stage 4 pupils has been very successful and the extension of this to Key Stage 3 is now in its early stages. Pupils can meet with their tutors to discuss their academic progress and any personal matters that concern them. The up-to-date and comprehensive record system which teachers keep is important in ensuring the success of this activity. These new arrangements for regular individual interviews with tutors are a very positive move towards helping pupils fulfil their potential. Parents and pupils are pleased with the positive effects of this initiative.

40. Pupils with SEN are particularly well catered for by their teachers and support assistants. Staff are aware of pupils' IEPs and of those pupils who need most help. As a result, these pupils make good progress. The school also makes good use of its local agencies on behalf of the pupils. The educational welfare officer has been successful in helping to reduce absence and the careers advisor has been particularly helpful with many aspects of careers education.

41. The school's measures for promoting good behaviour and discipline are generally effective. The Classroom Behaviour Plan with its emphasis on choice has been successfully refined and is respected by pupils as a fair means of calming down potentially difficult situations. Likewise, the positive approach of the school and the departments to the celebration of effort and attainment of targets through awards is good practice. The school keeps detailed records of all incidents of bad behaviour and analyses them thoroughly in an attempt to eliminate further incidents.

42. The school has sound systems for maintaining attendance at a satisfactory level and reducing unauthorised absence. Staff know when to close registers and latecomers know precisely what to do when they arrive at school. Parents understand the need to let the school know the reason for a child's absence and the school has adequate systems for dealing with situations that are a cause of concern. However, the school's registration procedures for the sixth form are unsatisfactory and should be reviewed urgently as there is no absolute check on which students are in school at any one time. Recording absence and lateness in the sixth form is difficult because of the consortium and the need for pupils to move between sites during the school day. This makes it even more important to have a secure system.

43. Child protection measures are exemplary and all staff and pupils are aware of them. A governor is appropriately linked to the school's named person. The sensitive but effective PSHE programme helps pupils to understand the implications of decisions they make about their sexual life and what aspects to consider in looking after their health. They are encouraged to discuss issues concerned with drug abuse and to see it as a moral issue as well as a health and social issue.

44. The health and safety of pupils is a high priority for the school and it is trying to eliminate the potential risks associated with parts of the accommodation, especially in DT. First-aid provision is adequate and sick pupils are looked after. Electrical appliances are checked and fire practices are carried out termly. Fire extinguishers are in place, but parts of the school lack fire exit signs and some doors are locked without giving a clear indication.

45. Support and guidance are, as reported at the time of the last inspection, a strength of the school. This is recognised by the pupils, their parents and the wider community of Yate. Some very challenging pupils are members of the school community and they bring with them complex problems. The school handles the difficult task of dealing with them sensitively and effectively.

## **Partnership with parents and the community**

46. The information provided by the school for parents is good. Parents receive a regular newsletter from the school as well as a very informative newspaper produced by the pupils. The parents, teachers and friends association arranges social activities from time to time and raises money for the school. The school is very welcoming, and teachers deal swiftly with concerns raised by parents. Pupils' personal organisers provide a good medium for dialogue between home and school and are conscientiously checked by teachers. Regular parents' consultation evenings are held in order to discuss their children's progress and a good proportion of parents attend. School reports provide useful information on a regular basis and form the basis of discussion between parents and teachers. Teachers' comments vary in usefulness, however, and do not always specify what a pupil needs to do in order to improve. Some reports tend to fulsome praise rather than identifying weaknesses and suggesting remedies, though they give a good profile of pupils' attitudes and behaviour. For example, some of the reports in science and art are too generalised and did not focus on standards, while reports in English are well structured and informative.

47. Parents are happy with the information they receive and feel well informed about the school and their children's progress. The prospectus conforms to requirements. The Governors' annual report to parents, however, is deficient in a number of ways. It does not mention governors' terms of office, or refer to the previous action plan.

48. The school recognises that parental involvement with their children's learning is limited and that the expectations of many are not high enough. Staff are aware that parents cannot always give sufficient time and so they are proactive in trying to promote parental involvement and in providing for pupils who lack the necessary home support. The success of this programme is shown by a significant improvement in attendance at parents' evenings and in the number of parents who come into the school to discuss their children's progress. The school has built a level of trust between home and school and there is a growing body of parents who do indeed give their children every support.

49. The links between the school and its community are strong. The school receives good support from the statutory agencies such as the school nurse and the educational welfare officer, especially where their services are focused on children with special problems. The school's careers service has built good links and partnerships with local industry and commerce that both help pupils to find jobs when they leave and to find work placements. The success of this latter programme is shown by the positive changes in attitudes that are induced in Year 10 pupils as a result of their work experience. Links with other schools are very good. The collaboration with primary schools at a professional level within the cluster, the use of facilities by them and the transfer arrangements from Year 6 to Year 7 are a model of good practice. The consortium provides a richer sixth form curriculum than would otherwise have been the case. Team and other competitive sports between schools helps pupils to foster pride in their own school and good relations with pupils of other schools.

50. The school makes good use of the resources of both the local and the wider community. There is a good programme of educational visits to places of interest and to cultural venues such as the Bristol Old Vic. The school's football team has toured the Boston area of the USA and other visits abroad have included Barcelona, Normandy and the Belgian battlefields. There is a good range of clubs and extracurricular activities and an activity week in summer time that introduces pupils to a variety of sports, which they might otherwise never sample. The school makes a significant contribution to the community through renting its facilities to sports and other organisations and a local church. It puts on art exhibitions that attract considerable numbers of visitors and to which almost every pupil in the school contributes. Next year, contributions from the school will be evident in the Millennium Dome. Overall, these links with the community make a significant impact on pupils' education by providing additional funds to procure resources, by widening pupils' horizons and by enhancing pupils' attitudes and self esteem.

## **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

### **Leadership and management**

51.The school has well considered-aims and a well-expressed mission statement. These are supported by a commitment to provide pupils with a high quality, balanced educational experience, based on appropriate teaching approaches. The school also undertakes to promote the development of self-esteem among pupils, especially through the way it values them. The school is moving in the right direction to accomplish these aims, especially as it is much involved with the High Reliability Schools Project.

52.The school has a good ethos. It is orderly, promotes equality of opportunity for all pupils, and the Headteacher and staff are striving to raise standards of attainment. The Headteacher provides very good leadership. He has a clear vision for the school. This revolves around the raising of standards of attainment and improving the quality of teaching. He sees the value of critically analysing data available in the school. The Headteacher has succeeded in involving the staff closely in the initiatives that have been set in train. He is well supported by the deputy Headteachers and senior teachers who make up the senior management team. The style of management is supportive and open. It encourages other staff to share ideas and practice, and contributes to the school's improvement. Staff are aware, however, that they have much to do if they are to achieve their target of raising standards significantly.

53.The management structure consists of the Headteacher, deputies, senior teachers, heads of faculties and heads of year. Changes at senior management level were made at the beginning of this academic year. The full implications of the change have not yet been evaluated, but the Headteacher is aware that a further review will be necessary. The senior management team works well together and those involved have agreed their areas of responsibility. However, much depends on the very good informal relationships that exist among them. Job descriptions are generic and not specific to individual post holders; one consequence of which is some overlap in responsibilities. The intended formulation of personal job descriptions should help to clarify responsibilities and ensure clear lines of accountability. It should also help to develop a more purposeful system of monitoring and evaluation. For example, the deputy Headteacher responsible for finance is in a good position to use his educational experience to monitor and evaluate the overall quality of spending in a structured way rather than simply performing the mechanistic tasks of allocating finance and overseeing the school's financial systems.

54.The governing body has all the appropriate policies and fulfils most of their statutory responsibilities. Exceptions to this include the omissions in their annual report to parents and the failure to provide a daily act of collective worship. The governing body has less than the designated number of governors and during last year six new governors were appointed. On occasions, meetings during the past year have been cancelled because too few governors attended. For example a finance and resources committee was cancelled because only one member arrived. As a result, the governors have not been providing the continuity in strategic leadership that is expected. They are well serviced by the Headteacher who provides them with information about the school and a range of data. However, few of them are able to visit the school during the day and do little to check on the school's progress. Although a governor occasionally observes classes, this is not part of a structured programme and no records of the visit are kept. The Headteacher and new Chair of Governors are well aware of previous shortcomings and new codes of practice have been drawn up. These should improve the contribution that governors make to the school's progress.

55.The school strategic plan has been produced mainly by the senior management team. The priorities are appropriate, the strategies to be used are set out in detail, and the criteria by which success is to be measured are clear. It is known to staff, who see it as a framework for action. Appropriate emphasis is placed on raising standards, especially literacy skills, and the targets set for pupils' performance are challenging. Priorities have a named individual responsible for their implementation and, where appropriate, costings. The whole-school plan is supported by good departmental plans. All have targets, strategies for implementation, in-service requirements, costs and performance indicators. Together, these plans provide a good framework for action.

56.The school has a structure for monitoring and evaluating its performance. The systems it has in place for analysing the attainment of pupils on entry and their subsequent performance in public examinations are very good. The school produces some very high quality data that forms the basis of discussion at senior management

level and between senior managers and heads of faculties. Faculty staff are also fully aware of the elements of the information which are relevant to them, though they do not always use it effectively. The Headteacher and senior managers visit lessons in their capacity as the critical friend of the different subjects. Heads of faculty also visit on occasions. However, the system currently lacks rigour and is not programmed to ensure that practice is improved significantly as a result of the visits. It is not precise enough or rigorous enough to identify the key areas that, if tackled, could make a difference to pupils' performance. The work of heads of year is more effective in monitoring pupils' behaviour and the work of their tutors.

57.The management of SEN is good. The school has a significant number of pupils on the special needs register and over 53 pupils have statements of special need. The school conforms to the national Code of Practice and the arrangements for identifying and supporting pupils are good. A member of the governing body links with the SEN coordinator and has a sound understanding of the school's arrangements. The special needs support staff are well managed and provide effective support in class. The department's policy documents are appropriate. The school properly spends most of the SEN funds on staffing. The school manages links with outside agencies effectively and statutory requirements for the review of pupils are met.

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

58.The school has sufficient qualified teachers to meet the demands of nearly all the subjects of the curriculum. The overall provision of teachers is generous. The time teachers spend in lessons is low by national standards at 74 per cent, and the pupil to teacher ratio is comparatively low at 16:1. Teachers generally teach within their own specialisms and this contributes to the generally good teaching. Non-specialist teaching takes place in geography and, to a lesser extent, English and modern foreign languages but, even in these subjects, the pupils are not disadvantaged.

59.Some eight per cent of the teachers are in their first year in the school. However, some 43 per cent of the teachers have over 20 years of teaching experience and a considerable proportion of the more experienced and senior staff have spent much of their teaching careers in this school. In this situation the school has been right to give considerable importance to staff development, and the ongoing training of teachers. This is a policy that needs to be continued and even extended. The staffing structure of the school has recently been modified in several important respects at a senior level and a number of acting posts have been introduced. The school is rightly in the process of creating the detailed job descriptions of some of these posts and reviewing its staffing structure further.

60.The school is well served by the high quality and commitment of its non-teaching staff who make a major contribution to the work of the school. There is too little technician support available in science and DT and also in art, where a teacher is timetabled to prepare clay for the pupils' work.

61.Staff development is managed well and has had some positive effects on the attainment of the pupils, particularly in art, geography, and PE. In-service training (INSET) is closely related to the school's development plan, but some funding is also available for training for the individual needs of teachers. The induction of new staff is outstanding. Newly appointed teachers are supported well by their academic and pastoral mentors and also by the staff in general. They receive early notice of their timetables, visit the school before they join and attend good training inside the school and also that provided by the local education authority (LEA). The recently introduced arrangements for the review of staff development are very promising. They seem likely to provide both the school and the staff with excellent information about their training requirements. In this area the school has improved greatly since the last inspection.

62.Resources for learning have improved since the last inspection but there are still deficiencies in the stock and quality of books and equipment in several subjects. Resources are good in PE, where generous capitation has been wisely spent, and in English, where a well-used book stock enables pupils, even in Key Stage 3, to take home the books they are studying in class. Provision of books and materials for class use and display is particularly good in RE. Book stocks are adequate in modern foreign languages, mathematics and history, but inadequate in art, geography, science and technology, the last of which has a limited range of equipment. The school has increased its provision for ICT and this is now more in line with requirements, though the ratio of

computers to pupils remains below the national average. Access to computers is generally satisfactory for most subjects through a booking system, but in science, art and RE, access and use are limited. The unreliability of the network sometimes hinders effective use. Special needs pupils have too limited access to computers.

63.Science and music have shortages. The supply of books for science is inadequate. There are no textbooks that pupils can take home, even in Key Stage 4, and the sixth form provide their own textbooks. There is a lack of logging equipment, balances, and stools in the laboratories. The supply of books and equipment for music is unsatisfactory, with weaknesses in the provision of tuned and untuned instruments.

64.The learning resources centre is attractive and well used, with a good layout that appropriately separates the computer area from the library. The library has a good stock of junior and senior fiction and all pupils have access to it during and after the school day. Much of the old stock referred to in the previous report has been removed and some good replacements bought. Provision of subject specific books is adequate in several areas, but not in science, music, art, mathematics and geography. There are no daily newspapers or serious journals and no magazines in the foreign languages that are being studied. During the long-term absence of the head of learning resources the centre is being efficiently managed by an acting manager, who works with the head of English.

65.The school has adequate accommodation. It is spread out on a large site and is made up of a two storey block and a number of single storey sections. The grounds around the school building are well kept and attractive. The external areas of the school buildings have been refurbished, but the roofing remains a problem. The school is following a redecoration programme to improve the working environment in classrooms. Certain areas have been identified as having particular problems. Of major concern is the sixth form block, which is in a poor state of repair and the safety issues related to the DT areas.

66.The school has adequate teaching space. Some subject rooms, including the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are grouped into specific areas and have good accommodation, but history and geography continue to use a variety of rooms. DT is split and in different parts of the building and continues to be a concern, as it was in the last inspection. Specialist accommodation is good in science and PE but poor in art. Art rooms, like those for DT, do not provide effective teaching areas. Accommodation for ICT is good and the learning resource centre provides a good working environment.

67.Although additional signs have been recently installed in order to assist movement around the building, access into, out of and around the building is still difficult. It is often unclear which are exit and entry doors. The quantity and standard of furniture in some areas are unsatisfactory. Floors are wearing badly in some rooms and corridors and court markings in the sports hall are poor. Showers in the sports hall are in poor condition and seldom used.

### **The efficiency of the school**

68.The school appears generously funded on the basis of its income of £2,532 per pupil. However, a substantial number (53) of pupils have with statements of special need and the income from lettings and donations (£43,000) reflects a community use and little profit to the school. In 1998/99 the school was fortunate to have a carry forward of some £113,000. The budget for that year was set at a deficit of £86,000, absorbing much of the previous year's carry forward and leaving £27,000 to carry forward into the 1999/2000 budget. Prudently, the school has managed to keep the budget within the funds available for the current year. This is despite some serious problems. The fabric of the buildings is generally poor and costly to maintain. The accommodation is energy inefficient and the difficulties of giving subjects adjoining teaching spaces also leads to inefficiencies. The Headteacher has a plan to make the best of a poor situation but there seems little likelihood of funds being available to finance the plan.

69.The governors were not sufficiently engaged in the budgeting process last year, although the recently elected Chair of Governors is addressing this. Governors have given insufficient consideration to determining whether or not the educational outcomes planned have been achieved. They have not been well served by the computer based accounting system, which is over-complicated. It does not provide governors with adequate information

in summary form for them to monitor the budget and exercise proper control over the process. The Headteacher and finance officer have been faced with considerable manual efforts to make sense of the data available. As a result, the governors' financial planning and monitoring have been unsatisfactory.

70.The deployment of teaching and support staff is satisfactory, though some minor inefficiencies have resulted from specific situations, as in art. Education support staff contribute effectively to pupils' progress, and especially to the progress of pupils with SEN. Departments use what are sometimes limited resources well to support teaching and learning. Good use is made of available accommodation. The learning resource centre is generally well stocked, though not for all departments, and provides an attractive environment in which pupils can study. Time is mostly well used in lessons, though some pupils are regularly late. The curriculum is broad and balanced and the school timetable allows flexibility. The grouping arrangements for pupils have been carefully considered and support teaching and learning well. The money provided for SEN is spent appropriately. The sixth form consortium provides a broader curriculum than would be otherwise possible, though it has not been properly costed. The school has a substantial level of external lettings that raise money without obviously disturbing the work of the school. The school's administration operates smoothly.

71.The day-to-day control of finances is good. The finance officer makes an invaluable contribution to the school, keeping good records and operating simple yet strict financial procedures. Cash is handled well and securely. All the recommendations of the November 1997 audit have been complied with, where still relevant. The finance officer has mastered most of the vagaries of the accounting systems and can produce detailed information at will. However, providing summary information in a form useful to the school entails a great deal of unnecessary work on her part. Budget holders get good information on their spend and commitments against budget and thus can monitor expenditure well.

72.It is evident that there are shortcomings in the levels of attainment pupils reach and the examination results they achieve. It is also clear that a minority of pupils have a poor attitude to study and on occasions adversely affect other pupils' learning. However, given the sound progress that most pupils make, the good teaching, the school's positive ethos, the marked progress the school has made in its assessment systems and ability to monitor pupils' performance, and the improvements since the last report, the school provides sound value for money.

## **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

### **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

#### **76. English**

73. In the 1999 national tests taken by pupils at the end of Key Stage 3, results were below the national average for all maintained schools. They were also well below the average in comparison with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. Over the past four years results have remained steady, with 53 per cent of pupils reaching Level 5 or above in 1999, 1998 and 1996. The 1997 figure of 51.7 per cent showed only slight variation. Attainment nationally at Level 5 and above rose to 65 per cent in 1998 but the school's results did not follow that trend. The gap between school and national attainment has, therefore, widened in the last two years. Teachers' assessments were in line with the results pupils achieved in the tests at Level 5 or above, but there has been discrepancy each year between the teacher assessment of pupils' attainment at Level 6 and the test results. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher level has been consistently below the national average and was well below in 1997 and 1998. In 1999, results at this level improved, with 22 per cent of pupils reaching Level 6 in comparison with the national figure of 35 per cent. Boys' results are below the national average for boys, and those of the girls are well below the national average for girls.

74. In GCSE, the percentage of pupils gaining grades A\*-C in English (41 per cent) is below the national average of 53 per cent and also the average for similar schools. The trend over the past four years has been for results to fluctuate only slightly. However, 1998 was a better year, with the proportion of A\*-C grades only four per cent below the national figure. In 1999, the difference extended to 12 per cent. In English literature, pupils achieved 38 per cent A\*-C grades against a national figure of 62 per cent. This represents a decline from the 1998 results, when 56 per cent of pupils attained grades A\*-C against the national figure of 58 per cent. However, a notable feature of the English literature results was the very high number of A\* and A grades obtained, a success rate above that of any other GCSE subject in the school. Well over half the A\*-C grades obtained were A\* or A.

75. The percentage pass rate (89 per cent) at A level in English literature in 1999 was close to the national average (94 per cent). In 1999, only one of the nine candidates gained a higher grade, B. In 1998 the pass rate was 93 per cent and 28 per cent of candidates obtained grades A-B.

76. Inspection shows that by the end of Key Stage 3 attainment overall remains below the national average, though the range of attainment is wide. This is particularly evident in writing. A minority of pupils write letters and reports, poems, stories and responses to books they are studying in class, to a satisfactory level. Their work includes some persuasive letters, poems on a variety of subjects, film reviews and imaginative and witty travel writing. Much of the work in Key Stage 3, however, displays not only inability to sustain and extend a piece of writing but also a range of technical errors well below Level 4, a reflection of the low level of attainment of pupils on entry. Difficulties with spelling, punctuation and use of capital letters are frequent. By the end of Key Stage 4, many pupils have still not overcome these difficulties and attainment remains below average, though there is a wide range of attainment. Pupils produce some good course work, including well-researched and well-argued essays on the texts, which reflect the high standards achieved in literature by a number of students in the examination last year. Many of the lower-attaining pupils work hard and produce writing which shows thought and sensitivity. A portrait of his grandfather written by one pupil was a striking example of this. Across the key stage as a whole, technical accuracy, presentation and range vary considerably and approximately half the cohort is working at the level of Grade D or below. In the sixth form most students meet the writing requirements of the syllabus, developing a critical vocabulary and improved analytical skills as they proceed through the course.

77. Reading attainment in general is low when pupils enter the school. Satisfactory progress is made in reading as pupils encounter a variety of texts in Key Stage 3; they read short stories, novels and poems in class and in Year 9 study a Shakespeare play. However, many pupils have limited vocabulary and reading experience and lack the skills to interpret and infer. Attainment remains below average despite the high borrowing rate in the library. In Key Stage 4, despite a good reading programme for GCSE, there is not enough background reading. Even so, students who choose to study literature at A level cope well with more advanced texts.

78. Pupils' speaking skills are under-developed. They talk freely in small group work and many, though not all, are ready to answer questions in class. Most participate in group reading of plays, including Shakespeare, in lessons. However, pupils at the end of the key stage show little inclination to present views or ideas, feedback to the whole class from group or individual research, give prepared readings, or become involved in lively argument or sustained discussion. During the inspection, pupils did not voice opinions in class confidently or challenge the views of others.

79. Pupils' rate of progress is variable. The majority of pupils enter the school with attainment below the national average. Comparisons of attainment at ages 11 and 14 show that the majority have made satisfactory progress, though not enough to bring them to the average national level at the end of either key stage. Through Key Stage 4, progress is more consistently satisfactory and on occasions good. Pupils are well served by the setting arrangements, which allows the pace of learning to be matched to pupils' prior attainment. Pupils improve the quality of their writing, their ability to research and their confidence in presenting an argument. Their reading also improves. The progress is reflected in the standards achieved in literature in the GCSE examinations, especially in 1998. Lower-attaining pupils and those with SEN make at least satisfactory and often good progress. Expectations of SEN pupils are high, they have access to the full English curriculum and teachers expect to enter them for both English examinations. Progress is closely related to the quality and style of the teaching. In Key Stage 4, a class of pupils with SEN made excellent progress in reading 'A Taste of Honey' under the enthusiastic direction of a teacher who developed their confidence and understanding skilfully. Students in the sixth form, drawn mostly from the higher-attaining pupils at Key Stage 4, make satisfactory progress, particularly in their ability to read prescribed texts and extract and present relevant information.

80. Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally satisfactory. Most pupils have good relationships with teachers and one another. Behaviour is mostly good. More noticeable was some lack of initiative and confidence. During the inspection, few pupils were willing to speak up for themselves or take a lead. When teaching is stimulating and lesson content interesting, pupils react well and enjoy their work. Sixth form students are committed and responsive.

81. Teaching is satisfactory or better in almost every lesson and in half it is good. Overall, it is good in Key Stage 4 and good lessons were seen in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form, where it is satisfactory. English teachers are firm but friendly in their approach to pupils. They establish a good atmosphere for learning in their classrooms and seek to share their enthusiasm with pupils. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, a non-specialist used her interest and enthusiasm to provide a lively introduction and approach. In another lesson, the teacher's enthusiasm for the text, 'The Taste of Honey', did much to engage the interest of the pupils. Teachers' planning is usually sound. They use well-designed worksheets sensibly and rightly do not place too much reliance on photocopied commercial material. On occasions, simple games are devised to reinforce understanding, as in a lesson on the parts of speech. Despite a good departmental policy, their approach to marking is inconsistent. Not all teachers ensure that pupils submit work regularly enough or mark the work regularly with the constructive comments the policy requires. The detailed following through of recommendations and suggestions for improvement leads to a dialogue between pupils and staff. There is some excellent marking, but in some books comments are infrequent, briefly summative or insufficiently diagnostic. Teachers set homework according to the timetable and it is usually appropriate and helpful to the pupils.

82. The English curriculum meets statutory requirements and the department seeks to ensure access for pupils of all levels of attainment. Many pupils have the opportunity to enter for GCSE English literature, for example. Work in English contributes to pupils' cultural development and their awareness of moral issues. Book weeks, poem for the day, a pupils' newspaper and occasional anthologies of original writing combine with the good choice and planned use of books to develop pupils' language skills and their interest in literature. The faculty is well led. Records are carefully kept and pupils' progress systematically charted, though there is not enough monitoring of marking and assessment. The departmental handbook and schemes of work provide a good framework within which teachers can develop their own ideas and plans. Induction for new teachers is excellent and there is also good support for several teachers from other departments who contribute to English teaching. Appropriate sharing of responsibilities and good working relationships are evident in a department which is making a significant contribution to the life and work of the school.

83. Pupils' language skills are below average on entry and their unsatisfactory levels of literacy inhibit progress in many subjects, particularly in Key Stage 3. Although many pupils improve their skills steadily, and most pupils with SEN make sound progress in this key stage, their understanding and use of language continue to be factors in under-achievement in a number of areas. Only in history and RE were reading standards found satisfactory. Writing is weak in modern foreign languages, science, history, geography, music and art. However, good efforts to develop vocabulary are being made in subject areas. Key words are displayed and emphasised in several subjects, including science, RE, music, geography and PE. The history department is planning a focus on the development of literacy and the English curriculum now includes a literacy hour in Year 7 which builds on the work of the Literacy Strategy in primary schools. Oral skills are satisfactory in several subjects, but in most they do not yet contribute enough to pupils' learning, confidence and progress. Pupils do not have a regular forum for discussion. The school council, for example, meets infrequently. During the inspection, pupils rarely took an active part in assemblies, where their role is mainly that of listener and not speaker, reader or presenter.

### **Mathematics**

84. In the end of Key Stage 3 national tests in 1999, the proportion of pupils who attained Level 5 or above, or Level 6 or above, was well below the national average for all maintained schools. Teachers' end of key stage assessments were in line with test results. Pupils' performance was also well below that of similar schools. Over the years 1996 to 1999 results have fluctuated but the proportion decreased from 55 per cent to 44 per cent at Level 5 or above and from 25 per cent to 20 per cent at Level 6 or above between 1998 and 1999. Over the past three years girls performed less well than boys but the difference is becoming much less significant.

85. In 1999 at GCSE pupils attained well below the national average for all schools (22 per cent compared to 48 per cent), a decline from previous years, and also for similar schools. Results in the 1999 GCSE examinations generally followed expectations predicted by YELLIS and the entry CAT profile for that year group. The trend has been for results to be below the national average. Between 1998 and 1999 the proportion of girls attaining A\*-C grades decreased significantly from 36 per cent to 18 per cent that of boys increased slightly from 23 per cent to 25 per cent.

86. In A level examinations in 1999 six boys and three girls attained A-E grades, with one pupil attaining an A grade. This was similar to 1998 for A-E grades when 10 candidates obtained A-E grades but three pupils attained A-B grades. These results are good in light of the school's results at GCSE, but the small entry makes comparison with national figures inappropriate. However, the school's aggregated figures for the past three years are significantly higher than comparable national figures for grades A-E, though lower than those for the highest grades.

87. The inspection revealed that by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils attain below the national average, the result of improving teaching. By the end of Key Stage 3 standards of numeracy are generally unsatisfactory in all but the highest-attaining set. In one Year 9 lesson a pupil could not subtract 67 from 90 mentally. Work in a high-attaining set in year 9, however, on Pythagorean spirals showed good understanding of basic trigonometry. Standards of numeracy are poor generally at the end of Key Stage 4. The highest attainers know their multiplication tables and number bonds and this helps them attain well in the other attainment targets. They can calculate angles in a quadrilateral and use data handling readily. Pupils' attainment in using and applying mathematics is generally unsatisfactory, though some very good displays were seen on classroom walls of investigations at both key stages. Pupils use calculators appropriately and generally accurately. Standards of presentation are generally satisfactory and often good in higher attaining sets. By the end of A level pupils reach good standards. They have good analytical skills and can model real world situations, such as when they effectively calculated relative velocities in applied mathematics lessons. Sixth form students make effective use of graphical calculators. For example, in a Year 13 class investigating transformations of conic sections, pupils saw the effect of their transformations instantaneously and this rapidly increased their understanding of the topic.

88. Pupils make good progress across Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Boys and girls make similar gains. Progress in lessons generally follows the quality of the teaching at both key stages. Teaching has improved since the

previous inspection but the impact on general standards has not been seen yet in public examinations and tests. The school believes that the current Year 11 will achieve much better results in the GCSE examinations. Their work in class and their course work support this view. Pupils generally make good progress in all attainment targets but for those with poor numeracy skills this progress is less marked in areas of the curriculum involving number. During Key Stage 3 pupils develop the basic skills of algebra and learn to model situations using that notation. In Key Stage 4 pupils develop investigation techniques and apply trial and error methods to solve certain problems. In the sixth form pupils make good progress. They develop their analytical skills and learn to manipulate more complex algebraic expressions. They are challenged more intellectually when modelling in applied mathematics. Pupils with SEN generally make sound progress. They improve their basic numeracy in terms of recognising patterns by using number squares to help make simple calculations and by playing well thought out games such as square bingo.

89. Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally positive. Most enjoy mathematics lessons and are prepared to try to do their best in them. They are usually pleased to go to the whiteboard to explain their understanding of the subject. They enjoy working in groups as in an effective Year 9 class of low attainers who set up shops and priced their items for sale before calculating a 10 per cent discount for their customers from other groups. They enjoy dealing with real world mathematical problems. They work enthusiastically on their investigations and like displaying their work on classroom walls. Pupils enjoy using ICT and are highly motivated when using it to solve mathematical problems. Generally they have very good relationships with their teachers. Occasionally their interest flags towards the end of the hour-long lessons but they invariably respond well to firm but fair discipline. Sixth form pupils behave as the young adults they are. They really enjoy the intellectual challenges of the subject.

90. The majority of teaching at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is good and in the sixth form teaching is very good. This is a major improvement on the previous inspection, though the impact of this improvement has not yet been seen in public test and examination results. Lessons are well prepared and teachers generally know their subject matter well. They know the areas that cause difficulties for pupils and usually have strategies to help get over the problems. They set the pace of lessons well from the start by having quick mental tests and moving speedily from task to task, keeping all pupils alert. They use resources well. Teachers use ICT well on occasions. It was used very successfully in a lower attaining Year 8 lesson, for example, to aid pupils estimate square roots very quickly and to improve their skill in using spreadsheets. Nevertheless, teachers should make more use of ICT. In the best teaching, teachers review what has been taught in order to consolidate learning. In a successful Year 13 lesson, the teacher recapped on Newton's Second Law before encouraging the class to apply it to some complex situations. The teacher neatly summed up the key points of the general method of solving such problems, using effective questioning to probe the students' understanding of the method. Teachers use homework effectively to complement class learning. They also use methods akin to the national numeracy strategy to help develop skills in basic numeracy. As a result, lessons contain a short, sharp test on mental arithmetic. This is very good practice. Most teaching is traditional, though the overhead projector was used to help pupils visualise problems in statistics more clearly. To make good lessons very good teachers should seek to introduce more colour into lessons. The tearing up of a 'real' £10 note to illustrate the fraction, one half, had a memorable effect on Year 9 pupils! Teachers generally keep a good pace in lessons and they vary activities appropriately. They sensibly discourage general use of calculators. Teachers know their pupils well and are very sensitive to their individual needs. This is particularly the case in classes with large numbers of pupils with SEN. Teachers use praise and awards sensibly and sensitively. Assessment is used well to plan further learning.

91. The faculty is well led by a comparatively new head of faculty. He is tactful in his approach, but has effectively instituted a lot of change in the department in a short space of time. The faculty development plan ties in well with the overall school plan. A start has been made on rewriting schemes of work; informal monitoring of teaching has been started and the department has a good approach to assessment. There is some use of ICT in mathematics lessons at both key stages but there is a need to develop the general use of this resource as a general tool. The mathematics staff is dedicated to the task of helping all pupils attain their highest potential and teachers give very freely of their time to this end. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection.

92. Standards of numeracy on entry to the school are generally poor in all but the highest attaining pupils. The school is sensibly adopting strategies in line with the National Numeracy initiative to try to raise standards. Pupils use their knowledge of mathematics effectively in several curriculum areas. These include plotting loci of cam followers in the engineering option of design and technology, manipulating formulae in science and geography, plotting graphs in science and geography and the general use of data handling techniques in GNVQ courses.

## Science

93. In the national tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 the percentage of pupils gaining Level 5 and above, and Level 6 and above, was below the national average and lower than that achieved in 1998. The results were well below those in schools from similar backgrounds. Teacher assessments were in line with the attainment tests. The trend in the school's results over the period since 1996 has been downward and always below national results. Over the first three years of that period the performance of girls was significantly lower than that of boys but in 1999 their attainment was similar. Pupils' attainment in science on entry to the school has been consistently below the national average over the period of these comparisons.

94. In GCSE examinations the percentage of pupils gaining A\*-C grades was well below the national average in all schools and in similar schools in 1999. The results were disappointing but were largely in line with expectations predicted on the basis of YELLIS analysis of pupils' performance at Key Stage 3 and CAT scores gathered on pupils when they enter the school. The school expects that the current Year 11 will attain better in these examinations in the year 2000, and the course work seen supports this view. The trend over the last four years has varied from below to above the national averages. This compares with a steady upward trend in national averages. In 1998 and 1999 the attainment of boys and girls was similar.

95. All pupils taking A levels in the separate sciences achieved A-E pass grades in 1999 but did not reach the highest levels of A-B in any subject. Numbers are too small to make meaningful comparisons with national averages. Over a period of four years the pass rate in all three science subjects has been in excess of 98 per cent.

96. Inspection evidence confirms that standards overall are below the national expectation at the end of Key Stage 3. Performance in some lessons is in line with the national expectation, however. For example, higher-attaining pupils in a Year 9 lesson showed a satisfactory understanding of the concepts involved in chemical reactions. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards generally are below national expectations, the better teaching has not yet taken full effect, but the higher-attaining pupils are achieving standards in lessons and assessments which are in line with those required for A\*-C grades in GCSE. For example, Year 11 pupils can confidently quantify definitions of electrical energy in calculations involving power and energy. The standard of lower-attaining pupils in lessons meets that required for D-E grades. In a Year 11 lower set, for example, pupils showed satisfactory recall and basic understanding of the solar system. In the sixth form all pupils who complete the two-year A level course reach a satisfactory standard. For example, Year 13 pupils studying biology understand the impact which human activity has upon the environmental ecosystems and can illustrate their arguments with appropriate biological examples.

97. The rate at which pupils progress in Key Stage 3 is just satisfactory. Pupils make equal progress across all four aspects of the National Curriculum, including that of scientific investigations. Year 7 pupils learn to apply knowledge of solubility gained from an earlier lesson to an investigation into a hypothetical problem regarding the correct percentage mix of a garden fertiliser. Over a period of several lessons Year 8 pupils show progress from an understanding of one method of extracting a metal from its ore to a knowledge of several methods, and to consideration of how each relates to industrial processes such as electroplating and blast furnaces. In Key Stage 4, progress is satisfactory overall across all aspects of the modular GCSE course, including practical assessments. For example, lower-attaining pupils in Year 11 progress from a simple understanding of series and parallel circuits in Key Stage 3 to quantitative measurements and the calculation of current and voltages in these circuits. Higher-attaining pupils do not progress sufficiently in practical assessment to attain the depth of investigation and inquiry reached by the best pupils in other schools. Lack of competent literacy skills, particularly oral and writing, in many pupils on entry to the school has an adverse effect on progress in science. Good progress is further inhibited by a lack of purpose in a significant minority of pupils. Determined teaching

and an emphasis on keywords and other literacy reinforcements sustain the level of overall progress. In the sixth form pupils make satisfactory progress in each of the three separate sciences, physics, chemistry and biology. For example, in chemistry students increase their understanding of the more demanding A-level work when considering a topic such as ionisation energy.

98. Pupils with SEN make satisfactory progress in lessons, and good progress when they have support in the class. For example, they participated fully with other pupils in a group investigation in one Key Stage 3 lesson and were given extra help by a support assistant to record data and written observations. The setting by prior-attainment of classes after Year 8 further facilitates satisfactory progress of these pupils.

99. The majority of pupils have a satisfactory, and many have a good, attitude to their studies. These pupils take pleasure in succeeding with a task, as demonstrated by lower-attaining pupils in Year 11 who suddenly saw the relationships involved in current flowing in series and parallel circuits. However, there is a sizeable minority, not always the lower attainers, who lack academic motivation and who take any opportunity to engage in noisy and disruptive chatter. Pupils collaborate readily in practical tasks and to share information. Most pupils feel able to approach their teachers when they do not fully understand and, given the opportunity as in a Year 8 lesson on changing materials, they can evaluate their own progress and understanding. In every lesson pupils are keen to respond to teachers' questions but only infrequently do they ask questions. However, when sufficiently stimulated by a topic, pupils of all levels of attainment will do so. For example, a low-attaining group studying the movement of the earth around the sun asked, 'Does the sun also revolve on its own axis? If so, does that make a difference to the heat we get?' However, very few pupils undertake independent reading or supplementary research into science topics. Sixth form students in lessons are interested in their chosen subjects but are content to complete only that work or research which is directly required of them by the teacher.

100. Teaching is satisfactory overall, but good on occasions, at both key stages and in the sixth form. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen but some lacked the sparkle that would make them good. In the best lessons the teachers are enthusiastic and generate interest in their pupils through the inclusion of supplementary, and frequently topical, information. For example, in a lesson on the female reproductive organs, the teacher included information about recent operations in the womb on babies with spina bifida and firsthand information from a pupil who was herself a blue baby. All the teachers are very committed to raising standards and the attainment of pupils. The assessment of pupils' attainment is carried out regularly in Key Stages 3 and 4 and is used subsequently to set targets for pupils. Marking is regular and usually linked to appropriate target grades. Every teacher, including those responsible for A level teaching, has good subject knowledge and plans work carefully to meet the programmes of study and requirements of the external examinations. Since most of the classes are set, teachers also take the overall attainment of the group into account when planning the lesson but some classes are insufficiently challenged by the repetition of work from Key Stage 2 or an earlier year. For example, Year 8 classes are repeating Year 6 work when investigating basic series circuits in electricity, and Year 7 work when writing up some practical activities. When in-class support is available for pupils with SEN it is well used. In most lessons teachers display competent classroom management and maintain a positive working environment. However, in a few lessons, some pupils are permitted to exploit the opportunities provided by practical work to generate an unacceptable level of noise that hinders everyone in the class. Teachers generally support and extend classwork with appropriate homework tasks, particularly in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, but the lack of textbooks limits the range of work that can be set. Teachers are beginning to use logging sensors and other elements of ICT whenever possible and available and they have made improvements in this aspect a priority in their development plan.

101. The science faculty is run effectively. All statutory curriculum and safety requirements are met, though at Key Stage 4, the time allocation is low. Assessment arrangements are good. Teachers are well qualified and experienced; they work well as a team and are supported by excellent, but hard-pressed, technicians. Regular meetings with feeder primary schools and staff from the sixth form link schools help teachers to plan work across the key stages, though as indicated above, this is not always entirely successful. Staff use limited existing resources well but much equipment is beginning to show signs of wear and the present levels of capitalisation are inadequate to sustain a rolling programme of replacements or to ensure that every pupil has their own textbook. The science accommodation is good.

102. Since the last inspection the science faculty has made positive improvements in the use of assessment and targeting of pupils to raise standards and these measures should now result in a steady improvement in examination results. Long-term planning and schemes of work are better and investigations are now incorporated into all curriculum topics. There is also progress in the increasing use of ICT.

## **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

### **Design and technology (DT)**

103. End of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments in 1998 were well below the national average. In 1999 results rose significantly and were above the national average. However, those for 1999 were too generous. The proportion of girls' reaching Level 5 and above and Level 6 and above was higher than the proportion of boys who achieved those levels.

104. GCSE results have fluctuated considerably since 1996. During this period the results for resistant materials subjects have been significantly higher than for food and textiles. In 1996 and 1997 some resistant materials subjects were above the national average while food and textiles were well below. In 1998, results for all subjects were below but closer to the national average, but in 1999 the results for all syllabuses fell, with only the combined DT and ICT course results remaining close to the national average. The overall results for all DT subjects have fallen from being above the national average in 1997 (55 per cent A\*-C) to well below in 1999 (28 per cent A\*-C compared with the national average of 50 per cent A\*-C for all schools). Only a small percentage of pupils have achieved more than a B grade since 1997 but most pupils achieved A\*-G grades in this period. In 1999, approximately 17 per cent of pupils did worse in their DT examination than in their other GCSE subjects. Actual grades were well below teachers' predicted grades. The small number of students taking A level each year have been consistently successful in gaining A-G grades, and a few have obtained A and B grades.

105. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with expectations. Overall, pupils' folders contain sufficient well-presented written and drawn work of satisfactory quality. Higher-attaining pupils produce work which is sometimes good and which includes sound knowledge development, addresses aspects of the design process and communicates ideas by using a range of drawing and recording skills. However, in some modules, the quality of work is unsatisfactory in pupils' folders, the amount of work is low, and work is incomplete. Pupils' knowledge retention is generally low, their knowledge of materials is weak, and their ability to discuss issues unsatisfactory. Practical skills are generally satisfactory and applied well. For example, good work was seen when pupils were producing working models in wood and carrying out sensory testing in food.

106. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is below the national average but in some areas standards are satisfactory. A large number of pupils are reaching satisfactory standards in design by following carefully structured approaches. However, many are held back by their poor ability to retain knowledge. The quality of work in folders varies considerably. The best are of very good quality in terms of content and presentation. They include good research of need, development of design ideas, for example of aids for the disabled, and good final solutions. However, standards vary across the different options. A significant minority of pupils use ICT effectively to present the results of their research work. Practical work is being produced to a satisfactory standard. In the sixth form current levels of research and design work are about satisfactory.

107. In Key Stages 3 and 4, most pupils, including those with SEN, make satisfactory progress. They start from a very low base, but the structured approach used by most of the separate subjects enables them to develop knowledge and skills and apply these in a variety of materials and contexts. In Key Stage 3, for example, a food group made satisfactory gains in knowledge about quality control and safety checks and applied these in planning their own task. In a resistant materials lesson, pupils used appropriate cutting and shaping skills to produce products with a good surface finish. The majority continues to make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4. An important contribution is made by the specific guidance pupils are given about examination requirements and the regular feedback they receive from teachers on how they might improve their work. Pupils making a sample sheet of different types of wood and doing calculations when studying mechanisms and the nutritional values of food benefited from these teaching approaches. Pupils improve both their designing and making skills satisfactorily. A graphics group, for instance, revised their design sheets after receiving advice. A few

committed pupils spend considerable time on their course work and produce work of a very high standard. Progress in the sixth form is unsatisfactory. Most students show a lack of commitment to their research work and their exploration of ideas through sketching is of low quality.

108. Overall, pupils' attitudes to study are satisfactory. Most show interest in their work. Pupils enjoy their practical work and in these lessons they concentrate and persevere well. Pupils' concentration is at least satisfactory and often good in a majority of lessons. Higher-attaining pupils show considerable interest in their work and are keen to do well. Behaviour is good in the majority of lessons and there are good working relationships in most classes. In a minority of lessons, when learning is not sufficiently structured, pupils find it more difficult to concentrate and stay on task.

109. In over two-thirds of lessons teaching is satisfactory or better and in over half of these it is good or very good. In one-third of lessons it is unsatisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory in Key Stages 3 and 4, but unsatisfactory in the sixth form. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Their long-term planning is effective but planning for individual lessons is often not sufficiently detailed and is unsatisfactory. In the better lessons, targets are clear and on occasions teachers write these on the board. This occurred in a food technology lesson, and led to pupils having a good understanding of what was required. Often, appropriate teaching methods are used and the pace is brisk. In these lessons, pupils are clear about how they can improve their work. In one lesson, for example, the teacher stressed quality in written work by drawing attention to the marking policy on the classroom wall, which spelled out the criteria used in judging good work. In weaker lessons, insufficient use is made of short-term targets and so pupils' attention is not properly focused. As a result, these lessons are not well structured in terms of content and the pace is unsatisfactory. In the main, teachers' expectations of pupils are too low. Overall, teachers manage classes well and create a satisfactory environment for learning. However, behaviour is unsatisfactory in a small minority of lessons and this is often related to the lack of detailed planning. Where marking is good and regular, teachers use constructive comments to stimulate pupils and help them improve their work. However, not all teachers follow this good practice.

110. Faculty documentation and schemes of work are being reviewed and improved as part of the sound faculty development plan. Curriculum time for DT is satisfactory and all statutory requirements are met. The faculty has sound leadership, which is an improvement on the last inspection. It is increasingly including aspects of ICT, but this is still an area for development. Assessment procedures are satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. They are good in Key Stage 4. Teachers are starting to use the analysis of test and examination data better to help their planning. Resources are barely satisfactory and there is not sufficient technician support. General machine maintenance is satisfactory. Although satisfactory health and safety procedures are in place, the department and school need to pay more attention to risk assessment. For example, a number of health and safety issues have been identified but have not been resolved. There is sufficient but poor accommodation for lessons in resistant materials and food and textiles.

## **Art**

111. Low attainment in art was a key issue in the last report; standards have improved significantly since then. In the assessments at the end of Key Stage 3, pupils performed above the national average in 1999. The most marked increase has been in GCSE. In 1995, only 20 per cent of pupils reached grades A\*-C, a very low figure against a national average of 51 per cent. In 1999, the percentage of grades A\*-C was 69 per cent, well above the (estimated) national average of about 59 per cent.

112. Most pupils enter the school with weak spatial awareness, often combined with low skills in drawing. By the end of Year 9, standards are broadly average, with good attainment in the making aspects of the curriculum. Many pupils, including lower-attaining pupils and those with SEN, show high levels of attainment in non-graphical areas such as printing, model-making, ceramics, and stencilling. Pupils produce well-constructed, imaginatively decorated masks, paper mosaic work, large group-produced card models of the human form, and delicately cut stencils, as well as some good work in painting. Standards are unsatisfactory, however, in other aspects of the art curriculum. Standards in drawing, for example, are below, and often well below average. Pupils are weak, too, in understanding the historical elements of what they study. Their written work and oral skills are below average, and almost no pupil's work in any year shows good investigation or

research. Likewise, most pupils have a weak grasp on the whole process of researching, designing, making, evaluating ideas and modifying them by the end of Year 9. These weaknesses are carried forward into Key Stage 4, where overall standards by the end of Year 11 are satisfactory. Pupils of all attainment levels make some very good, well-constructed, imaginatively embellished artefacts. Examples include oriental calendar wheels connected with a recent Japanese art project, and some pupils' tonal paintings connected with a futurism project. Standards are unsatisfactory in criticism and sketchbook work, particularly drawing. The presentation of work in sketchbooks is often poor. Standards are better in Year 10 than in Year 11. Recent A level entries have been few, and standards in the sixth form show wide variations.

113. Pupils make good progress in Key Stages 3 and 4, and satisfactory progress in the sixth form. They arrive at school with varying levels of experience and often below average skills. They are introduced to a range of visual and tactile skills which they cope with well. Pupils progress well in their knowledge of printing and their ability to make models from a range of materials. Pupils with SEN also progress well. For most pupils, ceramics is a new experience, but they progress satisfactorily through the key stages to making interesting artefacts, which demonstrate their improved skills. They make good progress in making stencils, improving to produce delicately designed work. In the sixth form, students developed some original drafts effectively in a lesson on batik. Most had done sketches in an earlier lesson. After a critical evaluation by the teacher, they worked on them and improved them. They went on to learn about the use of wax to help definition when inking cloth, gaining much from the examples produced by the teacher.

114. Pupils enjoy the subject and have sound attitudes to study. These play a significant part in the good progress they make. Mostly pupils work very purposefully and quietly once they are engaged in their activities. Many though, have difficulty concentrating on the introductions to lessons. Although their work is often good, many pupils are not confident about their abilities, needing constant encouragement and ideas from their teachers. Most pupils are very proud of their finished work, and eager to talk about work in progress.

115. Most art teaching is good and is always at least satisfactory. The department now has two full-time specialists, whose subject knowledge is good. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, their commitment to work in lessons, and their response to homework. They plan the curriculum carefully, designing projects sensitively to allow all pupils to succeed to the best of their abilities. The focus on making reflects this objective clearly. Teachers use a wide, often unusual variety of materials, techniques and resources that effectively stimulate pupils' imagination. Discipline is firm and fair, and class management is good. Historical and theoretical aspects of the curriculum are fully embedded into projects and reflect an unusually wide range of art from other cultures. Teachers are less effective in finding ways of improving standards in investigative research, critical studies and drawing from direct observation.

116. The department is well led. Assessment procedures are satisfactory. The last report criticised many aspects. Important improvements in provision have included the appointment of a new head of department. Pupils' attainment is now much higher and their progress much improved. Their attitudes to study are mainly good. The quality of teaching is good and the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum are now fully met. Some aspects of provision have deteriorated, however, and others remain unsatisfactory. Accommodation in one of the rooms is much too small, creating severe restrictions on the nature and scale of pupils' work. The school's use of the space in the department is inefficient, as is the use of a teacher as a technician. The current poor state of cleaning in the department makes it impracticable for ICT to be situated there; this is still a serious omission, and was reported previously. Books for research and investigative work are still severely limited, placing serious constraints on the practicality of necessary research. Even so, their successes in art contribute very significantly to pupils' developing self-esteem and to their spiritual, social and cultural development.

## **Drama**

117. In 1997, 21 candidates took the GCSE and the proportion gaining grades A\*-C, 76 per cent, was again higher than the national figure. In 1998, 15 candidates took GCSE drama and the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was well above the national average (86 per cent, compared with 66 per cent). In 1999, 12 candidates were entered and the proportion of grades A\*-C dropped to 33 per cent, well below the national average. The school offers an A level in theatre studies in partnership with one other school in the sixth form consortium. No pupils from the school took this examination in 1999. In 1998, one pupil from the school, who was taught elsewhere, took the examination and gained a C grade.

118. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is below national expectations, a reflection of the fact that it has only been on the curriculum since September 1999. Pupils demonstrate few skills in imaginative improvisation or role-play. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is average overall. Pupils who have chosen the subject work with enthusiasm and understand the need for planning and evaluating the work they do. In one lesson pupils were developing a short play for presentation on the theme of stalking. Although the content and ideas were limited, pupils achieved coherence in the shaping and sequence of scenes, were able to see the need for rehearsal and showed awareness of audience requirements. Attainment in the second year of the theatre studies course is satisfactory, with some promising features as pupils work towards the examination. The Year 13 class of five (four from the school) showed sound understanding of aspects of Brecht and other writers in their work on theatre practitioners. Attainment and progress in their group project for performance are likely to be affected to some extent by the very small size of the group, particularly if, as in the lesson observed, two of the five are absent.

119. Progress in drama is unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3. Pupils make little progress in the understanding of the basic disciplines of the drama studio. In Key Stage 4, pupils make satisfactory progress and are able to reflect on and learn from their work in each lesson. The interest that they show in the work is an important factor in their progress. In Year 11, for instance, a group of pupils made good progress by spending time after school reviewing and rehearsing, with guidance from their teacher. Enthusiasm and commitment are also key features contributing to pupils' progress in A level classes, where they improve in their ability to express themselves in unrehearsed situations, for example. These factors help them to overcome the very real disadvantages of working in such a small group.

120. Pupils' attitudes to study are unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3. Although most are eager to take part, a disruptive minority, mainly boys, see the drama lesson as an opportunity for boisterous or silly behaviour. As a result, a keen minority of pupils are disheartened or distracted. In Key Stage 4 attitudes are generally good and in the sixth form they are very good. Students work productively in small or large groups and contribute well to whole-class lessons.

121. Teaching at Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory. Lessons lack good starting points and an appropriate framework within which pupils can work creatively and interact effectively. The difficulties of teaching large classes of 30 or more at fortnightly rather than weekly intervals have not been overcome. The large scale projects, story-based and spread over a number of weeks, are not always suitable for drama teaching in these circumstances. The teaching strategies do not provide enough opportunity for pupils to develop expressive work and purposeful interaction in good drama situations. As a result, the teaching has a lack of focus and pupils have little sense of achievement. Teaching is satisfactory in both Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, where the teacher's interest in the subject stimulates pupils' enthusiasm. The teacher creates a good working environment and effective relationships with the pupils. Planning is detailed and the pace of lessons satisfactory. The activities are suited to pupils' needs and allow them to become involved in effective group work. The teacher intervenes well, assessing performance and suggesting improvements. Pupils are also encouraged to make self-assessment and peer-assessment. The work done in class is extended into post-school activity on occasions.

122. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is not planned effectively, but in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form it fits well with examination syllabuses. Assessment occurs informally during lessons, but there is little recorded evidence. Resources are just about adequate.

## Geography

123. In 1999, the teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 indicate that the percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 or above was above the average for all schools. Girls attained better than boys. In the GCSE examination in 1999, the percentage of pupils gaining grades A\*-C (51.4 per cent) was near to the national average (57.3 per cent) and also about the average for those obtaining grades A\*-G. In 1998, the pupils' results at grade A\*-C were far higher at 60.4 per cent, above the national average (56.1 per cent), and also exceeding it in the A\*-G range. These results are similar to those at the time of the last inspection. Boys have performed better than girls in recent years. In the A level examination in 1999, all nine candidates achieved a graded result, a figure above the national average, but no pupil achieved a grade A or B. In 1998, one of the candidates achieved a grade A while all but one achieved a graded result. The A level course is also taught at another school under consortium arrangements. The subject also contributes to the integrated humanities course taken by all pupils in Key Stage 4. In the GCSE in 1999, the percentage of pupils achieving a grade A\*-C was 50.3 per cent, above the national average and a considerable improvement on the previous year's results.

124. Attainment in the school at the end of Key Stage 3 is generally satisfactory compared with the national expectation, but with a considerable amount of low attainment. Pupils enter the school with many learning difficulties. By the end of this key stage, they have satisfactory skills in graphing data and carrying out geographical enquiries in the classroom and through fieldwork, though presentation in writing is weak. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards are very good. Pupils are well prepared for the examinations and can bring together information and ideas in a succinct and accurate way. Attainment is good in a range of coursework topics. Attainment in the sixth form are satisfactory.

125. In Key Stage 3 pupils make satisfactory progress and a significant minority make good progress. Pupils in a Year 7 lesson made good progress when well chosen resources and an amusing analogy helped them understand a great deal about the structure of the earth. Most pupils in Key Stage 4 made very good progress in geography and good progress also in some of the geographical aspects of humanities. Very good learning took place in one Year 11 lesson where the pupils sketched clearly and wrote succinctly about the causes of waterfalls after viewing a well-chosen video clip. In another Year 11 lesson, pupils extended their knowledge of poverty and the pressures faced by Indian villagers and their children through considering telling topical examples. Good learning also took place in lessons on the issues to be faced in planning in a historic city such as Bath and on the environmental issues involved. Pupils in the sixth form are making good progress. Pupils with SEN and lower attaining pupils generally make good progress at Key Stage 3 and very good progress at Key Stage 4 through well considered support in the classroom and, at times, through suitably adjusted materials and approaches, for example, through the emphasis on key words and phrases. Regular fieldwork in the local area and, on one occasion in France, has played a part in promoting pupils' interest and learning. The use of ICT is growing rapidly and has improved overall since the last inspection. Its growth is also playing a part in improving the progress made by the pupils.

126. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are mostly good, particularly in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Pupils are interested in what is asked of them and generally are able to sustain their concentration for the full extent of the hour-long lessons. Relationships between the teachers and the pupils are largely good, though some pupils need constant checking to ensure that they do not disturb the work of others. Behaviour is generally good. A reasonable number of pupils continue with the subject as well as humanities in Key Stage 4, a good indicator of the pupils' interest in the subject.

127. Teaching is mostly satisfactory at Key Stage 3, very good at Key Stage 4 and good in the sixth form. Some of the teaching by non-specialists takes place in unsuitable rooms not fully equipped for the subject and distant from the resources. Teachers in this position worked hard to meet the requirements of the course, and do so. The aims of lessons are invariably made known to the pupils and are very often reviewed to check whether they have been achieved. Short and well-chosen video clips are used regularly and teachers use carefully selected and up-to-date worksheets and stimulus materials. Generally, the planning of lessons is good. In the main, lessons are taught at an appropriate pace, especially when teachers provide varied and imaginative tasks designed to promote learning. Marking is regular, though gaps remain in the pupils' work. Teachers take all available opportunities to celebrate pupils' achievements and display their work effectively in the few available

areas. Teachers manage pupils, especially the few who behave immaturely, well and have high expectations of their performance.

128. National Curriculum requirements are met fully and satisfactory arrangements are made for the statutory teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3. The introduction of target setting is progressing well. The schemes of work and the associated well-prepared teaching materials have improved since the last inspection and provide good guidance for the teachers. Leadership is good. Good efforts are made to improve literacy and a useful contribution is made to progress in numeracy through the subject's use of graphical techniques. Pupils in Key Stage 4 have ready access to a suitable range of textbooks; such books are not available for the younger pupils. This deficiency is identified in the subject's development plan that is based on reviews of the progress made since the last inspection. The plan identifies clearly and correctly the targets that need to be reached in the next year. Efforts should be made to ensure that geography is taught by specialist teachers, and more teaching takes place in specialist accommodation.

## **History**

129. In the end of Key Stage 3 assessments in 1999 the standards of attainment of the majority of pupils are below the national expectation. The results were lower than in 1998. At GCSE, attainment is below the national average and below the average for similar schools. However, some individual pupils achieve good results in GCSE history. Overall results are better in humanities, which all pupils take and which has some history content. There has been an improvement in history results at GCSE in the last two years. In 1997 results were very poor with only two pupils out of the 21 entered reaching the pass standard. In 1998 only 17 per cent of the pupils entered achieved grade A\*-C. In 1999, 31 per cent achieved this level, though the 100 per cent pass rate at A\* -G of the previous year fell to 87 per cent. The school offers A level history as part of the consortium for sixth form teaching shared with another school. In 1998 four of six candidates entered gained a pass grade, though none reached the highest grades. There were no entries in 1999.

130. Attainment in history at the end of Key Stage 3 is below that expected of pupils of similar age nationally. Pupils can talk and read satisfactorily about the topics they are studying, and they have an understanding of the major changes that have taken place, though their knowledge of key people and events is often weak. They are aware of the importance of key developments in the twentieth century such as the impact of the First World War and some understanding about why the war happened. The best-written work is well presented and higher-attaining pupils are able to fit their studies into a wider context and to show how factors link together, for example in the development of trench warfare. However, pupils rarely question why things happened in the way they did or pause to reflect on how the soldiers lived and died. Pupils show some skills in organising and using information when studying such major events as the Norman conquest, though many of them are not clear about sources of evidence such as the Bayeux Tapestry. They can talk about some of the causes of enclosure but only the highest attainers can relate it to population growth and the demand for agricultural produce.

131. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards are still below the national expectation. Most pupils have appropriate knowledge of the topics that they have studied and all pupils, including those with SEN, can attempt essay and document questions. The lowest attainers understand the broad themes, for example the ambitions of Hitler and how they led to war. The higher attainers understand the way in which he used propaganda to promote the Nazi party. They are generally competent in the use of documents and extracts because they can read the text satisfactorily, and in the use of photographic evidence. However the written work of many pupils is unsatisfactory. Although they are skilled in answering questions based on extracts, statistics and illustrations during discussion in class their poor literacy skills and weaknesses in knowledge and understanding prevent them from reaching the higher levels when attempting GCSE questions. The attainment of boys in lessons is broadly similar to that of girls, though fewer boys have taken the subject at GCSE in recent years and far more boys have been identified as having SEN. By the end of the sixth form the majority of students reach standards in line with course requirements and on occasions they reach higher standards. They show a detailed knowledge of the inter-war period in Germany and the ability to use a variety of sources of information in preparing essays.

132. The majority of pupils make satisfactory progress through Key Stages 3 and 4. They progress in their understanding of life in the past by considering and comparing aspects of life in England during the Middle Ages. They learn about aspects of Islamic culture, the Industrial Revolution and the major events of the twentieth century. In the process, the majority of pupils are able to develop an understanding of chronology and the impact of change over time. The work of pupils at the beginning of Key Stage 3 shows that they are learning to use sources to find out about the past, such as the eye witness accounts of the murder of Thomas Becket. By Year 9, most pupils have learned that there are many sources of evidence but that all must be used with care. Where pupils are given the opportunity to work in pairs and groups for independent research activities, for example using photographs as evidence, they make good progress. Before the end of the key stage, some pupils are confident in using ICT for research purposes and to improve the presentation of their work. However, computer work is not sufficiently developed to promote consistent progress in the development of skills in research or data handling. GCSE pupils make good progress in the development of the skills that help them to answer complex source-based questions. Pupils go on visits to museums and historic sites, for example, to local castles and to the battlefields of Belgium. These visits help them to understand the impact of change. Satisfactory progress is made in GCSE classes by pupils with SEN. Their progress is unsatisfactory in other classes because of the lack of support and because SEN and lower-attaining pupils are too often using materials and attempting tasks which are too difficult for them. Higher-attaining pupils also fail to make adequate progress in those lessons where they are insufficiently challenged, because all pupils are attempting the same tasks and using the same resources, which are usually below their needs. Progress in the sixth form is good. Students use knowledge gained at GCSE as a basis for really detailed studies, for example on the reasons for Hitler's decision to destroy the Brown Shirts. They progress well in the development of essay writing skills and acquire a new awareness of historiography. Homework is used in a way that helps most pupils' progress, although not all pupils are prepared to spend sufficient time to complete homework or coursework which is set for them.

133. The response of many pupils to work in history and humanities is unsatisfactory. There are examples of written work at all levels being well presented, because a minority of pupils take real pride in their work. They enjoy the opportunity to participate in a variety of visits and student conferences. However, only a few pupils opt to take history at GCSE. The behaviour of a significant minority of pupils is unsatisfactory. They are frequently reluctant to start work at the beginning of lessons, are noisy and inattentive and fail to complete coursework or homework. This poor attitude is more noticeable where pupils have not had the experience of being taught consistently or by subject specialists. Behaviour is unsatisfactory occasionally in GCSE classes. However, students studying history in the sixth form were enthusiastic about and committed to their studies.

134. Teaching is satisfactory in Key Stages 3 and 4, and good in the sixth form. Teachers successfully promote progress and much of the teaching in examination classes is very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They use a variety of approaches, which include role-play and use of ICT. Lessons are usually well planned, managed and resourced, though in the least successful activities, pupils were focused on the same tasks whatever their prior attainment. The best lessons have clear objectives, which identify what younger pupils and examination candidates should know by the end of the lesson; these objectives are shared with pupils. In GCSE classes, pupils understand what they have to do in order to succeed and they are provided with a valuable revision programme prior to examinations. Work is marked frequently, although grades are sometimes over generous. Assessment is used effectively to set targets for individual pupils. Teachers use available resources well, though the department does not have computers in the classroom or sufficient access to overhead projectors. Books used lower down the school are too difficult for pupils of lower attainment and insufficiently challenging for the higher attainers. However, teachers are good at making their own resources, including slides and packs of photographs and in the best lessons these are well suited to the needs of the pupils that used them. In the most successful lessons pupils are provided with a range of materials to meet their individual needs or with exciting role-play. For example, pupils were given a good range of materials and activities when studying the complex issue of the Balkan wars prior to 1914. In less successful activities all pupils attempt the same task using the same resources. Teachers use the spacious classrooms well and the two which are mainly used for history have good displays, which celebrate pupils' work and encourage them to do well.

135. The history department is well led. It has a number of strengths, particularly in the development of resources and the use of assessment procedures. The head of department has identified specialist teaching and

the development of skills in literacy as the means of raising attainment. The situation regarding specialist teaching has improved since the last inspection and teaching in history is mainly by specialists. It is also taught mainly in history rooms. However, the last inspection also expressed concern that tasks and resources were not always appropriate for different levels of attainment, attainment was low and few pupils were choosing to take the subject as an option at GCSE or in the sixth form. Little improvement has been made in these important areas. The department ensures that the work of all pupils is valued and it is particularly successful in supporting pupils in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Careful planning and monitoring ensure that resources and assessment procedures are being effectively developed to promote progression and continuity and to improve pupils' attitudes and standards of work in both history and humanities. History in the school makes some contribution to the establishment of skills in all aspects of literacy but at present there is an insufficient focus on the development of vocabulary, reading comprehension and basic skills in English - the skills which should raise attainment in the subject. However, the department makes a good contribution to the moral, social, cultural awareness of pupils because of the range of topics covered in both history and humanities.

### **Information and communications technology (ICT)**

136. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 for 1999 were in line with the national average, but were too generous in the light of inspection findings. Results in the combined course for DT and ICT in 1998 were close to the national average, with 46.9 per cent of pupils obtaining grades A\*-C. In 1999 the percentage of grades A\*-C fell to 37.5, below the national average for all schools (53 per cent A\*-C).

137. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is below the national average. Pupils have basic skills in word processing, the use of spreadsheets, databases and other applications. However, skills remain at a rudimentary level and below expectations. Pupils can use these basic skills in other subjects to measure and control, but only at the lower levels of competence. By the end of Key stage 4, attainment is still below the national expectation. Higher-attaining pupils taking the combined DT and ICT course produce projects of high quality which show understanding through well structured, presented and annotated work. All pupils have basic experience of using ICT in other subjects to support and present their work, both at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

138. During Key Stage 3, pupils make unsatisfactory progress. In ICT lessons all pupils follow the same programmes of work. As a result, the progress they make depends on their previous attainment as they make their way through the work at their own pace. Pupils learn to access the computers, select and use software and follow worksheets to carry out set tasks. They progress in using the keyboard and mouse to enter and edit data on spreadsheets at a basic level and to follow written instructions to carry out calculations. They make little progress in understanding how these processes work. Where ICT is taught in other subjects work it is not sufficiently planned and coordinated to ensure that pupils make sufficient progress in raising their level of attainment. Although computer-based work is included in set lessons and other subjects in Key Stage 4, planning and provision are still not sufficiently structured to extend pupils' skills effectively. Consequently, progress is unsatisfactory. Progress is satisfactory in the sixth form, particularly in GNVQ courses. Students use ICT well and work is well presented and annotated, showing the changes and improvements in the work. Pupils with SEN follow the same programmes and make satisfactory progress. Enthusiastic computer users and higher-attaining pupils make more progress through work often carried out in their own time.

139. Pupils' attitudes vary but the majority show satisfactory interest when using the computers and can sustain their concentration for reasonable periods of time when they are clear about the tasks set. Most pupils persevere but show few signs of developing what they have learned beyond the needs of the lesson. The behaviour of the majority is satisfactory, but a number of pupils do not always respond quickly and positively to the teacher's requests. Pupils share computers without undue problems, but all those who are sharing do not make equal contributions to shared work. Most show suitable respect for equipment and others pupils.

140. Teaching is mainly satisfactory, though on occasions it is good. Specialist teachers have good technical knowledge and the ability to support pupils in their individual learning. In one lesson, for example, the teacher moved effectively around the room monitoring, evaluating and advising pupils. A very good tracking chart was displayed so that pupils could also monitor their progress. In other lessons, teachers successfully helped pupils with problems, creating a good supportive environment through their quiet and calm manner. Overall planning

for core ICT lessons is satisfactory, but schemes of work are under developed and individual lesson plans are not sufficiently detailed. Consequently, in a minority of lessons targets and objectives are not made sufficiently clear at the start of lessons and pupils are not aware of the assessment criteria which will be used. Teachers use a limited range of teaching methods and these do not always enable pupils to see or understand the teaching points being made. The pace of lessons is generally satisfactory but expectations are often not and so do not contribute sufficiently to raising attainment or behaviour. Teachers make sound use of homework.

141. In Key Stage 3, the National Curriculum and statutory requirements are met. At Key Stage 4, all pupils have access to a basic ICT course which addresses some aspects of the National Curriculum, some take the joint DT and ICT option at GCSE, and ICT work is included in the programmes offered by other subjects. If all planned parts of this programme are delivered then statutory requirements are met. However, this is not the case in several instances, as some of the other subjects do not make sufficient use of ICT. Marking and assessment procedures are under developed and not sufficiently used to inform pupils of their progress or to develop curriculum planning. The development plan for ICT is sound, but the success criteria are not specific enough. Schemes of work for ICT are under developed and although there is a positive ethos for the development and delivery of ICT in the school, current ICT provision is not sufficiently planned, coordinated or delivered. The development of ICT rooms, including the learning resource centre, provide an effective learning environment but operational problems with the network are having a negative influence on the use of computers and teachers' willingness to use the system. Overall, staff confidence and competence have improved since the last inspection, and leadership is sound. The accommodation provides a good working environment and the booking procedure is having a positive influence on the use of these facilities by a range of subjects. The computer ratio of 11:1 is below the national average of 8:1, however.

### **Modern foreign languages**

142. Pupils learn either French or German, depending on their year of entry to the school.

143. The teachers' assessments of the pupils' attainment in German at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 indicate that the attainment of half of the pupils is at Level 4 or above, with girls doing very much better than boys. This is below the national average of 63 per cent. In the teacher assessments in French in 1998, those reaching Level 4 or above (64 per cent) was in line with the national average, and the girls did slightly better than the boys. In 1999, the percentages of pupils achieving grades A\*-C in either French or German (12 per cent and 26 per cent respectively) were well below the national averages for pupils in all schools (51 per cent and 55 per cent respectively) and those in similar schools. Over the last four years, results in both French and German have been well below national averages and the averages for similar schools. However, in 1998, they rose significantly to 38 per cent in French and 33 per cent in German. Taking the last three years' results together, the school's analyses show boys achieving marginally more higher grades than girls. Almost all those entered gained a graded result. For a number of years the school has entered a proportion of lower attainers for a Certificate of Achievement in French or German; in 1999 some 13 per cent of the cohort entered. The success rate was good. No students took A levels in French or German in 1999. In 1998, two students took A level French under the consortium arrangements but neither achieved a pass grade.

144. The evidence of the inspection is that by the end of Key Stage 3 most higher-attaining pupils in French are performing in line with the national expectation. However, for the vast majority, attainment is below and sometimes well below what is expected. Most pupils have difficulty remembering the vocabulary and structures they have encountered. They hear very little of the foreign language spoken in class so that, while the higher attainers sometimes get the gist of what they hear or read, the understanding of most is weak. Speaking is largely limited to the repetition of words and phrases, and writing to the, mainly accurate, transcription of vocabulary and to short practice sentences and gap filling exercises where the words are supplied. At the end of Key Stage 4, the attainment in French of higher-attaining and a number of average-attaining pupils meets national expectations but that of most average and of all lower attainers is well below what is expected nationally. Many pupils are underachieving. Higher and also some average attainers can extract relevant information from spoken texts and can speak confidently and accurately on tape, though less fluently face to face. Their redrafted writing is accurate. However, for the majority, the range and quality of writing are below average, and speaking skills are weak. This is because pupils hear so little of the foreign language and have

little opportunity to practise in class under supervision. Their pronunciation is poor, as is their recall of basic vocabulary. They have an insecure grasp of basic grammar and rely heavily on written prompts for speaking and writing.

145. The vast majority of pupils in Key Stage 3 started out with limited literacy skills. The result is that their rate of progress in both languages is slow over the key stage and by the end of the key stage it is unsatisfactory for all but the highest attainers in French. That said, during the inspection most pupils made some satisfactory gains in learning in individual lessons. For example, a Year 7 French class drew on the subjects of the curriculum which had been practised in previous lessons to say which they liked and disliked. A pupil with SEN was able to produce a whole sentence unaided. A Year 9 upper ability set drew on its previous knowledge of times and places and used prepositions to arrange where to meet. This involved two or three successful exchanges between pupils. In Key Stage 4, the majority of pupils make unsatisfactory progress over time in all four skills, but especially in speaking. The majority have difficulty remembering previously covered work, mainly because they haven't practised and internalised the vocabulary and structures sufficiently and, in some cases, have had insufficient opportunities to revisit and re-use what they have covered. The result is that many average-attainers and lower-attainers cannot easily call up simple, commonly used words. In addition, their insecure grasp of basic grammar means that they have problems with verb forms and agreements in German and French, which prevents them from writing independently and confidently. Higher attainers in French, on the other hand, have been able over the course to draw on what they have covered to write, for example, letters booking a hotel room, accurately and at length. These pupils have learned to manipulate a range of tenses and grammatical structures appropriately. Overall, however, progress by all pupils, including those with SEN, is too slow. It is hampered not only by lack of oral reinforcement and sometimes inappropriate provision, but also by the pupils' lack of confidence and their tendency to be distracted from the work in hand.

146. Pupils' attitudes to learning were satisfactory in just under three-quarters of the lessons seen in Key Stages 3 and 4. Most are conscientious and are keen to do well at their studies. They cooperate with the teachers and are willing to contribute to oral work. They take care with their written work. However, most pupils lack confidence in their ability to learn a foreign language. In both key stages, however, a minority of pupils are boisterous and uninhibited, though they accept the teachers' authority where firm control is applied and settle down to work. They are easily distracted from learning and chat among themselves.

147. The quality of teaching was satisfactory in the majority of lessons seen in both key stages. It was unsatisfactory or poor in just under a quarter of the lessons seen, mainly, though not entirely, in Key Stage 3. Most teachers have appropriate command of the languages they teach, but few speak the language in class. This limited and inconsistent use of French and German in class limits the pupils' progress in listening and speaking and conveys the message that use of the language is not important. Most teachers plan their lessons carefully, though they do not always share the learning objectives with the class. The result is that pupils are not always sure what is expected of them. In the satisfactory lessons, the teachers employ appropriate, if rather restricted, approaches and materials. There is scope for more focused use of pair work, tapes and visual resources, which involve the pupils more directly in listening and speaking. Expectations of the pupils' oral contributions are too low. Too often, teachers resort to writing before the pupils are ready for it, and the result is often a slowing down of the pace of the lesson and an opportunity for pupils to be inattentive. The unsatisfactory and poor teaching seen, related to inexperience or, in the majority of cases, to a limited command of the foreign language and/or insufficiently detailed planning, unclear learning objectives and a very limited repertoire of teaching approaches. In these lessons, the pace of learning was slow, the work rate was very slow, English predominated and the pupils' progress was severely restricted. Teachers assess pupils' progress regularly and make use of the information gained. There is a good marking policy, though adherence to it is variable. Homework is regularly set. It usually arises out of the lesson. Some teachers use it soundly to reinforce, but learning homework rarely results in pupils being more confident about vocabulary and structures. At least one task set in class during the inspection - a drawing and labelling task, which took up a significant amount of the lesson - was better suited to work at home.

148. As stated above, the school offers French or German in alternate years: the current Year 7 is learning French. In Year 9, pupils may take a second foreign language - in the current year German - which is taught for one lesson per week. Just under half of the cohort and mainly girls, is learning German. The time allocation

is too low for significant progress to be made before the end of the key stage. Although the second foreign language is offered in Key Stage 4, there are currently no pupils learning two foreign languages. Pupils are taught in mixed ability groups in Year 7 and in ability sets thereafter. The faculty is well managed. National Curriculum requirements are fully met. Assessment systems are thorough and provide helpful information which determines setting and, to an increasing extent, the faculty's approach to raising standards. The schemes of work are helpfully set out but are insufficiently specific about the learning objectives for pupils of differing attainment. Staff have access to the IEPs of pupils with SEN, though these are not subject specific, and most are sensitive to their learning needs. Resources have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory. Staffing is appropriate, though there is a little non-specialist teaching, and leadership is sound. The accommodation is helpfully grouped and is also satisfactory.

149. Since the last inspection, the faculty has made little progress. There is still much to be done to raise the standards of work in both languages and across both key stages. In particular, the faculty should improve lesson planning to ensure that learning objectives are clear to the pupils, a wider range of attainment targets is represented in each lesson, and a greater variety of teaching approaches are appropriately employed. Teachers should also make much more consistent use of the foreign language in lessons, ensuring that their pupils do the same.

## **Music**

150. The numbers of pupils taking the GCSE and GCE A level examinations are too small year by year to be able to comment on standards in relation to national averages or trends over time.

151. Pupils enter the school with little knowledge, few skills and limited experience in music. By the end of Key Stage 3 standards of the majority are still below national expectations for their age. Pupils have developed a reasonable musical vocabulary, a result of the department's emphasis on key words, and use it to describe what they hear when listening. They can recognise mood, tempo, dynamics and some common instruments aurally, but listening skills are only beginning to develop. There are no able instrumentalists in this key stage, though some pupils can play melodies accurately and fluently on keyboards, and most can use traditional notation with the help of letter names for notes. Composition is mainly improvisation and little is written. While some are in line with national expectations in performance, many are below this level, and all are below in listening, writing about music and musicians, and composition. Nevertheless, this is an improvement on the findings of the last inspection. Recently, there has been improvement in the number of pupils taking instrumental lessons in school to almost 50, but many of these are still at a very elementary level and the effects will not be apparent for some time. By the end of Key Stage 4, the standards of the few pupils who take music are mainly average, with one or two pupils reaching good standards. Listening skills are still below expectations, but standards of composition are in line with national expectations. Few pupils are able to achieve an upper grade in GCSE across all aspects of the examination. Numbers are too small to make comparison with similar schools worthwhile. Standards in the sixth form are good, with pupils having a good appreciation of different musical styles and the works of important composers. They have a good understanding of the range of sounds obtained by different instruments in concert and can interpret scores. They have a good approach to dealing with composition. Work at this level has improved since the last inspection.

152. No high-attaining pupils were seen in Key Stages 3 or 4. Even so, it is clear that overall progress through Key Stage 3 is satisfactory, and through Key Stage 4 and the sixth form it is good. Average-attaining and low-attaining pupils consolidate their knowledge of the musical elements such as pitch and tempo, and increase their skills in performance. Their musical appreciation also improves as they listen to the works of the classical masters and more contemporary musicians and seek to interpret their meaning, form and structure. Pupils with SEN are well catered for and make sound progress.

153. In Key Stage 3, when pupils are enthused by good teaching, their behaviour is impeccable and attitudes are positive. They maintain good levels of concentration even when there is no direct supervision. Relationships with staff and peers are very good, and respect is shown for the fabric, resources and the feelings of others. Pupils share resources fairly, and instances of peer help and support were seen. There are few opportunities to show initiative, but pupils accept responsibility for their own efforts. In a few classes where control is less

secure and pupils are not stimulated by enthusiasm, there is a good deal of immature behaviour, some deliberate attempts at disruption and general discourtesy. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form attitudes are very positive in all respects. Initiative is shown, and pupils accept responsibility for their own progress.

154. In the majority of lessons in Key Stage 3 teaching is good, with many instances of very good practice. The teachers are confident, have good class management and infectious enthusiasm and energy which help motivate pupils. In the few lessons where teachers are more diffident, pupils do not respond cooperatively, and pace, which is very good in the better lessons, is slowed by the teacher's attempts to regain control. In good lessons time is never wasted, praise is used well for both effort and achievement and progress is satisfactory. Expectations are usually high, but are relative to pupils' assessed potential. Teachers have sound levels of knowledge, skills and understanding. Schemes of work and lesson plans, though limited by lack of resources, show imagination. Teaching in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form is good. Teachers use assessment well and this contributes to the effective way in which they plan their lessons. In a lesson on composition in Year 11, for example, individual tasks were set to meet the needs of each pupil and the teacher spent time with each pupil, discussing the quality of the work and recommending changes. The overall quality improved as a result and pupils made good progress in, for example, harmony. Teachers mark pupils' books regularly, provide formative comments and keep pupils well informed about well they are doing. Teachers set homework regularly, and closely relate it to work in class. Insufficient use is made of ICT, but this is partially a result of inadequate provision.

155. The leadership of the department is good. The scheme of work is appropriate, assessment procedures are good, and the resources mostly adequate. The staff contribute willingly to the good provision of extracurricular activities, though these are not always well attended by pupils. Videos show good quality performances from pupils of instrumental and vocal music and stage productions. These enhance the quality of cultural life in the school and community.

### **Physical education (PE)**

156. In the most recent GCSE examination 28 per cent of the pupils entered gained grades A\*-C, which is below that of the average for all other secondary schools. In September 1997 the school began offering its sixth form pupils the opportunity to take a GCE A level in sports science. In 1999, about 90 per cent of the pupils entered gained pass grades with an average score just below the national average.

157. The level of attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations. Pupils are able to demonstrate their skills and understanding in a variety of contexts and groupings. In games, pupils are confident performers and display a range of skills which are executed with accuracy and understanding. They can sequence movements with fluency. Their ball skills are sound and these enable most pupils to contribute to games successfully. Most pupils arrive at the school with only a very limited experience of dance. By the end of the key stage they are able to take responsibility for choreographing and developing a story line they can perform with fluency and control. A good example of the work was demonstrated by a group of Year 8 girls whose most vigorous and dramatic performance of the New Zealand haka was of a very good standard. Pupils show satisfactory ability to plan and evaluate of their work. The level of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is also in line with national expectations, with a few pupils, usually among those in the GCSE groups, displaying a standard of skills and understanding that is of a higher level. Pupils are able to follow instructions, maintain practical activities and apply the techniques that are being taught. Satisfactory levels of skill are clearly evident in a wide variety of activities, and most pupils have a good understanding of tactics and strategies in the games they play. They are able to apply these skills effectively to a full game, as for instance in rugby. Pupils in the GCSE groups have good technical vocabulary, the result of the emphasis given to this by the department, and know the basic requirements of fitness. They have good understanding and expertise in both the theoretical and practical aspects of the subject.

158. Many teams take part in many inter-school competitions and in spite of being a relatively small school gain much success. Many pupils have represented South Gloucestershire in a variety of events and one pupil has gone on to gain international honours. A number of girls have been selected to be part of a dance presentation at the Millennium Dome in London in February 2000, an indication of the standards they have reached.

159. Across all year groups pupils generally make good progress. They consolidate their skills, knowledge and understanding in most lessons. This is particularly the case when teachers allow sufficient time for pupils to practise and refine their work. There is often clear evidence of pupils building directly on practice activities from a previous lesson. The best progress occurs when teachers require pupils to evaluate their own work or assess that of their peers. Pupils with SEN are well integrated, are given much support and encouragement by both the teaching staff and fellow pupils, and make good progress.

160. Most pupils have a positive attitude towards PE both in their lessons and in extracurricular activities, although a small minority of pupils display behaviour which is not satisfactory. They respond well to the discipline inherent in sporting activities and accept decisions. Pupils contribute well to group activities and team games, and the best often support the lower-level performers in the interests of the team. They have a good approach to fair play. Pupils display great enthusiasm for the subject and derive much pleasure from taking part.

161. The quality of teaching is good in Key Stages 3 and 4. It is always at least satisfactory and on occasions very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they provide clear demonstration and explanations. They have high expectations. In a Year 10 lesson, the teacher insisted on pupils sending and receiving the ball accurately and involved them in critically examining the reasons why they might not be doing this consistently. Teachers make their aims clear, provide appropriate content and organise relevant resources well. They ensure that practical activities are carried out with purpose and vigour. They pay due attention to warm-up exercises, as was demonstrated on one cool morning when the teacher restricted the introduction in order to keep pupils active and involved physically in the lesson. Teachers expect pupils to be well behaved, work hard, and achieve at least a satisfactory level of performance. To this end, they encourage self-evaluation and peer-evaluation. In a Year 8 lesson, for instance, pupils evaluated each other's ability to dodge and weave, and to mark another player. Teachers show a care and concern for their pupils, whilst encouraging the best in fair play, cooperation and competitive experiences. They provide a good example, being consistent in the way they approach the different activities. Teachers are conscious of the presence of pupils with SEN. Teaching is sensitive and supportive and there are no instances of pupils with SEN being disadvantaged by the provision that is offered.

162. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is broad and balanced. However, although all pupils experience four areas of activity, all pupils do not have the opportunity to experience the same activities, as only the girls are offered dance and only the boys take part in outdoor and adventurous activities. The department has plans to rectify this in order to meet requirements in relation to equal opportunities. Key Stage 4 pupils follow a broad and balanced range of activities that meet the statutory requirements. Pupils in the sixth form have only a very limited opportunity to take part in PE activities; only a very few students participate. The department's development plan has recently been reviewed. It identifies an appropriate range of priorities and indicates how progression is to be achieved within the curriculum. The department has sound procedures for assessing and recording pupils' achievements; they are in line with statutory requirements and school policy. Many teachers, including non-specialists, give very freely of their time to provide a range of extracurricular activities, which are taken up by enthusiastic pupils. Pupils have the opportunity to take part in skiing holidays abroad, a soccer tour to Boston (USA), visits to dance productions at local theatres and to attend national sporting events. Accommodation, curriculum time and capitation are good, well used and have a positive effect on the attainment of the pupils. There is a good supply of subject related books in the school library which are well used, but there is a need to supplement these with books of a more technical nature so that pupils in the examination groups can use them for reference purposes.

163. The head of department had been in post for only a few months at the time of the inspection. She has inherited a well-organised and efficient department and has quickly settled into her new post. She is already demonstrating strong leadership. The staff who teach PE work well together, support each other and show a very strong commitment to the pupils. In December 1998 the school was granted the Sportsmark award, which is a national recognition of a quality programme of PE and sport.

## **Religious education (RE)**

164. The school fulfils its statutory duty to enable all pupils to study RE at Key Stage 4 by offering it within the humanities GCSE course, taken by all those who do not do GCSE RE. In the 1999 GCSE examination in humanities, 50 per cent of pupils gained grades A\*-C and 98 per cent gained grades A\*-G. These results were well above the average of other subjects in the school and above the national average. With the exception of 1998, when for one year another course was followed, results have been consistently above the national average. In 1999 there were 15 entries in GCSE RE. Here, 40 per cent of candidates gained grades A\*-C and 94 per cent gained grades A\*-G. These results were above the average of most other subjects in the school, but below the national average. There has been a decline in attainment in the GCSE over the last three years. Currently there is a GCSE class in Year 10 but not in Year 11. In 1999 teachers judged 68 per cent of pupils to be attaining at or beyond Level 5 at the end of Key Stage 3. These assessed grades were close to the national average. Currently there is no examination course in the sixth form.

165. Attainment is in line with expectations at the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils have sound knowledge and understanding of different religions and have satisfactory understanding of their own spirituality. They also have a sound knowledge of religion through time. For example, they make effective studies of diagrams of the Avebury site, know about the beliefs of early peoples and can tabulate different types of archaeological evidence such as this successfully. The higher-attaining pupils can make the link between the depth at which remains are buried and their relative age. Pupils also read and know about the major contemporary religions, being able to construct models of mosques as part of their work on Islam. They have a satisfactory understanding of the lay out, the Arabic names of different parts of a mosque and the functions of different areas of the building. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is also satisfactory. Pupils in humanities have a well-developed understanding of the spiritual and moral dilemmas facing society, though their knowledge of religious beliefs is lower than expected. For example, a class of Year 11 pupils had a good grasp of moral reasons for caring for the environment. They recognise that development decisions will often involve balancing social gain against environmental costs and often impact on later generations. The attainment of girls is a little better than that of boys at Key Stage 3, but there is little difference at Key Stage 4.

166. Most pupils make good progress overall through both Key Stages 3 and 4. The progress of some lower-attaining pupils in Key Stage 3 is only satisfactory. A Year 7 class, working in groups, improved their understanding of myths by converting a series of different creation myths into short imaginative plays with some fluent narratives and effective mime. In a study of Seder, as a part of their learning of Judaism, Year 9 pupils developed a good grasp of the symbolic importance of the different foods used in its celebration, and the higher-attaining pupils grasped the similarities between this event and others, for example Remembrance Sunday. During their exploration of news extracts and video material, Year 10 pupils improved their awareness of stereo-typical comments, developing an understanding of their danger and how they were often factually incorrect. They were largely successful in identifying some underlying reasons for people developing prejudicial and racist attitudes. Personal study skills improve significantly as pupils progress through the school, and their vocabulary improves through the emphasis given to using technical terms.

167. The great majority of pupils show good levels of interest in their work and sustain their concentration well. There are a small number of pupils, mostly boys, and particularly in Years 8, 10 and 11, whose attitude and efforts are unsatisfactory. Unsatisfactory behaviour is rare. Collaboration within group work is good overall. Very good cooperation between mixed groups of pupils in Year 8 enabled very good progress to be made with the construction of models of mosques. Most pupils answer questions confidently and a small number narrate personal views and experience effectively. Pupils mostly listen attentively to each other and respect each other's views, as was evident in a Year 11 class considering the consequences of their local authority urban development plan.

168. Teaching is good overall at both Key Stages 3 and 4. It is never less than satisfactory. The management of pupils is very good overall. Teachers use questioning effectively to draw pupils into the lesson and keep them involved and concentrating. This occurred in a very good lesson in Year 8, when pupils were questioned about Islam. Through effective questioning, the teacher increased pupils' knowledge of the layout of a mosque and the decor of the interior. Teachers' knowledge and understanding and their expectations of pupils are good,

other than in some Year 7 classes where they are just satisfactory. Most lesson planning is detailed and teachers use a very good range of teaching and learning styles. In one lesson, for example, pupils worked in groups to produce a presentation to depict creation. Teachers use assessment well in order to aid their pre-lesson planning, but also to check learning during lessons. They often provide different materials for different pupils. In discussions with a group of Year 10 pupils, the humanities course was singled out for its varied and interesting lessons. Lesson objectives are explicit and in the majority of lessons teachers review the progress pupils have made. In a small number of lessons resources are not well matched to the needs of less able pupils.

169.The curriculum for Key Stages 3 and 4 is broad and largely balanced and complies with the locally agreed syllabus. It is enriched by a good range of field studies and visits from representatives of different faiths from the local community. Information is incorporated systematically and effectively into the humanities course. The use of ICT in RE in all years is unsatisfactory. There is no RE provision for the sixth form as was the case at the time of the last inspection. This is an issue that the school has not tackled since the last inspection. Assessment procedures are satisfactory, though there are no arrangements in place to standardize judgments on levels achieved by pupils at the end of Key Stage 3. Arrangements for target setting for all pupils following the GCSE in both humanities and RE are comprehensive and effective. Professional relationships are strong. Development planning is well structured and very effectively focused other than for the professional development needs of non specialist teachers. Some monitoring and support arrangements are highly structured and effective in raising the standards of teaching.

170.Since the last inspection, the department has made satisfactory progress. All the strengths identified at that time remain. In addition, all the necessary schemes of work are now in place and the resources are now satisfactory overall.

### **Vocational education**

171.The proportion of pupils achieving grades A\*-C in GCSE business studies has fluctuated in recent years. In 1999 it was below the national average and lower than in 1998. The performance of boys slightly exceeded that of girls in 1999. At the intermediate GNVQ stage the most recent pass rates are at least comparable with, and in some cases above, national averages; at least one-third of candidates achieved merits in 1999. Intermediate ICT students' achievements were particularly noteworthy, as 80 per cent achieved merits. At GCE A level, standards of attainment in business studies are good in relation to the national average for similar schools. In 1999, 50 per cent of students achieved the highest grades A-B, which is about twice the national average. Results in 1998 were even better, with 100 per cent passes at A-E and 60 per cent passes at the higher band. The performance of boys was better than that of girls at the higher bands, a reversal of the national situation in all secondary schools.

172.Overall attainment in vocational education by the end of Key Stage 4 is satisfactory, though in many instances it is good. In business studies, pupils have a good understanding of business finance, and make accurate calculations of profit and loss accounts, demand and supply graphs and breakeven charts. They have a good knowledge of business vocabulary, using it appropriately in a range of activities, for example in marketing, or when analysing growth opportunities in the hotel trade. Attainment in the newly-introduced GNVQ part one intermediate business is satisfactory. Pupils can provide articulate answers to questions, and are prepared to challenge or develop points in class discussions. They use appropriate business terminology, for example in explaining the difference between customers and consumers, or in looking at aspects of the market and the environment. Standards in the part one GNVQ foundation leisure and tourism course are satisfactory. Pupils can explain different jobs within the leisure and tourist industries, and present their work effectively either in files or by using desktop publishing . Well-planned visits to local businesses and leisure facilities make a valuable contribution to all GNVQ pupils' vocational awareness and knowledge.

173.Attainment in Advance GNVQ by the end of Year 13 is overall satisfactory and in many cases it is good. A number of students are working at levels which could earn them a distinction or merit in advanced and intermediate course examinations. Students can put together good action plans, have good research and ICT skills, can organise well in groups, and have sound subject knowledge. For example, intermediate health and social care students can analyse data on fitness tests well, and leisure and tourism students can list in detail the

range of employment opportunities in those industries. In the advanced courses, students have good skills in planning, organising and running leisure events for younger pupils; they are also adept at researching and reporting on the activities of environmental health workers. Attainment in the key skills is satisfactory, with students achieving levels appropriate to their courses. Students integrate the key skills into assignments well. Standards of attainment for present students are also good. Students in Year 13 are able to present sound points of view on ethical marketing, competitiveness in world trade, or the differences between boardroom theory and practice when managerial judgments conflict with company objectives. In this first year of the advanced ICT course, students know the schematic of systems when analysing databases, and have good levels of understanding of the physical, electronic and intellectual structures of security systems.

174. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, progress is good. In Key Stage 4, pupils extend their knowledge each lesson and over time. For example, they learn about the range of legislation relating to consumer protection in business at a good rate. They also extend their ICT skills, mastering desktop publishing displays in a short period within leisure and tourism. They make good progress in written work, presenting it well, providing fuller answers as they move through the year and progressing as a result of the worthwhile homework. In the sixth form, good progress is clearly demonstrated both through portfolios and in the level of classroom exchanges between students and with the teacher. A number of students progress from intermediate ICT to advanced courses. In all the GNVQ courses good progress is evident as students improve their ability to organise events, such as a fashion show, develop new skills such as route planning, and make presentations such as that which they gave to Year 3 children at a local primary school about healthy eating.

175. Pupils have good attitudes to study. They make a definite choice to follow GNVQ after having it explained to them by staff and feel committed. The relationships with staff are very good and this contributes to their positive approach. They are keen to please and feel that the staff are doing their best for them. They enjoy the opportunities to be involved in practical work and role-play. They find the courses interesting, challenging and useful.

176. Teaching standards on vocational courses are mainly good and never less than satisfactory. This applies to both key stages. In many cases, the same teachers teach the range of vocational courses across the key stages, which helps progression, continuity and the maintenance of consistent good standards. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, and their enthusiasm for their subjects and the course structure are communicated to and shared by their students. Lessons are very well planned and prepared. They take into account the needs of the range of attainment in each group, and teaching aids such as worksheets are of high quality. In Key Stage 4, teachers carefully structure tasks so that they are accessible to all pupils. They provide appropriate extension activities to meet examination standards for higher level candidates. Teachers have very good classroom management. They give plenty of praise and encouragement, yet pupils are firmly organised and controlled within well-understood rules for acceptable classroom behaviour. They provide opportunities for pupils to express their individuality without disrupting the pace of work. Teachers give good written and oral feedback in both key stages and at all levels of work: there are many examples of encouragement, and of diagnostic and formative assessment. Relationships in lessons and outside are very good. At post-16 level, teachers are very good facilitators, providing individual attention to students but also ensuring that appropriate knowledge is communicated through whole-group instruction. The GNVQ sessions are carefully structured, with monitoring of time deadlines for assignments and appropriate encouragement for students to achieve at the higher levels. The quality of teaching throughout vocational studies is making a major contribution to the good standards achieved by learners in both key stages.

177. Vocational education is well coordinated, and efficiently and effectively managed. Communication, both formal and informal, within and across subject teams is good. Record keeping is meticulous. Care is taken with assessment standards within and across the vocational subjects and meets national requirements as externally verified. Individual students' strengths and weaknesses are well known to the teachers, and their progress discussed at regular meetings. Schemes of work are in place, as is a comprehensive programme of support and guidance for the teaching team. There are good formal and informal systems and levels of communication with colleagues in partner schools.

## **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

### **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

178.The inspection was carried out by 14 inspectors over 51 inspector days. They observed 202 lessons, spending over 150 hours in classes. The team met a sample of pupils from each year for about half an hour in groups of six to discuss a range of issues. Many informal conversations were held with pupils. The Headteacher was interviewed several times and other members of staff were also interviewed, either in their capacity as senior managers, subject leaders, year leaders or in a more general capacity. Discussions were also held with members of the administrative staff. The SEN coordinator was interviewed. A sample of books of three pupils of different levels of attainment from each year was inspected. In addition, books were looked at in class and the displays of pupils' work were also scrutinised. The inspectors observed over 20 registration periods, tutor periods and assemblies.

179.The inspectors met with a number of governors, including the chair of the finance committee. The lay inspector spoke with the educational welfare officer. The responses to the parents' questionnaire and the information gathered at the parents' meeting, which was attended by 21 parents, contributed to the inspectors' evidence. A good deal was also learned from an analysis of the documentation provided by the school, before and during the inspection.

## DATA AND INDICATORS

### Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y13	768	55	175	87

### Teachers and classes

#### Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	51.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	14.94

#### Education support staff (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of education support staff:	10
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	288.2

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes: 74.4

KS3 24

KS4 20

### Financial data

Financial year: 1998-99

Total income	1,800,488
Total expenditure	1,886,452
Expenditure per pupil	2,653
Balance brought forward from previous year	113,000
Balance carried forward to next year	27,036

## PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out: 768

Number of questionnaires returned: 179

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	22	67	8	2	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	33	58	4	4	1
The school handles complaints from parents well	18	55	20	5	2
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	18	65	11	6	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	31	55	5	7	1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	25	65	6	3	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	31	57	9	3	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	25	58	6	10	2
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	25	61	10	3	1
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	19	60	16	4	1
My child(ren) like(s) school	34	55	6	4	2