

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **JOHN WILLMOTT SCHOOL**

Sutton Coldfield

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103522

Headteacher: Mr R L Gittins

Reporting inspector: Mr C Sander  
4151

Dates of inspection: 22 – 26 May 2000

Inspection number: 187116

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Reddicap Heath Road Sutton Coldfield West Midlands
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R Evans
Date of previous inspection:	26 February 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr C Sander	Registered inspector	Vocational courses	What sort of school is it? How high are the standards? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils and students taught? How well the school is led and managed?
Mr R Folks	Lay Inspector	Diploma of vocational education course	How high are the standards? Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Attendance How well does the school care for its pupils? Pupils' welfare, health and safety Links with parents and carers Accommodation
Mr T Bailess	Team inspector	English, drama	
Mr R Hartman	Team inspector	Mathematics	How well does the school care for its pupils? Assessment
Mr P Scott	Team inspector	Science	How well is the school led and managed? Financial management
Mr J Harahan	Team inspector	Art	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? The quality and range of the curriculum
Ms R Robinson	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology Business studies	
Mr R Castle	Team inspector	Geography	
Mr A Grogan	Team inspector	History Sociology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities? Personal development including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

<b>Team members</b>		<b>Subject responsibilities</b>	<b>Aspect responsibilities</b>
Mr A Haouas	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
Mr G Spruce	Team inspector	Music	
Ms A Braithwaite	Team inspector	Physical education Equal opportunities	
Ms B Loydell	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
Mr G Harris	Team inspector	Religious education	How well is the school led and managed? Staffing
Mr J Waddington	Team inspector		Sixth form

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

John Willmott School is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils in the 11-18 age range with 1062 pupils on roll. It is bigger than the average size nationally. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals [14 per cent] is broadly in line with the national average. Ninety-two pupils have special educational needs. This is below the national average. Just under 90 per cent of pupils are white and there is a small percentage of black Afro-Caribbean and Indian pupils. Local selection arrangements at the age of 11 mean that the proportion of higher-attaining pupils is lower than in some other local schools. Attainment on entry has been below the national average but has started to rise. Courses beyond the age of 16 are offered by a locally-operated joint arrangement with two other schools. Just over half of the school's students subsequently enter higher education.

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

This is an effective school. Standards in the 1999 national tests for 14-year-olds were above the national average for similar schools and broadly in line with the average for all schools. By the age of 16, standards are broadly in line with the national average for all and similar schools and are rising. Standards in the sixth form are well below the national average at GCE Advanced level but above average in the range of vocational courses offered. Teaching is good at all key stages. High expectations and good planning are its hallmarks. Pupils make good progress. The new headteacher provides very good leadership; key staff manage many of their responsibilities well. Expenditure per pupil is above average. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

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

- Pupils make good progress and achieve well, particularly between the ages of 11 and 16 and in vocational courses in the sixth form.
- The attitudes, behaviour and personal development of all pupils are very good.
- The quality of teaching is good. High expectations and good planning help pupils to learn well.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' personal and social development very well; provision for both extra-curricular activities and vocational education is very good.
- The quality and range of extra-curricular activities are very good.
- The school cares very well for its pupils.
- It has strong links with the local community that prepare pupils well for adult life.

#### **What could be improved**

- Pupils perform less well in some subjects than in others at GCSE and results are declining in a small number of subjects.
- Measurable targets are not set for improvement in each subject at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 in order to further raise standards.
- Subject managers are insufficiently involved in the monitoring and evaluation of standards, teaching and learning.
- The legal requirements for information and communication technology at Key Stages 3 and 4 and for religious education at Key Stages 4 and in the sixth form, including provision for a daily act of collective worship for all, are not fully met.
- The quality of guidance to support the learning of GCE Advanced level students is unsatisfactory.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in February 1996. The most significant improvement has been in the quality of teaching. The key issues concerning unsatisfactory teaching have been addressed well and there is now more very good teaching. Overall, standards in the 1999 national tests at the age of 14 were broadly in line with the national average. Improvement over the last three years has been in line with the rate nationally. Standards have improved significantly at Key Stage 4 and faster than the rate nationally. Results are now close to the national average. However, there is a developing gap between those subjects that are improving and those where standards are declining. Attendance is slightly lower than at the time of the last inspection but has remained steady and in line with the national average. The quality of provision for religious education has improved but legal

requirements are still not fully met at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. There is still no daily act of collective worship. Provision to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs has improved. Overall, the range and rate of improvement has been satisfactory. The school now has very good capacity for further improvement.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	C
A-levels/AS-levels	E	E	E	

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

Pupils achieved well in 1999 to reach standards broadly in line with the national average by the age of 16. Results were lower than in 1998 but the trend of improvement has been greater than the national trend. The evaluation of the school's performance in comparison with similar schools has been adjusted upwards for GCSE examinations to reflect the below average standards of those pupils when they entered the school. Standards in GCE Advanced level examinations are well below average. They have remained steady whilst standards nationally have risen. However, many pupils start these courses with modest GCSE grades and achieve well. Standards in vocational courses are above the national average. The school did not quite meet its target for GCSE passes. Taken as a whole, standards in work seen were in line with expectations at both key stages and in the sixth form. They were above expectations in religious education at Key Stage 3 and in geography, music and business studies at Key Stage 4. Standards were above expectations in design and technology and business studies in the sixth form. Standards were below expectations in geography at Key Stage 3 and in information technology in both key stages and in the sixth form.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes are very good. They respond well to challenges and expect to work hard. Many take full advantage of the various activities available after school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons and at all other times is very good. Sixth-formers set a very good example. No bullying or harassment was seen throughout the inspection.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between adults and pupils, as also between pupils, are very good. Personal development is very good. This is an important strength of the school.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory. It is in line with the national average and improving this year. Unauthorised absences are higher than the national average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Good teaching is a strength of the school. It was at least satisfactory in all subjects, often good and very good in religious education, business studies and drama. Teaching was very good or better in 23 per cent of lessons. It was satisfactory or better in 99 per cent of lessons seen at Key Stages 3 and 4 and always so in the sixth form. It was good or better in more than half lessons seen at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and in three-quarters of the lessons seen in the sixth form. Two excellent and two unsatisfactory lessons were seen. The basic skills of numeracy and literacy are taught satisfactorily. The school meets the needs of all its pupils well.

The highly effective use of a range of methods across many lessons engages pupils' interest and sustains their involvement in the best teaching. Sometimes, where methods are more restricted, knowledge is developed but curiosity is not aroused. Individual target setting is used insufficiently. Teaching is nearly always well planned and teachers expect their pupils always to do their best.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality of the curriculum is invariably good. Careers and vocational education are very good. The range of additional activities is also very good, particularly in music drama and sport. However, the range and balance of overall provision is unsatisfactory because the legal requirements for information technology at Key Stages 3 and 4 and religious education at Key Stages 4 and 5 are not fully met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils are well taught, included well in lessons and get very good extra support. The needs of those pupils who have statements are well met. The effective use of individual education plans is inconsistent.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good provision for pupils' personal development prepares them well for adult life. There is very good provision for their social development, good provision for their moral development and satisfactory provision for their cultural development. Provision for spiritual development remains unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has very good arrangements to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety, including child protection. It works very well with its parents and carers. The monitoring of behaviour is very good. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory but there is insufficient attention given to individual target setting. The guidance to support GCE Advanced level students is unsatisfactory.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The new headteacher provides very good leadership. Key staff work well as a team and successfully encourage full staff involvement in the life of the school. The leadership and management of subject departments are satisfactory but the monitoring and evaluation of standards are insufficient. The school's values are strong but it has not published its aims.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Under its new leadership, the governing body has now established an effective partnership with the headteacher and key staff. It does not currently fulfil all of its legal responsibilities. It is now much clearer about the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school reflects well upon its practice. The newly adopted approach to development planning is excellent and has addressed previous shortcomings very well.
The strategic use of resources	Significant recent improvements in longer-term financial management have resulted in a much closer link between improvement planning and financial planning. The funding of the sixth form is cost-effective and specific grants are used appropriately. Staffing is well matched to meet the needs of the curriculum. Accommodation and learning resources are used satisfactorily. The school applies diligently the principles of best value.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school has high expectations of all its pupils.</li> <li>• Pupils make good progress.</li> <li>• Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school if difficulties or problems arise.</li> <li>• There is a good range of activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More regular and consistent setting of homework.</li> <li>• More guidance for sixth-form students.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees that the school has high expectations of all its pupils and that they make good progress between the ages of 11 and 18. However, at each key stage, and particularly at Key Stage 4, pupils' standards are sometimes inconsistent between subjects. The findings of the inspection do not confirm that, overall, homework is set inconsistently. It was a regular feature of lessons seen during the inspection. There is evidence to support the view expressed by a small number of parents about the insufficient degree of support and guidance received by some students at GCE Advanced level.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Taken as a whole, standards in the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were close to the national average in English, mathematics and science. The proportion of pupils reaching the national expectation, level 5, in 1999 was slightly higher in English and mathematics than when the school was previously inspected. In science it was broadly similar. The pattern of results over the last four years indicates that standards have remained steady since the last inspection with a degree of fluctuation above and below the national average in English. The trend of improvement has been broadly in line with the national trend.
2. Higher-attaining pupils performed relatively better in the 1999 national tests in mathematics but less well in English. Lower-attaining pupils did particularly well in science. Boys and girls performed close to the national average for their age groups in mathematics, science and English. They did least well in mathematics. Over time, both boys and girls are doing best in science.
3. In the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, standards were above the average for schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. They were above average in English and mathematics and close to the average in science. The proportion of pupils reaching standards above the national expectation by the age of 14 was below average in English and broadly in line with the national average in science and mathematics. Pupils' overall performance in comparison with similar schools was well above average in 1999 and better than in 1998.
4. The 1999 statutory teacher assessments in other subjects at the end of Key Stage 3 show that, taken as a whole, standards were in line with the national average. However, there was a significant variation between subjects. Standards were well above average in art. High-attaining girls reached very high standards in art. They were also above average in design and technology, physical education and information technology. Standards reached by both boys and girls were well below the average for their age groups nationally in modern foreign languages and music. They were broadly in line with the national average in history and slightly below it in geography. Girls did slightly less well than their age group nationally in geography. Where standards are highest, there is little difference between the performance of boys and girls. In the 1999 statutory teacher assessments for music and modern foreign languages the standards reached by boys were particularly low.
5. Taken as a whole, in work seen during the inspection, approximately four out of five pupils by the age of 14 are working at or above the national expectation, level 5. The proportion reaching standards above the national expectation is approximately one in four. A similar proportion of pupils is currently working below the national expectation. Standards are broadly in line with national expectations in all subjects of the National Curriculum except in information technology where they are below national expectations. Standards are above expectation in religious education because good teaching encourages pupils to question, evaluate and apply their learning. The standards of work seen in English, mathematics and science, are now higher than those indicated in the 1999 national tests.

6. Pupils are now doing much better in music and better in modern foreign languages than the 1999 results would suggest. There are several reasons for these improvements. Pupils' standards when they enter the school have been improving over the last three years. Good teaching, particularly the closer matching of work to pupils' needs, is improving standards in music. Revisions to the schemes of work have helped to improve standards in modern foreign languages but there is still too little use of the spoken modern foreign language in some lessons and the assessment of progress is insufficiently linked to the level descriptors within the programme of study. In comparison with last year's statutory assessments, the standard of work seen is not quite so high in art and physical education. One reason for this is that pupils have insufficient opportunity to contribute to the planning of their activities in physical education. In art, the final pieces of work did not match the quality of work in the sketchbooks. Standards in information and communication technology are broadly in line with standards at the time of the previous inspection, although in some subjects pupils use their skills well. Standards in history are broadly in line with the 1999 statutory assessments but those in geography have improved. Pupils of all abilities develop a good level of factual knowledge but are only just beginning to make critical assessments of historical evidence.
7. Attainment on entry to the school has been below average but is now improving. The standards of pupils entering the school at the age of 11 in September 1999 were broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of higher-attaining pupils is smaller than might be expected because there are two local schools that select pupils by ability at the age of 11. The school has experienced some difficulties in establishing comprehensive benchmark data for pupils at the age of 11. It does not set measurable targets for improvement at Key Stage 3. This makes it difficult to evaluate fully pupils' achievement. However, the evidence available indicates that pupils achieve well by the age of 14. In the 1999 national tests in English, mathematics and science, approximately two-thirds of pupils reached or exceeded the national expectation. When they joined the school at the age of 11, two-thirds of these pupils had below average standardised test scores. Pupils in the current Year 9 achieve well in mathematics, science, geography, music and religious education. Lower-attaining pupils achieve particularly well in science because of the level of challenge in the work they are set. Achievement is satisfactory in all other subjects. Underachievement was identified at the time of the previous inspection in several subjects. The improved standard of teaching has helped to remedy this.
8. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, performance was close to the national average. Forty-three per cent of pupils obtained five or more A\*-C grades. More than nine out of 10 pupils obtained five or more A\*-G grades, a proportion close to the national average. High expectations in teaching and the very positive attitude of all pupils, including lower-attaining pupils, contribute to these results. The average points score, 34.7, was also close to the national average of 38. Although slightly below the school's own target, this represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection when results were below the national average.
9. The 1999 results were not as good as the previous two years but there has been an improving trend over the last three years. During this time both boys and girls have performed broadly in line with the national average for their age group. However, the proportion of girls obtaining five or more grades A\*-C has declined from nearly two-thirds to just less than one-half. The proportion of boys and girls obtaining five or more grades A\*-G has been above the national average over the last three years.

10. In comparison with the results in schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, the proportion of pupils at this school obtaining five or more passes at both A\*-C and A\*-G was broadly in line with the national average. The proportion obtaining one or more grades A\*-G in 1999 was above the national average. This is a further indication of the care that the school takes to include all its pupils in examination success at the age of 16. The average points score in 1999 was below the average for schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. One reason for this is that all pupils follow the diploma in vocational education. Results in this course are high but do not count in the official calculation of the points score. The relatively smaller proportion of higher-attaining pupils in the school population further contributes to the lower points score. There was no evidence in work seen at Key Stage 4 during the inspection that higher-attaining pupils were underachieving.
11. Whilst standards overall are broadly in line with the national average and improving, there remain significant differences in the results obtained in different subject areas. The same pupils obtain widely differing results in different subjects. Over the last three years, pupils have done consistently well at the age of 16 in geography and science and almost as well in physical education, music, business studies, drama and history. The most significant improvement in standards has been in geography. Pupils have done consistently less well in mathematics.
12. The proportion of pupils obtaining grades A\*-C in English and science in 1999 was below the national average. It was well below the national average in mathematics. In comparison with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, standards were below average in science, well below average in English and very low in mathematics.
13. Standards at GCSE in 1999 were well above the national average for all secondary schools in business studies, drama, music and geography. They were above the national average in German and physical education. Standards were well below the national average in history and below the national average in art, design and technology, English literature and sociology. They were broadly in line with the national average in French.
14. In some subjects there was little difference between the performance of boys and girls. They both reached above or well above average standards in business studies, physical education and geography. The standards of both were well below average in mathematics, and below average in English and English literature. The standards of boys and girls in French were broadly in line with the average for their age groups nationally. Girls did better than boys in art and design and technology.
15. Pupils did much better in drama, geography, business studies, physical education, German, French and science than they did in their other subjects. They performed less well than in their other subjects in mathematics, history, art, design and technology, sociology and English.
16. There has been an improving trend in the majority of subjects over the last three years. Results have risen from below to well above the national average in business studies. Those in French and German have risen from below to above the national average whilst in geography results have risen from just above to well above the national average. In drama, results have risen from in line with the national average to above it. Although results dipped in 1999 in science and art they were above the national average in the previous two years in science and well above it in art.

17. Results in other subjects have declined. Standards have been below the national average for the last three years in mathematics and declined further in 1999. Results in design and technology have declined from above to below the national average over three years and dipped from just above to just below the national average in English. The standards obtained by boys in art have declined from well above to below average and those by girls from well above to broadly in line with the national average over the last three years. Results in history and English literature dropped in 1999.
18. The school did not reach, but did come close to, the challenging targets set by governors for the 1999 GCSE examinations. The average points score target of 38 was in line with the national average. The school achieved a figure of 35.
19. Year 11 pupils were present only for some revision lessons during the period of the inspection. Arrangements were made, where possible, to analyse a wider sample of their written work. A full range of lessons was seen in Year 10. This evidence in lessons indicates that standards overall are rising and are higher than the 1999 results would indicate. Overall, at Key Stage 4, in lessons seen, standards were broadly in line with expectations in almost nine out of ten lessons. They were higher than this in a third of lessons. Standards were above expectations in approximately one-third of lessons in Year 10 and in almost two-thirds of the revision lessons seen in Year 11. Standards in work seen were above expectations in geography, music, German, business studies and GCSE religious education. They are improving in mathematics and higher than previous examination results would suggest. Standards were below expectations in information technology but broadly in line with expectations in all other subjects.
20. Taken as a whole, when standards reached in national tests at the age of 14 are compared with GCSE results at the age of 16, pupils achieve well. The proportion obtaining five or more grades A\*-C is above the average for schools whose pupils got similar results at the age of 14. In lessons seen during the inspection, pupils achieved well in geography, music, business studies and mathematics. In all other subjects pupils achieved satisfactorily in lessons.
21. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. The literacy initiative, led by one of the deputy headteachers, assisted very effectively by the learning support assistants, has helped pupils to meet or exceed their targets for improvement. For example, nearly three-quarters of pupils in the current Year 10 had a reading age below their chronological age. In twelve months this reduced to slightly over half. Approximately half of the current Year 9 pupils had reading ages below their chronological age at the start of Year 7. This had reduced to less than one in five by the end of Year 8.
22. Standards in numeracy are good. Pupils have a good recall of the multiplication tables and are able to perform mental calculations quickly and accurately. All Year 7 pupils are given a nationally validated test in numeracy, and those with serious gaps are given well written and sensible individual education plans to enable them to fill these gaps. Some numeracy activities are against the clock, thereby emphasising speed as well as accuracy. By the end of Key Stage 3 lower-attaining pupils can confidently work out calculations such as  $80 \times 20 \times 10$  without the use of a calculator. They can mentally perform, quickly and accurately, simple addition and subtraction. Middle-attaining Year 10 groups can use their skills in mental arithmetic to calculate the values of algebraic expression. Higher-attaining pupils can use pencil and paper to complete more complex calculations.

23. Standards in literacy are also good. Speaking and listening skills are satisfactory at Key Stage 3, good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Listening skills are less effective in some mixed ability classes in Year 7 and in lower-ability classes in Years 8 and 9. If expectations here are not set out or observed clearly by staff, progress is restricted. But most pupils make a good contribution to class discussion. At all levels, they co-operate effectively in paired and small group work. Opportunities for pupils to develop knowledge and understanding through discussion and debate were limited in science, art and music lessons, however.
24. Standards in reading are good at each key stage. Most pupils are fluent, independent readers by the end of Key Stage 3. Close, analytical reading skills are further developed at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.
25. Writing skills are satisfactory throughout the school. A wide variety of written assignments were seen at all key stages, in particular in English, drama, religious education, history and geography. Staff in these subjects provide good advice for pupils on how to structure and illustrate essays with the use of writing frames. There could be more opportunities for extended written work in other subjects. There could also be greater encouragement of research skills and use of the library by pupils in some subjects, including design and technology, modern foreign languages and religious education.
26. Staff increasingly make a conscious effort to improve pupils' understanding of basic literacy skills. Lists of key words are well displayed and presented in most teaching rooms. Literacy is further encouraged by structured learning of technical vocabulary in many subjects including mathematics, science and design and technology. Teaching in modern foreign languages promotes a sound understanding of grammar. Finally, there is good additional support for the development of literacy skills for pupils with special educational needs.
27. Taken as a whole, standards in the sixth form are well below average. They are well below average in the GCE Advanced level courses followed by the majority of students. Standards are above average in the Intermediate and Advanced GNVQ courses followed by a minority of students.
28. In GNVQ Advanced business studies, half of the students entered in 1999 gained a distinction and more than half a merit in art and design. A similar proportion obtained merits in leisure and tourism and in health and social care courses at Intermediate level. Because the number of students following these courses is relatively small, results can appear to fluctuate between years in individual subjects. Overall, standards are improving with a rising proportion of merits and distinctions. They are currently above the national average. The improvement is particularly striking within business studies. Students achieve well in these courses because they are well taught how to research and organise their project work.
29. The average points score in the GCE Advanced level examinations in 1999 was well below the national average. Although standards have remained steady since the last inspection, they have not kept pace with the rising trend nationally. Only in physics do an above average proportion of students gain the higher grades A-B. More than a quarter of students did not obtain a grade in art, English Language and Literature, geography, history, home economics and psychology.
30. It was possible to see only a limited amount of students' work during the inspection as sixth form students were on a planned programme of private study. Standards overall were broadly in line with expectations or higher in nearly eight out of 10 lessons seen. Standards were above expectations in nearly one in five of these lessons. The available evidence indicates that standards were above average in design and

technology and below average in mathematics, geography, information technology and physical education. Standards overall were above average in the vocational courses.

31. Taken as a whole, students achieve well in the sixth form. They do particularly well in the GNVQ vocational courses. Many students start GCE Advanced level courses with modest GCSE grades. A number transfer to local grammar schools at the age of 16 and this reduces the number of higher-attaining students. A significant number of both boys and girls struggle to obtain the higher grades. However, the average point score within some individual subjects is improving. Good teaching is helping students to achieve well in design and technology, English, home economics and drama. The proportion of ungraded candidates is high in many subjects.
32. The rate of improvement is accelerating in mathematics and biology but remains uneven overall. Current trends and analysis suggest that the school is unlikely in the near future to narrow the significant gap between the national average points score and its own overall standards at Advanced Level GCE unless the current level of guidance, target setting and support improves.

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

33. Pupils' attitudes to the school and their behaviour are very good. Relationships within the school are of a high standard and personal development is very well encouraged with a wide range of opportunities being available. Attendance is satisfactory.
34. Pupils and students are keen to come to the school and have a mature approach to learning. They behave very well, concentrate well in lessons and work productively on their own and constructively in groups. They respond well to challenges and expect to work hard. The school has a positive climate for learning and the pupils and students respond very well to this.
35. In and around the school, pupils' behaviour is very good and on their many outings into the community they are a credit to their school. They treat each other and the staff of the school with respect at all times and make visitors to the school feel very welcome. They are polite and courteous and made way for inspectors as they passed by and held doors open for them during the inspection. Misbehaviour is very rare but was seen amongst a small minority of boys in design and technology. Pupils move from one lesson to another in a quick and orderly manner, despite the narrowness of some corridors. At break-times and lunch-times, they behave in a very responsible way. Sixth-formers, in particular, set a good example to the rest of the school and take part in paired reading and sitting in with Year 7 pupils. There is a general air of harmony within the school. At no time during the inspection was any bullying or harassment seen and although one or two pupils referred to incidents of bullying in the past, these were judged to be isolated incidents. The level of exclusions is low and similar to the level at the last inspection.
36. Many pupils take full advantage of the very good range of additional activities available at lunch-times and outside school hours. These opportunities range from getting the hall ready for assemblies to working in the Careers Library. One of the most impressive examples was a dance rehearsal. This was run by a sixth-form student with some assistance from fellow students, who organised the whole activity themselves. It was impressive to see a very large number of pupils splitting into groups and rehearsing by themselves without adult assistance.
37. Attendance is slightly lower than at the last inspection but is improving this year. It remains broadly in line with the national average. Unauthorised absences in 1999

were higher than the national average and the school is involved currently in a scheme to improve it. There is some lateness in the morning and this is subject to close scrutiny within the same scheme.

38. The vast majority of parents feel that behaviour in the school is good. The last inspection identified this as a strong area and the school has continued to nurture the family atmosphere, the good behaviour and the responsible and independent attitudes of the pupils in the school with a great deal of success. This is a strength of the school and makes a considerable contribution to the pupils' learning and their development as responsible individuals.

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

39. Good teaching is a strength of the school. It was at least satisfactory in all subjects, often good and very good in religious education, business studies and drama. Teaching was very good or better in 23 per cent of lessons. In the 171 lessons seen during the inspection it was satisfactory or better in 99 per cent of lessons at Key Stages 3 and 4 and always so in the sixth form. It was good or better in more than half of the lessons seen at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in three-quarters of lessons seen in the sixth form. Very good teaching was seen in approximately one quarter of lessons at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in one in five lessons in the sixth form. There was limited opportunity to observe the teaching of pupils in Year 11 and students in Year 13 as they were on a planned study programme at the time of the inspection. Evidence concerning the teaching of these year groups was drawn from the analysis of their work and the observation of several revision lessons attended by pupils and students on a voluntary basis during the week of the inspection.
40. The quality of teaching was excellent in one science lesson at Key Stage 3 where excellent subject knowledge, combined with pupils' very high levels of motivation, resulted in the excellent development of new skills, and in one instrumental music lesson at Key Stage 4. It was unsatisfactory in one lesson at Key Stage 3 in science because of weak preparation and in one lesson in modern foreign languages at Key Stage 4 because the methods used were ineffective.
41. Nine out of ten parents who completed the questionnaire before the inspection agreed or strongly agreed that pupils are well taught at the school. The findings of the inspection team confirm this view. Some parents had concerns about the inconsistent setting of homework but in lessons seen appropriate homework was set. It was a particularly strong feature within mathematics.
42. At Key Stage 3 the overall quality of teaching is good. It is very good in drama and religious education. It contributes well to the very good teaching of personal, social, moral and health education. It is good in English, mathematics, science, art, geography, music, and physical education. This results in a good quality of learning in all these subjects. Learning is less satisfactory in information technology because pupils had insufficient opportunities to apply their skills in the time available. In design and technology, history, and modern foreign languages the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Good teaching, the positive attitudes towards their studies shown by nearly all pupils and good standards of behaviour help pupils of all abilities to make good progress between the ages of 11 and 14.

43. At Key Stage 4 the overall quality of teaching is also good. Its impact on pupils' learning is very good in drama, religious education, music and business studies. Pupils learn very well in these subjects because teachers are highly skilled in the use of a good range of different methods to promote pupils' involvement and extend their understanding. This results in work that is imaginative and thoughtful in drama and religious education. Lessons in business studies are particularly well planned and the attention given to the needs of individual pupils is one reason why both teaching and learning are so successful. In music very good teaching results in very good learning when teaching is lively and the good use of questions encourages pupils to take risks. The quality of teaching and learning is good in mathematics, science, geography and in the diploma of vocational education. Whilst the quality of teaching is good in English and art, learning is only satisfactory in English because sometimes tasks set are insufficiently challenging. A satisfactory quality of teaching contributes to satisfactory learning in design and technology, history, modern foreign languages, sociology and physical education. The quality of teaching in information and communication technology is good but the quality of learning is only satisfactory because, despite pupils' good level of motivation and interest, the current teaching time over the key stage provides insufficient opportunity to develop and apply their skills fully. Overall, across their subjects, thorough planning and high expectations help pupils of all abilities to make good progress between the ages of 14 and 16. However, they do significantly better in some subjects than in others.
44. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good. Within the joint sixth-form arrangements, lessons include students from more than one school. Students from John Willmott frequently do less well than the other students at GCE Advanced level. The good teaching skills shown by teachers from John Willmott result in these other students obtaining higher grades. Teaching is good in all GCE Advanced level courses except in modern foreign languages where it is only satisfactory because insufficient attention is given to pronunciation and fluency in speaking. As a result students are slow to show initiative and confidence in discussion. Teaching is consistently good in general studies. In business studies it is very good because team work amongst the teachers is excellent and the particular needs of individual pupils are very well met in well-planned lessons. In nearly all subjects, teachers' good level of subject knowledge commands students' respect and promotes their confidence. Some students found the more formal teaching in sociology unhelpful in developing skills in discursive writing. The relatively high proportion of students obtaining no GCE Advanced level grade at the end of Year 13 indicates a need to monitor progress more rigorously and to set regular short term targets against which this can be measured.
45. The quality of teaching within the General National Vocational Qualification [GNVQ] courses in the sixth form is good and the teaching methods used help students beyond the age of 16 to develop good organisational and research skills when working on their own. This contributes to good quality learning in art and design and business studies at Advanced level and in leisure and tourism and health and social care at Intermediate level.
46. A good degree of improvement has been made since the previous inspection in the overall quality of teaching. The amount of unsatisfactory teaching has been much reduced. Whereas, previously, the teaching in one in every five lessons had been unsatisfactory, in this inspection unsatisfactory teaching was very rare. Very good teaching was seen in approximately one in five lessons whereas previously it had been rare. It was a particularly strong feature in the revision lessons for Year 11 pupils.

47. The particular weaknesses identified at the time of the previous inspection have been tackled well. Work is now well matched to individual pupils' needs in music at Key Stage 3. Setting in science has helped teachers match work more closely to pupils' needs but there remains a need to further improve this feature, for example, in mixed ability lessons in English and to extend the range of teaching methods in geography at Key Stage 3. Printed materials have been adapted in history for lower-attaining pupils but their use is inconsistent across the department. Sometimes, pupils are given too many at one time. This makes it difficult for them to sort out their ideas.
48. Additional funding through the Excellence in Cities initiative and involvement in the University of the First Age have helped the school to start to consider the learning needs of talented pupils. At this early stage, the impact is inconsistent across the school. There are agreed procedures to identify talented and gifted pupils in each subject area. Teachers are now more aware of the need to adapt their teaching and organise their schemes of work in order to meet their needs but only in art is accelerated learning, leading to early examination entry, a feature. Overall, there is insufficient provision of additional work in class or for homework to challenge the talented or gifted pupils identified by the school. They are better supported in business studies through the strong emphasis upon individual attention within lessons and additional opportunities such as Young Enterprise.
49. Overall, the teaching of basic skills in literacy and numeracy in different subjects is satisfactory and improving. The school has started to look more systematically at the teaching of basic skills across subjects at Key Stages 3 and 4. The methods used in teaching key skills within GNVQ courses are starting to influence this work in some subjects. However, the teaching of key skills across all subjects in the sixth form is unsatisfactory. Lists of key words are well displayed in most classrooms and writing skills are well taught in English, drama, religious education, history and geography at Key Stages 3 and 4. Good use is made of writing frames to help pupils to organise their thoughts in these subjects. Technical vocabulary is well taught, particularly in science, mathematics and design and technology. There are insufficient opportunities to develop thinking and speaking skills through discussion in art and music. To improve the quality of learning further, teaching methods need to place more emphasis on research skills, particularly through the use of the library, in design and technology and modern foreign languages.
50. Numeracy skills are well taught within mathematics and pupils of all abilities use them well to support their learning in other subjects, particularly in science, geography and design and technology. Teachers' knowledge and understanding about the teaching of numeracy across the curriculum is improving through involvement in a local education authority numeracy initiative. In mathematics good use is made of imaginative number games to develop mental skills at the start of lessons. Pupils have a good recall of the multiplication tables and are able to perform mental calculations quickly and accurately. By testing pupils when they join the school, those who need extra help are quickly identified and there are good arrangements to help fill the gaps in their knowledge, understanding and use of number.
51. Skills in information and communication technology are well taught in mathematics and science. Their use is encouraged in religious education. Teachers' knowledge and understanding in this area is good in design and technology, and well demonstrated in the highly effective teaching of control, but a serious lack of suitable resources limits what they can do. There are many missed opportunities to use information and communication technology within music.

52. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. The special needs co-ordinator and the learning support assistants have good relevant knowledge of the pupils' difficulties and have effective methods to deal with them. They are good at teaching basic skills, especially reading and spelling. The planning of each pupil's programme is very good, with subject teacher and learning support assistant working closely together. The link teachers in each department and the attachment of learning support assistants to specific subjects support this good level of provision. All teachers are well aware of the code of practice and have copies of individual education plans for pupils they teach. The use of the plans is sometimes ineffective because they are insufficiently adapted to the needs of the pupil in a particular lesson.
53. Overall, the needs of lower-attaining pupils are now better met than at the time of the previous inspection. This was a strong feature in science where high expectations and the pace of the lessons supported good levels of achievement at both key stages and in mathematics where the teachers' skill in getting pupils to think about what they were doing helped resolve any misunderstandings. This had a strong impact on the quality of pupils' learning.
54. The previous inspection report noted the unhelpful nature of the marking of some pupils' work. There still remains a degree of inconsistency between subjects. In religious education work is annotated with detailed suggestions as to how pupils can improve their future performance, but there are no such comments given in many other subjects, for example, in geography and mathematics. The school has recently completed a detailed whole-school review of marking policy and identified areas for improvement.
55. A well-planned programme of staff development has helped to improve teachers' knowledge and understanding of what they need to do to teach well and even better. The consistently good features in the teaching seen during the inspection were a good command of the subject, thorough planning and good relationships with pupils that were in nearly all lessons founded on high expectations. What distinguished the very good from the good teaching was the flair and imagination to organise the lesson in such a way that pupils were fully involved and challenged to think more widely or more deeply. On such occasions, the seventy-minute lesson included a good range of different activities with pupils working sometimes in groups and for other parts of the lesson as a whole class or individually. These features were reflected in the methods used in the teaching of drama, business studies and religious education and helped pupils of all abilities to sustain concentration and really get to grips with what they were doing. They were also present in the best teaching in English at Key Stage 4 and in modern foreign languages at both key stages.
56. Some aspects of teaching are strong in some subjects but weak in others. The very good use of assessment in drama and in the Advanced GNVQ business studies course is helping pupils to learn well as they know clearly what they need to do to improve and reach above average standards. Target cards are used well in Years 7 and 8 to help pupils to assess for themselves how well they are doing in mathematics. However, in modern foreign languages marking is inconsistent and makes insufficient use of the level descriptions in the National Curriculum programme of study. In English at Key Stage 3 it is used insufficiently to inform planning. In design and technology marking includes insufficient comment on what the pupil needs to do to improve and individual progress sheets have only recently been introduced. The very effective teaching of physical skills is a strong feature of the teaching of physical education at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Performance skills are taught well in drama at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 but not in music at Key Stage 3.

57. Some areas remain for further improvement. The most important is the need to establish clear targets for individual pupils based on a thorough appreciation of what pupils know, understand and can do in each subject at the start of each key stage. Teachers need also to become more skilled in the interpretation and analysis of the available data in order to monitor progress. This, in turn, needs to lead to more precise targets for year groups in each subject for the end of each key stage. There is a particular need to do this at Key Stage 3. The current investment in a commercially produced analysis of pupils' standards is under-used at all key stages.

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

58. The quality of the curriculum is invariably good. However, the range of overall provision is unsatisfactory because the legal requirements for information technology at Key Stages 3 and 4 and for religious education at Key Stages 4 and 5 are not fully met.
59. There has been a satisfactory degree of improvement since the last inspection but the time allocation for religious education remains too short at Key Stage 4 and involves too few students in the sixth form. Total curriculum time has increased slightly by 15 minutes to a 24-hour week but is still below the 25 hours per week recommended by the government's education department. Time allocation for two modern foreign languages remains unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3 and currently no pupils choose to study two modern foreign languages at Key Stage 4.
60. The policy to teach information technology and communication skills across subjects is carried out inconsistently. Control is well covered in design and technology despite limitations in available resources. Skills are developed and applied satisfactorily in science and mathematics. There are well-advanced plans to improve the overall quality of provision by September 2000 including a specific skills course in Year 7.
61. The equal opportunities policy provides equitably for pupils of all abilities. The only weakness is that not all pupils have equal opportunity to develop their information and communication technology skills. The Youth Award Scheme and the diploma of vocational education are important features of the provision that enable lower-attaining pupils, in particular, to achieve well. The school has identified the priority need to develop key skills across the curriculum and has made satisfactory progress in this area since the last inspection.
62. There is a good degree of balance and range in the common curriculum at Key Stage 3 and through the choice of two options beyond a core at Key Stage 4. In the sixth form both GCE and GNVQ courses are available, sometimes through consortia arrangements. Time allocations for National Curriculum subjects are broadly in line with national patterns
63. Pupils with special educational needs follow the common curriculum and are well supported across subjects. Provision is good at both Key Stages 3 and 4. There is good, additional provision to support the development of basic skills, in particular through additional reading activities within the learning centre. All pupils on the special educational needs register have full access to the whole curriculum and the special educational needs code of practice is fully implemented. The system of link teachers within subject areas supports good communication with the special needs co-ordinator.
64. Provision for talented pupils is developing, supported by the Excellence in Cities funding, but remains insufficient.

65. The quality and range of the curriculum is extended through opportunities for pupils to develop reading skills within form time and through the homework club. The curriculum is enriched through special study opportunities including revision days for Years 9 and 11 and such occasions as the Super Learning Day in July 1999. An extensive range of inter-form activities involves significant numbers of pupils of all abilities. There is good provision for residential activities with skiing adventure holidays, and residential courses for GCSE and GCE Advanced level pupils. Opportunities for participation in competitive sports are very good with both boys and girls competing within the area, city and region. A wide variety of well-attended clubs operate throughout the week. Each year the school has a major music and drama production with pupils from all key stages.
66. The provision for personal, social and health education is very good. The curriculum contributes very well to pupils' personal development and preparation for adult life, through the very good extra-curricular activities in music, drama and sports at all key stages, drama in lessons at Key Stage 3 and the diploma of education course at Key Stage 4. There is also very good provision for personal and social development through the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Approximately 50 per cent of Year 9 pupils and 40 per cent of staff take part in this activity. Health education and careers education and guidance are taught through drama at Key Stage 3 and the City and Guilds diploma of vocational education at Key Stage 4. Sex education and aspects of drugs education are well taught. Industry days have been introduced in Year 9. Careers education and work provision is a strength, for which the school has received quality awards. The Year 11 component of the diploma of vocational education involves 20 industrial tutors in a mentoring scheme that promotes greater understanding of the workplace. There are particularly good links with industry in business education. The strong emphasis upon the school as a community clearly helps promote social development.
67. Links are very good with the large number of primary schools from which pupils come to the school. The 'moving up' study unit in Year 7 now involves several subject departments. There are strong links with local businesses and with sports organisations. There are efficient and effective arrangements to provide good consortia links for courses for students beyond the age of 16. The school contributes well to the life of the local community through music concerts for the elderly and a broad range of community service in the sixth form.
68. Good provision for pupils' personal development prepares them well for adult life. The school cultivates high moral standards and good levels of social responsibility. The findings of the inspection confirm the parents' view that this is a strength of the school.
69. The school does not have a policy or procedures to identify how all subjects will contribute to pupils' personal development.
70. There is satisfactory emphasis on developing an awareness of pupils' own cultural heritage. Opportunities to appreciate the diversity of other cultures remain limited.
71. Provision for pupils' wider spiritual development is restricted. The quality of religious education at Key Stage 3 is good, with many opportunities for pupils to reflect and consider life's ultimate questions, looking at the beliefs of others and thinking through their own position. Opportunities are much more limited at Key Stage 4. Some activities seek to develop imaginative responses, for example, when listening to space music, reflecting on seed dispersal in science or superstitions surrounding the Black Death in history. Apart from isolated examples, the spiritual dimension is not being identified in planning and promoted in lessons in most subjects.

72. Morning assemblies make little impact on pupils' spiritual awareness, as they only take place once a week for each year group and do not consistently provide the legally required daily act of collective worship. The atmosphere is generally conducive to reflection but the content of assemblies seen did not develop this fully.
73. There is good provision for pupils' moral development. It is emphasised strongly in the school's behaviour and discipline policies, which form the basis of a home/school agreement, that all parents sign when their child is admitted to the school. Together with other policies against bullying and ensuring equal opportunities for all pupils, they constitute a strong moral code, which is promoted effectively across the school. The underlying principle is one of mutual respect for all members of the school community and this is upheld by teachers in their dealings with pupils. The expectations are that pupils will observe the code of conduct, be polite and courteous to others and work hard. Most pupils show such courtesy to visitors to the school, who are well received by those pupils on duty at reception.
74. The personal and social education programmes do much to build pupils' self esteem and consideration for others. There are good opportunities for pupils to discuss moral issues in a range of subjects, as well as in religious, personal and social education. In a Year 8 geography lesson on the rain forests of Brazil, pupils were helped to see the consequences of environmental exploitation. In a Year 9 history lesson on life in Nazi Germany, they were asked to think how they would feel about persecuted minorities. The history and religious education departments work closely together in the study of circumstances that led to the holocaust. Pupils' strong sense of right and wrong was also observed in their work in English and science, and their readiness to play fairly by the rules was evident in physical education.
75. The school makes very good provision for pupils' social development, both in the taught curriculum and in the flourishing programme of extra-curricular activities. Most subjects include opportunities for pupils to work together on tasks, and the quality of teamwork is particularly high in physical education, business studies and music. The diploma of vocational education for all, and the youth award for a small number of pupils, supported by high quality careers education, make an effective contribution to preparing pupils for adult life.
76. Mentoring by industrial tutors and an Afro-Caribbean group provides extra support. Sixth-form students act as informal mentors to younger pupils through the paired reading scheme, attachments to tutor groups and by serving as prefects. Older pupils help staff with extra-curricular activities and charity fund-raising, such as the recent collection for the Marie Curie foundation and the forthcoming sponsored walk for Oxfam, organised by the headteacher. Over 200 pupils were involved in the school production of the musical 'Anything Goes' and the cast and musicians benefited from a residential course to practise for the performance. The summer concert is an opportunity for pupils to take the lead in devising and putting on a show. During inspection week, a sixth-form student was rehearsing dance routines with a large group of pupils on most evenings. Half the pupils in Year 9 start the character building Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme each year during the summer Activities Week with an expedition to Wales. Many of them complete the bronze section during Key Stage 4 and some take silver and gold in the sixth form. Pupils elect their representatives to a School Council but this forum has not met in recent months.
77. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory overall. It has some significant strengths but also some missed opportunities. The extra-curricular programme provides very good opportunities for the cultural development of pupils, mainly through music and drama. Sporting culture is promoted well through the many opportunities for playing competitive games. The modern languages department organises a good number of exchange visits to France and Germany, and other trips abroad include

skiing holidays and art trips to the Paris galleries. Within the curriculum there is satisfactory provision for pupils to improve their knowledge and understanding of British culture. Multicultural education is much more limited. Jewish and Muslim culture is explored well in religious education, history and geography study different societies in place and time, and multi-cultural texts form part of the course requirements in English. However, except for the occasional event, such as the 'One World Week' some time ago, there is no regular programme to improve pupils' appreciation of the diverse cultures that form part of modern Birmingham.

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

78. The school provides very good pastoral support for the pupils and has very good arrangements to ensure their welfare and health and safety, including child protection.
79. The school looks after its pupils' welfare very well. Teachers know their individual pupils very well, including those with special educational needs. They are very much aware of their pastoral needs and respond to them in a positive and caring way. The school provides a safe and secure environment. Health and safety policies are comprehensive and a health and safety governor has been appointed recently. Regular building inspections now take place each term. Fire, electrical, and gym equipment are checked regularly. The premises manager has recently been on a risk assessment course and risk assessments have been started.
80. First aid procedures are excellent. The school has appointed a qualified nurse who is responsible for first aid procedures and has three qualified support staff and six qualified teachers in first aid to assist her. She is also a qualified counsellor and provides a valued service to both the pupils and staff. In addition, she has pastoral duties for both Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils. This is a good example of the care and attention the school gives to the pupils. The rest of the pastoral system is very supportive, starting with the form tutor and reinforced by Heads of Year. Child Protection is the responsibility of one of the senior teachers. He is assisted in this work by another teacher and very close liaison is kept with the school nurse and social services. There is also very close liaison with other outside agencies such as KWESI - which provides support and guidance for Afro-Caribbean pupils - the educational behaviour services and the Community Nurse. This close liaison is particularly helpful to enable pupils with difficulties to overcome them and take best advantage of the learning opportunities available.
81. The monitoring of behaviour is very good. Most recently the school has concentrated most successfully in eliminating minor instances of misbehaviour in class. The monitoring on attendance has also been increased recently through a joint project with the educational welfare service to improve the level of attendance, reduce the percentage of unauthorised absences and minimise lateness. This has already improved the level of attendance and is working well.
82. Parents feel that the school combines effective care and the promotion of high standards together well and this influenced them in choosing a school for their child. The last inspection report identified this aspect as a strong feature of the school and this remains the case.
83. The support and guidance that the school provides make a strong and positive contribution to the development of the whole pupil in terms of both their academic achievement and personal development.
84. The procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are satisfactory. Insufficient use is made currently of data to set targets but some subjects, for example English, make good use of individual interviews to deal with possible under-

achievement. The setting of targets is very good within the schemes of work in religious education at Key Stage 3.

85. In Year 7 and Year 8 the school, at present, uses its own criteria for reporting attainment rather than National Curriculum levels where appropriate. At the end of Year 9 National Curriculum levels are reported. It is intended in future to report in terms of National Curriculum levels throughout Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4 predicted GCSE grades and effort grades are reported annually. Predicted grades and minimum target grades are reported annually for Years 12 and 13. Insufficient attention is given currently to the setting of medium term targets for sixth-form GCE advanced level students.
86. At Key Stage 4 each pupil has an adviser with whom to discuss any problems. At the beginning of Year 11 all students, together with their parents, have an individual interview to review strategies for improvement. This has proved to be effective in raising examination attainment and work is in progress to extend a similar scheme into Key Stage 3. Whilst the school wishes to promote self-reliance amongst its students, the degree of guidance provided for GCE Advanced level students is unsatisfactory.
87. A weakness in the assessment procedures is the absence, in the great majority of subjects, of individual learning targets. These are important if pupils are to have self-knowledge about their learning. A start has been made at producing individual learning targets in English and modern foreign languages. There are some examples of good practice in the sixth form from English, Biology and GNVQ. A helpful whole-school briefing paper has started further consultation concerning policy and practice.
88. The school collects a great deal of assessment information centrally; much of it is stored electronically. The data includes Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3 and GCSE results, together with various commercially purchased assessments which are administered during each key stage and act as predictors for attainment at the end of that particular key stage. Also collected are reading and writing age tests and numeracy tests, which, in the case of special educational needs pupils, are all used as contributory evidence to inform individual education plans. Comparison between predicted and actual performance gives a measure of students' progress, which obviously reflects the quality of teaching and learning over a key stage. Although this data is used to identify underachievers, the gifted and talented, and those with special educational needs, the degree of its sharing and use by subject teachers and heads of subject is uneven. Its value is further reduced because few teachers understand how to use it to inform their planning. The data is also used to compare the performance between subjects and in some subjects the performance between sets. At present only a few senior teachers have received training as to how best to use the purchased commercial software that enables the data to be managed and analysed. Some departments, for example design and technology, keep electronic records of their day-to-day assessment.

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

89. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school and express a good level of confidence in its leadership and management. The school has built a very effective partnership with parents. It provides them with good information. Parents' involvement in school activities as well as regular meetings, have a very positive impact on the life of the school.
90. The parents expressed their strong satisfaction with what the school provides and achieves at the pre-inspection meeting and in the questionnaire. There were some concerns expressed by a small number of parents about sixth-form provision and the pattern of homework. The findings of the inspection do not confirm parents' concerns

about the regularity of homework but do indicate that some aspects of the guidance and support of GCE Advanced level students in the sixth-form provision are unsatisfactory.

91. Parents are provided with very good quality information about the school in a well-designed prospectus. This, together with the initial induction evening and regular progress meetings, workshops and annual parents meetings, and regular letters, keeps them well informed. Annual pupil reports give good information about pupils' progress in subjects and attitudes in the school but insufficiently identify specific areas for improvement in order to raise standards further. Home/school agreements are well established.
92. Parents are encouraged to become involved in the life of the school. Many of them show their support by helping in school productions, with educational visits, by helping in the library and providing transport and assistance at sports outings. They are made to feel welcome in the school and consider that the teachers are very approachable and helpful. The Parents' Association organises a number of fund-raising and other events each year that help to raise money to buy additional equipment and resources for the school. Their latest contributions are going towards buying the new minibus.
93. The effective partnership with parents identified at the time of the previous inspection continues to be a strong feature of the school. It makes a considerable contribution to pupils' progress and personal development.

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

94. Taken as a whole, the leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. They are recently much improved and the school has very good capacity for further improvement. It is now acting with a greater degree of rigour, building well upon its long-standing readiness to reflect critically upon its practice. There is a shared commitment to high standards but these are not always expressed in terms of targets. The rigour of its evaluation procedures needs to be greater. Parents consider the school to be well led and managed.
95. Through the very good leadership of the recently appointed headteacher, the senior management team has acted promptly to address the previous weaknesses in the school's financial management and improvement planning. It has established a more effective partnership with the governing body. These features of shared leadership and management are well illustrated in the recent bid for technology college status.
96. During the past twelve months there have been significant changes in the role and composition of the governing body. The governing body had very little involvement in the creation and monitoring of the action plan following the previous inspection. There is no named governor with responsibility for special educational needs and formal appraisal arrangements for all staff are not in place. The governing body does not fulfil all of its legal responsibilities, including provision for a daily act of collective worship and for information and communication technology. However, it is now much clearer about the strengths and weaknesses of the school and ready to act as its critical friend as well as its supporter. Whilst the involvement of local education authority governors remains poor, under its new leadership it has now established a very effective partnership with the headteacher and key staff of the school.
97. During the ten months prior to the appointment of the new headteacher, the acting headteacher and his senior colleagues successfully maintained the stability of the school but longer term planning was, understandably, delayed. They were particularly successful in maintaining the unity of staff and their high level of commitment to the shared values of the school. This is well illustrated in the adoption of an approach to

school improvement that concentrates on a specific issue and clearly distinguishes between what staff are seeking to maintain, improve and change. There was a very good degree of delegation and staff involvement as the school developed this approach.

98. The values of the school are strong. They are well expressed in the very positive attitudes across the school community. The school has a brief mission statement and logo but no published aims. Aims for the curriculum were drafted some two years ago but were not widely known or understood at the time of the inspection. There is, however, a generally good and widely shared understanding of where the school is heading. Until very recently there has been very little target setting and planning objectives have lacked rigour. As a result, it has been difficult for the school to evaluate its performance. Progress in this aspect of the school's management has been slow since the last inspection.
99. The school development plans for the previous two years has been unsatisfactory. It defined with reasonable precision what needed to be done, by whom and when. It also indicated training needs. However, the link between financial planning and development planning has been weak. The plans' targets were unclear and its monitoring and evaluation procedures very limited.
100. This weakness, identified at the time of the last inspection, has not been addressed until very recently. The bid for technology college status indicates major improvements in development planning.
101. The links between senior and middle managers are frequently good. The well-planned pattern of regular review meetings, and the precise recording of what needs to be done, are strong features that contribute very well to the very good quality of team work. The role of the heads of Key Stages 3 and 4 promotes a good link between the pastoral and academic life of the school. However, the role of the area study directors within expressive arts and humanities is ineffective and inefficient. Current practice is inconsistent and does not reflect the published job description.
102. Until very recently, insufficient attention had been given to the formal monitoring and evaluation of teaching through direct observation. Senior staff have now started to do so but there is no planned and recorded observation of teaching to assure standards by heads of subject. Current arrangements need to concentrate more on the impact that teaching has on the quality of pupils' learning and on the standards they reach.
103. Taken as a whole, the leadership and management of subject departments is satisfactory. It is very good in religious education and business studies. It is good in geography, physical education and in the vocational courses, including the diploma of vocational education. Monitoring and evaluation are good in these areas and very good in religious education. Careers education is also well managed. In these subjects and areas, development planning reflects the school's three stated priorities. However, there is insufficient co-ordination of target setting across subjects.
104. The development of vocational courses within the sixth form is well led and managed. The management of the guidance arrangements to support students' learning on GCE Advanced level courses is unsatisfactory. The concerns of a small number of parents expressed at the parents' meeting are confirmed. There is insufficient attention given to individual medium-term target-setting to support progress. There are no planned arrangements to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching.
105. The number, qualifications and experience of teachers and support staff match well the demands of the curriculum. The deployment of history teachers, which was unsatisfactory in the last inspection, is now good.

106. The school has a good range of administrative and support staff. These are totally involved in the life of the school through involvement in extra-curricular activities and visits as well as giving support to pupils within normal school hours.
107. The school has very good induction programmes for new staff and for newly qualified teachers. The programme includes mentors for new staff and a full programme of mentoring and training for all newly qualified teachers.
108. Staff development is closely linked to the identified needs of the school through the professional development committee. The in-service training provision is good and is effective in promoting good teaching and learning. There is an informal, open readiness by staff to discuss each other's teaching.
109. The school's accommodation is adequate. Resources have not been available to address some of the issues identified at the time of the last inspection. Available accommodation is well used but there are unsatisfactory features that do affect standards adversely in science, design and technology, art, drama and physical education. Accommodation is good in geography, religious education, business education and in the learning centre for pupils with special educational needs.
110. Except in design and technology and information technology, the school has adequate learning resources. Provision is good in art, geography, science, business education and for pupils with special educational needs. Senior managers make satisfactory use of the new technology to support their work.
111. Since the appointment of the new headteacher the school's use of its financial resources has been addressed successfully. The school can now look ahead and set clear priorities and targets, because the headteacher and governors are realistically aware of the directions the school can take within available resources. A basis for sound developmental planning has been laid to allow senior and middle management to address systematically the curricular needs of the pupils. Specific grants for local and national initiatives are well used for their intended purposes. The budget for special educational needs is well managed. The allocation of funding for the sixth form is cost-effective and benefits from current consortia arrangements with two local schools. Financial administration on a daily basis is sound and the principles of best value are applied diligently. The serious weaknesses identified in the last published auditor's report have been dealt with promptly.
112. The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory; the school's expenditure on each pupil is above the average for similar schools; their socio-economic background is broadly in line with the average nationally; pupils at all key stages achieve well. For these reasons the school currently gives satisfactory value for money.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

113. John Willmott School is an effective school. In order to improve further it should:

**Improve standards at Key Stage 4 in those subjects where pupils perform less well than in their other subjects or where there is a declining trend by:**

- identifying more precisely the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' work through marking and other forms of testing and assessment;
- monitoring regularly pupils' relative performance across subjects;
- developing the thinking and research skills of all pupils;
- developing teaching styles that encourage pupils to take charge of their learning;
- providing opportunities for the sharing of successful teaching through direct observation;
- meeting more fully the needs of talented and gifted pupils.

Paragraphs: 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, 48, 49, 64, 65, 88, 125, 129, 153, 186, 188, 190.

**Set and monitor measurable targets for improvement in each subject at Key Stages 3 and 4 by:**

- establishing clear benchmarks based on pupils' previous work in each subject;
- using this to confirm other statistical data created within school or purchased commercially;
- using National Curriculum level descriptors to help pupils understand clearly what they need to do to improve;
- including clear statements of expected standards, expressed in terms of what pupils will know, understand and be able to do, within the schemes of work for each year group;
- identifying more precisely what teaching methods work best to promote high quality learning and high standards;
- including targets in all reports in order to inform and involve parents in their children's learning.

Paragraphs: 4, 7, 18, 57, 84, 87, 88, 94, 95, 98, 124, 142, 147, 175, 177, 193.

**Involve subject managers more fully in the monitoring and evaluation of standards, teaching and learning by:**

- providing training for all subject managers in the analysis and interpretation of test and examination data;
- providing further training for all subject managers in the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of teaching on learning through direct observation;
- providing time on a regular basis for subject managers to analyse the work of pupils and students;
- providing further training in creating the departmental improvement plan with greater emphasis upon raising standards further and precise success criteria.

Paragraphs: 53, 84, 101, 137, 147, 151, 161, 177, 184, 214, 221.

**Meet statutory requirements in information and communication technology and religious education, including provision of a daily act of collective worship for all, by:**

- identifying clearly in the school improvement plan the steps to be taken and the timescales required in order to meet legal requirements;
- identifying where, in the current Year 11 provision, an amount of time similar to that currently used in Year 10 might be used for religious education;
- consulting more widely on the range of possible options to provide for all pupils a daily act of collective worship, including schools in similar circumstances that have solved the problem;
- including more detailed reference in all subject schemes of work to the provision and development of skills in information and communication technology.

Paragraphs: 58, 60, 71, 72, 96, 194, 214.

**Improve the quality of guidance to support the learning of GCE Advanced level students by:**

- improving the match of courses to students' prior attainment;
- extending the role of the tutor in providing guidance and support;
- extending the teaching of key skills, including study skills, to all students;
- providing clearer medium term targets and learning plans for all students;
- monitoring these plans against intended targets at least once each term.

Paragraphs: 27, 29, 32, 44, 85, 146, 174, 176, 182.

The inspection team considers that the school should seek ways to:

- identify more clearly the opportunities within subjects and assemblies to contribute to pupils' spiritual development (Paragraphs 71, 72); and
- improve the understanding and consistent use of individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs (Paragraph 52).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	171
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	42

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	21	39	36	1	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	896	166
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	126	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	7	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	92	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	20
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	36

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	8.8
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	2.4
National comparative data	1.1

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	98	89	187

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	59	58	55
	Girls	64	54	47
	Total	123	112	102
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	66 (71)	63 (70)	55 (65)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	18 (28)	33 (37)	17 (20)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	50	63	60
	Girls	58	59	58
	Total	108	122	118
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	61 (55)	69 (74)	66 (65)
	National	64 (61)	64 (64)	60 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	26 (11)	40 (46)	27 (20)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (30)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	97	98	195

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	38	91	97
	Girls	46	92	98
	Total	84	183	195
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	43 (49)	94 (96)	100 (97)
	National	47.8 (46.3)	88.4 (87.5)	93.9 (93.4)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	34.7 (38.0)
	National	38 (36.8)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate	
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and	School	190	74

the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	National	N/A
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### Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	30	44	74

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	12.8	11.43	12.0 (10.0)	4.0	4.2	4.1 (N/A)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (19.0)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (3.3)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	91.2
	National	N/A

### Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	42
Black – African heritage	10
Black – other	0
Indian	24
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	944
Any other minority ethnic group	40

### Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	6	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	2	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	4	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

## Teachers and classes

### Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	64
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.6

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	380

### Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74
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### Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	25.6
Key Stage 4	21.2
Sixth Form	17.9

## Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	2,804,676
Total expenditure	2,886,018
Expenditure per pupil	2,673
Balance brought forward from previous year	122,000
Balance carried forward to next year	81,342

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1162
Number of questionnaires returned	231

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	31	56	10	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	42	50	6	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	58	8	1	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	53	20	4	0
The teaching is good.	30	61	4	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	52	11	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50	43	4	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	36	3	3	0
The school works closely with parents.	31	52	10	4	3
The school is well led and managed.	33	51	6	0	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	52	7	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	42	45	6	2	5

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

### **ENGLISH**

114. In 1999, the results of the national tests taken by 14-year-olds at the end of Key Stage 3 were broadly in line with the national average for pupils reaching level 5 and above. At this level, they are above average for similar schools. At the higher levels, level 6 and above, results were below the national average, and also below average for pupils in similar schools. Within the school, pupils do better in the English tests than in science, though more reach the higher levels in mathematics. Girls perform better than boys in English at all levels, but the difference is about the same as that seen nationally. The results show an improvement on the 1998 figures, which were below the national average overall. Over the last three years, attainment at this age has varied considerably; for example, results were slightly above the national average in 1997.
115. At the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999, the proportion of higher grade passes in GCSE English was below the national average, and well below the average for similar schools. The results at this standard in English Literature were also below the national average. In both subjects, the proportion of pupils obtaining A\*-G grades was in line with national averages, but that gaining the highest grades of A\*-A was less than half the national figure. Within the school, more pupils gain higher grade passes in English than in mathematics or science. Girls again perform better than boys, but the difference is in line with national figures. Results were better in the previous two years, when they were broadly in line with national averages at the higher grades. In the sixth form, options were offered in 1999 for English Literature, English Language and combined Language and Literature examinations at Advanced level. Courses are taught jointly with the Fairfax School. The pass rate at grades A-E for John Willmott School students was below the national average in all three options. The proportion of candidates gaining either A or B grades was less than half the national average across the three examinations. Results were better, except in English Literature in 1998, in both of the previous two years when all pupils gained pass grades in the other options.
116. Standards in English on entry to the school are this year broadly in line with the national average, but in previous years standards were below average. Overall, there are fewer high ability pupils than would normally be expected. Achievement, in the light of prior attainment, is good at Key Stage 3; in 1999, most pupils improved their test scores to achieve results in line with the national average at the end of the key stage. Value-added analyses of GCSE results in 1999 show that progress at Key Stage 4 was a little below average compared with pupils who began their GCSE course in similar schools, though around the average when compared with other subjects in this school. The demands of public examinations help to maintain motivation and commitment for many pupils at Key Stage 4. In the sixth form, most students build on their work at GCSE successfully to achieve suitably realistic but challenging target grades. But in 1999, a significant minority failed to achieve a pass grade, despite high levels of individual support and guidance provided by the school. This was unsatisfactory.
117. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in all years, and achieve satisfactorily. They are well supported by special needs staff during lessons and clearly benefit from the help provided. At Key Stage 4, some pupils with special educational needs are given additional literacy support through work for the Certificate of Achievement, introduced by the school for the first time this year.

118. Pupils' attitudes to learning in English lessons are good. The great majority of pupils are interested in tasks set and make constructive contributions to whole-class, paired and small group discussions. Speaking and listening skills are satisfactory at Key Stage 3, and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Listening skills are less secure in some mixed ability classes in Year 7 and lower-ability classes at the end of Key Stage 3. When expectations are not set out clearly or observed consistently, small groups of pupils do not listen well to teachers or their peers. These lessons are less purposeful because of a lack of close attention. Oral contributions to classwork are generally better, though sometimes pupils are not sufficiently audible in whole-class discussions. In one Year 7 class, however, pupils showed considerable insight and maturity in a sustained discussion of drama work, based on events in the novel 'Chicken'. At Key Stage 4, pupils across the ability range speak with some fluency, demonstrating the ability to respond relevantly to literature read and each other's ideas. For those who choose to take the subject at GCSE, drama sessions develop clear and expressive speech. At Advanced level, most students are well motivated and show good levels of interest in discussions of literary texts. They generally put forward their ideas articulately, and understand the need to support them by detailed argument.
119. Standards of reading are good at each of the key stages. Throughout the school, pupils are given the opportunity to study a range of high quality literature by major authors, poets and dramatists. These include works by Shakespeare, Dickens, Hardy and Austen, amongst others, at appropriate ages. David Hare and William Golding are among more recent writers. There is also an increasing emphasis on the development of reading skills, and interpretation of texts written for different purposes, in a range of subjects across the curriculum. At Key Stage 3, the library is well used. Timetabled library sessions and time for silent reading help pupils to establish sound habits of wider personal reading. The school librarian is active and enthusiastic in communicating his interest in books to pupils. By the end of the key stage, most pupils are good, independent readers. They are beginning to come to grips effectively with written evaluations of texts studied in class. A paired reading scheme, where sixth-form students support less able readers, has been introduced. At Key Stage 4, analytical reading skills are developed further across the ability range through the study of novels, plays and poetry in preparation for the GCSE. Lower-ability pupils in one Year 10 class demonstrated a sound understanding of their reading of 'Macbeth'. They were able to distinguish decisively the main elements of character and the changing nature of the relationship between Macbeth and his wife. Analytical, close-reading skills are further developed in studying an appropriate range of demanding literature for Advanced level work.
120. Attainment in writing is satisfactory throughout the school. At Key Stage 3, pupils are provided with regular opportunities to write for a range of purposes and audiences: narrative and discussion essays, poems, personal and factual writing, letters and diaries. There is a sound emphasis on spelling, punctuation and grammar, as well as the importance of pupils re-drafting work and reviewing standards achieved. Technical accuracy remains a weakness for a significant number of pupils. However, there are now agreed policies on spelling and marking which apply across the curriculum. The use of writing frames in English and other subjects, including religious education, geography and history, helps pupils to structure their work appropriately, though these may sometimes restrict the response of more able pupils in mixed ability classes. At the end of Key Stage 4, progress for all pupils is consolidated. Standards seen in coursework for GCSE examinations were sound, though coursework forms only a small part of the final examination assessment. Essays for English Language in particular are well-structured and coherent, showing that most pupils make a considerable effort to refine and improve accuracy and expression when they have the opportunity to reflect and redraft work. In the sixth form, students write intelligently about language topics and literature studied, though essays could often be developed

in more depth, with greater use of textual detail to substantiate arguments. Standards of presentation in written work are good throughout the school. The great majority of pupils write clearly and present their work thoughtfully. Pupils are encouraged to develop word-processing skills, but the English department has no dedicated computer equipment and is able to schedule very little lesson time in the school's computer rooms. Opportunities to use new technologies creatively and to further improve accuracy in written work are lost.

121. The department has made satisfactory progress overall since the last inspection. In 1999, academic standards at the end of each of the key stages were broadly in line with the position noted in the last report. Whilst results at GCSE dipped last year, they had shown some improvement in the previous two years. The department has dealt well with a range of other issues raised by the report. A range of teaching methodologies is used, leading to more active learning styles in many lessons. Funds from the local education authority's Literacy Project have been used well to develop work on literacy skills. Writing skills are now satisfactory throughout the school, with clear evidence of progression from one key stage to the next. A wider programme of reading has been introduced, including the recent innovation of an after-school Able Readers' Club. Finally, greater attention to the importance of careful presentation in work is evident for the great majority of pupils at all levels. Constraints in access to computer equipment remain, however. Also, whilst the department has begun to promote some self-assessment of pupils' work, this requires further development. Individual learning objectives for pupils, particularly at Key Stage 3, could be more specific.
122. The standard of teaching is good throughout the school. This judgement takes into account not only lessons observed but also planning and preparation for teaching, and its outcomes in terms of pupil attainment. Teaching was never less than satisfactory in lessons seen. It was good or very good in 40 per cent of lessons at Key Stages 3 and 4, and in half of lessons in the sixth form. The best lessons were brisk, and clearly focused on well-defined learning objectives. Such lessons were carefully structured and progress against objectives was reviewed at the end. In other successful lessons, strengths were seen in teachers' good subject knowledge and use of a variety of methodologies, including the use of drama, paired and small group work, to generate involvement and engagement in the work studied. Teachers manage pupils very well and, in most classes, supportive and constructive relationships are forged. Homework is set regularly to reinforce and develop work begun in class. Written work is marked by all teachers conscientiously to a common grading system which has been explained to the pupils.
123. Relative weaknesses are seen in some lessons where time is not planned to best effect. There may either be too many activities to allow sufficient concentration and development of thought, or alternatively too long is spent on one activity and so pupils lose interest. The level of challenge in some cases was too low for the ability of pupils. In some mixed ability classes in Year 7 and lower-ability sets in Years 8 and 9, activities could have been more differentiated according to the ability of the pupils. Teachers could use the results of day-to-day assessment more effectively to focus on specific learning needs when planning lessons. Pupils themselves need to have a fuller idea of relevant National Curriculum and examination assessment criteria if they are to evaluate their achievements and make a successful contribution to their own targets for improving work further.

124. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The head of department is currently acting temporarily in post. She has made an effective contribution to the smooth running of the department. Amongst other things, she has introduced a lesson observation programme. This is at an early stage of implementation. Teachers' planning and the homework they set are monitored on a regular basis. There is also a commitment to staff development. More than half of the staff have attended some in-service training during the past year - particularly on examination and literacy work. A number of senior staff have considerable additional management responsibilities within the school. There are several part-time members of staff, and a number whose main teaching commitment is with other departments. Communication within the department is good, however. There is a willingness amongst staff to work together as a team to share and develop good practice.

## **MATHEMATICS**

125. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests at Key Stage 3, the percentage who reached level 5 and above was 63, which is close to the national average of 62 per cent. The percentage of pupils reaching level 6 or above was also close to the national average. The proportion of pupils who reached level 7 and above was 4 per cent, which is below the national average of 14 per cent. The difference in performance between girls and boys is in line with the national trend, with boys achieving slightly higher standards. Standards are broadly in line in comparison with similar schools. The trend over the last three years, in terms of average National Curriculum points score, is broadly in line with the national picture.
126. The proportion of pupils achieving A\*-C grades in the 1999 GCSE examination was 21 per cent, well below the national average of 46 per cent. The percentage of pupils reaching A\*-G grades was 93 per cent, below the national figure of 96 per cent. The proportion of pupils gaining the highest grade A\* was 0.5 per cent, compared with the corresponding national proportion of 2 per cent. In terms of grades A\*-C, girls reached a higher standard than boys, but the opposite is true when the proportion of grades A\*-G are compared. The first is in line with the case nationally; the second is against the national trend. Standards at GCSE over the last three years have fluctuated. They were well below both the national average and the average for similar schools in 1999, and below the national average in 1998 and 1997. Standards in mathematics over the last three years have been below those in English and science.
127. In the 1999 GCE advanced level examination, standards are below average. The proportion of students who gained A to E grades was 75 per cent, compared with the national figure of 88 per cent, but the proportion gaining A or B grades approaches the national average. Over the last three years both the proportion of A to E grades gained and the mean points score are consistently below average. However over this time the mean points score has steadily risen. The number of girls entering the subject is usually smaller than the number of boys. It is not possible to draw any significant conclusions about the relative performance of boys and girls at Advanced level GCE.
128. Standards on entry, based on Key Stage 2 results and other nationally standardised tests, vary by year. For the Year 7 pupils of 1999 standards are broadly average, but for previous years they are below average. The levels of achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs are good by the end of Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4 the achievement of pupils is unsatisfactory, with the exception of pupils with special educational needs, whose achievement is satisfactory. Achievement in the sixth form is good, relative to the expected standard of the students at the beginning of their Advanced level GCE course.

129. Standards of work seen are satisfactory for Key Stages 3 and 4 and also post-16. However, the test and examination results do not accurately reflect the standards of attainment observed at the end of Key Stage 4. The evidence of pupils' workbooks and lesson observations in Key Stage 4 shows improvement this year. Standards are now close to national expectations rather than very much below them. This improvement is further evident in the 'mock' examination results together with teachers' estimates of attainment at GCSE this summer. A great deal of work has been done within the department to improve standards of attainment. This has involved the careful monitoring of pupils, and, amongst other strategies, extra classes during the Easter break together with some assistance from the local education authority. The staffing changes since the 1999 GCSE examinations also appear to have some positive impact on standards.
130. Pupils of all levels of attainment make good progress in algebra. Lower-attaining Year 7 pupils can work with basic algebraic expressions and by Year 8 are able to solve elementary equations. Year 9 middle-attaining pupils systematically investigate the effect of the form of the equation of a straight line on its steepness. Pupils in Year 10 of the same level of attainment construct algebraic expressions to describe number sequences. Higher-attaining Year 10 pupils use their algebraic skills to construct spreadsheets to solve complex equations by trial and improvement, progressing to the investigation of the numerical differences between terms in sequences with the aid of spreadsheets.
131. Lower-attaining pupils in Key Stage 3 could achieve higher levels of attainment in basic fraction and percentage work. Higher-attaining pupils in Key Stage 4 need to improve their recall of trigonometrical and geometrical facts in order to reach a higher standard.
132. Since the last inspection the standard of teaching has improved. Learning objectives are now given at the beginning of every lesson and the lessons themselves are better planned and more focused. This has increased the quality of learning. However, although teachers are marking students' work regularly the feedback, written or spoken, is still not as useful as it might be as a means of enhancing pupils' learning.
133. The quality of teaching in mathematics is good. Teaching is always at least satisfactory and it is good or better in almost two-thirds of lessons. The effective use of learning support assistants, working with the class teachers, ensures that pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject, which give them an insight into pupils' misconceptions: for example, inappropriate use of length and breadth to find the areas of triangles, in a lower-attaining Year 10 set; where to place results which lie on the end of an interval when making filling in a frequency table; or common misunderstandings arising in probability during a Year 12 GCE Advanced level lesson. The very best teaching uses a range of methods and activities to inject pace: for example, involving pupils in active discussion by asking pupils by name challenging questions. This encourages full participation and discourages 'coasting'. A feature of many lessons are the questions 'How did you get that answer?' or 'Why is that so?'. Pupils are encouraged to think beyond the 'right answer'. Literacy is not neglected; all classrooms have word lists on display and teachers draw special attention to any new vocabulary that arises. Attention is also given to the best way to 'write up' an investigation, but some opportunities to encourage reading aloud are missed. Many satisfactory lessons would be changed into good lessons by an increase in pace, and good lessons transformed into very good, by an increase in the variety of activities.

134. An effective Year 10 lesson, whose purpose was to enable pupils to discover an algebraic rule, began with a quick ten-minute whole-class activity involving the substitution into, and the evaluation of, algebraic expressions mentally. The lesson objectives were then explained in suitable language. This was followed by a demonstration to the class by pupils of how to play a game involving the movement of counters on different sized boards. Pupils, working in pairs, then investigated the effect of further varying the size of the boards. Once this was completed each pair wrote an account of their work, including the algebraic rule linking the number of counter moves with board size. A whole-class sharing of results and conclusions followed, including the best way to 'write up' such an investigation. The lesson concluded with a carefully constructed recap by the teacher of the progress made during the lesson. This involved pupils in answering some challenging questions.
135. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes in mathematics lessons are always at least satisfactory and sometimes good or very good. This helps them to learn well. In well over half the lessons the quality of learning was good or very good. It was a feature of many lessons across all attainment levels and for boys and girls of all ages, including those with special educational needs. Typically, pupils are attentive to teachers' explanations and fully involved in discussion. Pupils become less involved in lessons where the introduction to the topic fails to interest them or lacks pace: for example, areas of a triangle which, without a context, failed to produce interest in a lower-attaining Year 9 class. In a Year 8 lesson on capacity pupils' interest was caught by an activity involving estimating the capacity of everyday containers. A higher-attaining Year 7 group, rather than being 'told' how to find the area of a parallelogram, spent a little time cutting up parallelograms in order to find the correct formula by 'guided discovery' - a far more effective and interesting approach. Pupils listen to the ideas expressed by others in the class and are tolerant of each other's views. Relationships with teachers are such that the odd slip by a teacher is politely brought to the teacher's attention, as in the case of a Year 8 lesson where the teacher momentarily confused price per unit volume with volume per unit price. These positive attitudes encourage effective learning.
136. Subject leadership and management have improved rapidly this year and are now satisfactory. Changes in departmental staffing, together with support from the local education authority, have started to address previous shortcomings successfully and to raise standards. The department is hard working and united in its desire to develop teaching skills in order to achieve this. The results of this are beginning to bear fruit, but teaching and learning are still monitored insufficiently. There has been some effective use of assessment information, including national tests, to highlight pupils' weaknesses and inform planning in order to raise standards. More widespread use of this type of information to a greater depth of analysis will increase standards further. The setting of individual pupil targets is another feature of assessment that requires development.
137. Groups are set by attainment but its current organisation results in a wide range of attainment within teaching groups that makes the precise matching of work to pupils' needs more difficult. Whilst there are enough textbooks to support learning in lessons there are insufficient to enable books to be loaned to pupils. Consequently, when making final preparations for examinations, they lack this support for independent revision.

## SCIENCE

138. At the end of Key Stage 3 in the 1999 national tests, standards in science were close to the national average for all schools and above the national average for similar schools. Fifty-five per cent of pupils reached or exceeded the national expectation, level 5, whilst 17 per cent reached the higher attainment levels of 6 or above. One per cent of pupils attained level 7, the highest grade reached. The trend in the school's average National Curriculum points score has been broadly in line with national trends over the past four years. In this period, standards reached by boys have been above the national average, and better than those of girls, which were close to the average. Overall in the past four years pupils have performed better in science than in mathematics and English.
139. At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results in the double award science, taken by nearly all pupils in 1999, were close to the national average. Slightly more than 40 per cent of pupils attained grades in the A\*-C range when the national average was 48 per cent. Over 99 per cent of pupils obtained grades A\*-G. This was better than the national average of 98 per cent. In both grade ranges the performances of boys were better than those of the girls and, in the A\*-C range, the difference was significant and different from the national picture where the proportion of A\*-C grades obtained by the girls was higher than that of the boys. In 1999, approximately 5 per cent of boys and girls obtained the higher A\*-A grades. This was about half the national average for the same grades. Compared with similar schools in 1999, standards achieved were below average. Following the last inspection in 1996, standards at GCSE grades A\*-C rose each year to 1999 when there was a significant decline in the pupils' performance. This was because the group of Year 11 pupils in 1999 were less motivated to learn and lacked the commitment of pupils in previous years. Evidence from the inspection shows that standards are now higher than last year but yet in line with those reached during the two-year period 1996-1998.
140. In 1999, all students entered for GCE Advanced level in physics and biology obtained A-E grades. However, the points scores for the subjects showed the standards reached to be well below the national averages. This is because some able students leave the school to joint sixth-form science courses at local grammar schools or colleges of further education and this deprives the school of pupils who would attain at higher levels in the GCE Advanced level sciences. GCE Advanced level groups are taught jointly with the nearby secondary school. The numbers of students from the school following GCE Advanced level sciences is small. In 1999 and 1998 no students were entered for GCE Advanced level chemistry and in 1997 there were no candidates in GCE Advanced level physics. The low numbers of students taking GCE Advanced level science courses result from the school's entry threshold which demands grade B minimum in GCSE double science. Some enrolled students move to other subject courses having found the science courses difficult, in particular the mathematics content, and others leave school. Some students following GCE Advanced level science courses enter for GCE advanced supplementary tests within the GCE Advanced level course. Standards reached at this level are well below the national average. In 1999, in GCE Advanced level biology and physics, the boys' performance was higher than the girls'. Since the last inspection standards in GCE Advanced level separate sciences have remained consistently well below the national averages.
141. Standards on entry to the school are close to the national average in science. The science department does not use standardised tests to establish pupils' attainment on entry or to monitor individual pupil progress in subsequent years. Results of the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 indicate that pupils make satisfactory progress in science over the key stage. Up to 1999, pupils' progress at Key Stage 4 was good and, in some years, very good. The group of pupils entered for GCSE in

1999 made satisfactory progress in science in the five years from their entry to the school. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress at both key stages.

142. Overall standards by the end of Key Stage 3 are satisfactory. Pupils have sound mathematical skills that they use confidently and appropriately when measuring and calculating. Written experimental data shows the correct recording of measurement, time and mass. Diagrams, graphical representation and recording of data are clear and comprehensive. A significant strength of the pupils of all levels of attainment is the care and pride in the presentation and completion of their work. The completed work of most higher-attaining pupils and a few average-attaining pupils is very high. Pupils benefit from the extensive levels of questioning which most teachers use to ascertain levels of understanding, retention of previous work and development of thinking skills. An increasing emphasis in the teaching of literacy, that is starting to build on what pupils have done in their primary schools, is helping pupils to read more carefully and write more clearly. However, their written work shows some weaknesses in writing for different audiences, for example, creative, biographical and extended writing related to science. The use of punctuation and grammar is good, with higher-attaining pupils paying close attention to detail, and lower-attaining pupils knowing the parts of speech but finding some difficulties in the spelling of technical words. The departmental policy of displaying lists of new scientific words and their correct spelling in each laboratory serves to improve learning.
143. Pupils involve themselves enthusiastically in discussion and experimental work showing that they understand the processes of learning in science. Pupils know, understand and use observation, classification, prediction, hypothesising, interpretation and evaluation to develop their learning skills. Pupils' learning is improved by their close co-operation and positive relationships with other pupils when carrying out investigations. In a Year 7 lesson, where progress in learning was very good, pupils worked well in teams to separate an insoluble from a soluble substance. New skills involving filtration, evaporation and crystallisation were learned and understood. In a Year 9 lesson, in which pupils used data-logging to plot a cooling curve of hot water, learning was excellent because the pupils quickly assimilated and used new skills in information technology to obtain and plot continuous scientific information. Pupils' progress as observed in lessons, in analysing their work and talking to them, is good. This is because the teaching is good, they have a strong inclination to learn and they enjoy experimental and investigative science.
144. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards meet national expectations. Pupils continue to develop their knowledge, understanding and scientific skills in all areas of the National Curriculum. The quality of written work is high for all levels of attainment. Some scientific reports on investigations carried out by higher-attaining pupils for GCSE assessments in Year 11 are of an exceptionally high standard. In these reports a wide range of skills covering all aspects of the use of information technology serve to enhance the presentation and accuracy of the collected data. Pupils' learning is helped by skilled teaching in which effective questioning to promote thinking, the use of models and analogues to simplify the understanding of complex scientific ideas and reference to relevant and related natural phenomena and industrial applications, play a prominent part. Some higher-attaining pupils find it difficult to apply their knowledge to new situations, for example when predicting whether sound will travel faster or slower in solids, liquids and gases. Aspects of literacy are extended to include note taking, descriptive writing and scientific reporting. Numeracy is well used as a tool to increase scientific learning. Pupils of all levels of attainment are expected to apply their mathematical skills to solve new problems. In a lesson where learning was very good, average-attaining Year 10 pupils were set the experimental task to calculate the electrical resistance of a piece of metal wire. In this lesson very good teaching stimulated the pupils and lucid explanations with a barrage of questions set them

thinking. High demands of the pupils contributed to them rising to the teachers' expectations and enjoying the challenge and momentum of the learning. In lessons where pupils listen attentively, learning is effective. In two lessons a very small group of higher-attaining pupils in Year 10 showed less maturity than many of their peers and younger pupils because they had not appreciated the need to listen and apply themselves fully to the work. Their lack of application restricted the learning of others because the pace of the lesson was adversely effected.

145. In the sixth form standards of work seen are above national expectations. Students work hard to produce project reports of a good quality using a very good range of skills in information technology. Some projects are models of scientific reporting. They are well structured with clear diagrams, and the results and their interpretation are recorded appropriately. The meticulous recording of scientific experiments is a particular strength. However, most students find difficulty in learning, particularly in the physical sciences where high levels of mathematical skills are required. Students apply themselves fully to their work and, with good teaching in which teachers' knowledge, understanding and experience are prominent, they make satisfactory progress and achieve well.
146. Since the last inspection, the department has made satisfactory progress in a number of areas. Teachers now use a wider range of techniques and methods. These have helped pupils develop greater interest, increased concentration and improved intellectual and creative effort. However, teachers have not fully developed their understanding of how pupils learn to be able to set individual targets to improve their learning. New science schemes of work with an emphasis on investigative and experimental work have been introduced and these have served to widen learning through a better understanding of the scientific method and the processes of science. Increasing use of information technology is a further improvement since the last inspection. Homework is set and marked regularly and most pupils, supported by interested parents, see the value in regular independent study as means to improve their learning.
147. Some strengths reported at the time of the last inspection remain. Pupils' attitudes to learning remain good. The quality of teaching reported as a strength of the department remains strong with the quality improving because teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding, their expectations remain high and their planned work matches more closely the differing levels of pupils' attainment, particularly higher-attaining pupils and lower-attaining pupils. Some weaknesses remain. Laboratory accommodation, whilst adequate, is unsatisfactory in some laboratories because services provide for the teaching of separate sciences and do not meet the needs fully of the introduction of the newer science courses with their emphasis on investigative, experimental and examination project work. Storage remains unsatisfactory. Expensive equipment is stored in cramped preparation rooms and unused toilets. A risk assessment on the storage of flammable liquids has not taken place. The processes of implementing, monitoring and evaluating new courses remains under-developed and schemes of work are incomplete making little consistent reference to the use of information technology, and not detailing information on opportunities for including appropriate learning experiences in literacy and numeracy. The schemes of work continue to meet the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum.
148. Throughout the school the quality of teaching in science is good. In nearly 60 per cent of lessons seen the teaching was good or better. Only one unsatisfactory lesson, at Key Stage 3, was seen. This was because the teacher did not succeed in meeting the lesson objectives and pupils' learning of the content was insecure. At Key Stages 3 and 4, teachers' knowledge and understanding is good. It is very good in the sixth form. This expertise is used to good effect in planning lessons, demonstrating and

explaining scientific phenomena and asking well-structured questions to help pupils build on previous learning. From Year 8 onwards, at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, pupils are organised into two broad ability bands of higher-attaining pupils and average and lower-attaining pupils. Approximately one pupil in three is in the higher band. The lower band has pupils of a wide range of attainment. This effective organisational arrangement helps teachers to match their teaching methods to the needs of the pupils through the teaching of modules of science related closely to the teachers' subject knowledge.

149. Teachers' expectations of all pupils, including those with special educational needs are high. Pupils in all groups are expected to follow the same modules with teachers closely matching teaching to the attainment range and using time and resources, including support staff for pupils with special educational needs, efficiently and effectively. Most students in the sixth form and at Key Stage 3 have a good attitude to work and they respond positively to the many lessons which have pace and rigour. Overall, pupils' learning is good because the organisation of teaching and the teachers' management of pupils are good. Teachers know their pupils well but they do not use the available information to monitor pupil progress closely and set individual targets to improve standards. Individual education plans for pupils are available but the targets are not always used consistently by all teachers.
150. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Close teamwork between teachers and technicians means that the work of the department is effective in delegation of responsibilities, planning, policy making, deployment of staff and management of resources. There is inconsistent monitoring of individual pupils' achievements, as well as the progress made by individuals and groups. There is very limited systematic evaluation of the quality of teaching.

## **ART**

151. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with national expectations. This is confirmed by end of key stage assessments made by the school. Boys and girls reach similar standards.
152. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards at GCSE are broadly in line with the national average. There has been a decline in performance over the last three years from well above the national average to in line with the national average. Similarly the proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades at GCSE has declined over that time and there has been an above average proportion of pupils gaining grades F and G. The proportion of girls achieving A\*-C grades is broadly in line with the national average while the proportion of boys reaching these standards has been below the national average. Higher-attaining pupils have the opportunity to sit the GCSE examination at the end of Year 10.
153. Standards at GCE Advanced level in 1999 were below the national average when more than one quarter did not achieve a grade. Numbers taking the examination, were however small. While the GNVQ results at Advanced level were broadly in line with the national average the GNVQ Intermediate standards were well above it.
154. Standards in work seen during the inspection were satisfactory by the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils show a sound knowledge of key words and use them to analyse the work of artists and art movements. They are able to use technical vocabulary when describing their work, can use a range of media creatively, can scale up designs and combine media skilfully. For example, in a 'modern maps' project, pupils were able to use water colour pencil crayons, with water paint and ink, to blend colour well, and in a similar project producing a personal business card the same skills were evident. A lesson developing drawings into three-dimensional card constructions began with an

analysis of Cubist work that produced a wide range of descriptions from the pupils. Subsequent observational drawings of a still life showed a strong sense of composition, line and form from the most able. The least able pupils' work lacked a sense of scale and form. Theme boxes developed in the style of Louise Nevelson by Year 8 pupils were inventive and, although examples of lively card constructions developed from Cubist portraits and some simple clay modelling were seen, it is two-dimensional work that predominates. Bold, colourful batik hangings based on the work of the German artist Hundertwasser were the result of Year 9 group projects. Sketchbooks are used well and consistently although there is a heavy reliance on photocopied imagery and second-hand source material. The use of information and communication technology is in evidence and Year 8 pupils have used the department's digital camera for portrait work developed in the style of Andy Warhol prints. All pupils are expected to use the Internet to gather information for homework.

155. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards are satisfactory. The more able pupils use their sketchbooks well. For example, studies based on a fairground carousel were impressive and filled nearly two books but the final outcome lacked the vitality of the preparatory material. Observational studies, often using pastels, are more in evidence, information and developments from artists' work are used well, but there is still much reliance on second-hand resource material particularly by lower-attaining pupils. A wide range of media and techniques are employed to good effect. Large low relief card constructions based on Cubist still life and exhibiting contrasts of form and texture are strong and clay character heads at best show lively modelling. Identified fast-tracker pupils are entered at the end of Year 10 for the endorsed options enabling dual certification by the end of Year 11. Pupils make ready use of the department's digital camera and scanning equipment for capturing images and the department has developed its own website where they can find project details, examples of images and suggestions for further research.
156. The department no longer offers GCE Advanced level although Year 12 students are occasionally entered for GCSE photography. Pupils taking the GNVQ Intermediate and Advanced courses develop work from a range of disciplines. The quality and range of experiences and outcomes shown by the pupils at GNVQ Advanced at its best is high while the Intermediate work is at a basic level. The majority of pupils produce satisfactory standards. Outcomes from vocational placements can be professionally produced and a wider use of information communication technology is evident at this level. The use of the department's computers for scanning and image manipulation and use of the digital camera is used frequently. A good range of provision is made for students taking this course. Projects, for example, are developed from an artists' etching workshop and as a result of one week's gallery visit to Paris. Constant monitoring by staff at this level ensures pupils are aware of short-term goals.
157. There have been a number of improvements since the last inspection. Two out of the three full-time staff are new to the department this year and are making significant contributions to its effectiveness. Book resources and learning materials have increased. The department has improved the use of sketchbooks as a source of recording key words, analysing the work of other artists and art movements and developing ideas. Each room has keywords, displayed prominently to support literacy development. Programmes of study have been developed relating activity to the work of artists and other cultures and these aspects are clearly identified in lesson plans. Increased use in the department's provision for information and communication technology is having a positive effect on standards. So too is the developing use of the department's website as a resource for learning. These improvements have yet to raise standards at Key Stage 4. Other than the fast-tracking of pupils at the start of Year 10 and Year 12, no clear system of monitoring and evaluating outcomes and practice, related to regular homework and class work assessments, is used for setting

individual targets at either Key Stage 3 or 4. A more formal system needs developing to inform both short- and long-term goals.

158. Teaching is never less than satisfactory, mostly good and sometimes very good in all key stages. This is having a strong impact on improving standards and the quality of learning. Teachers have high expectations, are able to communicate clearly aims and objectives, and lessons are well planned. They have a sound subject knowledge and display their own work as examples. Well-chosen teaching methods are a strong feature at both key stages. Careful introductions, supported by clear, well-displayed visual aids prepared before the lessons, indicate strong intentions and the pupils respond accordingly. An example was seen in a Year 8 class looking at the work of Gustave Klimt. A series of timed activities pushed the pace of learning along successfully. Closing sessions for reviewing work, reinforcing key words and learning points were used well. Similar methods were seen in a Year 7 class using recycled material for weaving referring to the work of Lois Walpole. Good outcomes were the result of clear instructions. Key words were used at the start and reinforced again at the end in a class evaluation session. Any low-level disruption was dealt with quickly and efficiently. Pupils with special educational needs were seen to be making good progress in this class. Classroom provision for teaching in the smallest room is inadequate and has a negative impact on learning for one Year 10 class. Progress is satisfactory in all key stages and schemes of work generally plan effectively for continuity in the short term. Longer-term planning is less satisfactory as the sequencing of lessons at Key Stage 3 may mean that pupils have large gaps between revisiting specialist material areas.
159. Pupils in all key stages have good attitudes to learning and relate well to their teachers. They settle quickly, are well motivated and behave well. Pupils benefit from the enrichment activities that the department provides. These include lunch-time and after-school clubs, artists workshops in school, life drawing classes and gallery visits both in this country and abroad. Visits are arranged each month and devised so that each year group is able to participate. Aspects of the spiritual, moral and cultural dimensions in art are often starting points for practical work but there is insufficient opportunity for reflection as part of personal development. The department's contribution to the diploma in vocational education course is significant, covering aspects of social and economic understanding delivered through the use of information and communication technology.
160. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory with some good features. Staff work together as a team and all have opportunities to teach at all key stages. Accommodation is satisfactory apart from the smallest art room that is inadequate for teaching full classes. The quality of display in the department is good but there is little art work exhibited elsewhere around the school. No procedure for the formal monitoring of teaching is in place yet to assure consistent quality. There need to be firmer procedures for using assessment information to raise standards and monitor more closely pupils' progress and attainment at Key Stages 3 and 4, including the setting of individual targets. Although the department is part of an expressive arts area there are no arrangements in place for the head of department to have regular meetings with a line manager to set targets and monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the subject. Lines of communication with middle and senior management do not appear to be formally established making difficult any department contribution to any whole-school aims.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

161. The 1999 GCSE results for the subjects within design and technology show the overall attainment to be below the national average for A\*-C grades. The results are slightly above the national average for A\*-G grades. The 1998 and 1997 results were at and above the national average for A\*-C grades. Results for 1999 and the previous two years show girls achieving better than boys. The 1999 results show pupils performing similarly in design and technology compared with the other subjects they study. However, overall, design and technology results at GCSE are slightly below some other subjects in the school. While there are some stereotypical choices at the age of 14, with boys in electronics and girls opting for textiles, boys are choosing food as an option. There has been a steady improvement in GCSE results since the last inspection, although 1999 results have dipped from 1998 and 1997. The 1999 results for A level design technology show almost one third of entries achieving a grade A and almost two-thirds of candidates achieving A-D grades. The results are above the national average for higher grades. Attainment in the GNVQ Health and Social Care course is broadly in line with the national average.
162. The evidence from the inspection shows that the standards achieved by pupils currently approaching the end of Key Stage 3 are generally satisfactory and in line with national expectations, although some pupils are below this standard. This is a similar situation to that found at the last inspection. By Year 9 pupils understand that designing and making are linked and the majority can follow and produce a design brief. Pupils develop knowledge of designing from Year 7 onwards and can use different practical skills to produce a range of products, with higher-attaining pupils able to show more detailed design ideas and a good finish to their products, as in the Year 8 mechanical toy product. Average and lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, work with tools and equipment satisfactorily, especially in food and resistant materials. All pupils employ graphic skills in their work with different components. Higher-attaining pupils produce a good range of ideas and show a good eye for detail in their graphic skills. With teacher guidance, lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good attempts to produce ideas, but these can be lacking in detail with not enough work of a sufficiently good quality produced over the key stage. At the end of the key stage these pupils still need a lot of teacher guidance. There is limited evidence of pupils modifying design proposals to improve them. While the majority of pupils' basic research skills are adequate for the work being undertaken, deficiencies in accommodation hinder development. Pupils use a variety of tools and equipment to mark out, measure, cut cloth, food, and file metal and wood. They have adequate knowledge of health and safety issues and wear appropriate protective clothing in the different areas.
163. By the end of Key Stage 4, evidence from the inspection shows standards to be broadly in line with national expectations, with a minority of pupils working below this level. Standards are higher than at the time of the previous inspection. Using their developing designing and practical skills higher-attaining pupils tackle some long and complex assignments for GCSE studies. There is some work in product design on developing a candleholder that shows good design skills combined with detailed research and analysis of data. This coursework is well presented and uses information and communication technology and beautiful handwriting. Some good information and communication technology is to be seen in the food projects on airline meals. A high percentage of the information technology is carried out at home. However, not enough work of this high quality is being produced. A minority of pupils, particularly boys, lacks the necessary basic skills and knowledge to produce quality work and achieve the higher grades. There is insufficient modern computer equipment to promote a high degree of skill within information and communication technology. The majority of technology projects show good literacy skills. The graphic skills of middle and lower-attaining pupils are unsatisfactory. Pupils through

both key stages have good listening skills. The coursework available from sixth-formers is of a high standard.

164. There has been a satisfactory degree of improvement since the previous inspection. Teaching has improved. At that time, pupils' were described as enjoying good working relationships with staff and this helped to ensure equality of opportunity for pupils. This is generally the situation now with regard to pupils' attitudes and behaviour, although at both Key Stages 3 and 4 there is a minority of disaffected boys who do not respond well in lessons.
165. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4 and good in the sixth form. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when the majority of teaching was described as sound with a significant proportion that was unsatisfactory. Teachers know their subjects well and impart knowledge clearly and with enthusiasm, for example, when introducing research methods and explaining how to devise a questionnaire with challenging Year 9 pupils. Lessons are well planned and there is good preparation throughout the department, helped by good technical support. This means that lesson time is well used for pupil activity. Teachers are very well informed about the pupils in their care and identify needs in their planning. This planning is proving effective in the classroom with the majority of pupils and raising standards, although a small proportion of boy pupils are not achieving as well as they might. Lessons are usually well structured with a balance of teacher input and pupil activity, as for example the challenging work on computer control in Year 9. Boards are successfully used throughout the department to guide and help pupils understand and reinforce their learning. A brisk pace of learning is maintained in the majority of lessons, especially work to be covered in the lesson. Demonstration techniques are clear, for example, when showing Year 8 pupils how to solder for the Steady Hand Game. In the best lessons, useful comments to individuals promote and sustain pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Opportunities for pupils to reflect quietly on their work are limited in technology, in part because of the design of the accommodation. Recording of pupils' marks is carried out regularly. Marking of pupils' work is varied; some being too brief to be helpful to the pupil. A well-thought-out scheme for assessment of pupils' work has recently been introduced, but is not yet well established. Storage of pupils' work is well organised and this helps pupil learning. Information and communication technology is underdeveloped in the department due to the lack of up-to-date computers for computer-aided design, although teachers do try to impart skills with the machines available. An example of this was Year 10's use of the portable e-mate computers to enhance promotion work on food products for the elderly and children. While homework is set throughout the department, there is a great variation on it actually being handed in on time. Monitoring of pupils' work is well established for the examination work at Key Stage 4, although undeveloped at Key Stage 3.
166. The quality of pupils' learning is satisfactory overall and often good in lessons. Standards range from above to below national expectations on entry to the school in Year 7. They make satisfactory progress because teachers have worked hard to ensure that the majority of pupils in all years have clear routines for working during lessons, and especially in practical work. Good classroom organisation of pupils into groups and collaborative work ensure good co-operation on tasks and effective learning for the majority over the key stages. New schemes of work have been developed since the last inspection and these provide opportunities for pupils of all abilities and interests to acquire a wide range of skills. With the help of their teachers, lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress across both key stages because there is scope in the curriculum to produce ideas and achieve satisfactory standards in making things. Pupils in Year 10 talk easily and informatively about developing storage projects. A minority of pupils at Key Stage 3 and 4, mainly boys, has undeveloped learning skills. Higher-attaining, and

some middle-attaining, pupils can organise their work for themselves. Key words are well displayed around the department and technical language is used well by the higher attainers in oral answers and coursework.

167. Leadership and management in this subject are satisfactory. Team work is good and encourages similar skills in the pupils. The requirements of the National Curriculum are met. The monitoring and evaluation of standards and the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. Resources are generally adequate, except for equipment for computer-assisted making and design, computerised sewing machines and equipment for graphics. The run-down accommodation has an adverse effect on the quality of pupils' learning.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

168. Attainment in the 1999 teacher assessments at the age of 14 was below national average. Fifty-three per cent of pupils achieved the national expectation. Sixty per cent did so nationally. In the 1999 GCSE examination, the proportion of pupils achieving A\*-C grades was significantly above the national averages, with a small cohort of 16 girls achieving a significant proportion of high grades. This cohort of girls outperforms the large cohort of boys. Seventy-six per cent of pupils achieve A\*-C grades. Fifty-three per cent reach this standard nationally. All pupils taking GCSE obtained A\*-G grades.
169. Over the past three years there has been a significant improvement in GCSE results. Pupils' performance compares very favourably with the results they achieve in other subjects. The improvement in standards has been greater in geography than in any other subject.
170. In 1999, pupils studying GCE Advanced level achieve below the national average. Twenty-one per cent obtained grades A and B. Thirty-four per cent of students did so nationally. Eighty-four per cent of students obtained A-E grades whereas 91 per cent did so nationally.
171. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards achieved at the age of 14 are broadly in line with levels expected of pupils of the same age nationally. This is supported by the predicted teacher assessments for 2000. By the age of 14, pupils show good knowledge of map work, map symbols and the application of these skills as they start to use, and a few to interpret, data. They show a good understanding of Japan, its location in relation to the United Kingdom, the differences of climate, population, culture and physical features. Low-attaining pupils work out the time differences between London and Tokyo. High-attaining pupils start to appreciate how the physical aspects of mountains, earthquakes and typhoons constrain the development of Japan's housing and infrastructure. Literacy skills are in line with expectations, and there is good achievement from many pupils in a range of writing. Similarly, numeracy skills are successfully developed and contribute to better understanding when, for example, pupils work out different times about the world. There was no evidence seen in lessons to suggest any difference in boys' and girls' achievement.
172. In the work seen during the inspection the standards achieved at the age of 16 are above the levels expected of pupils of the same age. By the age of 16, all pupils including those with special educational needs show a basic understanding of tourism as seen through their fieldwork undertaken in the Peak District. When studying Tanzania, they show a good understanding of the poverty line and how those people above the line can afford luxuries and those below the poverty line lack the basic essentials for living. Pupils consider human development indices like infant mortality, birth rates, and adult literacy that measure the less economically developed countries

against the more economically developed countries. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress as they move through the key stage. They build successfully on the skills and knowledge learned in Key Stage 3. They start to combine their knowledge and skills in order to consider concepts and geographical issues, for example the conflict of protection of the environment balanced with the needs to provide water and stone for building. Higher-attaining pupils' notes are well organised, with well-drawn diagrams and sketch maps that help understanding. The best coursework is at the highest levels; the key points are well made, often through diagrams, annotated photographs, sketches and maps. The best coursework is often enhanced with good use of computers for presentation. Conclusions are firmly based on evidence gathered in fieldwork or research work. The less successful studies and coursework tend to be descriptive rather than analytical. Literacy and numeracy skills continue to support and enhance the work. There was no evidence seen in lessons to suggest any difference in boys' and girls' achievements.

173. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards achieved in the sixth form are below the level expected of students of the same age nationally. Pupils are starting to link successfully their knowledge and understanding of concepts in order to understand the different issues, which cause crises in cities in less economically developed countries. They show a good understanding of the push and pull factors of migration to cities, for example Rio de Janeiro, and the consequences of this migration. Year 13 students' fieldwork shows weaknesses in preparing hypotheses, evaluating the evidence and making conclusions; consequently they achieve below the national expectation. Performance data over the last three years show that pupils studying geography barely make satisfactory progress in relation to their ability. The department is well enhanced with a range of good displays of pupils' work, including photographs and material that gives good insight into fieldwork activities.
174. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. The commitment, hard work and experience of the teachers ensure a sound experience of geography for pupils. There is good thorough organisation and administration of the department. New young staff have contributed well to the success of the department. There has been an improvement in the quality of teaching and learning which has raised pupils' attainment. This has helped in addressing one of the key issues of the last inspection. However, assessment procedures still need to be developed further in order to target specific pupils to further raise levels of attainment. A significant improvement has been made in the development of the fieldwork including some residential trips especially at Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. This gives pupils good first-hand experience of geographical enquiry. However, there are an insufficient number of teaching strategies especially in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form; the range of tasks are not fully developed in order to meet the needs of all pupils; and enquiry though information technology is underdeveloped.
175. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning are good at both key stages and in the sixth form. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teaching has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Teachers show very good knowledge, understanding and application of their subject, for example, knowledge of rural push and urban pull when studying migration. This in-depth knowledge enables teachers to question in order to challenge pupils' own knowledge and understanding and consequently extend their horizons. A good quality question and answer session, based on a video clip, as well as good pace, give opportunities to extend pupils' learning. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils' work and behaviour. They ensure that pupils in Years 7 and 8 learn basic geographical skills and use the correct geographical vocabulary. For example, simple well-drawn diagrams and sketch map are labelled appropriately and spider diagrams are well laid out in order to categorise brainstorming ideas. Pupils illustrate their work effectively with charts and pie graphs to represent simple data. Most pupils

listen and contribute well to question and answer sessions. Challenging questions make Year 8 pupils consider important ethical and moral issues about exploitation of the rain forests of Brazil. Geography contributes to the appreciation of cultural diversity and the richness of other cultures; for example, when studying Japan and Brazil. Planning is good and systematic, ensuring progression and continuity across both key stages.

A wide range of good resources including videos, textbooks, maps and atlases are used in most lessons; a particular strength is the quality of information, task sheets and revision sheets. Teaching methods are generally satisfactory, although, at times they are inappropriate, as pupils are insufficiently involved in their learning and become too reliant upon their teacher. This slows learning, especially in the sixth form. The strength of the teaching is a blend of high expectations, good specialist knowledge and understanding, and good thorough planning. These factors are further supported by good, and often very good, relationships between teachers and pupils, which further enhance the learning environment. As a consequence, all pupils, including those with learning difficulties, make good progress in their learning in both key stages. However, in the sixth form they only make satisfactory progress. Pupils show a good acquisition of geographical skill and knowledge in Years 7, 8 and 9. These are developed further so that pupils in Years 10 and 11 start to develop geographical concepts. However, the development of linking physical, human and political geography is an area that is in need of further development in Key Stage 4 and sixth form. In all lessons throughout the key stages, pupils with special educational needs are integrated well into lessons and make progress in line with their peers.

176. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department shows a clear educational direction for the development of the subject; he is very supportive of team members. Departmental documentation is good and clear. This documentation ensures progression and the development for learning. Geography makes a good contribution to the pupils' moral, social and cultural development, with the tackling of moral issues as a particular strength. However, the departmental development plan is insufficiently developed for measuring outcomes especially those of pupils. At present, the use of information and communication technology is less well developed and this constrains the development of geographical enquiry. The use of assessment information and data, in order to monitor pupils' progress and to measure the effectiveness of teaching and learning, is undeveloped. The department works well together as a team; is well motivated and committed to raising standards.

## **HISTORY**

177. Standards in the 1999 statutory teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 were broadly in line with the national average. Boys did slightly better than their age group nationally. In 1999, GCSE results in history were well below the national average for the first time in five years, with only a third of the candidates achieving grades A-C. Girls did as well in history as in the average of all their other subjects but boys did worse. In the previous two years the results had been around the national average with no significant gender difference. At A level, 1999 was a good year for results in history. After two years of few candidates and poor results, all eight students entered passed, with an average points score that was not far off the national average.
178. Year 9 pupils entered the school with below average standards of literacy in Year 7 and their attainment in history at the end of the key stage is in line with national expectations. They are making satisfactory progress overall, showing good knowledge of their study of twentieth century history. Pupils are able to use historical sources successfully for information and select what they need for tasks, such as the Year 8 class that were preparing newspaper articles on the plague from the standpoint

of medicine or witchcraft. By Year 9 they are beginning to look critically at evidence for possible bias, as in a lesson on the bombing of Dresden, where higher-attaining pupils were able to criticise the official version of events. Lower-attaining pupils struggle when presented with too many pieces of evidence to process. They need to be given more opportunity to engage in small group discussion to help them think through the questions raised by historical sources. The use of writing frames is helping pupils to plan essays and progress from potted biographies of Hitler to more discursive writing on his policies. Displays of work show some pupils are producing full answers to assignments but others are not writing at length and investigating topics further on their own. Their ability to explain the causes and consequences of events needs further development.

179. At Key Stage 4 attainment is more in line with national expectations than last year's results, which were a departure from the usual standard. Teachers have identified the reasons for the drop in standards and have targeted more practice in analysing sources with this year's candidates. A well-structured approach to coursework on Northern Ireland, breaking it down into sections, making difficult sources more accessible through focused exercises and commenting on their first drafts, is producing good results that show this year's candidates are up to the expected standard. Understanding of the views of different groups to the Good Friday agreement was less secure in a Year 10 lesson, where pupils lacked confidence in representing the various factions, relying too much on teacher exposition of the situation. Pupils are covering the topics thoroughly in their notes and benefiting from the time that teachers are able to give them in the small teaching groups.
180. It was not possible to see evidence of the work of the Year 13 pupils, as they were on examination leave, but the level of attainment of those in Year 12 is in line with national expectations for pupils half way through the A level course. The work in their files shows a conscientious approach to their studies, covering topics thoroughly with notes. Essays are well argued, but could be more focused on issues than narrative, and include reference to views of historians, that demonstrate wider reading. In a lesson on the arguments for and against Gladstone's policy on Ireland, pupils demonstrated their ability to debate the question, support their views with relevant evidence and reach reasoned conclusions.
181. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. It has increased its use of historical source material in teaching the subject at Key Stage 3, presenting pupils with a greater academic challenge, if overloading lower-attaining pupils. Teachers need to give more thought to progression in the use and analysis of evidence, and graduate the work in each year accordingly. This needs to be clearly communicated to pupils and individual targets set, so that they know what they have to do to reach levels 5 and above of the attainment target for history. The recent focus on literacy in the school is being used to good effect in history, enabling pupils to understand more difficult texts and improve their written assignments. New schemes of work have indicated how materials and activities can be adapted to suit the needs of pupils at different levels of attainment but, in practice, there is not yet a consistent match of tasks to pupils' ability. Teachers have continued to make improvements to examination courses and they now have texts at two levels to support the work.
182. Taken as a whole, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It is satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4 and good in the sixth form. In all lessons seen during the inspection it was at least satisfactory and good or better in half of them. Teachers know their subject well and plan lessons thoroughly, stating their objectives clearly at the start and reviewing them at the end. They make good use of resources, particularly historical evidence, and set challenging tasks which make pupils think, such as preparing Year 9 pupils for the type of historical essays they will encounter at

GCSE. In some lessons there is not enough variety of activity for pupils in the double period and not enough interaction between them to allow them to take more initiative over their learning, with resulting lapses in concentration. Pupils are interested in history but many do not engage with the subject sufficiently to be keen enough to pursue it further to GCSE. Where pupils are given scope for independent learning, as in a Year 8 lesson preparing their own choice of items for a database of people and events in the English civil war, they respond with enthusiasm. On the examination courses the teaching is thorough and pupils receive valuable guidance over coursework, which raises the standard of their work. The danger here is that teachers do too much for their pupils, rather than enabling them to take more responsibility for their learning. Pupils who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

183. The leadership and management of the subject are sound, with effective collaboration between the subject and line managers. They have rightly identified the need for a greater emphasis on pupil learning as the way to increase understanding and enjoyment of history. The teachers work well together as a team, but other responsibilities limit the time they can give to developing the subject. Monitoring of teaching is informal and monitoring of pupils' learning at Key Stage 3 needs to cover the whole range of history skills to ensure that they are on course to achieve their target grades. Greater precision over what is expected of pupils in each year group and the promotion of a greater variety of learning styles are both required if standards are to rise further.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

184. Taken as a whole, standards achieved by pupils currently approaching the end of Key Stage 3 in information and communication technology are below the levels expected nationally and broadly in line with those at the time of the last inspection. Progress in raising standards has not kept pace with the rising standards nationally. Standards in some pupils' work, particularly in religious education, were above expectations.
185. Attainment in information and communication technology at the end of Key Stage 4 is below the national average. In 1999 the CLAIT (Computer Literacy and Information Technology) qualification was gained by all the pupils entered. All pupils in Key Stage 4 have a number of lessons in information and communication technology as part of the Diploma of Vocational Education course. Their work is of a high standard. Lower-attaining pupils achieve a high standard in the CLAIT course.
186. Attainment in the sixth form is below the national average, although examples of good application of information and communication technology skills are to be seen, for example in the well presented research assignments for GCE Advanced level Business Studies and Computer Studies.
187. The legal requirements of the National Curriculum for information and communication technology are not fully met. The majority of pupils do not demonstrate a high enough level of independent competence in the different aspects of information and communication technology.
188. The opportunities to develop these skills are identified insufficiently within subject schemes of work and there is inadequate curriculum time at both key stages. These are two reasons why standards have risen more slowly in this subject.
189. By the end of Key Stage 3 the standards in work seen are below national expectations. No taught information and communication technology course exists at present in Key Stage 3. Pupils are required to develop the use of information and communications technology capability within the subjects of the curriculum. Most

subjects make satisfactory use of information and communications technology, for example science, English, mathematics and modern foreign languages. Some interesting work is taken place in Year 8 science where computers are used to produce a graph of the results of an experiment on how a spring extends. Information and communication technology is very much a development area in art at all key stages, with some good work using digital cameras and creating own web-sites are taking place in the GNVQ Advanced course. In Year 8 design and technology pupils use basic computer programs to develop their own simple designs for a mechanical toy, which is later produced in resistant materials. Evidence from these lessons shows that pupils can use the software with a reasonable degree of competence, usually quickly and easily with teacher direction. They are fluent in basic operations, such as using a keyboard and mouse. They word-process, use spreadsheets and simple graphs. A Civil War database is accessed in history. Work is saved and retrieved as appropriate with some confidence for the majority of pupils. Pupils have limited knowledge of computer control via work in design and technology. Higher-attaining pupils are able to produce clear, well set out word processing. Lower-attaining pupils, with teacher help, achieve a standard similar to their peers. Special educational needs pupils are meeting to a satisfactory degree the targets set for them by their teachers.

190. Evidence from the inspection indicates that the standards achieved by pupils towards the end of Key Stage 4 are below national expectations because they have too few opportunities to develop a full range of skills and develop these to a high standard. However, there are occasions when standards are at least broadly in line with expectations. For example, lower-attaining pupils on the CLAIT course are producing work to meet satisfactorily the high degree of accuracy required. Some good work using a variety of information and communication technologies was seen in the Year 10 Diploma of Vocational Education course with pupils producing a leaflet for young people about pregnancy issues. In the GCSE Business Studies course pupils produce satisfactory word processing reasonably independently, and the majority can apply information and communications technology skills to new situations as required by the coursework criteria. These pupils have clear learning targets and this means that they make progress and are up to date in their coursework. To enhance presentations on products for elderly people and children, pupils in Key Stage 4 food technology successfully use portable e-mate computers.
191. In the sixth form, students studying GCE Advanced level computer studies identify and understand the social and economical changes caused by computerisation. Work of a satisfactory and good standard on communicating information is seen in the students' work for 'A' level business studies and the GNVQ work for business and other courses.
192. Pupils' attitudes to learning are as at the previous inspection, well motivated and work collaboratively. They enjoy the different topics and behaviour at Key Stages 3 and 4 is good.
193. Taken as a whole, the quality of teaching is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection. It is satisfactory at both key stages and good in the sixth form. The teaching of these skills in other subjects of the National Curriculum is now always satisfactory, sometimes good and occasionally excellent. The lessons observed are well planned and prepared with clear objectives and high expectations of standards that are relayed to pupils. Teachers have good knowledge and clear explanations that enable pupils to learn. Class management of these lessons is good and this ensures that although classes are large and pupils share computers, effective learning is taking place. Good technical help supports learning. To enhance pupils' information and communication technology skills departments regularly use the computer room in the school. A high percentage of teachers in the school have good information and

communication skills and work encouragingly with pupils were possible. Useful teacher inset has taken place and more is planned for the future. Ongoing assessment of pupils' achievements and progress is an area for development.

194. The quality of learning of pupils in cross-curricular information and communication technology Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Pupils of all abilities make progress in these lessons and acquire information and communication technology skills. However, as mentioned previously, curriculum time is inadequate for the pupils to demonstrate a high enough level of independent competence in the different aspects of information and communication technology. At Key Stage 4 a similar situation exists and equality of access and opportunity is not offered to all pupils in information and communication technology.
195. The leadership of information and communications technology is satisfactory and although recently established is making headway in the school. The whole school management of the subject is not satisfactory regarding time allocated to the subject in the different key stages. Resources are inadequate to meet the needs of the National Curriculum particularly with regard to control. The deficiencies in the subject are well recognised by the school. There are very well thought out plans in hand for development in the subject. The school has made satisfactory progress in improving the facilities available to pupils and modern computers have been acquired since the last inspection.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

196. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment in both French and German is broadly in line with national expectations. The 1999 statutory teacher assessments show that standards were well below the national average and those of the boys were particularly low. At GCSE in 1999 the proportion of pupils obtaining grades A\*-C in French was close to the national average. Standards in German were above the national average. There has been an improving trend over the last three years. Girls did much better than boys. These results are above the average for the school in other subjects. The majority of pupils are entered for exams with low attainers appropriately directed to sit for the certificate of achievement. At GCE Advanced level, where the course is shared with a neighbouring school, although the majority of pupils obtain at least an E grade, there were no A or B grades for pupils from John Willmott School.
197. Standards by the end of Key Stage 3 in work seen during the inspection were broadly in line with national expectations. Most pupils understand a range of language used in the classroom and can change single words and short phrases. They understand passages that use familiar language. Higher-attaining pupils show a good grasp of grammar when using the target language to respond to their teacher. However, their pronunciation is often approximate. When new words and phrases are introduced there is insufficient time given to practising their use in order to correct errors. Most pupils can identify the main points when they read a passage. A significant number cannot read fluently and independently. They cannot use clues in the text to work out the meaning. This is due to the lack of emphasis on reading as a regular activity and the limited range of reading materials and opportunities provided. Most higher-attaining pupils can write in paragraphs and use a range of structures and tenses correctly. Their written work is well presented. Lower-attaining pupils write in two or three sentences, drawing on familiar language. The majority of pupils use dictionaries regularly and appropriately to help them to make progress.

198. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are in line with national expectations in French and above expectations in German. More effective teaching methods in German are one important reason for this. The strong emphasis on developing oral skills in the language lays a very good foundation for successful reading. Above average standards are also promoted through the good use of role-play activities. Nearly all high-attaining pupils show a good knowledge of vocabulary and a grasp of past tenses. This leads to good examples of extended writing where pupils develop skills in using idiomatic expressions and make good use of expressions suggested by their teacher. They speak fluently and confidently as individuals and are eager to practise what they have learned in group work. Lower-attaining pupils can use simple phrases in every day situations, for example when ordering food and drink or expressing their likes and dislikes. They can substitute words in set phrases and thus make progress in using the language.
199. In the sixth form, GCE Advanced level students show a good understanding of authentic texts adapted from newspaper articles. They can make presentations based on prepared topics. However, the majority of students have poor pronunciation. As a result they do not speak confidently or spontaneously in discussion. Standards in writing are higher. The majority of students can write at length on a number of topics. They make satisfactory progress as they learn to make use of a widening range of vocabulary and everyday expressions.
200. The majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily, making sound progress. Pupils in the top German set in Year 11 have made the fastest progress over time because of the strong emphasis in the good teaching on developing speaking and listening skills. A significant number of higher-attaining pupils do less well in French because the teaching methods are less well organised. Pupils make less progress here because they are often unclear about what they have to do. At both Key Stages 3 and 4, achievement in listening to French is satisfactory but pupils make less progress in speaking and reading. This is because they have insufficient planned opportunities to practise these skills in class. There are opportunities at Key Stage 3 for pupils to assess how they have done and what they need to do to improve but this is linked insufficiently to the standards described in the National Curriculum and the targets are too broad. Many students in the sixth form find it very difficult to progress from the modest standards they achieve at GCSE to the very challenging requirements of the GCE Advanced level courses.
201. Pupils show positive attitudes to the languages studied across all key stages. They show interest, listen attentively and apply themselves well. When given the opportunity to work in groups, they respond enthusiastically and show a sense of enjoyment and initiative. This was well illustrated in a Year 7 lesson where the pupils responded enthusiastically to the teacher's brisk pace of oral questioning, and were used to the well-rehearsed routines of working orally, responding in the target language and reading aloud to a high standard. In a Year 10 German lesson, the pupils showed a high level of independence and organised themselves in a range of activities under the guidance of the teacher. They worked well together when reading a dialogue, completing a role-play and a group listening activity. However, there were many instances in several lessons where the pupils were less ready to use the target language because the teaching methods had not promoted confidence in speaking.
202. Better teaching methods have led to improving standards since the last inspection. These have included the more sustained use of the target language; a greater emphasis on developing speaking skills through the effective presentation of new language; the sequencing of activities to increase demands on pupils and the use of role-play to develop fluency. However, these improvements have not influenced all teaching and this results in inconsistencies. Development planning places insufficient emphasis on raising standards and there are no agreed and shared strategies to

assess progress or intervene when this is unsatisfactory. Procedures for assessment through end of unit tests and the mid- and end-year exams are thorough. However, the standards and programmes described in the National Curriculum are used insufficiently for this purpose.

203. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at both key stages and in the sixth form. It was at least satisfactory in nine out of ten lessons seen and good or better in a third of these. The quality of teaching was very good in nearly 20 per cent of lessons. Teaching was unsatisfactory in one lesson at Key Stage 4. Where teaching is good, or very good, as in a Year 7 class in French, there are well planned, challenging opportunities for pupils to practise speaking the language. In this lesson, the textbook was used skilfully to develop pupils' reading skills and many pupils brought photographs from home to help them develop the topic. Thorough practice of the spoken words to ensure accurate pronunciation and intonation further supported above average standards. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, or less successful, objectives were unclear to the pupils and there was insufficient emphasis on developing speaking skills in the target language.
204. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The issue raised in the last inspection report about the inadequate allocation of time for those pupils taking a second foreign language at Key Stage 3 has not been addressed. Very few pupils continue to study two languages at Key Stage 4. Whilst the programmes of exchanges with a German and a French school enhance pupils' learning and motivation, the development of cultural awareness is not an explicit feature in the schemes of work. There are some good examples of work in information and communication technology in the use of word processing and graphics in Year 8 but this provision is limited and many pupils have no access to it. The analysis of assessment and test results is not used to set specific targets for individual pupils and does not include analysis by ethnicity and background to compare the attainment and progress of different ethnic groups.

## **MUSIC**

205. Standards at GCSE are consistently well above the national average. In 1998 and 1999 four-fifths of pupils entered for GCSE gained A\*-C grades. In 1999 two out of four pupils passed Advanced level music, both with low grades. However, in previous years, Advanced level results have been in line with, or slightly above, the national average. Standards in music at entry to the school are just below national expectations.
206. The 1999 statutory teacher assessments in music indicated that standards reached by both boys and girls at the end of Key Stage 3 were well below average. However, in those Key Stage 3 lessons observed during the inspection, standards were broadly in line with national expectations, with relative standards in Year 7 higher than in Years 8 and 9. High standards are frequently achieved in listening and appraising music but these are offset by lower attainment in performing and composing. This is particularly so in Year 9 where attainment in performing and composing is, overall, just below national expectations. No significant differences were observed between the standards achieved by boys and girls. Where standards are high, pupils use appropriate terminology to analyse music and to explain why it achieves its particular effect. They then apply these skills in evaluating and discussing their own and others' performances and compositions in a mature and supportive way. Attainment is lower in performing and composing due to the lack of opportunities which pupils have traditionally had to develop these skills within the department's curriculum. This deficiency is being addressed by a revised curriculum introduced this year and this is now beginning to have a positive impact upon standards.
207. At Key Stage 4, standards observed were consistently high over a range of musical activities. In one lesson pupils were able to name and identify by sound a range of

percussion instruments, write out complex rhythms from dictation and then use these rhythms as the basis for group performances. Performances were accomplished with panache and confidence.

208. In the sixth form, standards are in line with national expectations. In one Advanced level lesson, students were able to identify from which musical period a composition came and about half were able to make appropriate suggestions as to the composer. In a brief performing session, good performance skills were demonstrated by a violinist and a trumpeter.
209. Standards observed in instrumental lessons were never less than good, with the standards achieved by a Year 7 oboist in her first few weeks of tuition being very good.
210. Standards of attainment at Key Stage 3 have risen only slightly since the last inspection. This rise in attainment is mainly due to teaching of significantly higher quality than was identified in the previous inspection. Attainment has not risen further due primarily to the department's failure, until this year, to implement a curriculum that reflects the National Curriculum's emphasis on performing and composing over listening and appraising. Composing has been particularly neglected. The revised curriculum is now beginning to have an impact both upon standards and on the number of pupils opting to study GCSE music which has increased significantly for September 2000. Standards in Key Stage 4 have risen since the last inspection with most pupils achieving particularly high standards in listening and appraising music. Standards in the sixth form are broadly the same as at the time of the last inspection. The department is still failing to fulfil the requirements for information and communication technology.
211. At Key Stage 3, teaching is never less than good with one example of very good teaching in a Year 7 lesson taught by a supply teacher. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is very good and it is good in the sixth form. Good teaching in all key stages is characterised by strong relationships between pupils and teachers, well-structured lessons, clear explanations of the lessons' learning aims and, particularly, tasks that take account of the range of skills and attainment within the class. Teaching materials provide particularly good support for pupils with special educational needs. Teaching is very good where, in addition to the above, pupils are given opportunities to engage with a wide range of integrated musical activities which focus upon common musical learning aims. The introduction of a 'singing register', where pupils sing a song of their choice at the beginning of a lesson, has done much to raise pupils' confidence in their singing abilities. The department now needs to consider strategies for further developing vocal skills by integrating them into the overall learning aims of a lesson. Pupils' attitude to learning was good or very good in almost all lessons observed and was never less than satisfactory.
212. Of the two instrumental lessons observed, teaching was very good in one and in the other, a guitar lesson, excellent. The latter exemplified good practice in that the development of instrumental technique was considered in the context of musical communication. The teacher drew upon his own musical skills and knowledge of music and musicians to exemplify points of technique and musicianship in a vibrant and interesting way. Pupils were encouraged to discuss issues, both technical and musical, so that learning was a result of a dialogue between teacher and pupil.

213. The department is justifiably proud of the standards achieved in its extra-curricular work and the large numbers of pupils who take part. The extra-curricular activities of the department, and particularly the annual production, contribute significantly to the social and cultural development of a large number of pupils across all key stages.
214. The leadership and management of this subject are very good. This results in very well organised provision and the nurturing of high artistic standards across a range of extra-curricular activities. It is also highly effective in creating an atmosphere within lessons where pupils enjoy music and, when given the opportunity, feel secure in expressing themselves through performance and composition. Leadership has been much less effective in the area of curriculum development at Key Stage 3 where, for too long, the curriculum has failed to provide sufficient, structured opportunities for pupils to develop their skills as performers and, particularly, composers. The department needs to monitor and evaluate the revised curriculum to ensure that all pupils receive their entitlement to a broad musical experience in music lessons. The department must also consider as a matter of urgency strategies for resourcing and integrating music technology into the curriculum.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

215. The 1999 teacher assessments for pupils aged 14 were above the national average with the great majority of pupils attaining the national standard. Boys and girls reached similar standards. GCSE results were above the national average, with 63 per cent gaining A\*-C grades and 100 per cent A\*-G. The proportion of higher achievers, those gaining A\* and A grades, was also above the national average at 17 per cent. There was little difference in the attainment of boys and girls. In 1999 pupils performed better in physical education than in most of their other subjects because carefully prepared schemes of work supported good teaching. Results have varied over the last three years but have always been above the national averages. The numbers entered for GCE Advanced level are too small to make national comparisons. Although results have been below average for the last three years they represent satisfactory achievement in relation to pupils' previous attainment. Pupils' standards of attainment and experience on entry are very varied, but by the age of 14 the majority are reaching the national standard. This represents satisfactory achievement. In physical education lessons taken by all pupils this satisfactory level of achievement is sustained to 16. Achievement in GCSE groups is good.
216. Standards of work seen at the end of Key Stage 3 are average. Pupils have satisfactory levels of skill in a range of athletic activities. They have the basic skills, tactics and knowledge of the rules to play games to a satisfactory standard. Pupils know how to modify their fielding positions in games to outwit the opposition. They have a thorough knowledge of how to prepare for activity and do this conscientiously, but do not always link this to the effect of exercise on the body and a healthy life style. In comparison with last year's teacher assessments, standards in lessons were not quite so high because pupils did not always link the effect of exercise on the body to a healthy lifestyle. They sometimes have insufficient opportunity to plan activities for themselves.
217. No Year 11 work was observed. Standards of work seen in Year 10 in lessons taken by all pupils are in line with expectations and the majority of pupils are on course to attain typical national standards by the age of 16. An analysis of pupils' GCSE files shows a good standard of written work. Pupils apply their practical skills and knowledge with increasing control. When working in restricted space indoors, because of poor weather, they showed good control and awareness of how to work safely. There was some work below the expected standard when girls did not have sufficient skills to play a game of rounders to a satisfactory standard. In the sixth form GCE Advanced level course, students have a sound knowledge and understanding of

important issues in physical education and can illustrate these from their own practical experiences. There are weaknesses in the extent to which they draw sufficiently on previous work to extend their answers.

218. Pupils throughout the school have good skills of observation and use these to identify strengths and weaknesses in a performance and what needs to be done to improve. They co-operate well in pairs and small groups when playing as a team or when helping one another to practise. Pupils of all abilities attain appropriate standards including those with special educational needs, this is the result of individual comment and support by teachers during lessons. The excellent range of extra-curricular activities and clubs makes a good contribution to standards achieved by pupils of all abilities.
219. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The overall quality of teaching has improved, as have GCSE results. A good system of assessment is now in place but is not yet used to set targets for pupils. The accommodation for physical education remains unsatisfactory.
220. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is better in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form than in Key Stage 4. In Key stage 3 teaching was good in three out of five lessons and there was a small proportion that was very good in both key stages. A significant feature of the teaching is the wide range of methods used by teachers compared with other subjects in the school. Teachers carefully select the appropriate method to encourage pupils' learning. Pupils know what to do and how to do it. They are given opportunity to observe and coach one another ensuring improvement for others and reinforcement of their own knowledge of the skills being learnt. Teachers use questioning well and pupils are clear about what they have learnt and why. This also contributes to pupils' skills of speaking and listening. Teachers use their good subject knowledge when observing pupils at work to make helpful comments to individuals so pupils of all abilities learn and improve. In the best lessons teachers show good judgement about when to intervene and move the class on then the lesson has a real sense of pace. In a very good cricket lesson in Year 10, the teacher set a challenging pace that resulted in clear progress by pupils in the quality of the strokes they played. In a few lessons teachers' explanations were too long or pupils were given too long to practise. This slowed the pace of pupils' learning. Occasionally the subject knowledge of the teacher was sufficient to develop pupils' basic skills but not a deeper knowledge of the game. Pupils are well managed in lessons and this, together with good relationships, contributes to the smooth running of lessons.
221. The good leadership and management of the department contribute to its success and the high regard in which pupils and parents hold it. A key feature is the committed staff team who give generously of their time to run extra-curricular activities. A weakness is the lack of formal arrangements to monitor standards and the quality of teaching and learning across the department. A start has been made to analyse GCSE examination data but evaluation is currently at a rudimentary level. Assessment information is used insufficiently to set targets for pupils and to ensure consistently high standards of teaching and learning.
222. Facilities for physical education are unsatisfactory. There are too few indoor spaces. This restricts attainment and the range of activities that can be offered.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

223. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are above average for pupils of this age. Their knowledge and understanding of Christianity are above average. Knowledge and understanding of Islam and Judaism are average. Pupils know the main features of the three religions. They can identify key beliefs such as Jesus as Saviour, the Five Pillars of Islam and main Old Testament characters. Their questioning skills are above average, their evaluating skills are average and their applying skills are above average. From given stories Year 7 pupils can identify the key activities associated with worship and are able to apply these to different religions and associate them with different places of worship. In Year 9 pupils are able to discuss the horrors of the holocaust and understand the significance of Yad Vashem. Their skills are effectively developed by offering opportunities for discussing and comparing various alternative beliefs and values and applying these to contemporary issues.
224. No pupils have been entered for GCSE or GCE Advanced level examinations in the last three years. However, there are currently two groups studying for GCSE in Year 10. These pupils are working towards above average standards by the end of Key Stage 4. Their knowledge of Christianity and Islam is above average. They have highly developed questioning and evaluative skills and can apply their knowledge and understanding to the implications to themselves of their own beliefs and values and how they affect others. In a Year 10 class discussion on capital punishment, pupils listened carefully to one another and to the video clips of people giving different views from their own. They were able to identify the various differences of opinion and compare them with their own beliefs and values. These levels of attainment are achieved by a combination of very good teaching and very good attitudes by pupils to their work. Pupils in Year 10 taking the Diploma of Vocational Education course show attainment that is average for their age but there is insufficient time for their knowledge, understanding and skills to be developed in depth.
225. Pupils' literacy skills are good. They read fluently and clearly. The use of writing frames and lists of relevant religious terms help them to develop their knowledge and understanding. In all years pupils effectively use information and communication technology to produce leaflets, newspaper articles and display materials as an integral part of their work.
226. Pupils come into the school with various levels of knowledge and understanding. Their questioning, evaluating and applying skills are low. Throughout Key Stage 3 and, for GCSE pupils, Key Stage 4, the progress they make is very good. They add to their knowledge and understanding of Christianity, Judaism and Islam. There is significant development of their skills throughout both key stages. The opportunities given for discussion and evaluation of texts, and the ability to consider different cultures through the study of these religions, deepens pupils' questioning and evaluating skills considerably. Their applying skills are developed sufficiently by the end of Key Stage 4 for GCSE pupils so that they can analyse their own views and show how they have been influenced by the views of others. Good progress is maintained for all pupils up to the end of Year 10. For GCSE pupils this steady progress is maintained to the end of Key Stage 4. This means that by the end of Key Stage 4 their achievement is very good.
227. The achievement and progress of pupils with special educational needs are good at Key Stage 3 because they receive considerable extra support that enables them to achieve standards in line with their abilities. The picture is similar in Year 10 but there is no provision in Year 11 for this subject.

228. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is very good and is the major feature in the very high standards achieved by pupils. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject that enables them to answer pupils' questions in depth and to deliver their subject with confidence. Questioning skills are very good. Lessons move at a good pace and in a year 10 lesson on capital punishment activities included question and answer, video clips, class discussion and group written work. This lively pace keeps pupils' interest and enables them to deepen their thinking by considering a number of differing views on controversial issues. Lessons are made relevant to the pupils and careful choice of topics means that pupils see them as worth discussing and working to understand.
229. Opportunities are not taken to use taped music to give a heightened sense of feeling to a subject such as creating an atmosphere to go with the experience of Yad Vashem. The classrooms have many lively displays of pupils' work which encourage them to be proud of their work. Because of the very good relationships within classrooms pupils are secure enough to venture to answer questions even when they are not sure of the answer. A significant contribution is made to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils by offering numerous opportunities for the discussion of beliefs and values. There are times given for quiet reflection. Teachers give pupils the opportunity to experience other cultures through the study of Judaism and Islam alongside Christianity.
230. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They are keen to take part in lessons and to learn from one another. They work well together. They respect one another's views and are able to adjust their own thinking in the light of what they have learned. They show considerable enthusiasm and often do extended independent work. They are self-critical and use the self-evaluation sheets on each unit honestly and with a genuine desire to improve their own work.
231. Two key elements in the successful raising of standards in the subject are the development by the new head of department of an exciting and carefully thought-out range of units of work and the thorough continuous assessment of pupils' work. It involves pupils in ongoing self-assessment of each unit of work and this raises the level of attainment both at GCSE and in Key Stage 3. The schemes of work are excellent and cover the criteria identified in the Agreed Syllabus. Library books are insufficient and out-of-date but otherwise resource provision is adequate for the needs of the department.
232. Since the last inspection the leadership and management of the department have improved significantly. Two GCSE groups have started and two more are planned for this coming year. Assessment is now carefully linked to the Agreed Syllabus level descriptors. Curriculum planning incorporates changes as a result of assessment of pupils' work. Standards at Key Stage 3 have been improved. The school, however, does not include religious education in the Year 11 curriculum and the 'beliefs and values' module in the sixth-form general studies course is optional. The school, therefore, still does not meet statutory requirements at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

## DRAMA

233. Drama is an optional GCSE subject. It is also offered at Advanced level and, for the first time, this year at AS level. At Key Stage 3, the course is jointly designed to deliver objectives in the school's Personal Social and Health Education programme. The department also co-operates with the English department to support work on Shakespeare, in preparation for the Key Stage 3 tests in particular.
234. The number of pupils choosing drama as an option at Key Stage 4 has ranged between 20 and 30 in recent years. Numbers have risen in the current Year 10. For those who choose it, levels of attainment at GCSE are well above national averages. In 1999, 95 per cent of pupils gained A\*-C grades, compared with 67 per cent nationally. All gained A\*-G grades, whilst the national figure was 99 per cent. Twenty per cent of pupils gained the highest A\* or A grades. Standards have improved consistently over a three-year period. Boys do as well as girls in the subject, though a greater number of girls opt to take it. There has been a 100 per cent pass rate in GCE Advanced level drama for the past three years, though very small numbers of students have chosen to take the subject at this level to date. No student has gained A or B grades in the past three years. Again, numbers are increasing in the current Year 12.
235. At Key Stage 3, pupils' work in improvisation and role-play shows that they can speak and listen confidently in a range of contexts. One Year 8 group were able to develop effective group improvisations on the topic of vandalism. They used this experience constructively to reflect on the social issues surrounding vandalism, so meeting personal and social development objectives. They worked well together and developed ideas imaginatively. Discussion and evaluation of the experience was thoughtful and mature. At Key Stage 4 and at Advanced level, pupils are well motivated and go about their work with some energy and commitment. They make good progress in developing a more structured insight to the subject and are able to reflect on and justify the use of specific dramatic techniques. Practical work for group presentations at both levels showed some flair and imagination. In particular, a Year 12 group attempted the ambitious task of a symbolic interpretation of the painting 'The Scream' by Munch. They co-operated very well together in a fluid and responsive improvisation of mood, using physical movement and freeze-frame techniques.
236. Teaching is very good throughout the school. There is detailed and helpful planning for the subject, which allows for differentiation of task by ability and sets out clear assessment criteria which are understood by pupils. Planning and preparation for lessons are very good. The teaching style is active and dynamic, keeping all pupils engaged on task and eliciting imaginative responses. Use of ongoing assessment to evaluate work done and decide next steps is particularly effective.
237. The head of department is newly appointed this year. Other staff currently teaching the subject are also new to the school. Their efforts are well co-ordinated, with a clear focus on the teaching of dramatic skills and evaluation techniques. After-school drama clubs are offered for Key Stage 3 pupils. They offer valuable experience to the small numbers of keen pupils who attend. Theatre visits are also arranged to enrich pupils' experience of the curriculum. Resources for drama are adequate. Accommodation is limited. In particular, additional teaching space in a temporary classroom is unsatisfactory. It restricts opportunities for practical work, affecting preparation for GCSE and Advanced level practical assessments in particular.

## **BUSINESS STUDIES**

238. The 1999 GCSE business studies results show overall attainment to be well above the national average. There has been a great improvement in results in GCSE business studies since 1997 when results were below the national average. Boys and girls achieved equally well in the 1999 examinations and very well when comparisons are made with their results in other subjects. Business studies results at GCE Advanced level are also very good and have been consistently above the national average for the last three years. By the end of Key Stage 4, evidence from the inspection shows standards to be above national expectations. In lessons at Key Stages 4 on marketing, students set and meet their own personal targets during the time and extend their analytical skills of business situations. With very good teaching students are able to apply their knowledge to solve new problems. Students' portfolios are developing well.
239. In the sixth form, students of all levels of attainment improve their understanding of information and communication technology by using more advanced features of word-processing and presentational software. For example, in Year 12 GCE Advanced level business studies, students created organisational charts using commercial software. GNVQ business students prepare satisfactory action plans that are realistic to work to and there is evidence of well-thought-out changes to these plans. This helps students to develop skills in prioritising tasks and adjusting deadlines. Thorough research, with satisfactory information seeking and handling skills, is evident in students' work on enquiry of customs and cultures within the European Union. Higher-attaining students are achieving a good degree of self-evaluation. Middle-attaining students also display above average standards in comparison and analysis of three companies. The key skills of numeracy and information and communication technology are well developed through good statistical analysis of the outcomes of a questionnaire. A satisfactory level of self-evaluation is shown in this work. The range and depth of research is not as great as for higher-attaining students. Lower-attaining students do not develop assignments with the same degree of thoroughness. Action planning and research skills for these students are of a pass standard but evaluation is not so thorough. Overall standards are above average for GNVQ business, with good learning development in key skills, particularly communication within written reports, gathering information and analysis of data by higher and middle-attaining students.
240. Progress in lessons is good at Key Stages 4 and in the sixth form. Students are capable of independent and co-operative work that leads to improved learning. Students with special educational needs are well provided for through the materials included in the schemes of work and much individual teacher help. All students are able to gain from the lessons and opportunities are given to them to use the computers individually each lesson to help them develop their information and communication skills as well as business knowledge.
241. Students' attitudes to learning are good, sometimes very good and occasionally excellent. Teachers work closely with individual students to ensure that they understand the tasks they are set. This promotes a good level of interest in the subject material. Students enjoy the opportunities to plan work for themselves and also to work with others in lessons. Their mature behaviour helps them to achieve well.
242. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of business studies for the range of courses that are taught. Planning of the courses and individual lessons is very good and this helps lead to very effective student learning and improved standards. Course material is up-to-date, relevant and very well presented. Teachers stimulate students' interest by presenting such topics as marketing in a local

setting. There is excellent teamwork amongst the teachers and a shared philosophy across the department. Their expectations of students are very high and this has a crucial impact on learning and raising standards. Assessment is carried out well according to the GNVQ criteria and relayed to pupils via formal and informal methods. Pupils' progress is well recorded.

243. The leadership and management of this department are very good, with a strong emphasis on raising standards.

## **SOCIOLOGY**

244. Results were close to the national average in 1999 when, for the first time, pupils took the GCSE examination. In the current Year 10, attainment is broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils are beginning to show the required level of understanding of issues and concepts, and are developing the ability to interpret data and reach conclusions.
245. At GCE Advanced level, more candidates sat the examination in 1999 than in the previous two years and achieved better results, although these were still below the national average. These improving standards were observed in the work of Year 12 students, who are making good progress with sociological methods and the application of spreadsheets to present the results of surveys. They show good understanding in answers to data response questions but have difficulty constructing developed arguments to essay questions. Students are receiving the help they need in all aspects of their work. This helps them to make good progress.
246. The quality of teaching in the few lessons observed was satisfactory and occasionally good. Its main strengths are good subject knowledge, clear instruction and carefully structured work around well-prepared materials. The style of teaching is mainly didactic, which, at times, means pupils copying down points made by those who answer the teacher's questions. There needs to be more activities, which engage pupils in collaborative exercises and encourage them to develop their own ideas.
247. The subject is administered efficiently and plans to develop social science courses in the sixth form are sound. The teacher in charge of the subject had to take on extra examination classes in 1999 as a result of internal staffing moves. Students were offered tutorials to sort out any problems with work, but some still found formal teaching did not help them to improve their technique for writing discursive essays.

## **VOCATIONAL COURSES**

248. All pupils study for the City and Guilds diploma of vocational education at Key Stage 4. This provides pupils with opportunities to study a range of vocational options in Year 11. It makes a significant contribution to pupils' preparation for adult life.
249. Standards in Intermediate Level GNVQ are significantly above national benchmarks both in written and oral work observed.
250. The GNVQ Advanced level results in art and design were broadly in line with the national average. Standards at intermediate level were well above the national average. The quality and range of work seen was sometimes high at GNVQ Advanced level with good use of information and communications technology. The use of the department's computers for scanning and image manipulation and use of the digital camera is particularly good. The Intermediate work seen was at a basic level. The majority of pupils produce satisfactory standards.

251. Results in the GNVQ Intermediate and Advanced level business are very good with all students obtaining the qualification, many at merit level and some with distinction. These courses are proving increasingly popular with pupils, with a steady number of both boys and girls choosing the subject and achieving success. Apart from examination successes, students from the department have been very successfully involved in other activities that involve business skills and enhance and develop key skills, for example, a mini enterprise venture at Year 11 and sixth-form students' successful involvement in Young Enterprise.
252. Students in Year 12 successfully follow a one-year GNVQ course in leisure and tourism; this course has a 100 per cent pass rate.
253. Pupils achieve well on all of these courses. They make good progress in planning and organising their work. The key skills are well developed through a range of interesting assignments. In the small amount of written work seen during the inspection, standards were similar to those obtained in the most recent public examinations. It was not possible to observe the teaching of the GNVQ health and social care course but standards in the small sample of work analysed were broadly in line with expectations. A middle-attaining student showed a satisfactory degree of thoroughness in researching the topic of relationships. Students generally make good use of their information technology skills to enhance the presentation of their work. Analytical skills are less well developed.
254. High-attaining pupils reach above average standards in work analysed on the GNVQ Advanced business course. Good use of an industrial placement at a local company further promotes these high standards. Good action planning results in thorough research and assignments often include a good degree of self-evaluation. The quality of learning is high. Very good research skills and good levels of literacy support above average standards when students research the customs and cultures of the European union. Middle-attaining pupils also display above average standards in their assignments. The key skills of numeracy and information technology are well developed in the statistical analysis of a questionnaire. The range and depth of research are not as great as those seen in the work of the higher-attaining student. Lower-attaining pupils achieve satisfactorily. They reach a pass standard but their work lacks the thoroughness.
255. A small amount of teaching was observed in the various vocational subjects. This was consistently good across all subjects. Students participated well in the intermediate level leisure and tourism lesson as they prepared and conducted a meeting whilst in an Advanced GNVQ business lesson students took an active part in planning a marketing campaign. The good teaching was founded on a clear understanding of the methods required to promote pupils' knowledge, understanding and confidence. Detailed planning by the teacher contributes greatly to ensuring the success of the students. Effective support and guidance as students worked independently were strong features of the teaching within art and design. The teaching methods encourage students to plan their work carefully, to research independently and to organise their work clearly. Pupils generally write clearly with a good appreciation of their audience.
256. The leadership and management of these courses are good. Very good understanding of the various course requirements and good teamwork contribute well to the above average standards.