

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **ECCLESBOURNE SCHOOL**

Duffield

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 122986

Headteacher: Dr Robert Dupey

Reporting inspector: Grace Marriott  
3674

Dates of inspection: 27<sup>th</sup> November - 1<sup>st</sup> December 2000

Inspection number:

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Secondary
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Boys and girls
School address:	Wirksworth Road Duffield Belper Derbyshire
Postcode:	DE56 4GS
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Appropriate authority:	Derbyshire
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Painter
Date of previous inspection:	March 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Grace Marriott	Registered Inspector		How well the school is led and managed
Douglas Binfield	Lay inspector		How well the school cares for its pupils Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well the school works in partnership with parents
Betty Barratt	Team inspector	History	The school's results and achievements How well pupils are taught
Rachel Hobson	Team inspector	Equal opportunities Sixth Form	How good the curricular and other opportunities are
Barbara Baughan	Team inspector	English	
Derek Jones	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Angela Fraser	Team inspector	Science	
James Bowden	Team inspector	Special educational needs Physical education	
Rhona Humphries	Team inspector	Design and technology	
Michael Merchant	Team inspector	Geography	
Malcolm Padmore	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
Michael Pennington	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
David Ward	Team inspector	Music	
Heather Boyle	Team inspector	Religious education	
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## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6 - 9</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>10 – 12</b>
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>12 - 14</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?</b>	<b>14 - 16</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>17 - 18</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>20 - 24</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>25 - 45</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Ecclesbourne is a larger than average comprehensive secondary school in the village of Duffield, just north of the city of Derby. The school is popular in the locality and is oversubscribed. It has 1343 pupils on roll, with slightly more boys than girls overall. Most pupils come from homes which are supportive of education. Fewer than 3 per cent are entitled to free school meals, which is very low. The vast majority of pupils (98 per cent) are of white ethnic origin and no pupils are at an early stage of learning English. Attainment on entry is above average overall, but with relatively few very high attainers. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is about average. Almost all pupils in Year 11 continue in education after the age of 16 and about three-quarters of them stay on into the school sixth form.

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

Ecclesbourne School is providing a very good education for its pupils. The very strong leadership, good management and high quality teaching create a climate in which pupils are valued as individuals and challenged to achieve to the best of their ability. The school provides very good value for money.

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

- The school ethos is very strong and underpins all its work
- The quality of teaching is very good overall. Teachers have high expectations for all pupils
- The pupils have excellent attitudes to work and achieve standards well above national average
- Pupils behave very well both in lessons and around the school
- The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities which pupils thoroughly enjoy and which enrich their education
- The school caters very well for pupils of all levels of ability, including high achievers
- The work of the basic studies department is very good and pupils who need additional help at an early stage subsequently achieve very well
- Almost all pupils in Year 13 go on to higher education

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

- Subject departments vary in the consistency and effectiveness with which they use assessment and data to track pupils' progress and in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning.
- The marking of pupils work varies in quality and usefulness
- Information and communications technology (ICT) is not being used fully in every subject

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

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

The school has a strong commitment to continuous improvement. It has maintained the high academic standards noted in the previous report. It has made some improvement in the facilities for ICT, English, art and technology, but facilities for physical education and drama and the social accommodation are still unsatisfactory. Collective worship still does not fully meet statutory requirements. The system of reporting to parents was changed following the last inspection but the school is not satisfied with the progress made on this and is currently carrying out a pilot scheme for a new system. The curriculum has been extended by the addition of subjects at GCSE and A Level, and the provision for personal social and health education has improved. The school has achieved the status of a beacon school and is currently bidding for technology college status.

## 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
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A
A-levels/AS-levels	A*	A	A	

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

The standards of work seen during the inspection showed that the high levels of the 2000 test and examination results are being maintained, with exceptionally high standards in science, mathematics, art and religious education. Over the last three years, standards have risen in both Key Stages 3 and 4, and high standards have been sustained in the sixth form. At the end of Year 9, results are well above the national average and above those of schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, when compared with similar schools the 2000 results were well above average in mathematics, above average in English, and in line with the average in science. GCSE results are well above both the national average and the results of similar schools. When compared with what these pupils achieved at the end of Key Stage 3, the results in English and mathematics were well above the averages for schools with a similar intake and in science, the results were in the highest five per cent. The school sets realistically challenging targets for attainment at GCSE and is successful in achieving these. In the sixth form, attainment at GCE Advanced level has been well above national averages over the last four years, and all the students following GNVQ courses in 1999 and 2000 were successful in gaining qualifications. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well throughout the school. Girls' achievement is better than boys' at GCSE but this was not significant in the work seen during the inspection.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils' enthusiasm and hard work make a significant impact on learning. This is an outstanding feature of the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Consistently very good during lessons and other activities. The incidence of bullying is very low.
Personal development and relationships	The full programme of extra curricular activities and other events provide many opportunities to enrich pupils' development. Relationships throughout the school are exemplary.
Attendance	Excellent. Very high in comparison with other schools.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Very good	Very 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.*

Teaching is very good. In the lessons seen it was good or better in 84 per cent of lessons. In 44 per cent it was good, in 37 per cent very good and in three per cent it was excellent. It was satisfactory in almost all other lessons and unsatisfactory in less than a half of one per cent. Teaching is slightly better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3, and is especially strong in the sixth form. The strengths in the teaching result in very good learning especially in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Pupils sustain a very good pace of work in lessons, often working at full stretch intellectually. The best teaching is in English, mathematics, science, ICT, art, design and technology, religious education and music. In other subjects the proportion of good teaching is high, but there is less that is very good. Teaching varies most in quality in physical education, geography and modern languages, though it is still good overall in these subjects. Teachers have very high expectations and very good subject knowledge. Lessons are very well managed and the planning and teaching methods are very well matched to the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and the potential high achievers. Literacy and numeracy skills are also taught very well. Pupils' work is marked regularly but marking does not always provide them with clear enough guidance to help them improve their standards. In general, where teaching was satisfactory rather than good, pupils were allowed too long to complete the work or the teacher tended to over-direct learning. This restricted the challenge to pupils and the opportunities for them to take initiative and responsibility for their work. In most subjects, ICT is not yet being used enough to support learning.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and balanced overall and provides a wide range of opportunities at all stages.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school makes very good provision to support pupils with special educational needs and this enables them to achieve their targets.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is very good overall and excellent in terms of opportunities for social development. Provision for spiritual development is good though occasionally, opportunities to give pupils time to reflect on spiritual matters are missed.
How well the school cares for its pupils	A very high standard of pastoral care is provided. Health, safety and welfare arrangements are good except for the limited social amenities.

The curriculum in Key Stage 3 is extended by the provision of two modern foreign languages and drama. Imaginative initiatives such as the Cognitive Acceleration schemes in mathematics and science give pupils good opportunities to develop thinking skills. The only weakness in Key Stage 3 is that most subjects are not using ICT in the way that the National Curriculum requires. In Key Stage 4, the range of GCSE options is wide. In the sixth form the choice of advanced courses is wide and includes an advanced vocational course in business studies. At present however there are no non-advanced courses in the sixth form. The provision for careers and vocational education is very good and together with the links with the community makes a very good contribution to pupils' learning. Parents are very pleased with the school. They give a high level of support to their children's learning, especially with homework.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher, supported by the senior management team, provides very strong leadership. The school ethos of high expectations, and the commitment to providing a high quality education, are shared by all staff and permeate all aspects of the school's work.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are well informed and involved in setting strategic objectives for the school. They have a good view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school keeps its performance under constant review, particularly at the level of senior management.
The strategic use of resources	The school plans and budgets very carefully for development. It makes full use of the resources available.

The success of the school stems to a very considerable extent from the well qualified, experienced and hardworking teachers. The support staff work very well as part of the team and make a significant contribution to the effectiveness of the school. The accommodation and resources are adequate overall, though there are weaknesses in particular subjects and the library, though well used, is too small for the size of the school. The accommodation for physical education and drama is inadequate.

## 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 standards pupils achieve</li> <li>• Pupils' positive attitudes and hard work</li> <li>• The very high standards of behaviour</li> <li>• The supportive and caring environment</li> <li>• Teaching is good</li> <li>• The school is well managed</li> <li>• The extensive extra curricular programme</li> <li>• The school's very good relationships with parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information to parents on their child's academic progress</li> <li>• The level of financial resources available to the school</li> <li>• The range of facilities and condition of the premises</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views. The school meets the statutory requirements for reporting to parents but the school has recognised that more frequent information about academic progress would be helpful, and is working on this. The total annual income from all sources is about average for a school of this size, as is the expenditure. The facilities for physical education and drama are limited and the temporary buildings used for social accommodation are in a dilapidated condition.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Over the last three years, standards have risen in both Key Stages 3 and 4 and high standards have been sustained in the sixth form. The improvement in Key Stage 4 has been at a faster rate than nationally. Pupils reach levels in Key Stage 3 which are well above the national averages for their age and in both 1999 and 2000, standards were above the averages for schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. Attainment in English, mathematics and science is well above the national averages for all maintained schools. When compared with similar schools the 2000 results were well above average in mathematics, above average in English, and in line with the average in science.
2. At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results are well above the averages for both all schools and those with a similar in-take. They were also well above the averages for schools where pupils had achieved similar results two years previously at the end of Key Stage 3. The results in English, mathematics and science in 2000 were well above national averages for all schools and also for those where pupils had reached similar standards at the end of Key Stage 3. In English and mathematics they were also well above the averages for schools with a similar intake. In science, the results were very high i.e. in the highest five per cent, in relation to averages in similar schools. The school sets realistically challenging targets for attainment at GCSE and is successful in achieving these.
3. During the inspection the standards of work of pupils working towards the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4, broadly reflected the results of the Key Stage 3 tests and the GCSE examinations in 2000. The standards in mathematics, science and art were very high in Key Stage 3, and exceptionally high in Key Stage 4. In English, by Year 9, the highest attainers are accomplished writers, able to sustain and organise narrative and analysis impressively. Lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs have made very good progress, although they may continue to struggle with details of expression. In a Year 11 lesson pupils studying a novel showed considerable skill in discussion and exploration of a range of issues. In mathematics, this was especially evident in the work of pupils entered early for GCSE examinations in Year 10. In science, the very high skills of the gifted and talented pupils in investigational work in Key Stage 4 are especially notable.
4. Standards in the other subjects are very high in relation to national averages at the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4, and in religious education they exceed the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus. In art, pupils' personal response is very good. They draw with confidence from observation, develop their own ideas and have exceptionally well developed drawing skills. Very high standards were also seen in the case of the very highest attaining pupils in modern languages and in religious education in Key Stage 4, with pupils demonstrating very good knowledge and authority in their responses and interpretation of difficult questions.
5. In the sixth form, attainment at GCE Advanced level has been well above national averages over the last four years and all the students following GNVQ courses in 1999 and 2000 were successful in gaining qualifications. Similar high standards were seen in the work of students during the inspection. These were reflected for instance, in the work of very high quality in science, in the work in Further Mathematics, the exceptionally high standards of ideas, creative and design work in design and technology, and the sophistication and high levels of personal response of students in research and the use of techniques and materials in art.

6. The relative weaknesses in pupils' attainment are to be found mainly at Key Stage 3. In modern languages, for instance, where many pupils are not confident as oral linguists, in geography, where descriptions and explanations are superficial at times, and in music where some pupils do not retain knowledge well and therefore are not able to apply it in new situations.
7. Pupils achieve well throughout the school. Girls' achievement is better than boys' at GCSE but this was not reflected in the work seen during the inspection apart from in modern languages. The quality of teaching and the very clear focus on expecting and encouraging the highest possible standards, strongly promote high achievement. The pupils' own very high levels of motivation, their interest in their work and their keenness to do well, are also very important factors. The only significant evidence of more restricted achievement is in the relatively limited use of ICT as an integral part of learning. This was shown for instance, in mathematics, where lack of up-to-date equipment limits opportunities, and in science where not enough use was being made of computers to support investigations.
8. Pupils' achievement is very well supported by their very good standards of literacy. They develop confidence and strength in speaking and listening through the many opportunities they have in lessons to discuss topics, as a class and in groups and pairs. Reading skills develop very well and pupils extend their research through using the very good book stock and the Internet. Faculties place particular emphasis on the specialist vocabulary and writing conventions of their subjects, with the result that pupils are aware of the need to write in particular ways for different purposes.
9. Overall competence in numeracy is very good. In addition to work in mathematics lessons, the handling of number and measurement is supported very well in geography, ICT, modern foreign languages and science. Art provides good opportunities for pupils to apply spatial concepts and opportunities for them to develop skills in handling statistical information occur in many subjects.
10. Those pupils with special educational needs achieve well as a result of the very good provision made to meet their learning needs. This includes very effective support in lessons by Education Care Officers (ECOs) and the opportunities across the curriculum for them to fully participate in all aspects of learning. In 2000, their good achievement resulted in the great majority gaining grades A\*-G at GCSE. Pupils of very high ability achieve very well, inspired and supported by the very good teaching and their own very positive attitudes to learning.

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

11. Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. During lessons they listen attentively, concentrate well and work very hard. They show initiative and are helpful to one another when working in pairs or small groups. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are well motivated and keen to learn. When the opportunities arise pupils often make telling contributions to discussions and are confident in suggesting alternative ways to solve problems. As they move up through the school opportunities for independent study and investigative work feature strongly. Particularly good examples were observed in English, science, information technology and religious education lessons. Pupils show a diligent approach to homework. All these features make a significant contribution to the high standards achieved. Pupils' positive attitudes are an outstanding feature of the school.
12. Behaviour is very good during lessons and other activities in and around the school. The high standards identified during the previous inspection have been maintained. This contributes well to the smooth running of the school and helps to provide an effective learning environment. The incidence of bullying and misbehaviour is very low. Last year there were no permanent and 10 fixed term exclusions. This is well below the level in most secondary schools. Pupils are polite to

others and take good care of equipment and resources. The small number of pupils from ethnic minority groups are fully integrated in the life and work of the school.

13. Relationships and the provision for pupils' personal development are excellent. Pupils co-operate well with one another and respect the very good example set by teachers and other staff. The friendly and helpful atmosphere provides a firm foundation for learning. Personal development is greatly helped by participation in the extensive programme of extra curricular activities. Educational visits include residential trips in this country, Europe and for sixth formers, the United States. Many pupils are involved in drama and operatic productions, music concerts, debating competitions, producing school newspapers and fund raising for charities. The sixth form prefect system works well. Younger pupils are encouraged to take on monitoring and other responsibilities.
14. Attendance is excellent and has improved from the very good levels at the last inspection. Attendance levels in 1999/2000 were exceptionally high at 95.6%. This is very high in comparison with other schools. The incidence of unauthorised absence is very low. Punctuality is very good. Lessons start and finish on time. All these features make an impressive contribution to the quality of learning.

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

15. The quality of teaching is very good. In the lessons seen during the inspection it was good or better in 84 per cent of lessons. It was good in 44 per cent, very good in 37 per cent and excellent in 3 per cent. Virtually all of the rest of the teaching was satisfactory, and the unsatisfactory teaching is not significant in that it amounted to less than a half of one per cent.
16. The high quality of the teaching seen at the time of the last inspection has been maintained and strengthened even further. In English, mathematics, science, ICT, design technology, religious education and music, teaching is very good throughout the school. In art, teaching is exceptionally good in the sixth form and very good in Key Stage 4. In Key Stage 3 it is more variable in quality. In the other subjects, though the proportion of good teaching is high, there is less that is very good and excellent. Teaching varies most in quality in modern languages (mainly because of staffing difficulties), geography and physical education. In these subjects, though much of the teaching is good or better, the standard is lower than in other subjects.
17. Teaching was slightly stronger in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3, but was strongest in the sixth form where in nearly 60 per cent of the lessons seen the teaching was very good and in a few cases, excellent. In general, where teaching was satisfactory rather than good, pupils were allowed too long to complete the work or the teacher tended to over-direct learning. This restricted the challenge to pupils and the opportunities for them to take initiative and responsibility for their work.
18. The teachers' very good subject expertise and their love for and commitment to the subject leads to very high levels of challenge. Pupils are expected to work at a demanding level intellectually and creatively. These benefits are evident in all subjects and are especially well exemplified, in all key stages, in English, mathematics and science. This was very clear in a Year 10 English lesson on Macbeth where pupils in a lower-ability group were enabled to achieve good knowledge of the characters and the theme, as a result of the teacher's skilful use of questioning to elicit and re-inforce their knowledge and understanding. In mathematics pupils made clear gains in learning as a result of open-ended, challenging questioning and well-managed discussion. An outstanding feature in science is the extent to which teachers use their subject expertise to challenge pupils to think about abstract ideas and answer difficult questions.

19. In other subjects there were also examples of high quality teaching during the inspection. For example in art teachers use whole-class teaching, with well-chosen examples and demonstrations, to take pupils through more complex tasks so that they all make good progress. In design and technology GCSE courses teachers encourage pupils to trial, model and evaluate their prototypes, to enable them to achieve high quality end products. In geography, history and religious education lively exposition and good use of discussion are notable features. In a Year 13 history lesson a very clear presentation helped students to grasp the complexities of the French Revolution and they were challenged to think deeply about issues through searching questioning and discussion. In ICT, modern languages, physical education and music thorough planning of appropriate tasks and activities helps to promote high standards.
20. Research skills are very well promoted by the encouragement for pupils and students to read widely, use the Internet, undertake extensive personal studies and projects, and by the regular setting of homework to consolidate and extend learning in lessons. This results in a very high level of commitment to learning at all stages, and especially in the sixth form.
21. Pupils' attention and interest are gained from the outset in lessons through the setting of clear learning objectives; their interest and concentration are sustained by a good range of well timed and clearly focused activities, a brisk and purposeful pace of work, and very good classroom relationships which create a good learning ethos. Lesson planning is effective in ensuring that activities are clearly focused on promoting learning. For example, in design technology at Key Stage 3, coherent planning across the department which includes assessment processes, ensures progression in the acquisition and development of knowledge, understanding and skills. The effectiveness of planning towards this end was clearly shown in the Year 7 work on tapestry.
22. In the great majority of lessons, pupils with special educational needs receive good support; teachers are aware of their needs and provide work which is well matched. Where teaching, while satisfactory, is less strong, it is because sometimes the work is not sufficiently well matched to pupils' learning requirements. This is the case, for instance, in some lessons in geography where planning does not give enough attention to ensuring that higher-attaining pupils are appropriately challenged, and lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported. Inconsistency in the quality of marking also weakens the overall effectiveness of teaching. Most work is marked regularly but marking is not always thorough and accompanied by clear guidance to pupils on how to improve their standards.
23. Other features of the teaching, which while satisfactory, are less effective in promoting learning at an appropriate level, include the tendency in some lessons for the teacher to over-direct learning. This restricts the challenge to pupils and opportunities for them to take initiative and responsibility for their work. On occasion also, learning is slowed by too long being allowed for the completion of tasks. These shortcomings are mainly to be found in Key Stage 3.

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

24. At the last inspection, the curriculum at Key Stage 3 was described as 'broad and balanced, meeting the needs of all pupils'. This is still the case. All National Curriculum subjects are taught, and the curriculum at this key stage offers pupils the opportunity to study two modern foreign languages in addition to all pupils taking drama. There are some imaginative initiatives that give pupils good opportunities to develop thinking skills, such as the Cognitive Acceleration schemes in mathematics and science and cross-curricular skills such as team working. There are some time pressures on the Key Stage 3 curriculum, which mean that history and geography have to cover National Curriculum requirements in a relatively short time, although this does not seem to affect standards. There is very good coverage of ICT in Key Stage 3 through the information technology lessons but the provision is not satisfactory in most other subjects and is not fully

meeting statutory requirements. Design and technology is one department which has ICT planned into schemes of work and where it is actually taught. Even in this subject area, however, there is no contribution to the assessment of ICT levels.

25. The Key Stage 4 curriculum meets statutory requirements. It is broad and balanced, with some appropriate vocational options offered by business and leisure and tourism courses and the Youth Award. National Curriculum requirements are fully met and pupils can choose from a good range of GCSE options, including some short courses. High achieving pupils have the opportunity to take mathematics GCSE early, and then start work on the Advanced Subsidiary (AS) course. The school has continued to offer two modern foreign language options, despite financial pressure.
26. The sixth form curriculum provides a broad, balanced and relevant range of AS level subjects; most of which can lead on to the full A level course. Students can also choose to take the GNVQ advanced course in business, either as the single or double award. Although the GNVQ intermediate level in business was offered this year, there were not enough applicants for the course to run. There are some imaginative options in the sixth form provision, including, in Year 13, AS level in philosophy, which in Year 12 is available as an 'Ideas' course. The range of AS courses available gives students a good choice, including, for example, economics, religious education, further mathematics, physical education and drama. In addition, most sixth form students are able to take recreational sport, and there are many opportunities for students to take part in such activities as community service and working with younger pupils through the Basic Studies department. All sixth form students are prefects, and many fulfil leadership roles in the school. The school is developing the assessment of key skills for students in the sixth form.
27. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Secure and appropriate arrangements are in place for those pupils who require special education. In Key Stage 3, a significant number of pupils are temporarily disapplied from some areas of the National Curriculum, and receive support through the Basics Studies department. Learning support assistants work with individual pupils and small groups, both withdrawing pupils from lessons and by supporting them in lessons. This support is usually effective, allowing pupils to return to their full timetables in due course. Transitional and annual reviews are effective and support pupils with statements. The Basic Studies department has very good links and effective relationships with outside agencies. Gifted and talented pupils have the opportunity to make progress in some curriculum areas more quickly than their peers, for example in mathematics. The work on thinking skills, too, helps the highest attaining pupils to achieve very well.
28. The school has a clear commitment to equal opportunities and to combating oppressive behaviour, for example bullying or racism. A current focus for professional consideration is the relative under-achievement of boys in some subjects.
29. All pupils in Key Stage 3 follow a course in ICT. In Key Stage 4 they can choose a full or short GCSE course in ICT or the GCSE Business and Information Studies course. The school makes appropriate provision for health and sex education and advice about drugs through the Personal, Social and Vocational course which in Key Stage 4 includes religious education.
30. Careers education and guidance are very good. The well-planned programme allows pupils to find out about employment and further and higher education opportunities. This includes thorough preparation for the Year 10 work experience programme. Visiting speakers come into school to tell pupils about opportunities in different careers, such as the visit made by an officer from the Royal Navy who came to talk to sixth form students during the inspection week. Different faculties organise a good range of visits to local companies. For example the design and technology department organises visits to lawnmower and furniture companies and to Denby Pottery, and the Business Studies and Economics department has useful links with Bass Brewery

in Burton-upon-Trent and Boots headquarters in Beeston. The links with local primary schools and with further and higher education institutions are good and there is a compact in place with Derby University. There are impressively wide-ranging opportunities for pupils to take part on exchange trips to other countries and to go on overseas visits. In recent years there have been visits to Prague, Denmark, Germany, France, Belgium and Spain, with additionally a skiing trip to Austria. Sixth form students get the chance to go to an American High School in Philadelphia for a month.

31. The literacy cross-curricular committee has produced a strategy to guide all teachers in ways to develop pupils' literacy skills. A recent audit took place across departments, to assess what they are currently doing and to identify areas that still need to be developed. There are some successful strategies that have been adopted, most notably in science, but good practice is not yet consistent across the school.
32. The school makes very good provision for extra-curricular activities. It offers a wide range of opportunities for pupils to participate in cultural, sporting, social, musical and other interests, as well as providing 'clinics' for pupils to improve in different curriculum areas. Musical concerts and recitals, school plays and the house drama festival involve many pupils in their preparation and presentation. There are many field, residential and day visits organised, and visits to the school from writers, public speaking competitions and many other worthwhile and valuable activities are appreciated by both pupils and parents and enhance effectively the curriculum provision.
33. Overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development is good, and for their moral development, very good. The religious education department in particular organises a wide range of visits to local places of worship and also encourages sixth form students to attend a conference on ethics. Many departments plan into their schemes of work occasions for pupils to discuss moral and ethical issues, such as the work done in geography on case studies looking at population and agriculture in less economically developed countries, and discussions in mathematics on infinity and relativity. There are excellent opportunities for pupils to develop socially. Relationships, between pupils and with teachers, are very positive, and older students in particular have many chances to develop leadership qualities and show initiative. Some very good collaborative work in different subjects was seen during the inspection week. The school does not, however, meet the statutory requirements for a daily collective act of worship, and there are missed opportunities for pupils to reflect on spiritual and moral issues in assemblies and in the 'Thought for the Week' arrangements.

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

34. Good arrangements are in place for ensuring pupils' welfare, health and safety. The very effective provision made for pupils' pastoral support is underpinned by the caring ethos of the school. Class teachers and other staff readily provide good quality support and advice to individual pupils. There are, however, only limited social facilities for pupils to use, especially during the lunch breaks. On three mornings each week, pupils spend the first 20 minutes of the day under the direction of their form tutor. This period is used for registration, the 'Thought for the Day' and various administrative matters (such as notices, checking homework diaries and consultation with individual pupils). This time is not consistently well used. In some classes this time is particularly useful but in others there is a need to improve the quality of the sessions.
35. The Governors undertake an important role by regularly monitoring health and safety aspects. They have clear policies and a more detailed risk assessment system is currently being implemented. On the second day of the inspection, the school was evacuated following a fire

alarm warning caused by an electrical fault. Pupils and staff left the buildings quickly and in an orderly manner. This demonstrated a clear understanding of the emergency procedures. Health education, accidents, illness and child protection issues are dealt with effectively. The police make a very helpful input to lessons about the dangers of drug abuse. Health visitors assist with the teaching of the sex education programme.

36. Pupils receive very good educational and personal support. Systems for monitoring attendance and punctuality are excellent and registration and follow-up procedures are dealt with well. Arrangements for promoting high standards of behaviour are very good. Pupils have a clear understanding of the school's high expectations. The rewards for good behaviour and sanctions for misbehaviour are implemented fairly and expeditiously.
37. Systems for tracking pupils' academic progress have been improved since the last inspection. This includes target setting for each pupil and predicting levels of achievement. The school meets statutory requirements for reporting to parents but has recognised that more regular information is needed to pupils and parents about academic progress. Good support for personal development is provided through the class tutor system and by the staff who teach the various subjects. Helpful arrangements ease the transition from primary schools. Pupils are given very good information about GCSE subject options, A level choices, further and higher education opportunities and careers.

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

38. Parents feel that Ecclesbourne is a very good school. They are very pleased with the academic achievements and with pupils' attitudes, hard work and good behaviour and the range of extra-curricular activities. The high quality of teaching and management is commended. Relationships with parents are very good and the school provides a supportive and caring environment. Inspectors agree with these positive views.
39. One fifth of respondents to the parents' questionnaire indicate that they would like more information on their children's progress. Inspection evidence indicates that more frequent notification about academic progress would be helpful. Other parents are concerned about the school's low level of financial resources and the need for refurbishment to some of the accommodation. The total annual income is about average for a school of this size. The facilities for physical education and drama are limited and the temporary buildings used for social accommodation are in a dilapidated condition.
40. The school has very good links with parents. The prospectus and governors' annual report gives comprehensive information about the school. Parents receive regular newsletters and two editions of the 'Update' publication each term. Special meetings are held for particular purposes, for example to advise parents about the induction arrangements, visits abroad, subject options, work experience and careers. An open evening is held each year and the school's web site provides comprehensive information about the school. Parents are able to contact the staff very easily to discuss any concerns. The comprehensive annual written reports are of good quality. Oral reports to parents on academic progress are usually dealt with at one consultation meeting with teachers each year. The school is proposing to introduce a more regular reporting system as soon as practicable, thereby addressing parents' concerns.
41. Parental involvement in the work of the school is good. School concerts and other events are popular and well attended. Several parents help the school by providing transport for school trips and activities. They are particularly interested in pupils' learning. They give full support to work undertaken at home including regular monitoring of pupils' homework organisers. The parents of children with special educational needs work closely with the school in monitoring progress and



in reviewing the individual educational plans. The school values parents' views which are canvassed every five years, or more frequently when special issues arise. The parent teachers association sponsors the annual Prize Giving event. Last year the association raised over £5,000 which was used to enhance educational resources in the school.

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

42. The headteacher provides very strong leadership and a clear sense of direction for the school. He is very well supported by the senior management team and the school has benefited from their experience and team approach. The commitment to continuous improvement of the quality of education provided is understood and shared by staff and governors. The members of the senior management team all have clearly defined responsibilities and are rigorous in their monitoring of the school's performance and in taking appropriate action.
43. The governors are involved in the work of the school and are very supportive, but are nonetheless prepared to ask challenging questions. They have a clear understanding of the difference between the role of the governing body and that of the headteacher and staff. Through the committees and in the full governors' meeting they play a significant role in setting the school's strategic direction and in monitoring progress. Current priorities have been determined in accordance with a strategic plan created five years ago. The school is about to start the process of creating a new strategic plan and the governors will be fully involved in this. Development planning and management systems focus on maintaining and improving the high standards.
44. The leadership of heads of faculty, heads of subject and heads of year is good overall. In the faculties there are significant strengths in English, mathematics, science and technology. There is also particularly strong subject management in ICT and art. Staff have a clear understanding of their management responsibilities and of the need to ensure that faculty and subject action planning reflect whole school aims and priorities. This is more difficult to achieve in the multi-subject faculties than in those which by the nature of their work are more homogenous. There are variations in rigour with which teaching and learning are monitored and faculties are at different stages of development in the extent to which data is used effectively to track pupils' progress.
45. The systems and procedures for financial management are good and the most recent auditors' report was complimentary. The links between development planning, school priorities and the budget are explicit and budget holders are expected to optimise the use of funding. Grants for specific purposes such as provision for pupils with special educational needs and in-service training for staff are properly and very effectively used.
46. The school strongly promotes good relationships and provides equality of access and opportunity to the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. The adaptation of the premises has enabled a number of disabled pupils to join the school. The special educational needs provision is very effective in ensuring that pupils have maximum access to the curriculum.
47. The teaching staff are well-qualified and suitably experienced and these are very important factors in the success of the school. The educational and administrative support staff work well as part of the team and provide a very good service to staff, pupils and parents, to ensure that the school runs smoothly. Their work also contributes to the friendly and pleasant atmosphere. All staff have access to appropriate training and the guidance and support given to new staff is good.
48. Resources are adequate overall and good in some subjects such as physical education and religious education. ICT provision is inadequate since much of the hardware is old and unreliable. The accommodation is adequate. For some subjects such as English it is good, but the facilities for physical education and drama are poor, there is pressure on the music rooms and the

science laboratories are small for the size of some classes. The library is well stocked and well used but too small for a school of this size. The deficiencies, though not affecting standards overall are affecting the range of work that can be undertaken. Capital grants in recent years have been used wisely to improve the overall accommodation and the governors and senior managers are constantly seeking ways to upgrade the facilities; the planning for this is detailed.

49. The total income available to the school is average though this conceals significant differences in the income generated by different sources of funding. For example the income based on the number of pupils is below the national average but the income for special educational needs is above average. The school budget is used carefully and very effectively to support educational priorities, for example in the resources put into the basic skills department. The headteacher, chair of the finance committee and bursar all have a good understanding of priorities and how the budget can be used to help raise standards and achieve best value.

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

Ecclesbourne school has very many strengths and few real weaknesses. To maintain and continue to improve the current high standards the governing body, head teacher and staff should ensure that:

- Faculties and subjects are more consistent in their use of data for assessing and tracking pupils progress, and more systematic in the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. (paragraphs 44, 54, 94, 102, 112, 134, 152)
- The marking of pupils' work is improved to make it more useful in providing guidance to pupils on how to improve their work. (paragraphs 22, 54, 112, 122)
- Information and communications technology is used across the curriculum both to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum in Key Stage 3 and to support and develop pupils learning at all stages. (paragraphs 7, 24, 73, 82, 94, 102, 122, 134, 142, 159)

In addition the governors should consider including in their action plan the following less significant issues

- Improving the use of registration time. (paragraph 34)
- Implementing fully the statutory requirements for an act of collective worship. (paragraph 33)
- Continuing to monitor and take appropriate action to support the attainment of boys overall and in modern languages in particular. (paragraphs 7, 28)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed

216

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

75

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	37	44	16	0	0	0

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

### *Information about the school's pupils*

#### **Pupils on the school's roll**

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1043	300
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	30	

#### **Special educational needs**

	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	27	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	243	3

#### **English as an additional language**

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

#### **Pupil mobility in the last school year**

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	19
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

### *Attendance*

#### **Authorised absence**

	%
School data	4.4
National comparative data	9

#### **Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	0.2
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*

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	117	91	208

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	97	97	97
	Girls	86	84	80
	Total	183	181	177
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	84 (86)	87 (82)	84 (77)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	69 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	44 (54)	68 (59)	49 (35)
	National	28 (28)	41 (38)	29 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	106	96	92
	Girls	88	83	79
	Total	194	179	171
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	93 (85)	86 (78)	82 (78)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	61 (51)	60 (61)	39 (46)
	National	30 (31)	39 (37)	30 (28)

*Percentages in brackets refer to 1999*

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	111	91	202

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	78	108	108
	Girls	77	89	90
	Total	155	197	198
Percentage of pupils achieving The standard specified	School	77 (80)	93 (98)	99 (98)
	National	47.8 (46.1)	91.1 (90.9)	96.1 (95.9)

Percentages in brackets refer to 1999.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	53.1(53.3)
	National	37.7 (36.9)

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

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

### 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
	2000	19	16	35

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	21	23.5	22.4 (22.3)	1.3	2.7	1.9 (1.6)
National			18 (17.9)			2.7 (2.8)

Figures in brackets refer to 1999.

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	19
	National	100

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	1
Indian	11
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	8
White	1303
Any other minority ethnic group	8

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	78.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.5

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	21
Total aggregate hours worked per week	576

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.7
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 2	N/A
Key Stage 3	24.7
Key Stage 4	20.7

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	10	
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	3312696
Total expenditure	3307349
Expenditure per pupil	2477
Balance brought forward from previous year	62119
Balance carried forward to next year	67466

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	1,343
Number of questionnaires returned	216

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	49	5	1	-
My child is making good progress in school.	42	51	2	1	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	37	58	1	-	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	56	11	2	4
The teaching is good.	36	55	2	-	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	47	16	4	9
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	41	6	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	31	1	-	-
The school works closely with parents.	26	48	13	4	9
The school is well led and managed.	43	49	3	-	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	47	2	-	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	39	45	7	1	8

### **Other issues raised by parents**

Parents raised concerns about the school facilities, the condition of the buildings and the level of funding which the school receives.

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

### **ENGLISH**

50. English results in the national tests for 14-year-olds are well above national averages, and have been for some years; they are also better than those of pupils in similar schools. Pupils make good progress throughout Key Stage 3. From the first term in Year 7 they develop their skills in analysing style in the texts they study, for instance learning to appreciate the use of rhetorical devices by writing speeches of their own. By the time they reach Year 9, all pupils can write at length. The highest attainers are accomplished writers, able to sustain and organise narrative and analysis impressively. Lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs have made very good progress and, although they may continue to struggle with details of expression, they respond well to the challenges they meet and achieve results in their work that are close to national averages.
51. Examination results in GCSE are also well above national averages in both English and English literature. In Key Stage 4 pupils are organised into classes based on attainment levels at the end of Key Stage 3. Those in the lowest groups work in smaller classes and again make very good progress. All pupils take the GCSE and achieve an A\* to G pass grade, with more than four fifths of them in the A\* to C range.
52. English is a popular subject for GCE A Level. Results are regularly above national averages in the higher grades. At this stage particularly, the very high standard of oral work in lessons is reflected in quality of the written work: the students write with passion and conviction, showing knowledge and analysis based on wide reading and personal response to the texts.
53. The teaching of English is very good. All the teaching seen was at least satisfactory, and half of it was very good or excellent. All the teachers have good knowledge of the subject and a clear understanding of what is needed to enable pupils and students to reach the highest standards possible. The courses at all stages are clearly and tightly structured and aim to provide a varied, stimulating experience that will generate enjoyment, commitment and examination success. Relationships are warm and positive and expectations are high. Teachers are skilful in managing behaviour, which causes no problems at any stage. Lessons move with pace and purpose, drawing on a range of strategies. A class in Year 9 came to a firm understanding and appreciation of irony in situation and language by exploring the meaning of a popular song played on tape. Another class learned a good deal about structuring and sustaining argument, and about tailoring language to audience, through a formal debate about the value of fashion. In Year 11, in a whole class discussion on a section of 'To Kill a Mockingbird' by Harper Lee, pupils explored issues of society and context, by considering and comparing assumptions and prejudice when the novel was written, when it was set and at the present day.
54. Homework is set regularly and is useful and relevant. The faculty has appropriate systems for checking progress of classes and individuals, although its chosen style of day-to-day marking and assessment of work is less structured and secure; there is a need to develop better ways of indicating strengths and weaknesses in pupils' writing.
55. The faculty is led and managed extremely well. The head of faculty is deeply committed to raising standards in attainment, learning and teaching. He monitors work in the faculty closely and ensures that pupils and teachers have the best opportunities to develop their skills and interests. Standards have improved since the last inspection. However, there is still a need for more structured teaching and use of ICT within the subject.



## **Literacy**

56. The level of pupils' literacy when they enter the school is above average. Pupils are highly articulate and confident speakers, using a wide range of vocabulary and sentence structures. All but a very few have competence in reading that is at least average for their age – and for almost two thirds of pupils, it is well above average. Standards in writing are lower than those for speaking and reading, but they are nevertheless higher than average. A small proportion of pupils, roughly one tenth of the intake, have very poor ability in reading and writing. For these pupils, and for others with specific learning difficulties, the basic studies department provides specialised extra help.
57. The school is strongly aware of the need to improve literacy for all pupils still further. Speaking and listening are important components of most subject courses and are further developed in extra-curricular activities such as public speaking, debating and drama. Pupils develop confidence and strength through the many opportunities they have in lessons to discuss topics, as a class and in groups and pairs. By the time they reach Year 11 they are experienced and competent debaters. During the inspection, a sixth form design and technology group gave a presentation of product analysis work that was most impressive in delivery. There were also many other examples of class discussion that showed sophisticated levels of expression and of negotiation of ideas and views. Reading skills develop very well. The library and the librarians who run it support all subjects of the curriculum. Pupils learn to research by using the very good book stock and the Internet, while their reading interests are sustained by whole school focus on reading at specific times in the year. As the school develops its own literacy strategy, faculties are increasingly conscious of the part they can play in developing language skills. For instance, they place special emphasis on the vocabulary and writing conventions of their subjects, with the result that pupils are aware of the need to write in particular ways for different purposes.

## **DRAMA**

58. Standards in drama are good. All pupils study drama in Key Stage 3 and it is offered as an optional examination subject for GCSE. Pupils are very successful, gaining results that are well above average. For the last two years the arts faculty has also run a GCE A Level course in drama: in both years all candidates have passed the examination and the proportion reaching the top grades is well above average. Achievement levels during the courses are high, with very good practical work and writing that shows very clear understanding of texts and activities.
59. Teaching in the department is good and often very good. The course in Key Stage 3 is well structured, giving clear guidelines, while allowing scope for individual development by teachers and pupils. Drama gives pupils many opportunities for considering moral issues and for reflecting on experience. For instance, in a Year 9 lesson, pupils working on an improvised scene within a topic on life during World War 2 showed imagination and control, managing dialogue and movement well. They were able to compare attitudes towards women of the time with those of today. A class in Year 11 had gained a great deal of knowledge about drama technique. Pupils were working in groups on improvisations stemming from their set text. They responded well to the enthusiasm and commitment of the teacher and were prepared to give time outside the lesson to perfect their presentations. There was a similar spirit of collaboration between teacher and students in lessons in the sixth form.

60. The arts faculty, and the drama department in particular, makes a very good contribution to the extra-curricular programme of the school. There are regular school productions, such as the musicals, 'Barnum' and 'Joseph and his Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat'.

## **MATHEMATICS**

61. Pupils' standards at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form are well above the national averages. This is the result of very good teaching and the very good attitudes pupils have towards the school and their work. Achievement is good throughout the key stages. Pupils with special educational need make good progress and the gifted and talented pupils make excellent progress.
62. Standards in examinations match those seen in the inspection. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 has been well above the national average for the last four years and well above the average for similar schools in 2000. There is no significant difference between boys and girls. Similarly at GCSE the number of pupils with grades A\* to C at the end of Key Stage 4 is well above the national average and well above the average for similar schools, with a higher proportion than in the last report. All pupils were entered for the examination and less than one percent earned grade G or less, a result also well above the average nationally. Those pupils who entered GCSE at the end of Year 10 in 2000 reached very high standards, 14 of them earning the A\* grade. Pupils in Year 11 who took GCSE a year early in 1999 maintained their high standard in the AS examination in 2000. The introduction of short modules of work in this examination has addressed the concerns of the last report appropriately.
63. In the sixth form, those students studying further mathematics reach very high standards. Attainment in mathematics at the end of the sixth form is well above the national average as far as the higher A/B grades are concerned. There is no significant difference between results in the mechanics and statistics courses. The number of students earning a pass grade is above the national average. The improvement in statistics since the last inspection is good. Standards in statistics are enhanced by the lively discussions seen in the lessons.
64. Teaching is very good overall and in each key stage. About half the teaching seen was very good or excellent and almost half was good, with the teaching in a few lessons being satisfactory. Teachers' expectations are very high. They expect the highest possible grades for pupils in examinations without neglecting the wider aspects of the subject. The introduction of thinking skills into the Year 7 curriculum is one good example, concern for numeracy across the curriculum is another. A discussion on infinity in one Year 7 class was incidental to the main thrust of the lesson but extended the high attainers. The reference to Latin and Greek origins of some mathematical words made them more interesting to the low attainers.
65. The self-assessment procedures in use by the faculty play a significant part in raising attainment, such as the very good practice seen in Year 10. Pupils are able to identify what they have learnt and compare this to the expected outcomes. They know what to do to improve. Moreover they work very hard and concentrate very well on what they are doing. The mental work in many lessons is reinforcing gains in learning and giving pupils the confidence to contribute in class.
66. Teachers demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding of their subject in the lessons seen in Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good knowledge and understanding when teaching the sixth form. This is a significant factor in the standards achieved by the students. Teaching methods overall are very good. The use of computers as in a Year 8 lesson on simple graph work provides the possibility of fast, effective learning. The faculty does not have sufficient modern machines to provide this type of learning to more pupils more often. The machines the faculty does have are out of date. The majority of lessons move ahead briskly, and keep up a good pace through

changes in class activity, though on a few occasions pupils spent too long on one task and lost concentration as a result. Teachers make very good use of questions and answers, which enhances pupils' understanding of new topics. Some of the board work is of a high standard. Support for pupils with special educational need is efficiently targeted through the good setting arrangements. Teaching methods for them are good and result in good standards of learning. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection

67. The mathematics faculty is very good, providing wide ranging opportunities for all pupils to succeed. The head of faculty is supported very well by the deputy head of faculty and by the whole team of experienced mathematics teachers. They enjoy their work. The whole team approach is particularly helpful as the head of faculty has other demands on his time with public examinations. Leadership and management are very good. The priorities are clearly set and every effort is made to improve standards through effective monitoring procedures for teachers and learners.

### **Numeracy**

68. The mathematics faculty is in the process of establishing appropriate curriculum links with other departments in connection with its numeracy policy. The handling of number and measurement, mentally, orally and in writing is supported very well in geography, information technology, mathematics, modern foreign languages and science. It is supported well in design and technology. There are good opportunities for pupils to apply spatial concepts, such as in art in the formal study of point perspective in Year 8. Still life studies across years examine spatial relationships. Good opportunities also arise in design and technology, geography and science. There is a wide range of information presented to pupils numerically and graphically in design and technology, information technology, mathematics and science. Opportunities to handle statistical information occur in many subjects. Pupils in Key Stage 3 geography, for example, use correlation and construct lines of best fit, statistics studied theoretically by some Year 12 students in mathematics. The overall competence of pupils in numeracy is very good. There is effective provision and support for pupils with special educational needs so that they cope remarkably well, in science for example. Skills are more than sufficient to cope with the next stages of education or employment.

### **SCIENCE**

69. Inspection judgements confirm national test and examination results. Attainment is well above average at the end of Key Stage 3, high by the end of Key Stage 4 and well above average in the sixth form. The school sustains such creditable results because teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly through first hand enquiry and practical investigation.
70. In 2000, standards by age 14 were well above the national average, both for the number of pupils reaching the expected level 5 and the higher levels 6 and 7. When compared with similar schools, the number of pupils reaching expected levels was well above average and higher performance was above average. Both boys and girls were well above the national average. Performance over four years has been well above average. Results in 2000 have improved from 1999 against similar schools. In lessons, pupils achieve very good standards in knowledge and understanding and perform well in practical investigations
71. At GCSE, in 2000 very high results were sustained. Performance was very high in comparison with all maintained schools and similar schools, with no significant difference between boys and girls. The number of pupils achieving the higher grades A\* to C in double award was almost twice the national average and those achieving expected grades A\* to G was above average. Results have steadily improved, particularly at Key Stage 4, since the last inspection. In lessons,

work is very well matched to the needs of individual pupils, enabling those in all groups to reach much better than expected standards.

72. Sixth form standards are well above average as a result of some exemplary teaching. Innovative programmes of work challenge and motivate students, as shown in the Year 13 biologists who work to very high practical standards with micro-organisms, observing health and safety procedures with impressive rigour. In physics, students improve their mathematical competence through investigating the changes in tension of wire, modelling the increase in mass on a suspension bridge. In 1999 and 2000, most sixth form students met the required standards of the course in advanced level physics, chemistry and biology. The percentage of pupils reaching the highest grades A and B were well above average, with particularly impressive performance by girls.
73. Standards of literacy are very good. By Year 11, pupils of highest ability bring exceptional writing abilities to the subject, presenting reasoned arguments of high quality to explain experimental findings. Extensive evaluations of practical procedures offer further illustration of capable analysis. Pupils have good opportunities for research in Year 9 and are encouraged to write creatively as they describe a planet for alien visitors. Numeracy skills are also very good. The extremely high skills of gifted and talented pupils in Year 11 are notable. Most pupils in the higher sets have abilities in mathematics that enable them to produce investigations of high quality. Standards in the use of information and communication technology are good and have improved since the last inspection. Year 9 pupils work industriously, finding recent information from the INTERNET, talking together about the structure of planets. Year 10 pupils in a low set understand how variations in natural conditions affect the rate of photosynthesis by using a computer model to produce effective charts and graphs to illustrate their findings. However, all pupils need to reach consistently high standards by using ICT more frequently, maximising achievement from the benefits of good resources.
74. Teaching and learning are very good, contributing to the very good achievement of pupils during their time in school. An outstanding feature is the extent to which teachers use their subject expertise to challenge pupils. They think about abstract ideas, drawing on subject expertise of teachers, when answering difficult questions. Older pupils refine their abilities in speaking and listening through analysing complex issues, illustrated by Year 11 as they reflect on the influence of global warming for their future.
75. Teachers set very high expectations for pupils to engage in first hand scientific enquiry, even though this places a high demand on accommodation, resources and the energies and availability of technicians. Year 7 pupils talk convincingly about the variables affecting the sound they hear from tubes of different qualities. An outstanding lesson in Year 12 chemistry resulted from excellent preparation of resources, enabling students to examine the effect of heating an alkaline compound. They gained an impressive theoretical understanding through excellent probing questions, enticing them to express their views. Through investigation, pupils learn to be more independent because teachers foster a high sense of responsibility, expecting them to take initiative. Although Years 7 and 8 have a very good grounding in thinking at a high level, Year 9 do not always show such high performance in investigation and would benefit from greater demand on their energies.
76. Good monitoring of progress of pupils as they work helps them show marked improvement of skills and knowledge. A further feature of the very best lessons is the quality of review at the end of the lessons, drawing together ideas for the benefit of everyone. Assessment is good. Homework is set regularly and work marked carefully, but the use of targets to help pupils review their efforts is variable. Teachers talk rigorously with students in the sixth form about how they can improve. Those in Key Stage 4 have a good understanding of examination criteria, but those in Key Stage 3

would benefit from in depth discussion of their progress. Science staff do not assess progress in the use of information and communication technology

77. Teachers foster enthusiasm and hard work, further enriching pupils' positive attitudes and real enjoyment of science. Pupils are serious minded about their work, enjoying very good relationships and steadily increasing in maturity. They co-operate well in teams, managing practical resources and fulfilling safety procedures. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress because teachers and technicians spend time to work with them individually, praising their success.
78. Leadership is very good. A cohesive faculty reflects the aims of the school in its work to raise standards and do the very best for pupils of all abilities. A very committed team works hard to fulfil school policies, evident in significant development of new schemes for sixth form to reflect national changes. Integration of ICT into the routines of teaching is gaining momentum and much is already effective. Assessment of investigation skills during Year 9 would benefit from further analysis. In establishing more formalised systems for monitoring pupils' progress, the faculty is well placed to develop them further to show pupils their achievements over their time in school. Attention to equal opportunities is very effective. New staff are supported very well. Accommodation is barely adequate for meeting growing demands by pupils. Some rooms are too small and access routes continue to be unsatisfactory. The quality of work provided by technicians is outstanding, but they are very pressed for time in the light of new national demands on sixth form teaching.

## **ART**

79. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 exceeds the nationally expected standards on the basis of inspection evidence. Pupils make good progress over Years 7 and 8 when basic skills and techniques are systematically taught. Carefully planned and structured projects enable pupils of all abilities to improve over the key stage while allowing also for personal response and imaginative work. By the end of the key stage, pupils use skills and techniques in an increasingly discriminating way to produce work that they can describe and evaluate, sometimes in writing.
80. Standards attained by the end of Key Stage 4 are very good. In the 2000 GCSE results, the percentage of A\* to C grades and of A\* to G grades was well above national averages. High standards seen at the previous inspection have been improved upon, at much greater rate than nationally. Boys' attainment is very good, though girls' is better still. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils have well-developed drawing skills and use personal research in sketchbooks to develop imaginative responses to broad projects. Pupils study the work of other artists and relate it to their own work. They bring their interests, attitudes, views and feelings to their work and sometimes produce very personal pieces. All pupils achieve well, regardless of ability.
81. The standard attained by GCE A Level pupils is excellent. In the 2000 examinations, 100 per cent pass rate was maintained with all candidates gaining the top two grades. This is very much higher than national averages. In 1999 one pupil won a national award for the best candidate in the examination. Both boys' and girls' results have improved at a much higher rate than the national average. They build on their GCSE achievements to produce highly personal investigations and developments on thematic projects. They use techniques and materials in sophisticated and expressive ways to research, develop and produce work. Some achieve standards more typical of students on college art-foundation courses.
82. The achievements of all pupils are largely the result of good teaching and positive attitudes to learning by pupils. Where appropriate, and especially in Key Stage 3, teachers use whole class teaching, with well-chosen examples and demonstrations, to take pupils through more complex

tasks so that all pupils are able to make good progress, whatever their ability. In a small number of Key Stage 3 lessons the lack of clearly focused lesson objectives resulted in some confusion in pupils and progress was not as good as it might have been. Pupils relate their work to that of artists but there is some inconsistency in Key Stage 3 in teaching about artists and their work. This results in some pupils working from reproductions of artists' work but not being able to identify it or say anything about its relevance to their own work. Provision for Key Stage 3 has not been reviewed in the light of recent national changes and the requirement to teach ICT at Key Stage 3 is not being met.

83. Teaching in Key Stage 4 and at GCE A Level is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge that covers a wide range of specialist art practice, including photography, creative embroidery and computer aided art and design. This enables pupils to gain skills and knowledge that match their interests and aptitudes. Teachers' expectations of pupils are high and pupils respond well and take increasing responsibility for their learning. A summer holiday project to prepare for Year 10 resulted in a great deal of high quality work, from the majority of pupils, on the theme of 'Architecture', using local buildings and those seen on overseas holidays. Some pupils studying A Level attend life-drawing classes outside school, which has a positive effect on the development of their work in school. Teachers use a range of appropriate teaching styles including effective individual support and discussion with pupils, which encourages pupils to think carefully about their work and clarify their intentions. From Year 9, pupils' work is increasingly personal and relevant to them. Year 11 pupils develop work on themes as demanding as loneliness, bullying and alcoholism. One boy produced a large and complex composition in watercolour and ink, which makes an insightful comment on governments' use of propaganda in wartime. In her sketchbook a Year 12 pupil used her visit to London and a holiday in Africa to produce stunning combinations of media, exploring the relationship between manmade and natural structures. Pupils are very positive about their enjoyment of art and spend many hours in addition to class time working on their projects.
84. The department is well managed and led. The head of department has a clear vision of the contribution of art to education and has monitored, shaped and directed the work of the department effectively. The staff works well as a team and there is a shared and successful commitment to raising standards. A strong department has continued to improve since the previous inspection and is well placed to continue to raise already very high standards.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

85. On entry, pupils' skills in design and technology are average but progress during the key stage is good and by the end of Year 9 standards are above the national average. In 2000, nearly all pupils were awarded Level 5 or above in end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments and nearly half gained Level 6 or above. This high level of achievement is due partly to the nature of the tasks developed by the faculty. These are specifically designed to develop and enhance basic practical skills in all the different materials and build on pupils' knowledge and understanding in each activity. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, especially when assisted by learning support assistants.
86. GCSE examination results over the past three years have been above the national average and the overall results in 2000 were well above average. Generally, pupils taking the short courses do better than those taking the full course with the exception of graphic products where over three-quarters of those taking both the short course and the long course gained A\* to C grades. Some pupils are successful in converting their short course to a full course result in out-of-lesson time, with very good extra support from their teachers. Girls gained more higher grades than boys in 2000. Pupils do well in all the different design and technology, especially in textiles, where

candidates gained A\* to C grades in the full course and 95 per cent gained A\* to C in the short course.

87. Fourteen students took the A Level design course in 2000 and all passed, nearly half gaining A or B grades. Standards in lessons in Year 12 and 13 are good and the number of students taking advanced design courses has risen considerably. Currently, home economics is offered in Year 13, students are making good progress and their predicted grades are promising.
88. Standards seen in lessons are consistent with examination results. The success the pupils enjoy is partly due to the good and very good teaching and their willingness to concentrate and work hard. Teaching was never less than satisfactory, in half the lessons it was very good and in the sixth form it was all very good. In the very good lessons, the pupils are fully challenged and learn to use a wide range of equipment and materials to design and make exciting projects. For example, in Year 8, the dragster and lamp project are good examples of pupils acquiring a range of skills in different materials. The emphasis on producing quality graphics in all design folders has a great impact on the development of pupils' design ideas and their eventual successful outcomes. Teachers have the expertise to guide pupils to understand quite difficult concepts, especially in electronics, where pupils successfully design and make bicycle lamps and operate traffic-light sequences. Nearly all lessons are well paced and good planning ensures that all pupils are on task and are fully aware of the next stage of development and extension work that is available to them.
89. In Key Stage 4 teachers have particularly high expectations. Lessons are well resourced and the teachers use excellent quality exemplar products, made by former GCSE groups, to inspire pupils. Maximum use is made of display areas, especially in graphics, food and textiles, where a wide range of exciting work is on display for all to see. The end-of-year exhibition recognises the quality and range of work produced in the department. Teachers encourage pupils to trial, model and evaluate their prototypes, thus helping them to achieve high quality end products. Continual assessment of progress is used to identify under-achievers and these pupils are mentored regularly to help them improve their work. The high quality of work produced for GCSE would not be possible without the high level of commitment of the staff and the willingness of pupils to work at extra times when necessary. Good parental support in providing good quality materials especially in resistant materials and textiles, helps to produce high quality items. The good library resources enable pupils to develop a wide range of ideas in depth.
90. Very good sixth form teaching enables students to develop fully their creative talents, especially in textiles, where they have produced some excellent garments based on a variety of themes. These include costumes for plays, clothes suitable for children and outfits for different seasons. The diverse range of textile skills is very impressive. Students making items in wood, metal and plastic have the knowledge and skills to design and make a wide range of items including a portable picnic rucksack, a foldaway art easel and garden furniture. In product design, students have effectively researched into a range of household products and are able to present to the group a comprehensive analysis of the products developed and manufacturing process. These students were particularly articulate and confident in their presentations. Pupils throughout the school are positive in their approach to work, keen and interested and are anxious to learn new techniques. They thrive on competition and work very well in groups discussing and modifying their design ideas. They are developing good research techniques and their time management is improving, especially in Key Stage 4.
91. The curriculum offers a wide range of activities and experiences in all material areas. ICT is well integrated into the schemes of work and used whenever possible. The development of technical and craft terminology is encouraged and pupils are regularly checked for understanding. Accurate measurements are vital to the production of quality items and with the acquisition of good graphic skills pupils are able to see their ideas three dimensionally.

92. The new assessment procedures are built into the planning of schemes of work and are effective in recording pupils' efforts and their levels of attainment. Areas for improvement are identified and targets recorded. The present Year 7 schemes of work have been modified to apply to curriculum 2000 and those for Years 8 and 9 are under development ready to implement over the next few years. Support for low attainers is planned and good education care support enables them to make good progress and behave appropriately. Higher attainers are challenged by the provision of extension work.
93. The overall management of the department is very good. The faculty head has the support of a very committed team of teachers, many of whom hold other responsibilities within the school. The planning, monitoring, evaluating and moderation of work is very much a team effort with very positive results. All staff freely give of their time to promote high standards of craftsmanship and to keep up to date with developments in technology. Although there has been a reduction in resources, consumables, equipment and rooms are very well managed and the department endeavours to provide the pupils with high quality materials. The technician support is highly valued. Health and safety issues are monitored regularly and the new system of risk assessment will comprehensively check any areas that might be of concern.
94. Since the last inspection improvements have been made in the schemes of work to develop more challenging tasks and new assessment schemes which monitor pupils' progress accurately. There are no key issues for action, however, formalising the literacy and numeracy procedures would ensure greater consistency throughout the department. Assessment and recording of ICT skills at Key Stage 3 would recognise pupils' skills within the design and technology department. A closer monitoring of girls and boys achievement might help to narrow the gap at GCSE.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

95. At the end of Key Stage 3 the standards of the vast majority of pupils are well above national expectations. In Key Stage 4 GCSE results are well above average when compared to similar schools, and have been for the last four years. The achievement of all pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is very good and for higher-attaining students it is excellent. In the sixth form, A Level results are well above average overall and close to the average for grades A and B. The work seen during the inspection matched the results achieved at the end of each key stage and in the sixth form.
96. Progress is very good in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Most pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of geographical processes and patterns and of environmental themes. For instance in a Year 7 class, pupils were already using appropriate terms and had a good understanding of concepts such as what makes a "place" distinctive. In Year 11 and the sixth form, the vast majority of pupils and students could interpret geographic information and make reasoned judgements. This was well shown in a Year 12 lesson on bio-geography, where students were searching for information in secondary sources and making reasoned evaluations. Pupils with special education needs and higher attainers make equally good progress because the work is skilfully matched to their individual needs. This was well shown in a Year 9 lesson on coasts where excellent progress resulted from the teacher's skilful use of video to illustrate and extend pupils' understanding of how cliffs are eroded.
97. In nearly all lessons, enthusiastic and stimulating teaching fosters excellent relationships and behaviour and these contribute strongly to the positive attitude to learning. The teaching is good overall and most effective in the sixth form. Half the lessons seen were good or very good and there was only a very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. In the overwhelming majority of lessons teachers use lively and skilful exposition to transmit their good subject knowledge. This is



clear, stimulating and authoritative, drawing on topical examples to illustrate geographical themes. Resources such as video and photographs are very well used to reinforce pupils' understanding, as in a Year 13 lesson on glaciation where the use of video stimulated students to explore how glaciers erode.

98. Teachers create a relaxed yet productive atmosphere in classes which is highly conducive to learning. They encourage pupils to persevere when faced with difficulty and, as a result, they work with diligence and enthusiasm. Higher-attaining students in particular attain a deep understanding of complex issues, such as the environmental conflict arising from urban development. In a small minority of lessons however, the teacher talked for too long and pupils lost interest, becoming passive and making slower progress.
99. Questioning is often effectively used to challenge and develop students' understanding, although in a small minority of lessons it is not probing enough and poorly directed, so that a few pupils sometimes dominate the lesson. The department skilfully uses a wide range of challenging and interesting activities which are usually well matched to the needs of individual students. These have a positive impact on attainment, particularly that of higher-attaining students. Teachers expect much of pupils. For example, in a Year 9 lesson they were studying coastal processes which is more usually taught at GCSE level. Group work, role-play and simulations are very well used in enabling pupils to challenge and support each other in their learning. This was well demonstrated in a Year 13 lesson on geomorphology where students researched a topic and then shared their finding with the class. Attainment could however be even better with more use of ICT in all lessons.
100. In most lessons, the brisk and purposeful pace fosters very good levels of concentration and interest and time is used to the full. In most lessons progress is accelerated by the careful planning of activities, that encourage pupils to be active learners and to "find out" rather than being "told". The confidence of teachers in not over-directing pupils is rewarded by the sense of achievement as shown in a Year 11 lesson on volcanoes where the sequence of tasks led pupils to "discover", the link between volcanic shape and lava type at plate margins. This approach is not uniform across the department, however and, in a minority of lessons, too much time is spent on low level tasks such as copying notes, which prevents pupils from working at full stretch.
101. Homework is regularly set and the best examples support pupils' interest in, and understanding of, their work and the development of research skills, particularly the use of computers to search for and present information. There is scope to take this further and ensure that homework is more consistently useful in this respect. Nearly all pupils are keen to succeed and most understand how well they are achieving. Pupils work is regularly and accurately marked with many helpful and supportive comments which encourage students to learn from their mistakes and move on.
102. An efficient and effective head of department working closely with a team of enthusiastic geographers leads and manages the subject well. The staff have a shared commitment to raising standards. They have set clear and quantifiable targets for improvements and devised strategies to reach them. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall, however the use of ICT has not improved and the subject is not meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum in this area. The newly appointed head of department is beginning to have a strong impact by creating a culture of self-evaluation. Leadership could be enhanced through a more systematic approach to: monitoring the work through lesson observation that would help to develop more consistent teaching strategies, the scrutiny of students' work, and the use of performance data.

## **HISTORY**

103. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is well above the national average. This is shown both in the teachers' assessments, and in the work of pupils now in Year 9. GCSE results have also been well

above average over the last three years and standards are similar in the current Year 11. Girls have reached higher standards than boys at GCSE but this difference was less evident in the work seen in school. In the sixth form, the entry for A Level almost doubled between 1999 and 2000. The results in terms of the points score were below average in 2000 and not as good as in 1999. However, when compared with the achievement at GCSE the 2000 results still represent good achievement.

104. Pupils make good progress and use their historical knowledge, understanding and skills increasingly effectively in their work. From Key Stage 3 onwards, they demonstrate a mature grasp of key issues and an ability to make links in analysing events and in providing explanations. In a Year 7 lesson on Thomas Becket, pupils showed a mature understanding of the relationship between the main factors in the struggle with the king which led to the archbishop's murder. Pupils become increasingly confident in the use of historical sources in investigating events, though at Key Stage 3 some are not always confident in judging their reliability. By the time they reach Key Stage 4 pupils' well-developed research skills include the critical use of a range of historical sources. Higher attaining-pupils especially, use their very good knowledge and understanding in mature and well-informed discussion. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, they were able to suggest and discuss hypotheses for the solution of the problems in Northern Ireland.
105. Pupils' written work develops well though there is little substantial evidence of structured extended writing until Key Stage 4 and some written work at Key Stage 3 is colloquial in style with careless mistakes in grammar and spelling. However, by the end of Key Stage 4, these problems have been largely overcome and most GCSE coursework assignments are of very high quality.
106. Students continue to achieve well at GCE A Level, acquiring sound, and in the case of higher-attaining students, good knowledge and understanding. They continue to refine their historical skills in the course of their studies and essays reflect detailed investigation, thorough research and wide reading. The best work is analytical, with clear lines of sustained and cogent argument, well supported by judicious use of sources. In other cases work is usually accurate but sometimes less analytical and clearly focused.
107. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. They are helped to learn by the good learning ethos in lessons and by the support and example of their peers. At best they are also very well assisted by good support from education support officers and by materials being adapted to meet their specific learning requirements.
108. Pupils' very high levels of motivation, interest, initiative and the very good relationships and behaviour in lessons, are major factors in promoting their achievement. The high quality of the teaching is another very important factor. The teaching was good in seven out of 11 lessons seen, very good in one and excellent in two. The other lesson was satisfactory. Teaching is very effective in developing pupils' knowledge and promoting historical skills, including those of investigation, interpretation, the critical use of historical sources, empathy and chronological understanding
109. Teachers support pupils' learning through skilful sharing of their very good subject knowledge. In many lessons, very good narrative sustains pupils' interest and clear explanation and challenging questioning enrich and deepen their knowledge. In a Year 13 lesson the teacher's very clear presentation helped students to grasp the complexities of the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution and they were challenged to think deeply about issues through his encouragement of discussion and searching questioning.
110. In the great majority of lessons, a variety of well timed activities sustains a good pace. Teachers use carefully prepared resources and overhead projectors to focus attention on key issues, and to

stimulate and structure the discussion which is a feature of most lessons. This enables pupils to explore issues and to form views and draw conclusions which they can substantiate. The effective use of group work helps pupils to refine their ideas and to learn from each other. This was particularly evident in a Year 9 lesson where pupils worked enthusiastically and very productively together in analysing sources for scrapbooks reflecting World War I experiences. In most lessons, the teachers' high expectations encourage pupils to work at full stretch. They respond well to this, as for example in Year 11 lesson on Hitler's rise to power when they were challenged to make decisions about the order and inter-relationship of the factors and events leading to his dictatorship.

111. There were however a few lessons where learning was slowed because pupils were allowed too long to complete tasks or the teacher over-controlled the lesson. In a Year 10 lesson on developments in medicine, though the lesson was satisfactory overall the level of challenge and the pace of work resulted in pupils making less progress might have been expected. Similarly and in a Year 12 lesson even though the students were clearly able to work independently they were not given enough opportunity to do so.
112. Staff are experienced and bring many strengths to the teaching of history. The head of department is very well organised and provides clear structures and guidance to promote and sustain high levels of attainment. Since the last inspection many of the aspects identified as needing attention have been addressed successfully, especially those relating to teaching and increased opportunities for pupils to take initiative. The sharing of good practice is encouraged but arrangements for the systematic and rigorous monitoring, evaluation and planning of the department's work are under-developed as are systems to ensure consistency of practice across the department. Teachers mark work regularly and also use systematic formal assessment to monitor progress. However more work needs to be done to ensure consistency in marking. Much of it is good but sometime it is superficial and does not give pupils enough constructive guidance on how to improve standards.
113. The time allocated for the subject in Year 8 and 9 remains inadequate to ensure full coverage of the National Curriculum and continuity between lessons. The need to compensate for the limited time places great pressure on individual teachers and the department as a whole.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

114. Standards have improved since the last inspection. Over the past two years the attainment of most pupils at the end of Year 9 has been above average. The 2000 results show an improvement on 1999. The GCSE results in 2000 on both full and short courses were well above the national averages. GCSE results have been high over several years. A Level results in 2000 were very good and continued an established pattern of high attainment.
115. Key Stage 3 pupils attain good standards. In Year 9, pupils used good desktop publishing and word processing skills to combine words and graphs in a report on an imaginary chocolate company. Their research was good and they presented the information in ways that are readily understood by others. They responded very well to a very challenging task in which they drew on three separate spreadsheets to present figures for a profit and loss account in a summary sheet, modelling this information to explore various scenarios. They have modelled information using a software package in science to explore photosynthesis and have also successfully used sensors to recorded and present the data on the heating and cooling of liquids in graph form. In control technology pupils write complex procedures which direct an on-screen pen to draw geometrical shapes. Their awareness of the effects of information technology on the world about them is good. For example they know about many of the ways in which supermarkets use the information they gain on individuals through reward cards to adapt their operations.

116. Standards in Key Stage 4 are well above national expectation. Pupils following the full courses at GCSE introduce the problems they intend to solve in their projects with great clarity, using very good analytical skills to describe the situation and explore a range of possible solutions. Their background knowledge of the equipment and software that is available is very good and their knowledge of software solutions is based on methodical studies of the alternatives available. They base their thinking and derive their solutions to the problems on careful consideration of the evidence. Their evaluations are clear, concise and well considered.
117. In the short course GCSE examination, pupils also attain very high standards. Though on occasion progress is hampered by the breakdown of the equipment, pupils make very good progress as for example when creating a database of a diving club. They apply extensive knowledge of the concepts, terminology and models that can be applied in a commercial context. They are very good at finding information and putting it together in well-constructed reports that are full and very informative. They are good at describing the impact of the new technology on the environment. Pupils following the business studies and information technology courses have a very good understanding of information technology in a business context. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve the standards of which they are capable.
118. Standards in the sixth form are well above average. Year 12 pupils are making very good progress. They demonstrate real confidence as they tackle projects that challenge and extend their knowledge and understanding. They choose projects such as one which aims to provide a full range of information technology solutions for a new bar to be opened in Derby, or another that concerns itself with the information technology solutions involved in the setting up of a corporate leisure enterprise. They propose using a wide range of programmes in their projects. They are well aware of the need to formulate survey questions very carefully to ensure that they will produce useful and usable information. They conduct very good research into existing web sites to extend their ideas. Their work is informed at all stages by a good awareness of the needs of their clients. Year 13 pupils have developed high level programming skills. Their knowledge and understanding is very good and they apply this to their projects which are themselves wide ranging. The technical and user guides they produce are very good and comprehensive.
119. Teaching is good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The scheme of work for Key Stage 3 is very good. It gives teachers and pupils clear guidance and this results in a coherent learning programme. Key Stage 3 teachers have good subject knowledge and impart this effectively in the support and guidance they give their pupils. The short and concise introductions to lessons allow the maximum time for practical work. The teachers then move around the rooms giving advice and support to promote individual progress. Relationships are very good and this helps to maintain a working environment that encourages pupils to make contributions without fear of failure. Teachers are enthusiasts and they share this excitement for the subject with their pupils. The setting of homework is appropriate and teachers keep good track of pupils' progress.
120. Teaching in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is very good. Lessons are lively and are characterised by effort and application. Teachers keep their knowledge and skills up to date. This is essential as pupils attempt a very wide range of projects that rely on their teachers keeping up with a wide range of developments. Marking and feedback is very good as is the use of personal interviews to review and to promote very good individual progress. Teachers plan very well, for example splitting the sixth form syllabus into short units so that pupils can assimilate what they learn and taste immediate success.
121. The department is very well led. The head of department is tireless in her efforts to improve the teaching and learning of information technology. She provides maximum access to the comparatively limited number of computers in the school and works hard to maintain out-dated

equipment. Machines are available at lunchtimes and after school and teachers give up their time to supervise their use. Two of the information technology rooms have a network of computers which is constantly failing. This adversely affects progress as well as causing stress to teachers and disruption to lessons, though pupils learn to cope well with ageing software and frequent machine failure. Resources in information technology are not adequate and the ability of subjects to comply with the requirement to use information technology is greatly hindered by the limited access teachers have to computers, even though when machines are free in information technology lessons, pupils from other lessons can have access to them.

122. Assessment procedures in information technology lessons are very good in all key stages and contribute to learning. Pupils and teachers are very clear about the progress that is being made at every stage and so if there is a need for remedial work then this is identified at an early stage. Assessment procedures are inadequate for information technology work in other subjects. The process, which relies on pupils to track their own progress in other subjects, is not working well. In order to track attainment in other subjects the school is considering the development of a school-wide scheme of work that would provide subjects with modules for which they would be responsible and which would lead to a recognised National Curriculum level.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **French, German, Spanish**

123. Standards are above average in each key stage. Pupils achieve well and sustain good progress throughout the school. Gifted and talented pupils achieve very well, and many produce work of exceptional quality at ages 14 and 16. The improvement over the past three years has been faster than the national rate.
124. In Key Stage 3, the percentage of pupils aged 14 reaching the expected level is well above average. In Key Stage 4, nine out of ten pupils are entered for the full GCSE course and in 2000 nearly three-quarters achieved A\* to C grades. Girls perform outstandingly with over 90 per cent awarded A\*-C grades in each of German and Spanish in 2000. Boys do well compared with boys nationally, and in German almost match the girls' results, but in French and Spanish the gap between them is now wider than it is nationally. In French, the A\* to C rate fell significantly, reflecting entirely the fall in the boys' results. Pupils have tended to perform less well in modern languages than in other subjects but the difference is not as great as it is nationally because girls' standards are very high. GCE A Level results are very good in French, less consistently so in German and Spanish because entries are much smaller.
125. The standards seen during the inspection match these results. By the end of Year 9, most pupils are on course for average to well above average standards. They write extended pieces on family, personal interests, school and the locality, using present and past tenses accurately, a range of basic structure in their paragraphs and making simple agreements of verb and adjective. Understanding of both gist and detail is very strong in both listening and reading comprehension, and pupils write and perform their own role-play dialogues. The very highest attainers use a range of negatives in French, place verbs and make simple case agreements in German and make comparisons in Spanish.
126. In Key Stage 4, standards of written work are high, in some cases very high. Most pupils can use a range of tenses and other structures. A few exceptional pupils can improvise, hypothesise and argue in a style equal to the very best at A Level. Typical of the variety seen in German and Spanish are job applications and dialogue scripts, arguments for conservation, and accounts of imagined life in the second half of the century. Between two-thirds and three-quarters of pupils are securely on line for the A\* to C range, although the grouping arrangements applying currently in Year 11 may cause a slight fall in overall standards in French this year. Both listening and reading comprehension continue to be strong: in most classes pupils hear the spoken language for

much of the lesson and can understand detail and gist from unseen texts because they learn and retain vocabulary so well.

127. Pupils achieve well because they know how to learn, are keen to do so and have highly developed literacy skills. In Key Stage 3, the highest-attaining pupils achieve very well and write correctly constructed patterns of language because they have learnt to say and use them in natural situations in class. For example in Year 8, they use past tenses in accounts of holidays, a year in advance of expectation, and make rapid early gains when starting their second language. However, achievement is not uniformly good. In a top French set in Year 9, pupils were not used to speaking the language without the support of text. Also, the classes where pupils are expected to use the foreign language as the normal means of communication both with each other and with the teacher are very much the exception.
128. Similarly in Key Stage 4 achievement is good except where pupils have not been taught predominantly through the spoken language and rely too heavily on text and their grammar notes when required to speak. This particularly affects the attainment and progress of boys. Pupils in general perform well enough from memory when required, but are reluctant to take risks or to improvise. There is underachievement in the top French sets in Year 10 where some pupils have regressed in speaking since Key Stage 3 because of the effect of staffing difficulties.
129. Standards are above average for the A Level course. One or two students of A/B grade potential are secure and fluent, able to express sophisticated ideas across a range of styles and registers in carefully constructed essays. In other students' writing, however, there is careless or unsure application of basic structure. Oral standards are above average, with students able to paraphrase and express freely their views on racism. Year 12 students take time to adjust to the demands of A Level.
130. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. The separate provision made for them in Year 7 works very well, and they do well to succeed as they do on only one period of French a week. They continue to be suitably supported throughout both key stages, in Years 8 and 9 by being taught in small classes created by the allocation of extra staffing. Expectations are suitably high and tasks appropriate, so that by age 16 they perform well at simple word and phrase level.
131. Standards are also high overall because the teaching is good. In nearly two-thirds of the lessons observed it was good or very good and it was satisfactory in all others. Learning routines are strong. Teachers have high expectations of how pupils keep their exercise books as study-aids and apply grammar rules in their writing. Teachers expect pupils to work hard and they respond well, sustain concentration and work at a good pace, presenting their work carefully.
132. Teachers plan and organise tasks very skilfully to maintain a challenging pace and to ensure that pupils learn through the most appropriate activity. Year 11 pupils were observed in an efficient carousel of group activities, consolidating all skills from video, cassette, text and a sheet of dialogue situations. Learning is good when the spoken language is used throughout, as in all Spanish lessons and a lower French set in Year 8. It is especially good when, in addition to target-language teaching, teachers use technological aids to develop skills in combination, for example, in Year 12, speaking and writing in response to a television news item on floods in Corsica projected from CD-Rom onto the board. Other very good examples of this were seen in French in Y7 and Y11.
133. The very best teaching adopts innovative and very effective methods for oral drilling. Pupils in these classes in each year reinforce and practise vocabulary and speech patterns using mime, body movement, song and rhythm. Not all teaching, however, is as motivating or exciting. Some is less than inspiring and unchallenging, and does not teach speaking skills effectively. Pupils in these classes do not find learning a language as enjoyable as their friends do.
134. A feature of the faculty is the stimulating environment created by a rich variety of display: high quality and amusingly illustrated verb tables and memory aids, portraits of pets, letters, family descriptions, town plans, strip cartoons, many of them word-processed with good use of Clip-Art.

In one room in particular, this enrichment compensates for very cramped conditions. Though unavoidable staffing difficulties have taken up much of the head of faculty's time recently and affected the management of the subject, teaching needs to be more rigorously monitored to ensure that all pupils benefit from the best of current practice. Other aspects also need more attention to maintain and further improve standards, particularly those of boys. These include strategies to encourage more spontaneous speaking and develop independent reading further, better use of assessment data to track pupils' progress, and the use of ICT by all teachers.

## MUSIC

135. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is in line with the national average. A significant proportion, however, attain standards that are above average. Pupils perform and compose on keyboards. Those who learn other instruments use them to good effect in class lessons, often taking a leading part in group performances. For example, in one lesson, pupils in Year 9 produced a piece in reggae style, combining chords, bass line and difficult rhythm patterns. By the end of the key stage, pupils have a fair knowledge of orchestral and popular instruments, simple musical forms and styles of music (for example folk and jazz), an understanding of notation and a fair knowledge of commonly-used musical terms.
136. Pupils' overall attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is well above the national average. In the GCSE results in 2000, 15 out of 16 pupils gained grades in the range A\* to C. One of these was an A\* grade. Results in the previous two years lay within a similar range. During the inspection pupils clearly demonstrated very good standards in a lesson in which they performed their own compositions. These included a short cycle of settings of texts by Goethe, and a popular song accompanied by guitar picks and strums of a high technical order. In their final year of the course, pupils acquire very secure knowledge of musical terms and features which they apply well in their regular aural tests and in their discussions with the teacher.
137. Only two pupils in Year 13 are at present taking the A Level course. In Year 12, six are following the AS syllabus. Due to the small numbers involved and the changing syllabus, it is inappropriate to form a judgement of pupils' attainment compared with a national average. The overall progress of pupils in meeting the examination requirement is, however, very good. As well as developing good performance and composition skills at this stage, pupils also analyse difficult pieces, for example Britten's Peter Grimes. They employ correct musical terms and understand musical conventions, which enable them to discuss and write about styles and genres with confidence. Over the whole school, standards have been well maintained since the last inspection.
138. The quality of learning in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory overall. Pupils enter the school with varied attainment in music. Over a third join Year 7 already able to play an instrument and with some background musical knowledge. Most of these pupils make good progress throughout the key stage as a result of good individual and class teaching and extracurricular opportunities. Those with more limited musical experience develop satisfactory skills in performance and composition together with a broad knowledge of notation, scales and chords and musical styles and forms.
139. In Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, pupils learn very well. Early in Year 10, they realise the need to perform regularly in front of other pupils. They also learn to evaluate their own performances and compositions. At this stage, they use their individual instruments well, both in class lessons and in the various extracurricular activities. Pupils are very committed to their studies; they develop a mature approach to learning together with a clear sense of their strengths and weaknesses. In both key stages, pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
140. Overall, across the year groups, pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. Most of them are very interested in the subject and work in lessons with sustained interest. They respond very well to

the challenges set by their teachers and produce plenty of work in lessons. A significant minority of pupils in Key Stage 3 do not retain knowledge well over time; however, within lessons they make progress in accordance with the pace and demands set for them by the teachers. Almost all pupils behave very well in lessons and develop a very mature approach to their learning as they move up the school.

141. Overall, teaching is good and in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form it is very good. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen during the inspection. Teachers have good subject knowledge and the musical expertise to teach the basic skills of literacy and musicianship effectively, as well as the A Level curriculum. Planning is good, lesson preparation is very thorough and teachers have high expectations that pupils will work hard and behave well. Good attention is paid to clear writing and presentation and pupils' work is marked diligently. The day-to-day assessment of work is good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Pupils are given clear criteria to tell them what they have to do to achieve higher grades. The visiting instrumental teachers make a very good contribution to the department as a whole, and to the high standards many pupils achieve.
142. The recently appointed subject head has already injected much enthusiasm for music in the school. New schemes of work have been written for Key Stage 3. These should help to provide a clearer focus and ensure better continuity, especially in respect of pupils' basic musical skills and background knowledge. Around 300 pupils receive instrumental lessons and a similar number take part in the excellent range of extracurricular activities provided. Most pupils sing well in lessons and in a variety of ensembles at lunch time. More computers are needed in order to provide sufficiently for the wide range of work planned, particularly at AS level. Accommodation is stretched to the limit when visiting teachers' lessons and pupils' group work happen at the same time. This weakness was reported in the previous inspection. Music makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, social and cultural life of the school.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

143. Standards in Key Stage 3 are very similar to those at the time of the last inspection. The proportion of 14 year olds working at or beyond national expectations is broadly average with no significant difference between the standards of boys and girls. In Key Stage 4 standards are high in relation to national expectations and enhanced by the attainment of pupils taking GCSE physical education.
144. At the end of Key Stage 3, achievement in girls' gymnastics lessons is good. They successfully plan, perform and evaluate routines involving five balances. Older girls' all-round netball skills and their improving accuracy of passing raise the standards of team play. In football, Year 9 boys' secure close control and passing skills are evident in small-sided games. In Year 11 volleyball, the boys' use of skills and techniques is secure, but the cramped conditions of the hall makes it difficult for them to improve much further.
145. Across both these key stages, pupils have a secure understanding of the principles and procedures of warm-up. In some lessons, though, they are not given enough responsibility for leading aspects of this. Pupils identified as having learning needs are well supported, integrated and make secure progress. Pupils with physical and other needs are very well supported by education care officers in practical lessons and as a result of this make good progress.
146. The department has recently introduced GCSE physical education. In 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining A\* to C grades at 85 per cent was significantly higher than the national average. Though still high in 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining A\* - C grades was somewhat lower and matched the results in 1998. In both their theory and practical lessons, Year 11 pupils are



achieving well. In Year 11 they respond positively to the extra challenge of being taught alongside Year 12 students. These students are the first group in the school to take the one-year AS physical education course and are making very good progress in their knowledge and understanding of anatomy and physiology. Year 10 pupils are also making good progress. In netball, for example, girls plan their own practices to develop their feint and dodge techniques and in basketball boys successfully apply zone defence tactics during games.

147. Overall, the quality of teaching is good in Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good in the sixth form and has a positive impact on pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills development in the games and activities taught. Teachers have high expectations in terms of behaviour and in the ability of pupils to work to their best. Pupils respond very well to this, which helps to promote a good atmosphere in lessons. Smiling faces and positive comments, for example, during Year 8 dance and gymnastics lessons were indicative of how positive pupils can be.
148. Clear introductions to lessons ensure that pupils are made fully aware of what is expected of them. Overall lesson planning and structure are indicative of teachers' good knowledge and understanding of the subject. In the best lessons, the use of effective questioning allows the teacher not only to establish what pupils know and understand, but also enhances their speaking and listening skills. In a Year 8 gymnastics lesson, effective questioning also enabled the pupils to evaluate both their own balance sequences as well as those of others. Teachers circulate well in lessons offering constructive praise and criticism so that pupils become more aware of their capabilities - effective use of this was evident in both boys' and girls' GCSE practical lessons.
149. There are, though, inconsistencies and the quality of teaching varied from very good in more than a third of lessons, to satisfactory in a quarter. Although all lessons include a variety of structured activities, thus helping to ensure pupils remain on task, the few non-participants are not always as fully involved as they should be. In a Year 9 hockey lesson, for example, the non-participant was not drawn in to watch the breakdown and demonstration of the skills required for taking a penalty flick. In a Year 11 volleyball lesson, the teacher directed much of the work and pupils were not given enough opportunities to take responsibility for planning, performing and evaluating, and thus to deepen their understanding of what they are doing. Similarly, at the end of lessons, there is sometimes a tendency for teachers to tell the pupils what they have achieved rather than explore how they think they have made progress.
150. The curriculum is broad and balanced and largely meets the new requirements of the National Curriculum. However, the unsatisfactory quality of accommodation affects the range of activities that can be offered. Current schemes of work for both key stages now need further fine-tuning so that learning objectives fully meet the new requirements, and there is further work to be completed to match existing department levels to the new assessment levels. Short units of work do not make it clear to pupils which two activities they are studying in depth in Key Stage 4 in the course that all follow. In Key Stage 3, the short units limit the amount of time pupils need to make up for their lack of prior experience in gymnastics. The curriculum is extended in Key Stage 4 by a GCSE course and in the sixth form by the AS physical education course. A particular strength of the sixth form is the structured time for recreational physical education for both Year 12 and Year 13 students.
151. A strong range of extra-curricular activities continues to extend further opportunities for physical education. These include matches against other schools as well as house matches and recreational activities. As a result of the dedication and enthusiasm of teachers, numerous individuals have recently achieved representative honours at county level in a wide range of sports. Teams have become county champions at netball and district champions in athletics and cross-country.

152. Physical education is part of the arts faculty and the historical structure of having separate heads of subject for boys' and girls' physical education remains. Job descriptions for these posts show that there is duplication of responsibilities, which is not an efficient use of teachers' time and expertise. Formal evaluation and monitoring of teaching is not yet fully developed, thus inconsistencies in quality are not being addressed and the quality of teaching has therefore remained much the same as at the time of the last inspection. Shower arrangements do not provide the privacy expected by both boys and girls and this has a negative impact on pupils' standards of hygiene.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

153. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above the national average. Inspection evidence points to a steady improvement in standards since the previous inspection and these now exceed levels expected by the Derbyshire Agreed Syllabus. Pupils' knowledge and understanding are good. They have developed an awareness and knowledge of the religious belief and practice of a number of world religions in the context of the contemporary world. They also understand the influence of religion on events and social structures and make appropriate connections between belief and morality and their effects on personal relationships.
154. In Key Stage 4, in the GCSE short course in 2000, attainment was well above the national average. Those who took the full GCSE course also achieved well above average results. Results are well above those of similar schools and pupils perform better in GCSE religious education than in some other subjects. Results have seen an upward trend with slight fluctuation and are a result of consistent application to raising attainment through appropriate examination techniques and study skills which reinforce pupils knowledge and understanding. Pupils have a very good understanding of religious belief and practice through well-developed skills of evaluation and analysis and are able to present lucid and coherent argument using appropriate terminology.
155. A level results are very high in comparison with the national average and very high in comparison to similar schools. Results have improved since the previous inspection. Students have excellent knowledge and understanding of religious belief and teachings, particularly the underlying philosophy and practice relating to different cultural traditions. They are also skilled at evaluation and analysis and can examine complex questions about life and death and the existence of God. Statutory religious education, post 16 and Key Stage 4, are both delivered through successful general studies programmes which make a significant contribution to moral and social education through preparation for adult life.
156. In both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, pupils, including higher attainers and pupils with special educational needs achieve very well. A creative, well-balanced curriculum and well-structured lessons together with very high expectations, encourage pupils of all abilities to think for themselves. Pupils build steadily on prior learning, successfully extending their knowledge of different religions, and how religious teachings and beliefs are expressed in every day life. Key Stage 4 pupils engage in lively debate and develop their skills of expressing their opinions and constructing critical arguments when studying moral and social issues. Excellent preparation for examinations and the strong emphasis on evaluation and analysis throughout both Key Stages are a major contribution to success, as are the highly productive, creative and challenging tasks set through careful lesson planning. In the sixth form students' high standard of achievement is a result of very high expectations and very good teaching. Students are also given every opportunity to give practical application to religious theory,
157. All pupils, especially in the sixth form, have highly developed listening and concentration skills. Pupils are very well motivated, apply themselves readily to all learning opportunities and are

responsible, mature individuals with excellent manners. Sixth form students set very high personal standards for themselves and are excellent role models for younger pupils.

158. The quality of teaching is very good overall. Teaching is good within Key Stage 3 and very good within Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The skilful management of pupils through high expectations for behaviour and academic success and the variety of teaching and learning approaches work exceptionally well to support learning in all lessons. Teachers' knowledge and subject expertise is outstanding. They are skilled at transmitting this to pupils especially in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form where it promotes confidence and results in good progress. In the best lessons, the brisk pace and variety of task foster high levels of concentration and interest. Pupils have excellent relationships with their teachers and they appreciate the support and guidance given to their learning. Pupils' high achievements in Key Stage 4 and post 16 are the result of creative and stimulating teaching approaches and the imaginative use of artefacts and sources of information. There is evidence of occasional underachievement among higher-attaining pupils in Key Stage 3, when tasks remain unchallenging and unsuited to the needs of all pupils.
159. The resourceful head of department is committed to high standards of teaching and learning. Since the last inspection some progress has been made towards the use of assessment to inform curriculum planning, however this needs further development particularly in Key Stage 3. Although the department has made sufficient plans for the use of ICT, the majority of pupils are not receiving their statutory entitlement within religious education, which affects the progress of all pupils. Apart from this the department continues to provide a high quality education for all pupils.