

INSPECTION REPORT

THE PRIORY LSST

Lincoln

Unique reference number: 120721

Headteacher: Mr R T Gilliland

Reporting inspector: Mr Paul Cosway
2734

Dates of inspection: 27th November – 1st December 2000

Inspection number: 22401

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

© Crown copyright 2001

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11 to 19

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Cross O'Cliff Hill
Lincoln

Postcode: LN5 8PW

Telephone number: 01522 889977

Fax number: 01522 871300

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr T J Coffey

Date of previous inspection: September 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Paul Cosway 2734	<i>Registered inspector</i>	Pupils with English as an additional Language.	What sort of school is it? How high are the standards? The school's results and students achievements; How good are pupils or students taught? What should the school do to improve further? Other special features. School data and indicators; The standards and quality of teaching in areas of the curriculum, subjects and courses.
Deborah Granville-Hastings 19720	<i>Lay Inspector</i>		Pupils attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school work in partnership with parents? How well is the school led and managed? How well does the school care for its students.
Gilbert Harris 1684	<i>Team Member</i>	Mathematics.	
Christine Humphreys 15606	<i>Team Member</i>	Design and technology; Special educational needs.	
Jeffrey Pickering 31129	<i>Team Member</i>	Art.	
Anthony McDermott 21981	<i>Team Member</i>		Sixth form.
David Benstok 20243	<i>Team Member</i>	Science.	
Muriel Harrison 15407	<i>Team Member</i>	Geography.	
John Morrell 23308	<i>Team Member</i>	Music.	
Richard Merryfield 19152	<i>Team Member</i>	History.	
Graham Preston 1990	<i>Team Member</i>	Information technology.	
Jan Boulton 18888	<i>Team Member</i>	Equal opportunities; Physical education.	
Charlotte Goodhill 8131	<i>Team Member</i>	MFL	
Richard Wilkins 18673	<i>Team Member</i>	Religious education.	Spiritual moral and social education.
Carmen Rodney 18950	<i>Team Member</i>	English.	

The inspection contractor was:

*Westminster Education Consultants
Old Garden House
The Lanterns
Bridge Lane
London
SW11 3AD*

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

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

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	1
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	7
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	12
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	14
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	18
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND CARERS?	20
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	22
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	27
OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURE	28
The Special Unit	
Sixth Form	
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	30

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

34

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a coeducational secondary school, educating pupils from the age of 11 to 18. There are significantly more boys than girls. The school has technology college status and opened in 1992 as a partnership between the authority and representatives of the business community. The aims of the school reflect its emphasis on the teaching of technology and science, whilst still providing a broad and balanced curriculum. There is no selection test. Parents choose to send their children to a school providing this kind of education towards the end of their time in primary education. A fixed number of places is allocated to each partner primary school in Lincoln and the surrounding area. The school is heavily oversubscribed and final decisions about entry are based mainly on prospective pupils' levels of attendance in Year 5. It is much larger than most secondary schools. There are 1404 pupils on roll, of whom 299 are in the sixth form, established two years ago. Pupils are drawn from a wide area around Lincoln, including areas of social deprivation. Almost all the pupils are white, although the school does have the advantage of a small number of pupils who represent other world cultures. For just under one per cent of pupils, English is an additional language, which is just below the average nationally. Of these, three are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, less than five per cent, is below the national average. The proportion identified as having special educational needs, 8 per cent, is also below average. The attainment of pupils on entry is above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school with many excellent features. It sets high standards for academic performance and has established a very special ethos in which pupils work very hard to succeed and to meet the staff's high expectations of them. Pupils make good, often very good, progress as a result and overall attainment in tests and public examinations is well above national averages. The management of the school is very good and it provides an education of high quality, especially in technological subjects, which are particularly well taught and resourced. Very good teaching across the school helps to ensure that pupils are very well behaved and interested in their work. It provides good value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- The pupils make very good progress and attain, overall, standards well above average.
- Pupils develop very positive attitudes to school, becoming independent learners, and they work very hard, realising the importance of study. Their behaviour is excellent. These are significant factors in the academic progress they make.
- Relationships and pupils' personal development are very good; moral and social development are excellent.
- Teaching is very good and this leads to pupils developing very good learning skills.
- The leadership and management of the school are very successful in focusing on the raising of attainment.
- The pastoral and academic systems link together very well – very good monitoring and assessment systems support pupils and help them to make progress.
- There is very good provision for pupils with special educational needs.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- The proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades, A* and A, at GCSE needs to be higher more consistently. It is very good in some subjects, such as the technology subjects, but is not equally good across all areas of the curriculum.
- The school's literacy policy, to develop pupils' reading and writing skills in subjects other than English, is not yet implemented fully across the whole curriculum.
- Links with some parents need to be strengthened.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school's last full inspection was in March 1996. At that time, it was a very different school from the one it is now. There was no sixth form provision, no pupils had reached the end of Key Stage 4 and the school was significantly smaller. It was deemed to be a very good school that sought to get the best from its pupils. This is still true. The school has made very good improvement since then, especially in the quality of the accommodation, in test and examination performance and in the quality of teaching.

The aspects of the school's work that were criticised have all been addressed. The provision for more able pupils now sets more challenge. Marking is now more consistently effective, as is cross-curricular planning. Equality of access to the curriculum for pupils is now a strength, and accommodation and resources have continued to improve in order to match the growth of the school and the needs of the curriculum. The effectiveness of the *thought of the day* has improved, but is still inconsistent. The school is well placed to continue to improve in future.

STANDARDS

The table below shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on their results in GCSE examinations and by 18 year olds in A and AS Level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	B
GCE A/AS Level	N/A	B	C	N/A

Key	
A*	<i>very high</i>
A	<i>well above average</i>
B	<i>above average</i>
C	<i>average</i>
D	<i>below average</i>
E	<i>well below average</i>

Over the past three years, attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 has been well above the national average, and also above the average for similar schools except in the latest reporting year, when it was average. Attainment was higher in 2000 than in any previous year, but the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals fell below five per cent for the first time and this meant that that the school is now compared with the highest attaining category of schools. The best performance was in mathematics, where the pupils attained very high results overall, especially at Levels 7 and 8, which are well beyond what is expected for their age. All pupils make very good progress from their levels of attainment on entry to the end of Key Stage 3.

Progress is also very good at Key Stage 4. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to C passes at GCSE rose in 2000 to 75 per cent. This is well above the national average and above the average for similar schools. Pupils attained particularly well in technology subjects. Many more pupils gained A* and A grades in these subjects than is the case nationally. The finding of the inspection is that attainment currently is similar to that in the 2000 results at the end of Key Stage 4, and the school is on course to meet its ambitious target of 80 per cent of pupils attaining five or more GCSE passes at A* - C.

Attainment at GCE A and AS Level is close to average. There is open access to sixth form courses and students who did not attain particularly well at GCSE nevertheless make good progress in their studies and achieve well. A large proportion of students go on to university.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent: pupils enjoy school and work very hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent: behaviour is exemplary both in lessons and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Very good: they relate very well to each other and to adults and accept responsibility very well. They work well together and treat everyone with equal respect and courtesy.
Attendance	Above average, with relatively low unauthorised absence.

The positive attitudes to work and school that the school engenders in all pupils are a strong contributory factor in its success. Pupils value the school and what it has to offer them. They want to succeed and so they sustain concentration in order to get the most out of their lessons. The pupils are given many opportunities to take responsibility, as members of the school council, for example. They respond to these well. Pupils learn to be considerate of other peoples' feelings and to respect adults and one another. The very positive attitudes to school engendered in all pupils help to ensure that they work hard and therefore succeed. Similarly, the consistently high levels of attendance of almost all pupils ensure continuity in their learning and help them to make progress.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged 16-18 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 in English, mathematics and science is very good throughout the school. There are many strengths in teaching. Around 45 per cent of teaching is very good or excellent - a very high proportion. Teaching is satisfactory or better in 99.5 per cent of lessons. There is a high proportion of very good teaching in almost every subject, especially in mathematics, English, history, the technology subjects, modern foreign languages, physical education and religious education. The teaching meets the needs of all pupils very well, including those with special educational needs.

Strengths in the teaching are the very good subject knowledge of teachers and their meticulous planning, along with very good class control. Discipline is good in all lessons, ensuring that the very good teaching is effective and leads to very good learning. Pupils show considerable interest in their work, concentrate hard and understand how to improve it further. In general, teachers have high expectations of their pupils and pupils respond to these well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The broad, balanced and rich curriculum matches the needs and interests of pupils very well and stimulates them to learn.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs and for pupils with English as an additional language.	Very good: the organisation and management of the provision for these pupils is very effective in ensuring that their needs are met and that they are taught well. They make very good progress as a result.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall: the provision for the social and moral development of pupils is excellent. The cultural provision is good, with good links with other countries by use of both the internet and educational visits. Pupils develop a spiritual awareness through their time in the school, but the provision for this is not developed well.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils very well. The monitoring of pupils' academic progress is excellent and personal development is monitored very well. Teachers respond quickly and effectively where there are concerns. Incidents of oppressive behaviour are not tolerated.

In many ways, the school works well in partnership with parents. The information it provides for parents is good, although there are sometimes conflicts between the high standards the school insists upon and the wishes of some parents - over items of uniform for example. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities, including educational visits.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good: firm and decisive leadership from the headteacher and senior managers provides very clear direction for the work of the school, setting high expectations of both pupils and staff. The school is managed very well, with almost all middle managers working very effectively. These have been key factors in its continued improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good: the governors are supportive of the school and give of their time willingly to help the school and involve themselves in its work. They fulfil their responsibilities well and have a very good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent: the senior management team and middle managers evaluate whole-school and departmental performance well and use this information very effectively to guide the priorities for further development.
The strategic use of resources	Very good: almost all lessons are taught by specialist teachers. The accommodation is used well. Effective use is made of all learning resources.

Standards are rising as a result of the targets that the headteacher and his senior managers have set, with the support of the governing body and the staff, the good monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance and the commitment of the teachers. The quality of staffing is very good. The school successfully seeks best value in the use and deployment of all its resources and in the use of its budget.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>Over 90 per cent of the many parents who responded think that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their children are making good progress (96 per cent); • behaviour is good; • teaching is of good quality; • the school expects its pupils to work hard and give of their best (98per cent); • their children are helped to become mature and responsible. 	<p>Of around 800 parents who responded to the questionnaire or attended the meeting for parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twenty-five per cent do not think that the school works closely enough with them. • Twenty-four per cent are concerned about the amount of homework that is set. • Sixteen per cent do not feel comfortable approaching the school with problems and do not believe that the school is managed well.

The homework provision is good. The parents who express concern think that there is too much homework, but the provision is appropriate for most pupils and helps them to make progress in their learning. The information that the school provides for parents is good, but the school needs to ensure that the positive relationships enjoyed with the majority of parents are maintained and developed.

The inspectors agree with the positive points made by parents, finding that pupils make very good progress, behave very well indeed and develop a sense of responsibility. Their positive attitudes to school and good behaviour are very positive influences, helping them to attain well and benefit from the good teaching.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

1. Overall, pupils make very good progress during their time in the school. Their attainment on entry is slightly above average. An above average proportion of pupils gained Level 4 and above in the three core subjects at the end of Year 6.

Key Stage 3

2. At Key Stage 3, improvement in performance in the National Curriculum tests over the last four years has been broadly in line with the trend nationally; the attainment of pupils in the school has moved from above to well above average compared with attainment across the country as a whole. In the 2000 tests, attainment was average compared with similar schools, having been above average in 1999. This masks a significant improvement in results, especially in mathematics. The school has had a drop in the numbers of pupils entitled to free school meals and this has resulted in it being compared to the highest attaining cohort of comprehensive schools; that is with schools with fewer than 5 per cent of pupils claiming free school meals. All pupils, both boys and girls, make very good progress through the key stage and there is no significant difference in attainment between boys and girls overall.

3. The National Curriculum test results for 2000 show that attainment in mathematics is very high compared with the national average and above that in similar schools. The proportion of pupils reaching Level 5, the expected level for their age, was 85 per cent. Even more impressive are the figures for higher levels; almost 40 per cent of pupils reached Level 6, just over 20 per cent attained Level 7 and three pupils attained Level 8. The attainment in English was also well above the national average and it was slightly above the average for similar schools, with 83 per cent of pupils reaching Level 5 or above. Just over 40 per cent of pupils attained Level 6, with just under ten per cent at Levels 7 or 8. Level 5 or above in science was gained by 79 per cent of pupils, a proportion in line with the average for similar schools but again well above the national average. Level 6 was reached by 30 per cent and a further 10 per cent gained Levels 7 or 8.

4. The findings of the inspection are that standards currently are similar to those indicated by last year's end of Key Stage 3 test results. Attainment in English, mathematics and science is well above the national average. The high attainers are stretched particularly well in mathematics, where open, challenging teaching provides them with stimulating opportunities to extend their knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts. In the other subjects of the curriculum, performance ranges from average to well above average, compared with attainment nationally. Attainment is well above the standard expected for pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 in design and technology, geography and history. It is above average in art, information technology, German, French, music

and religious education. In physical education, attainment is close to that expected for pupils of this age.

Key Stage 4

5. Attainment at GCSE, measured by the average point score per candidate, has risen since the last report more rapidly than the average nationally. In 1997, the average point score, the most accurate measure of pupils' attainment over all the GCSE examinations they take, was 43.9, against a national average of 35.5. In 2000, the average point score was 48, a rise of 4.1 points against a national rise of 3.2. The average point score has been well above the national average over the last four years. Both boys' and girls' results were well above the respective national average for boys and for girls. The national trend for girls to outperform boys at the end of both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is not true here. Progress from the end of Key Stage 3 to the end of Key Stage 4 is good for pupils attaining five or more GCSE passes.

6. The proportion of pupils who, in 2000, passed five or more examinations at A*-G was well above the national average and above the average for similar schools. The proportion of pupils who left with at least one GCSE pass was above the average nationally, but was below that in similar schools. This is because the school takes pupils from the nearby air force base and a small number of these left before taking the examinations, but still had to be counted in the final statistics. Of the pupils still attending the school at the end of Year 11, all achieved at least one GCSE pass at A*-G.

7. The results at GCSE in 1999 were well above the national average in most subjects. In three subjects, human physiology, business studies and tourism, the percentage of pupils who attained A* to C passes was below the percentage nationally. In 2000, business studies and biology significantly improved their A*-C pass rates. In business studies, for example, 83 per cent of candidates attained an A*-C pass, as against just over 50 per cent in the country as a whole. Nevertheless, some subjects do not succeed in getting as good attainment from pupils as others. This is true at two different levels. The A* and A pass rate is significantly higher in a group of subjects that includes the technological subjects than it is in others. In electronics, for example, almost 50 per cent of candidates gained A* and A grades in 2000; in food technology, the percentage was 20 per cent, significantly higher than the national one of 8 per cent. In graphics, it was 42 per cent. In systems, it was 45 per cent. In textiles it was 36 per cent. High percentages were also recorded in other subjects with high numbers of pupils entered, including information and communication technology, sports studies, statistics, geography, French and English literature. This shows that, in general, high attainers in the school are being challenged and are making good progress. However, in some subjects, such as science, mathematics and English, the proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades at GCSE is only just above the national average. The school needs to continue to review teaching and learning strategies in all departments, sharing good practice from the subjects that are succeeding particularly well. Expectations need to be equally high across the whole curriculum to ensure that the pupils attain highly in all subjects. In terms of overall pass rates at A*-C, the picture is more consistent. Almost all subjects exceed the national average pass rate by a significant margin. Where subjects are failing to gain a high percentage of A* and A passes, they are picking up a higher percentage of B and C passes to compensate. The exceptions are German and travel, where the A*-C pass rate is close to average. Boys and girls attain equally well.

8. Attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 4 is well above average and has improved from the 1999 levels. It is above average in speaking and listening. Pupils are confident and fluent and can address adults appropriately and well. All pupils listen well. Reading skills are well above average. Almost all pupils are adept at using books and, especially, information technology to access information. Writing skills are well above average. Almost all pupils can write expressively and accurately, adapting their style well for different purposes and audiences, but a minority has problems with spelling, grammar and punctuation. Expressing their ideas clearly in written form is an effort for these pupils and this can affect their attainment in other subjects, such as psychology, where clear, reasoned English is required. Attainment is high in English literature. Pupils read with understanding and express their ideas about fiction fluently both orally and in writing. They make good progress in English over both key stages.

9. Attainment in mathematics is well above average at the end of Year 11. A small number of relatively high attainers are capable of passing GCSE with a grade between A* and A, but most pupils are working towards grades B and C. All pupils make good progress through the school in developing numeracy skills. Pupils also make good progress in science through Key Stage 4 and attainment is well above average.

10. There is a group of subjects in which pupils achieve well, improving significantly on their ability levels at the end of Key Stage 3. This is true of physical education, geography, history and art, in all of which pupils' attainment is well above average. Attainment remains above average in French, German, information and communication technology and religious education. Particularly good progress is made in the other technology subjects. The quality of education and provision is particularly high in these subjects, which include electronics, textiles, resistant materials and graphics, and attainment is very high compared with the national average. Attainment is average in music, where the number of candidates is small.

11. Attainment at GCE A Level was just below the national average in 2000, having been above the year before. The school's policy of having open access to the sixth form, and making it open to pupils from other schools, meant that there was an above average proportion of low attainers in the cohort. Almost all subjects succeeded in gaining a satisfactory number of A-C passes and few candidates failed to gain a pass at any level, but there was a high proportion of passes at D and E grades. Within this overall picture there was evidence of individual successes: psychology produced 45 per cent of passes at A, out of an entry of 11; technology had 44 per cent passing with an A grade out of 18 candidates, and in general studies a third of the 13 candidates attained an A grade. The finding of the inspection is that attainment at A Level is currently better than is indicated by the 2000 results and is above average overall. It is particularly high in mathematics; well above average in art; above average in English, German, religious education, physical education, music, history and French. It is close to average in geography and science.

12. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire believe that pupils make good progress at the school and the inspection finds this to be true. Over their whole time in the school, however, mid-attaining pupils do not always make good progress in the development of their literacy skills. That so many pupils do succeed, in a school where the majority of pupils are boys and so are less likely to do well in English, is in large part due to the hard work of the English department,

where teachers work skilfully to develop reading and writing skills. However, the whole-school approach to developing literacy skills is still in its infancy

and much more needs to be done in other subject areas. Most subjects teach pupils the specialist vocabulary they need to succeed in their work, but they do not consistently insist on good spelling and grammar and mark for this when checking pupils' work. The lack of drama teaching in Key Stage 3 means that additional opportunities are lost to develop a spoken vocabulary that pupils can transfer to their written work.

13. Pupils make good progress in the development of numeracy skills overall in both key stages. The development of a whole-school numeracy policy is at a similar stage to that of the literacy policy, but pupils achieve well despite this.

14. Pupils with special educational needs and the small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language are supported well in their learning across the curriculum and make good progress. They attain standards that are good in relation to their prior attainment, because relevant pupil records are used to determine need and support. Progress is tracked effectively and very detailed records are kept on each pupil. At the end of Years 10 and 11, when pupils take external examinations, they have the option of selecting the certificate of achievement if they find the GCSE course inappropriate. By this stage pupils have made improved learning gains due to the successful monitoring and support of their individual need. The co-operation between parents and the school enhances this progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

15. The attitudes and values of the pupils throughout the school are excellent. This area was praised in the last inspection and has improved even further. The school has created an ethos of respect, responsibility and high standards in all areas of its life, and pupils respond with an impressive degree of enthusiasm.

16. Pupils' attitudes to school in general and to learning are excellent, arriving at lessons with positive attitudes and a desire to learn more. They work very hard, concentrating well and applying huge amounts of intellectual effort to their studies. They face difficult challenges with evident enjoyment and are prepared to work hard on their homework to support their lessons. Most pupils ask and answer questions readily, join in discussions and contribute well during lessons. They are confident, good-humoured and relaxed in all subjects. For example, in a Year 9 art lesson where pupils were looking at totems, they were keen, interested and sensitive to the feelings of other pupils. In history, Year 8 pupils participated in a purposeful discussion of the changes of the church during the reformation. In English, Year 9 and Year 11 pupils responded exceptionally well to the very high intellectual challenges offered them by their teacher, absorbing knowledge at an incredible rate. Sixth form students show an impressive commitment to their studies, as was seen in Year 13 English and mathematics lessons where students showed excellent preparation for their examinations. Year 12 law students tackle the subject with maturity and interest, their discussions showing that they had read around the subject to give extra support for their well-argued views. Such positive attitudes from all pupils and students in the school have a direct impact on the high standards that pupils aim for and achieve. Most pupils are sophisticated learners, in that they work independently very well and take on responsibility for their own learning.

17. Behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school is excellent. Pupils understand and accept the high standards expected of them in all areas and respond accordingly. In lessons, their excellent behaviour ensures that learning takes place at a tremendous rate, which produces very good results. Around school, the atmosphere is good-humoured, calm and orderly. Movement between the two buildings is very sensible and respectful. Pupils move between lessons promptly and with no boisterous behaviour, which means that lessons begin on time and in an atmosphere conducive to learning. There is no litter, graffiti or vandalism, and classrooms are always left tidy and organised. Throughout the school, pupils are treated with trust and respect, and they respond to this very positively. For example, at lunchtimes and breaks, classrooms are left open and office doors unlocked. Pupils have free access to the school and there is never any question of rooms or resources being touched or damaged. Pupils are proud of being members of The Priory. They wear their uniform with pride and appreciate the facilities and environment within which they live and work.

18. During the last academic year there were 17 fixed term exclusions and one permanent exclusion. This is below the average for a school of this size. Exclusion is the final stage in a clear, structured approach to dealing with unacceptable behaviour, and it is not a sanction that is used lightly. All exclusions are fully documented and parents are involved at all stages.

19. Relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils themselves, are of a very high quality and create a supportive and caring atmosphere in which pupils feel secure and comfortable. These very good relationships have a positive impact on pupils' responses and attitudes in lessons. Pupils are valued both as individuals and for their contribution to school life, as can be seen from the work of the year and school councils. Pupils respect each other's feelings and are willing to listen to opinions different from their own. Discussions in many lessons, particularly in religious education, illustrated well pupils' acceptance and tolerance of others. They are considerate in the manner in which they go through the school day, very polite and friendly, and welcoming visitors into their school. Bullying is tackled through tutorial time and assemblies. Pupils report that there is a small amount of bullying, but are confident that it is dealt with quickly and sensitively when it arises.

20. Pupils respond very well to the responsibility given to them. The ethos within the school demands a high level of maturity and independence and pupils flourish as a result. Most of the pupils are confident and proud of their achievements. This is evident in the way in which they approach their studies and tackle difficult concepts with energy and enjoyment. Feedback from employers involved in work experience placements praises Priory pupils for their approach and confidence. In the sixth form, students manage their time very well, making excellent use of their free time for personal study whilst still enjoying the atmosphere within the sixth form. Many pupils enthusiastically participate in clubs and after school activities. The newly established Combined Cadet Force has 120 members. Thirty per cent of pupils are involved in sporting activities within and out of school. The homework club has many pupils staying after school, and residential trips and trips abroad are thoroughly enjoyed by pupils and staff alike. The year councils meet with their heads of year very regularly, and feed views through to the school council. Many of the pupils' initiatives have been acted upon and pupils feel they have a genuine voice within the school. Throughout the year, pupils take part in producing assemblies and organise many charity events on large and small scales to raise awareness of the misfortunes of others and help them.

21. Attendance at the school is good. The attendance rate for 1999/2000 of 93 per cent was better than the national average. Unauthorised absence is low and less than the national average. Pupils register with their tutors in the morning, with subject staff in the afternoon and in all lessons. Registers are marked accurately and absences are recorded correctly. Registration times are used well and create a purposeful and effective start for the day ahead.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

22. At the time of the last report, teaching was good in the school. Teachers planned work well, were committed and hard working. In 15 per cent of lessons, teaching was very good. Shortcomings were identified in the quality and usefulness of teachers' marking and the levels of challenge for high attaining pupils. There has been significant improvement. The proportion of very good and excellent teaching has risen considerably. The large majority of teachers plan extension activities for the higher attaining pupils. Marking is done regularly and provides valuable feedback to pupils to help them to improve their work.

23. The senior management team has put in place an impressive programme of lesson monitoring and professional development, aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school. As a result, there is now almost no unsatisfactory teaching in the school. Whereas 75 per cent of teaching was good or better at the time of the last report, the proportion is now 87 per cent, with 45 per cent of teaching being very good or excellent. The proportions of excellent and very good teaching are almost identical across the two key stages and the sixth form, but more teaching is satisfactory rather than good at Key Stage 3, because some lessons are taught by non-specialists. A high proportion of parents, 93 per cent, indicated in their questionnaire return that they believe teaching to be good in the school. This was reinforced by comments made at the meeting for parents with inspectors. Teaching is now a significant strength of the school and makes a major contribution to the quality of education and the standards attained.

24. The main strengths in teaching are the high expectations of behaviour that all teachers have of the pupils in their charge and the hard work and commitment that teachers show in preparing interesting and challenging lessons. High expectations of behaviour lead to effective class control and a good ethos for learning in every classroom. As a result, pupils learn to concentrate and get the attention they need to help them to make progress. Teachers sustain a good pace and this leads to the pupils learning relatively quickly. Teachers praise attainment when this is justified and this helps build the confidence of their pupils and raises their self-esteem. In excellent lessons, teachers' high expectations are translated into teaching and learning strategies that provide open-ended challenges to pupils that extend their knowledge and their ability to think. In an excellent mathematics lesson with Year 8 pupils, the teacher began with a series of demanding mathematical puzzles, that related to the learning objectives for the lesson, and that she challenged the pupils to solve. They were enthralled, and their excited interest and intense concentration from all pupils as they rose to the challenges that had been set were striking features of the lesson. As they discussed, thought through and finally solved the puzzles, their attainment also rose, to become well above average by the end of the lesson.

25. Teachers use assessment and target-setting well. There is a much better understanding of the importance of the use of assessment information in the school as a whole than there was at the time of the last inspection. Pupils have individual targets in every subject; their progress is monitored module by module, and they are mentored and supported if progress is seen to slip.

26. Good subject knowledge is a feature of almost all lessons. Teachers have the ability and confidence to extend and challenge even the most able pupils. Teachers plan well, setting clear learning objectives for the lesson. They share these objectives effectively, so that the pupils know what is expected, and they revisit them at the end of the lesson to consolidate learning. In an excellent lesson in design and technology with Year 7 pupils, the teacher had prepared the lesson very well, making extremely good use of the very good resources available. The teacher's very good subject knowledge, and excellent understanding of how to use information and communication technology to help pupils to learn, ensured that the pupils made rapid progress in their knowledge and ability to make use of CAD/CAM technology. By the end of the lesson, they had made excellent progress in their learning and their attainment was well above the average for their age.

27. Lessons are structured so that skills and knowledge are built gradually and progressively over time. This is a key feature of the good and successful teaching in the school and often means that a lesson starts with a swift review of facts and skills already taught. Resources are prepared to support lessons effectively. Homework is used well to extend the learning opportunities in class.

28. In lessons where teaching is satisfactory, there are many of the strengths that are consistent across almost all lessons. Teachers plan and prepare well so that the work is generally appropriate. It is organised so that pupils can build on what they have done and learnt previously. In some of these lessons, taught by non-specialists and mainly in Key Stage 3, the lack of an in-depth knowledge of the subject restricts the teachers' abilities to challenge and extend the higher attaining pupils. In the one unsatisfactory lesson observed, the teacher, new to the profession, did not yet have the experience to know the best teaching strategies to take the pupils forward in their learning.

29. Teaching is very good overall at both key stages and in the sixth form in English and mathematics, with many examples of excellent lessons. The best teaching in mathematics challenged and fascinated the pupils, bringing the best out of them. In English too, there were examples of inspirational teaching. In science, teaching is good in Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form. Teachers have very good knowledge of their science, but do not always extend and interest the pupils as well as in the two other core subjects. The planning and organisation of lessons are areas of strength and classes are very well managed in these three subjects to ensure that there is a good learning environment.

30. The quality of teaching makes a significant contribution to standards and the quality of learning across the rest of the school. Teaching is very good across both key stages and in the sixth form in a number of subjects. In art, the aims are clear and teachers ensure that all pupils know what is expected of them and how to succeed. Positive use is made of praise and encouragement to build pupils' confidence and help them to succeed. In physical education lessons, teaching is very good; very well focused on developing the skills that pupils need to succeed in the subject. The teaching of music is good across the school, with examples of very good teaching that interests and inspires the pupils. Teaching is very good overall in design and technology and drama; good in information and

communications technology and design and technology. It is often challenging and interesting, leading to good learning from the pupils as they concentrate and try hard to succeed in response to their teachers' high expectations.

31. In French and German lessons, teachers' good knowledge and expertise and good classroom management skills lead to pupils working hard and making good progress. Teaching is good in Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Geography teaching is good overall, characterised by a good emphasis on the development of the skills necessary to succeed in the subject and good planning that ensures that all pupils are set work appropriate to their needs. As a result, all pupils learn at a good pace. History teaching is very good. Tasks are varied and interesting, which helps to motivate pupils.

32. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good and for the few pupils for whom English is an additional language teaching is good. It is always planned effectively to help these pupils to meet the targets they have been set. The targets in their individual education plans are not always specific about the progress they need to make in individual subjects, but good use of assessment information by teachers helps them make progress. Teachers' lesson plans clearly match task with need to support these pupils in their learning. Many teachers successfully use a range of strategies to meet different needs in the class. Support assistants work well, both with individuals and small groups.

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

The curriculum

33. The curriculum is very good overall. It is good at Key Stage 3, where the expected range of subjects is enriched by particularly good provision for science and technology. It is very good at both Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, where the range of subjects is particularly wide and supports pupils' achievement, because they are able to take courses that challenge and interest them.

34. The curriculum is well planned and the very good provision reflects the aims of the school as a technology college. Across both key stages, the curriculum includes all requirements of the National Curriculum and is complemented by a well-planned programme of personal, social, health and moral education that is provided within tutor time. Across the key stages, the curriculum in each subject is organised into discrete half term modules that enable the school to carry out regular assessment and reporting. Overall, the very good range of sixth form provision reflects well the national educational policy for greater breadth, though it does not meet the statutory requirement for a planned programme of religious education for all.

35. Key Stage 3 subjects have sufficient time to cover their programmes of study and all pupils take two modern foreign languages. Pupils have good access to information and communications technology through discrete lessons and the many opportunities provided in most subjects. Design and technology is particularly strong in its use of computers for design and manufacture. Drama is less well developed in what is, otherwise, a broad and balanced curriculum in Years 7 to 9.

36. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is very good in fully covering the National Curriculum requirements and enabling pupils to pursue a wider than average range of options. All pupils follow a course in information and communications technology (ICT), leading to a full GCSE qualification, and this continues to be complemented well by the good cross-curricular use of ICT. Technological and vocationally related education is strong. It includes seven different design and technology courses as well as GNVQ Part 1 in information technology, and GCSE courses in business studies, child development and travel and tourism. Further breadth is provided by option courses in classical civilisation, statistics and psychology, with the opportunity for pupils to take GCSE in single sciences.

37. At both key stages, the curriculum is organised effectively. The amount of taught time is above the recommended minimum and the timetable is organised to minimise movement between buildings, some of which are a quarter of a mile apart, to avoid wasted time between lessons. Registration in the afternoon is done in the first teaching period so that there is no movement from tutor base to classroom. A strength of the curriculum structure, retained and enhanced from the time of the last report, is the division of work in every subject into half term modules that are assessed and reported on regularly.

38. In the sixth form, there is appropriate provision for those one-year sixth form students wanting to take GNVQ Intermediate in business and GCSE courses. Provision at Advanced level is very good and the school has responded well to Curriculum 2000 with 35 different courses that lead to GCE and Vocational Advanced Level/Advanced Subsidiary Level qualifications. These cover all the main subjects necessary for progression to higher education and employment. Further, all students take the key skills qualification in communication, application of number and ICT. They can choose to be involved in sports and community activities and all follow a programme of careers and social education through the tutorial system.

39. The effectiveness of strategies for teaching numeracy skills is good, and all pupils have sufficient numeracy skills to support them in their work. The effectiveness of the teaching of literacy is just satisfactory, because of the good work of the English department and isolated examples of good practice in other areas. Literacy strategies have not yet been implemented across the curriculum and this does disadvantage some pupils, but a working group has produced a policy and there are plans to implement it in the near future. Apart from this, equality of access and opportunity is very good. The small proportion of pupils with special educational needs benefit from very good provision in terms of support and access to the curriculum. The curriculum is sufficiently broad and accessible to meet the needs of all pupils, and very few do not successfully follow the main provision at Key Stage 4. The school does provide for a small proportion who benefit from a less heavy GCSE programme and a few follow a programme that includes significant work experience in Year 11. The open access sixth form encourages a high proportion of students to continue their studies, including some special educational needs students.

40. Considerable use is made of links with the community to support learning and the contribution of the community is very good. As a technology college, the school enjoys successful links with various industrial partners and sponsors who support teaching and learning, particularly in the design and technology and business studies courses.

41. The school has clear and agreed curricular policies that relate to health education and this is incorporated into a well-organised personal, social, health and moral education programme. PSHME provision is good and delivered effectively within tutor time and assemblies.

42. The good careers education and guidance benefit from good links with the Careers Service and local employers and are supported by an excellent careers resource area. The careers programme is well delivered within the PSHME programme. In the sixth form, preparation for higher education is thorough and includes regular links with local universities and colleges.

43. There is a very good range of extra curricular activities and clubs in many subjects. These include a range of sports activities and tournaments in which nearly one in three pupils participates. In information and communications technology, the pupils make active use of the many facilities during lunchtimes and after school and some help develop and maintain the school web site. The school also has its own field-study centre and this is well used to support different field studies in sciences and the humanities.

44. The school has a number of good relationships with local educational institutions. It works closely with a number of universities and colleges in supporting teacher training in information and communications technology, as well as enhancing sixth form courses through the use of university conferences and seminars. The school is a major provider of information and communications technology training to a considerable number of local secondary and primary schools. It is also actively involved in a European wide initiative to establish a common accreditation for all employees in a range of information and communications technology skills. A programme of curriculum enrichment for local primary schools is provided by the school's team of Advanced Skills Teachers. A good improvement in the curriculum has been achieved, based on the good quality of provision reported by the last inspection.

The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

45. The school makes very good overall provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. It places a high value on their spiritual development, but there are weaknesses in its provision for collective worship. Pupils attend a year group assembly once a week, and meet on other days in their tutor groups for a 'Thought for the Day'. Assemblies are primarily moral and social in tone and their Christian, religious and spiritual content is very limited.

46. Where there is good practice, music is used to create an appropriate mood on entry, and there may be brief prayer or reference to Christian teaching. Where prayer occurs, however, it is devalued by being rushed. Opportunities for reflection are too few, and too brief. The 'Thought for the Day' in tutor time is again primarily moral and social in tone. It sometimes provides

opportunities for reflection, but in the very large majority of instances observed during the inspection week, it was lacking in any spiritual dimension.

47. Some subjects promote pupils' spiritual development in the classroom. Religious education makes an excellent contribution, through, for example, the study of symbolism, creation, pilgrimage and worship. In English, pupils explore the human situation through prose, poetry and drama. For example, Year 9 pupils are challenged by the religious world-view underlying Milton's 'Paradise Lost'. Subject matter in art encourages reflection on the mysteries of the natural world. In history, pupils meet a sacramental concept of land ownership in their study of the North American Plains Indian. In dance and drama they explore feelings and self-identity. In other subjects, however, such as science or mathematics, there is little evidence of planned provision for pupils' spiritual development. This is an area of weakness.

48. The school makes excellent provision for the moral development of pupils. Its clear values, based on respect and caring for the individual, are shared and promoted very well indeed by teachers and parents alike. Teachers provide excellent role models for pupils. Pupils are taught to know right from wrong, and the staff's expectations of pupils' behaviour are excellent. The pupils enjoy excellent relationships with each other, and with their teachers, because the strong moral ethos of the school tolerates nothing less. Considerable trust is shown in the pupils and they respond very well. There is no vandalism or graffiti, despite the fact that every room in the school is always open to them, along with open access to all the school's resources. The underlying principle that it is morally wrong to undermine the opportunities and resources that the school offers for learning, and that these opportunities must be valued, underpins the provision for moral development. There is excellent provision for the development of pupils' moral understanding of social justice in the support given to charities, both in the school Charities' Week, and throughout the year. Causes supported range from combating the scourge of leprosy, to support for St. Barnabas's and St. Dunstan's Homes.

49. A well-planned programme of personal, health and social education provides pupils with excellent opportunities to explore a wide range of moral issues. These are consistently reinforced across the curriculum. In English, for example, pupils explore the ethics of relationships, euthanasia, capital punishment and racism. Drama challenges them with the moral perspectives of self-sacrifice through the story of Saint Katharine. Geography confronts them with issues relating to population migration, the environment, sustainable development and global inequalities. In modern foreign languages, they explore equal opportunity and gender issues. The morality of slavery is explored in history. Physical education addresses issues of drugs in sport and society. Religious education makes a particularly strong contribution through the study of religious and secular responses to key moral issues.

50. The school also makes excellent provision for the social development of pupils. Pupils' personal and social achievements are publicly recognized, and their self-esteem raised, through the Merits System, on which they place high value. They are given excellent

opportunities to develop their social and leadership skills through, for example, the residential programme and field trips, the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme, the Young Enterprise Scheme, the School Council, the Sixth Form Community Sports Leaders Awards and the recently introduced Combined Cadet Force.

51. Most subjects do much to develop pupils' social skills through encouraging collaborative working in pairs and small groups in lessons. It is a strength, for example, of English and drama, where pupils show a high level of interpersonal skills. Geography provides them with very good opportunities for developing social skills through residential fieldwork, visits and conferences. Physical education provides excellent opportunities for developing teamwork and leadership skills. Religious education challenges pupils with the social significance of the religious beliefs of the principal faith communities of the country, for example, in the study of rites of passage.

52. The school makes good provision for the cultural development of pupils. Its grounds and communal areas are enhanced by very good displays of sculpture and paintings, creating a cultural ambience. Outside classrooms, there is good display of creative work by pupils. Pupils enjoy sound overall opportunities for experiencing the creative and expressive arts, although the potential contribution of music is not fully exploited. In art, they stage exhibitions, and enjoy visits to a range of galleries. Through English and drama, they take part in theatre visits and workshops. Their awareness of European culture is promoted through a good programme of foreign language visits and exchanges.

53. Some subjects promote pupils' awareness of cultures other than the Western European. They explore African, North American Indian and aboriginal art. In geography, they explore the impact of tourism on the cultures of developing countries. Dance in physical education draws on different cultural traditions. Religious education makes a very good contribution through the study of Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. In other subject areas, more could still be done to promote pupils' awareness of the multicultural nature of contemporary British society, and of the contribution of cultures other than the Western European to the development of present day civilization. There has been good improvement in the provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils since the last report.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

54. The school provides a very good level of care for its pupils and students, which they and their parents appreciate. This area was praised in the last inspection and continues to be a strength of the school.

55. The school gives a high priority to the physical care and well-being of its pupils. A good child protection policy follows the local authority procedures. The designated officer is thorough and responsible and provides good advice and support for staff and pupils. Good use is made of outside agencies and lines of communication are clear. There are effective arrangements for dealing with first aid, sickness and accidents. The school follows clear guidelines for the organisation of and participation in off-site visits and activities, and there

are regular checks on fire and electrical equipment. Departments monitor health and safety carefully across the site by conducting weekly checks of their areas. Termly inspections and annual audits ensure the site is a safe environment in which to work. Risk assessments in the technology and physical education departments are thorough and appropriate.

56. The school provides very good support and guidance for its pupils. A strong feature is the total integration of the academic system with the well-established pastoral system. The year heads and tutors provide thoroughly professional support, helping to track pupils' learning and to ensure that they are helped to attain their academic targets. There is a structure of regular meetings within year groups and between year heads. A member of the senior management team is always present to ensure consistency of approach and a very good exchange of information and good practice. Year heads regularly monitor the pastoral work through review sheets for their year, and tutors are now involved in monitoring the performance of their individual tutor groups. A strength is the way that the sixth form is fully integrated into the overall structure of reviewing, monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress and personal development. The role of the tutor is very clearly defined and is seen as a pivotal and valued part of the road towards high achievement. Tutors and subject staff know pupils well individually and have a genuine concern for their progress, welfare and achievements. The high quality relationships and mutual respect evident throughout the school contribute to pupils' and students' confidence and attitudes, and play an important role both in their enjoyment of school life and in ensuring that they get the maximum benefit from it.

57. There are good procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance, and attendance is good as a result. Tutors follow up absences promptly, and pastoral staff work closely with the education welfare service to help the small number of poor attenders. Attendance of tutor groups and year groups is monitored each week, and rewards for individuals and tutor groups give a constantly high profile to the importance of good attendance. Tutor groups are given targets to exceed each half term, and the school sets an overall target to improve attendance further. The school's ethos of high expectations motivates pupils and makes them want to be in school.

58. Very good procedures for promoting and monitoring behaviour create a culture of expected high standards. This pervades every corner of the school and pupils and students respond accordingly. They understand the rewards and sanctions and consider them fair. Members of staff have their own code of conduct and they provide good role models for pupils to follow. The emphasis on honesty, respect and trust, and the expectation that everyone will live and work in this way, are the basis for the very high standards of behaviour seen around the school. The pastoral support programme is effective, with very few pupils at risk of being excluded.

59. There are very good procedures for supporting pupils' and students' personal development. The half termly module reports keep pupils and students aware of how they are progressing. Tutors have individual reviews with pupils to discuss their reports and develop strategies to improve where necessary. Pupils doing particularly well receive letters of commendation to recognise their achievements. Close monitoring and careful use of the data available mean that under-achievers are highlighted quickly. Pastoral staff and subject staff then work together to establish the most effective means of support to ensure that all pupils achieve their best. Every pupil has a personal mentor, and there is supervised study after school for those who need extra help with homework. The school modifies the curriculum for individual pupils where necessary. The good practice of monitoring sixth

formers' involvement in extra-curricular activities and events, such as the Millennium Volunteers, or the Duke of Edinburgh Awards, has now spread to the rest of the school through the 'Priory Passport'. The personal and social education programme is incorporated into tutorial time and assemblies and is well-thought out. Tutors use at least two of the morning tutorials to work on specific aspects of the programme. The sessions observed during the inspection showed that all staff value and support the programme and make very effective use of the time to support pupils' and students' personal development well. Assemblies are used to publicly acknowledge good work and endeavours, and are enjoyed as much by older pupils as by the younger ones.

60. Overall, the quality of support provided by the school is an integral part of pupils' and students' development and is instrumental in their achieving high standards.

Assessment

61. The school takes procedures for assessing and recording pupils' attainment and progress very seriously indeed and this is a central part of the school's culture. Pupils are assessed on entry using cognitive ability testing (CAT). The school has not had access to full data on the Key Stage 2 test scores for every pupil. After trying out two commercial packages, the school has written and recently begun to use its own software. This allows for the central collection of data, such as CAT scores and end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum test scores, as well as recording the half termly end-of-module assessments. Analysis of the data is well established and very effective, and all subject departments use the data for target-setting at Key Stage 3 and GCSE level. The pastoral care system makes excellent use of this information to monitor and support pupils' academic progress at both key stages, and in the sixth form, where all assessment data are comprehensively evaluated and acted upon. The school as a whole makes good use of this information to inform curriculum planning. The content of courses and the methods of teaching and learning used are modified in the light of an analysis of results in tests and public examinations. This process is helping to raise attainment in the school. It helps to explain the very good performance in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 3, where teaching strategies have been adapted to provide more challenging teaching and a greater requirement has been placed on pupils to think for themselves. As a result, the higher attainers now achieve particularly well.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

62. Overall, the great majority of parents is very positive about the school. Parents are particularly pleased with the way the school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best, the progress children make and the high standards of behaviour and values. Parents also appreciate the good quality teaching and almost all parents say that their children enjoy being at the school. However, there is number of parents who, whilst still acknowledging and appreciating the high standards the school achieves, feel that the school could work more closely with them and involve them more in school issues.

63. Parents receive good quality information about the school and its philosophy and approach. The prospectus is professional in appearance and provides detail on how the school works and

what parents can expect. It is attractive and eye-catching, and communicates the schools' positive image and high standards well. The annual report from governors is detailed, thorough and interesting. It gives parents an abundance of information regarding each department and each year group. It does not, however, make any reference to the arrangements and facilities for the admission of pupils with disabilities, which it must do to comply with legal requirements. Newsletters and letters home keep parents up-to-date with events and activities. A useful handbook for new entrants communicates clearly the high expectations of all who are part of The Priory School. Around school, displays give a good flavour of school life, activities and events.

64. Parents are kept informed about their children's progress through a module report each half term, an annual written report and at least one parents' consultation meeting each year. The module reports grade attainment and effort for each subject, and indicate National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades. They clearly indicate whether pupils are working above, below or in line with national expectations and whether the pupils are working to their full potential. The consultation evenings follow the written report and this is the main route for discussions with parents and subject staff. Parents of pupils in Years 7, 10 and 12 have an additional meeting with their child's tutor during the autumn term to discuss how pupils have settled into secondary school life, and Year 9 parents are invited in to discuss the option system. The annual reports vary in quality. For Years 9, 10 11, 12 and 13, the comments are particularly useful and clearly indicate what pupils need to do to improve. They report examination results, and clearly relate pupil's performance to potential GCSE or A Level grades. In many subjects there are clear and specific targets that will help pupils to improve and to achieve their predicted grades. In Years 7 and 8, reports do not always include targets for improvement.

65. Tutors and heads of year work hard to involve parents in their child's learning, and are quick to respond to parents' concerns, or to inform them of any problems within lessons or school. Letters of commendation go to parents each half term after the module grades. Parents of pupils who receive 'D' grades in module reports are invited into school to discuss strategies to help. Some year tutors produce an annual curriculum booklet, which tells parents exactly what pupils will be studying through the year. The Year 7 booklet is particularly good because, within each subject, it gives parents practical advice, suggestions and activities they can follow at home which will directly support lessons in school. Parents are expected to sign the daybook and planners each week, and most do. Tutors and subject teachers comment on various aspects of pupils' work and attitude in the daybooks and many parents respond directly to these. Attendance at the parents' consultation meetings is very good throughout the school. Attendance is closely monitored and those parents who do not or cannot attend are contacted by telephone and offered an alternative time, or a written summary of progress. During a recent Year 11 parents' evening, parents were asked to complete a questionnaire giving their views on the usefulness of the evening and communication in general. The results of this were very positive, 97 per cent of parents who attended felt they were treated as partners in their child's education.

66. Whilst most parents are very happy with the relationship with tutors and year heads, some parents feel they are not invited to be involved or consulted about fundamental whole school issues. A small number of parents also feel that their genuine concerns have not always been handled as effectively as they could have been at senior management level. Parents offer help and support in

departments such as physical education, but, currently, no parent association exists for parents to be involved in, although one is now being established.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

67. The last report noted that the routine organisation and administration of the school were good and described the leadership of the school as outstanding. The monitoring of some of the work was criticised, however; especially the monitoring of equal opportunities and of the personal and social education provision. Overall, there was a *powerful and positive ethos*. The statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all was not being met.

68. Good progress has been made in adapting the style of leadership to one that is effective in a much larger school than was inspected in 1997. The systems for the monitoring and evaluation of the work of all aspects of the school are now very good. The school meets the statutory requirement for an act of collective worship for all every day, but not the requirement for religious education in the sixth form, and some statutory information is missing from the governors' annual report to parents.

69. The quality of leadership is very good. The headteacher, with the support of the senior management team and all middle managers in the school, provides excellent leadership in setting a clear educational direction for the work of the school. He has a clear vision for its future. He has high expectations of both pupils and teachers, along with an informed, balanced and accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The focus of his leadership has been very clearly on raising standards in the school. In this the management, at all levels, has been very successful. The school has more than doubled in size since the last report was written and a large sixth form has been established. During that time, the performance of pupils in the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests has risen in line with the average nationally. The average point score at GCSE has risen from 43.9, when the first cohort was entered in 1997, to 48 in 2000, well above the national average of 38.7. The rise has been above the average nationally. Even more impressive has been the rapid increase in the proportion of pupils attaining good passes at GCSE. The successful drive to raise standards has been carried out on a number of fronts. The underachievement of pupils has been tackled very well. Pupils' progress is monitored very systematically through the end-of-unit assessments that are an intrinsic part of the modular curriculum for every subject. Pupils are set targets based on current performance and previous test results. Any downward deviation from these targets is picked up immediately and investigated. Pupils are mentored to support and guide them until they are back on course to attain their expected grades. Pupils attaining above expectation are praised and encouraged. A key element in the school's success has been the integration of the pastoral and academic roles of all members of staff. As a result, pastoral work with pupils supports their academic achievement and very much helps them to succeed in their learning as well as to cope with the vagaries of life.

70. Similarly, targets are set for departments and teachers. Their progress towards meeting their targets is also monitored and each department has a mentor on the senior management team. Appraisal has been superseded by a performance management policy that provides a

structured and methodical approach to staff development. The criteria for success established in it are very much related to improved teaching and learning and to improvements in the quality of work that pupils produce. Further, there is very good analysis of examination and test performance, and the data gained from this are used to modify where necessary the way the curriculum is taught and help pupils to attain well.

71. Closely linked to the work done to improve teaching and learning, and to set realistic but demanding targets, is the insistence within the school on the highest standards of discipline and conduct, for both pupils and staff. The governors and the headteacher firmly believe that the strict enforcement of rules is essential if the very positive work ethos is to be maintained. They see the rigorous application of a business-like approach to dress and conduct as a vital ingredient of the way the school operates. They are clear that, if there are rules, they are there to be obeyed - not adjusted to suit individual circumstances. They believe that the increasing success of the school is linked to these high standards it upholds in all aspects of its life and work. Almost all parents agree with this, but when some are brought to task because their children have failed to conform in what may seem relatively minor ways to the parent and child concerned, they feel aggrieved. The leadership of the school needs to ensure that, without deflecting from their principles, they explain their philosophy fully to parents and seek to take them along with them. As would be expected under this very firm leadership, all school policies, and especially those concerned with target-setting, attainment, teaching and learning, are fully understood by staff and implemented across the school.

72. At senior management team level, the systems in place for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and curriculum development, are rigorous and effective. Regular reviews of teaching are led by members of the senior management team, department by department, together with reviews of work in exercise books, as part of a planned monitoring cycle. There is detailed feedback to individual teachers and to subject areas. Where necessary, targets are set, further monitoring planned and carried out, and professional development prioritised. The outcomes of monitoring are reflected in the priorities set in the whole-school development plan as well as in department planning.

73. The effectiveness of the monitoring process is evident in considerable improvements in teaching, learning and standards since the last report. It has led to increased consistency in lesson planning and delivery, as well as more consistent implementation of school policies for teaching and learning. Teachers are aware of the criteria that are being used to monitor the quality of their work in the classroom. The criteria by which lessons are to be judged, and the expectations of the way teachers should organise their classrooms and run their lessons, are published as school policy. In most departments, the head of department plays a significant role in monitoring and sharing good practice. Heads of department and year heads provide very effective leadership, giving clear direction to the work of teachers in their charge. The organisation and administration of departments and year teams are strong and help to ensure that the work of the school runs smoothly.

74. Governors are very supportive. They know the school well and many give readily of their time. They liaise very effectively with the senior management team. Key members of the governing body meet weekly with the headteacher and members of the senior management team to review the day-to-day work of the school and keep abreast of strategic issues. They participate in the setting of the school development plan as well as the budget, and seek to link the two effectively. The

finance group helps to monitor the budget, and has begun to monitor the effectiveness of major budget decisions. Some of the governors, many of whom are professionals or successful business people, bring specific strengths and skills to their work, and overall, the governors fulfil their role well. The monitoring role of the governing body is developing well, but needs to be more formalised in the way it monitors the school's curriculum.

75. The management of provision for special educational needs is very good and the management of the teaching of pupils for whom English is an additional language is good. The special educational needs policy meets the requirements of the Code of Practice. The register of special educational needs is accurate, and the records of identified pupils are well kept. Statutory requirements for the statemented pupils are fully met. The team of support assistants is managed effectively. The school keeps very clear records that are open to teachers and parents, and the close involvement of parents with the school ensures, in most cases that the home environment is supportive and extends the learning opportunities that the school provides. The management of equal opportunities is good. Equality of opportunity is implicit in the schools' ethos, and the documentation of most departments indicates awareness of the need to provide equality of opportunity for all. The performance of pupils in tests and examinations is monitored by gender, and the tutorial program offers pupils the opportunity to consider issues relating to self-esteem, stereotyping and prejudice.

76. The last report commented on the gender balance in senior management positions and stated that the school needs to monitor the effect of this on girls' perceptions of women's roles. This situation still obtains, although there is no evidence that it is having any effect on girls' self esteem or attainment. Overall, the very good and very effective leadership of the headteacher and the senior management team is the principal reason for the school's success and for the rapid improvements that have been made. The management style is firm, challenging and rigorous, and has been very successful in leading the school through a period of rapid growth. It is now changing to a more affiliate style, allowing all a share in the decision-making process. This should ensure that the loyalty and commitment shown by all staff continue to support the management of the school well and ensure that it is well placed to continue to improve in future.

Finance

77. The school budgets very systematically and well for all expenditure. The senior team and the governing body base their funding decisions on the priorities outlined in the school development plan, and always seek best value in the allocation of contracts. Their experience as a grant-maintained school serves them well in their application of the principles of best value. Heads of department have responsibility for their own budgets and similarly seek to maximise the value they can get from their funding in terms of the effectiveness of the resources they purchase. Overall, the quality of educational provision has benefited from the wise and careful management of the budget. Funds have been allocated successfully to areas of educational priority. These have proved successful in raising standards and the quality of educational experience for pupils. The improvements in accommodation, for example, have helped to raise standards. They also provide an environment of a quality that is more than suited to the education of young people in the twenty first century, matching the high standards that the school sets in all other aspects of its work. The governors used funding sufficient to provide six classrooms as a new build to buy and convert redundant industrial

buildings adjacent to the school site. Skilful use of funding has resulted in the school acquiring new suites of classrooms for art, drama and English, a large school hall, an impressive lecture theatre, a new reception area, restaurant and sixth form block. All are furnished and equipped to a standard of modern business premises. The impact of this on the standards of teaching and learning and the ethos of the school has been high in proportion to the amount of money that has been spent. Similar enterprise has led to the purchase of a large Victorian house adjacent to the school and its conversion into reception and office spaces of high quality. Links with industry have provided funding to landscape the grounds. This too has been used well to provide an environment for pupils that encourages them to respect their surroundings, as well as to enjoy a good aesthetic experience. The quality and rigour of financial management are now good. The last auditors' report raised a number of issues connected with the deficit budget, all of which have been addressed satisfactorily. The deficit is planned, with the agreement of the local authority, and is the result of the school's growing numbers. Annual funding, based always on numbers on roll in the previous year, has not kept pace with the rapid growth of the school.

78. The school makes excellent use of new technology. It is used equally well for administration and in many subject areas. Special grants, such as those for educating pupils with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language, are used appropriately. There is regular review of the effectiveness of spending decisions by the senior management team and, informally, by governors. Overall, taking account of the progress made by pupils, the quality of teaching, and the very good personal development of pupils, off-set against the relatively high costs of the school, value for money is good.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

79. The school has a very good level of staffing, with well-qualified specialists in all areas of the curriculum. There is an effective blend of young and experienced teachers. The technical support staff is sufficient in number and provides an excellent service, notably in the area of information and communication technology. The members of the experienced administrative staff form an equally impressive team, providing financial, secretarial and clerical expertise. The pleasant and highly efficient manner in which all non-teaching staff members carry out their roles contributes significantly to the very smooth running of the school, to the benefit of all young people and adults who work in it.

80. Arrangements for the professional development of teachers are very good. In service training is planned well and linked effectively to school and departmental priorities for development. Training in the use of computers is extensive. Very good support is provided for new staff and especially for newly qualified teachers. An excellent programme of meetings, observations and visits is arranged and there is a comprehensive handbook, which details all procedures. Support staff also benefit from an effective development programme. A system of appraisal has been in place for some time, and is now being superseded by well-advanced implementation of performance management.

81. Accommodation is very good. The school is housed on a large site, with two major centres, a significant distance apart, and other peripheral buildings. The grounds provide extensive provision

for physical education. The overall appearance of many areas of the school is excellent, with great emphasis on the quality of the environment. Furnishings and decoration in most areas are of an exceptional standard, and displays of art and sculpture enhance the public areas. There are large carpeted halls for assembly, examinations and lecture presentations. Several rooms are dedicated to seminar facilities. In just a few areas, accommodation has become inadequate for the increased size of population, for example in music, where there are insufficient practice areas to avoid disturbance to others. The well-equipped library, which serves the whole school, is situated in the English, art and sixth form block, the building furthest from the main school, and is therefore not immediately accessible to other departments. Accommodation for the sixth form is excellent.

82. The adequacy of learning resources is good overall. The provision of resources for information and communication technology is excellent, the number of computers being twice the national average. Most departments have their own computer suite, with a generous number of workstations, all connected to a single school network. Electronic whiteboards are increasingly being used. Facilities in design and technology are also notably excellent, with well-advanced equipment, for example, in computer-aided design. Most areas have a satisfactory level of basic resources for everyday use, for example in physical education and science. The library is stocked with new books, appropriate for all areas of the curriculum, careers materials and computer software.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

83. In order to continue to improve and to raise levels of attainment and improve the quality of education in the school, the governors, headteacher and teaching staff, with the support of the local education authority, should:

- evaluate the successful strategies used by those departments that attain a relatively high proportion of A* and A passes at GCSE and adapt them in other subject areas to raise the attainment of pupils so that it is more consistently high across the school;
- fully implement the school's literacy policy, to further raise the literacy levels of lower attaining pupils, from the time they enter the school, in order to give them the skills they need to communicate successfully in and out of school, in both speech and writing.
- work to foster more productive relationships with those parents and carers who feel that the school is not responsive enough to them.

84. The governors are urged to include in their action plan the following areas for development, which the inspection team noted with concern but did not pick out as key issues. These are:

- * the relatively weak provision for the spiritual development of pupils, which is in marked contrast to the excellent social and moral provision;
- * not all statutory requirements are being met. Religious education is not taught to all in the sixth form.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

The Sixth Form

85. The attainment of pupils studying Advanced Level GCE in 1999 was above the national average, as was the level achieved in Advanced Level GNVQ. In 2000, in advanced GNVQ examinations, a seventy eight per cent pass rate was achieved, whilst sixty seven per cent of entrants passed intermediate level GNVQ. There are, currently, no national figures for comparison. In 2000, the average points score of pupils entered for two or more advanced level GCE examinations was 16.5, which is close to but slightly below the national average. The pass rate of ninety two per cent at A Level is comparable to national averages. The numbers of A and C grades are higher than those achieved nationally, whilst B grades are below national averages. This has led to a target being set of raising the number of B grades at the expense of CDE grades. Many subjects scored 100 per cent pass rates. The lower overall A Level points score for 2000 is a consequence of the school's open access policy for sixth form entry. In work seen and lessons observed during inspection week, attainment is above average, which means that the high levels of previous attainment at A level are being maintained. A significant proportion attains at levels well above average, and a small number of pupils attain very high standards indeed

86. Pupils show a very high level of personal development and demonstrate very good learning skills, making considerable gains in independent learning. They know how to carry out research quickly and accurately. They undertake role-play very successfully, analysing data and preparing responses that produce a high level of debate. They have very good knowledge and understanding of their own learning and, as a result, lessons build very well on their previous experience. Almost all pupils show a very high level of oral skills, and speak confidently in class. They are able to make excellent class presentations as a result of their very successful co-operative learning and their excellent computer skills. They are very skilled at self evaluation and at peer evaluation, being very open to constructive suggestion.

87. The high attainment shows the success, amongst other factors, of very skilful target setting and mentoring carried out in the pastoral system and the excellent monitoring of work rates and levels of achievement.

88. Progress in learning is very good overall, sometimes excellent, and this is reflected in previous GCSE and current AS Level modular results as well as predicted ones. Progress is at very high levels when pupils are faced with open-ended questions, which encourage them to formulate and give opinions. The development of a set of logically constructed sequences in a lesson guides pupils to develop ideas, to share, reform, evaluate and re-express them in response to very good teaching.

89. Pupils in the sixth form display an excellent response overall in their lessons. They show happiness, enjoyment and appreciation of very good teaching. Pupils show the ability to think for themselves without inhibition, often displaying very high levels of concentration in remaining on task throughout the lesson. A very high level of respect for the work and views of others is seen, and very high levels of trust in each other and their teachers are openly shown. A very good level of co-operation within groups serves to increase levels of learning.

90. Overall, teaching in the sixth form is very good. Of the lessons seen, 15 per cent were excellent, 40 per cent very good, 40 per cent good and the rest satisfactory. Teacher's knowledge of their subject is usually excellent and their expectations of pupils are very high. A seminar style approach is frequently used, enabling all pupils to take an active part in their learning. Very good planning, together with a display of very secure subject knowledge, makes a big impact, in that teachers make a confident start to a lesson, generate a good level of discussion and critical thinking develops. The use of a good repertoire of teaching styles means that pupils work much harder to achieve challenges set. In some excellently prepared experiential learning – 'what is it like to be Prime Minister?' – pupils gasp initially at the challenge then confidently give it wrapt attention. There is an eager movement into role by all the class, who find this an enjoyable way of work and so work very hard, producing large gains in personal development as well as in knowledge. The regular monitoring and evaluation of teaching is helping to produce the very good level of teaching.

91. The curriculum is broadly based, with a good range of twenty-nine Advanced Level GCE courses and four advanced and three intermediate VCE courses. The statutory religious education requirements are not met. There is a good match of pupils' ability and aspirations to curricular provision. This is borne out in the very high proportions of pupils entering higher education or appropriate employment directly from the sixth form. There is very good provision for the teaching and learning of the key skills of numeracy, communication and the use of information and communications technology. Students are improving own learning and problem solving skills as a result of a personal and social education programme of which tutors are justifiably proud. There is open access to the sixth form and the curriculum is constructed very well, using research into the needs of universities, the local business community and the Year 11 pupils about to enter. The very large numbers of courses have classes large enough to provide the academic 'friction' of debate. There is no gender bias found in the take-up of subjects. The very wide and varied range of extra curricular activities enriches the academic curriculum. For example, there is a large take up of activities with Millennium Volunteers, who receive accreditation. Pupils attend many subject conferences. Large numbers of pupils succeed in gaining their European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL). All pupils undertake two weeks of high quality work experience, linked where possible to study areas.

92. There are very good links with a large number of universities, including Oxford and Cambridge, and last autumn pupils entered some 42 universities. The university application process is carried out very successfully. The very high degree of monitoring of pupils' progress and of their work rates is supported by the system of electronic student tracking. This system also records pupils' attendance at independent study time, where very experienced and highly qualified support teachers are available. There is very thorough assessment and monitoring of academic and personal progress operating continuously and this has a very positive link to the high rates of course completion.

93. The sixth form is cost effective. There are some small groups, but this is done deliberately and in accordance with development plans to achieve the target of three hundred pupils over a comparatively short-time scale. There is very strong, very effective and very experienced leadership of the sixth form team, all of whom have explicit job descriptions. They are kept well briefed by very communicative year heads. This leads to highly efficient working which promotes the very high academic standards and the very effective personal development of pupils.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	197
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	35

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
12	34	41	12	0.5	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
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1404
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	36

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	15
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	116

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	50
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	40

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.2
National comparative data	7.9

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	101	92	193

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	79	85	82
	Girls	81	79	69
	Total	160	164	151
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	77	78	78
	National	64	62	54
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	37	40	33
	National	28	31	23

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	73	84	57
	Girls	83	77	61
	Total	156	161	118
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	81	84	61
	National	64	64	59
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	37	40	33
	National	31	37	28

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	108	94	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	82	104	104
	Girls	70	90	90
	Total	152	194	194
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	75	96	96
	National	49.2	88.9	94.4

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	48
	National	37.8

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	5
White	1282
Any other minority ethnic group	9

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	1	0
White	12	2
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7–Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	85.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7–Y13

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	87

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
----------------	------------------

	£
Total income	3477089.00
Total expenditure	3569592.00
Expenditure per pupil	2948.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	-52333.00

Deployment of teachers:**Y7–Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.3
---	------

Balance carried forward to next year	-144836.00
--------------------------------------	------------

Average teaching group size:**Y7–Y13**

Key Stage 3	27.4
Key Stage 4	19.3

Results of the survey of parents and carers**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

1404

Number of questionnaires returned

769

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	38	53	7	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	50	3	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	47	47	3	1	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	50	19	5	1
The teaching is good.	37	56	4	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40	445	10	3	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	41	40	13	3	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	77	21	1	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	21	49	19	6	5
The school is well led and managed.	31	48	11	5	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	51	7	2	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	48	11	2	7

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

ENGLISH

94. Standards of attainment in English are currently well above average at the end of both key stages and good in the sixth form. Standards have risen considerably since the last inspection and there is a rising trend in performance.

95. The results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 have consistently been well above the national averages over the last four years. High standards were reached in the 1999 tests, but the 2000 results were better, with just under half of all pupils achieving Level 6 and above. Results are now slightly above the average for schools of this type. Overall, the average points score for boys is marginally higher than that of girls. Inspection evidence confirms that there is hardly any difference in their performance. More pupils reach the higher levels in mathematics and science.

96. Results at GCSE are well above the national averages and the averages for similar schools in both English and English literature. The 2000 examination results were higher than those in recent years, with 75 per cent of pupils gaining A*-C in English and 90 per cent in English literature. With the exception of 1998 results, pupils achieve a higher proportion of the highest grades in the literature examination. The boys' results go against the national trend. They attain as many A*-C passes as girls do. However, girls achieve almost twice as many more of the highest, A* and A, grades than boys. Pupils' performance in literature is marginally better than it is in maths and science. However, their average points score in both subjects is lower than most subjects in the curriculum. Pupils with a special educational need make very good progress. At A Level, all pupils achieve at least a pass grade.

97. In both key stages and in the sixth form, pupils have very advanced oral skills and show an exceptionally high ability to articulate their views. Both speaking and listening skills are well above average. Pupils draw on a wide vocabulary and, from the start of Year 7, the highest attaining pupils have a very good command of spoken Standard English. They speak confidently; display an inquisitive approach to their learning, and understand how to extend discussion, as was illustrated in two lessons where they discussed the power of advertising and the work of Charlotte Bronte.

98. At Key Stage 4, pupils listen intently and speak articulately and clearly. The highest attaining pupils in Year 11 speak perceptively and in a sophisticated way. Pupils of all abilities manage collaborative tasks in a constructive and meaningful way to support their learning. Sixth form students have the communication skills necessary to analyse their work and give presentations.

99. Pupils make very good progress in learning, especially in reading, the teaching of which reflects the priority given to it in the department. Reading skills are well above average. At Key Stage 3, pupils use the recommended reading lists and habitually read at the start of most lessons. At the start of Year 7, the higher attaining pupils read critically, as seen in their analysis of Lawrence's 'Beautiful Old Age' and Hesketh's 'Old Age Geriatric Ward'. By the end of the key stage, the lower attaining pupils show a sound grasp of literary texts and annotate texts carefully to

identify the main points. The higher attaining pupils read challenging texts critically and their analysis of texts is thorough. For example, their essays on Browning's 'Porphyria's Lover' and 'The Duchess' show a very good understanding of how to make comparisons across texts and comment in detail on the use of language. At Key Stage 4, attainment in reading is very good. They read widely and have a good understanding for their age of the context in which a literary text was written. Some of the high attaining pupils make very good use of an extensive bibliography to demonstrate the high level of research undertaken. The lower attaining pupils show good engagement with literary texts, but in-depth analysis is not always sustained. In the sixth form, students display a wide range of reading skills and confidently study and analyse a range of literary texts.

100. Standards of attainment in writing are good and the vast majority of pupils write competently. They show a good understanding of the techniques for planning and structuring their written work. Throughout Key Stage 3, the higher attaining pupils write with precision. These pupils are assured and talented writers. They recognise the power of language and choose words carefully to create effect. Very good examples were seen in the work of the highest attaining Year 8 pupils' work on 'Childhood Retrospectives'. The lower attaining pupils achieve a satisfactory standard in their writing, but technical inaccuracies mar their work and they do not re-draft, edit and proof read it carefully. Pupils in both key stages take part in peer marking to improve their writing and this works well. However, basic errors including inaccurate spelling and punctuation, as well as not applying the principles of sentence grammar accurately, are evident in written work. Although the English department teachers mark carefully to ensure that pupils are aware of where their errors lie, this is not true of all teachers. A more consistent approach is needed to the correction of work and the teaching of vocabulary across all departments. A potentially useful literacy policy has been prepared by a working party, but it is not yet in place. There is a lack of rigour and attention to the finer details of writing across the curriculum. By the end of Key Stage 4, the higher and average attaining pupils write succinctly; their carefully crafted essays are redrafted extensively in English lessons to produce accomplished pieces. Sixth form students write competently and structure their essays well. Standards of presentation are very good, as is the use of information and communications technology for research and for presenting work.

101. Pupils work conscientiously, enjoy their learning and love hearing and using effective language. They show initiative, taking full responsibility for their work, and show determination to do well irrespective of their ability. They recognise the challenges set in lessons and believe that they have the capacity to achieve high levels of attainment. As a result, pupils work productively and are habitually industrious and well disciplined. Behaviour is always very good with many excellent features.

102. The quality of teaching English is very good overall: it is rarely less than very good and some is indeed excellent. Teachers are well qualified, enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the subject. As such, they use their expertise to broaden pupils' understanding of the use of language and literary tradition by delving into literary criticism and contextualising both literary and non-literary texts. Very good and often excellent planning contributes to effective teaching and learning. This leads to pupils understanding the objectives and being highly motivated. It is evident in the way that teachers use time constructively to pace and challenge their pupils to complete the set work. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are always high. For example, the lower attaining pupils in Years 9, 10 and

11 are made to understand that they can achieve at least the standard expected for their age by the end of both key stages. Teachers help to equip pupils to understand their learning by discussing the assessment criteria, setting a range of attainment targets, and using a range of teaching strategies to boost their confidence and ability to apply the taught skills to their work. They sustain pupils' interest in their work by carefully matching approaches and resources to their level of attainment, as well as through the use of challenging texts, effective questioning, listening to their response, extending their oral skills and vocabulary, and using a variety of groupings to explore and summarise learning.

103. In the excellent lessons, teachers inspire pupils and present intellectually challenging work. This impacts on their learning, because pupils are required to pitch their responses at the same level as the teachers. For example, high attaining Year 9 pupils are constantly probed and encouraged to handle challenging concepts confidently, as was illustrated in a high-powered discussion on Locke's views on humanity as a way of exploring the themes of evil and good in Shelley's 'Frankenstein'. In a similar Year 11 lesson, pupils displayed a depth of understanding when using technical terms to analyse the language in 'Come up From the Fields, Father'. Exposition is always very good and teachers continuously draw on pupils' previous learning to consolidate new learning. Marking and target setting are always very good and homework is an integral part of teaching and learning.

104. The curriculum fully reflects the requirements of the National Curriculum. The schemes of work are well documented and the departmental handbook is very thorough on practice and procedures. Assessment procedures, including target setting, are well planned. The resources and use of information and communications technology are good and the accommodation is excellent. Display is good and contributes to learning. All pupils have full access to the curriculum and the department has broadened the curriculum to introduce communication studies at AS/A Level.

105. The leadership and management of the department are outstandingly good and provide clear direction for the department. There is good teamwork. The procedures for monitoring teaching and learning are well established. The department uses examination and baseline data to develop and plan the curriculum. Care is taken to expose pupils to literature from other heritages and the subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. The development plan has clear and challenging targets based on rigorous reviews. However, it omits the strategies for achieving the targets, and staff development and monitoring are not included. The department is now faced with the challenge of maintaining the higher standards and in taking steps to increase the performance of high attaining pupils to achieve a higher percentage of the top most grades in the National Curriculum tests and all public examinations. Since the last inspection, results have improved and the quality of teaching is now very good.

MATHEMATICS

106. At the time of the last inspection the school was in its infancy, though its courses in mathematics had become established and National Curriculum test results at the end of Key Stage 3 were generally well above the national average for this age group. Since 1996, the school has more than doubled in size and the mathematics department now provides a wider range of courses. There has been good improvement since the last report. In the intervening years considerable progress has

been made, with results in mathematics being consistently well above national expectations. Boys and girls do equally well.

107. Attainment at age 14 was well above the national average in the National Curriculum tests in 2000. In 1999 the percentage of pupils reaching Level 5 or above was 78 per cent and those reaching Level 6 or above was 51 per cent. In 2000, these figures had risen to 82 per cent and 60 per cent respectively. The percentage of pupils reaching Level 7 or above was 23 per cent. These results show a significant rate of progress, with standards consistently well above national averages.

108. Attainment at GCSE also shows that significant progress took place between 1999 and 2000. In 1999, 47 per cent of pupils examined were awarded A*-C grades; 68 per cent of pupils attained these grades in 2000. These results have been well above the national averages in each year. Candidates were first entered for statistics in 1998, when 64 per cent of the pupils gained A*-C grades. In 2000, the results climbed to 81 per cent of pupils receiving similar grades. This result is exceptional and is well above expectations.

109. Attainment at GCE A Level in 2000 enabled 89 per cent of the examination entry to gain A-C grades, and 100 per cent to gain A-E awards. These results compare very favourably with the national figures. Nationally, 65 per cent of the entry gained A-C grades and 89 per cent gained A-E grades. The success rate for the school's A Level candidates in mathematics is well above the national averages.

110. Attainment in all lessons seen was well above average. In Year 9, all pupils are working hard to achieve the target set of all pupils attaining at least the expected level for their age. At Key Stage 4, all pupils are responding well to the demands of the different tiers of the GCSE examinations. A Level attainment in lessons is, without exception, above average or better. The finding of the inspection is that standards, currently, are similar to those indicated by last year's end of Key Stage 3 test results in Year 9. Attainment is well above the national average. The high attainers are stretched particularly well in mathematics, with a far higher proportion of pupils in line to attain Levels 7 and 8 than is the case nationally. Attainment is well above average at the end of Year 11. A small number of relatively high attainers are capable of passing GCSE with a grade between A* and A, but most pupils are working towards grades B and C. The new, challenging teaching that is extending the higher attainers' skills at Key Stage 3 has not yet had an effect at the end of Key Stage 4. Attainment at A Level is high; better than was shown by last year's results.

111. Pupils' learning in all classes is very good overall; always good, often very good and sometimes excellent. There is a positive response to the very good class management and very good teaching. All pupils have an excellent attitude to learning. They listen, they participate in oral work and generally apply themselves industriously. Teaching is very good, overall. In each classroom, mathematics is alive, interesting and suitably challenging. The teachers' accurate targeting of the content of lessons to their pupils' levels of ability and need does much to enhance learning. Work to be done matches the time available, without exception. The working atmosphere in lessons is conducive to thinking and learning. The objectives of each lesson are clear and are understood by pupils when the teaching becomes more extended and vigorous. In Year 11 work on straight-line graphs, for example, the teacher's exposition was good and pupils were, therefore, able to grasp the complex methods of calculating gradients and deriving the equation of a line when

the gradient is known. The class showed a high degree of commitment and worked hard. This was typical of almost all lessons seen. In the one unsatisfactory lesson, with a Year 11 class, the teacher did not make his explanation clear enough to help the pupils to understand. Generally, however, the full range of pupils' abilities is catered for well. Support is given to gifted and talented pupils, as well as those with other special educational needs. Careful monitoring of the effectiveness of this work is carried out in accordance with the policy in the mathematics department.

112. At sixth form level, teaching is outstanding and is characterised by calm, confident delivery. All branches of the syllabuses are well taught. All teachers have good subject knowledge. Their exposition is usually very good, whilst the testing and questioning of pupils' understanding are invariably skilful. The teaching of statistics is supported by an in-school publication, 'Action Stats', a lively text that leads the user through a varied and interesting course to a good understanding of the use and importance of this branch of mathematics. The text is used as a pre-sixth and lower sixth resource. The teaching of statistics is excellent.

113. The teaching of numeracy and information technology is strong. The excellent facilities enable the requirement to teach information technology to be integrated into the courses and examination syllabuses. The pupils are competent and confident when using computers, as a result. Their use of a wide range of calculators is good. All members of staff are computer literate. In the teaching of numeracy, due consideration is given to the needs of other subjects across the curriculum. Good applications of mathematics can be seen in geography, science and technological subjects in particular. Graphs and charts, tabulation, substitution and evaluation, order and ranking and statistical techniques are in use. Numeracy levels across the school are generally good.

114. The use of assessment information within the department is one of its many strengths. At the beginning of Year 7, pupils are assessed within the mathematics department using mental and written tests and an investigative task. The scores provide a baseline for selection into sets and for monitoring progress. Courses and teaching approaches are modified or changed as a result of the monitoring of test and examination results. The department makes excellent use of its own database records.

115. A further strength of the mathematics department lies in its administration, management and organisation. It is in the capable hands of an efficient head of department. He has very good teaching skills and sets a high standard for all in his department. Clearly set out aims encourage professional development and co-operation. He is ably supported by his second in department, who also carries the responsibility for statistics. Displays of pupils' work are of a particularly high standard in terms of presentation and content. The mathematics department has a suite of adjacent classrooms and its own computer suite. The good accommodation and the good levels of resourcing have a positive effect on standards, with resource materials always readily to hand.

116. Despite the departure of five out of eight members of the mathematics staff at the end of the last academic year, there has been good improvement since the last report. The new appointments have brought fresh ideas and new brands of teaching strength. This is an excellent department: well led, working together and making a positive contribution to the education of the young people in the school.

SCIENCE

117. Attainment in science is well above the national average at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Overall, pupils achieve well in both key stages. In the sixth form, students reach standards according to their own individual capabilities and in line with national average overall.

118. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000, pupils' average level gained was well above the national average. The percentages of pupils gaining Level 5 or above and Level 6 or above were both well above the national average. Similarly, the percentage gaining Level 5 or above was well above the average for similar schools, based on the proportion of pupils qualifying for free school meals. The percentage gaining Level 6 or above was just in line with the average in similar schools. Boys' performance was a little better than the girls'. Standards have remained consistently well above average over the past three years, and the achievement over the key stage has been good.

119. At the end of Key Stage 4, in 2000, the performance at GCSE, in double award combined science, was significantly well above average. Both the average grade and the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C were well above the national averages. Again, the performance of boys exceeded that of the girls. Over the past three years, the attainment has increased, with a significant improvement in 2000, compared with the previous year. Pupils have progressed very well over Key Stage 4, in terms of the proportion of pupils gaining a grade C or higher, but the number gaining the highest grades, A or A*, and the average achievement has been relatively lower.

120. A Level results are steadily rising each year as the courses become more established. In 2000, results were broadly in line with national average in biology, chemistry and physics, and representative of the individual strengths of the students. Average standards in 2000 were significantly above those in 1999, particularly in biology and chemistry.

121. Observation of pupils' work in school confirms that the standards at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 mirror the test and examination results. For example, the majority of pupils in Year 9, studying electromagnetic fields in Attainment Target 4, physical processes, have a clear knowledge of field patterns and are aware of factors affecting the field strength. A significant number understand the relationships between electrical energy and magnetism in the depth needed for Levels 6 or 7.

122. The work at the end of Key Stage 4, in Year 11, for example, on the reaction of metals with oxygen, indicates that most pupils fully understand the oxide reactions and many can recognize the equations. A significant number appreciate the need to balance equations and understand the changes in mass or the processes involved. Boys and girls are seen to work equally well together. In the sixth form, work is challenging and students, depending on ability, understand essential concepts, but struggle with more difficult aspects and applications to solving problems.

123. Overall, pupils make good progress in lessons and their achievement is above average. Pupils with special educational needs, and lower attaining pupils, increase their confidence with individual support or additional learning resources. Higher attaining pupils, including those identified as gifted or talented, are challenged and extended in many lessons, although there are occasions when they do not achieve as well as could be expected, because the appropriate challenge is not always provided in the teaching.

124. Attitudes towards science are very good. Most pupils enjoy the subject and strive to gain high grades. They raise questions readily, and respond well in discussion sessions. Relationships with the teachers are good and pupils are polite and courteous. They work very well in teams, to discuss the work or carry out experiments. Behaviour is exceptionally good, with notably strong awareness for safety. Presentation of written work, however, is sometimes lacking care, mainly from those with weak literacy skills.

125. Overall, teaching in the department is good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection and over three quarters of all lessons observed were good or very good. All teachers have good knowledge of their subject and high expectations of pupils' work and endeavour. They give strong encouragement to pupils to succeed, and they create a purposeful working environment. They use homework in a constructive way to extend skills and knowledge acquired in class. Resources are used effectively. The pace of learning is normally brisk and efficient, largely because pupils are keen, interested and determined.

126. Lessons are planned well for progression and range of activities, but not enough provision is made for work that matches the different levels of ability of pupils in a set, and especially those with higher attainment. Assessment procedures are used satisfactorily to track the progress of individuals, but marking of pupils' work does not give a clear indication to pupils of what to do to improve their level. The basic skills of numeracy gained from mathematics lessons are developed well in a science context. However, literacy skills are not sufficiently reinforced and standards of written work, therefore, are sometimes below the level expected. Information and communication technology is used frequently and effectively in all years, with full advantage being taken of the modern networked computer suite within the departmental area.

127. The department is led well by the relatively new head of department. An enthusiastic team of teachers shows great commitment to raising standards in science. Schemes of work are clear and provide good, detailed support for those teaching outside their specific area of expertise. Assessment procedures are well established and data is meticulously recorded. However, there is insufficient analysis of the performance data in relation to national achievements. Pupils are not sufficiently involved in their assessment, with the result that they are not clear enough about their current level of attainment and unclear about relevant subject-specific targets. Teachers' work is monitored, mainly through close liaison within the team and regular reviews of test results and assessments. The school's policy for performance management is well advanced and implementation is in progress. Health and safety procedures are clear, but further training is needed to ensure full risk assessments are carried out.

128. Since the time of the last inspection, standards of attainment have risen in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. The sixth form courses and students' achievement within them have been rapidly

established. Pupils' attitudes to learning remain at least as high as previously found. The quality of teaching continues to be good, although previous concerns over the lack of challenge for higher attaining pupils, effectiveness of setting targets for pupils and the detail of marking, remain. Laboratories are sufficient in number. The use of the library has been improved, despite its situation some distance from the department base, and the investment in new technology has been considerable and effective.

ART

129. The achievement of the pupils in art is very good, overall. They make good progress. Allowing for their varied prior experiences of art when they enter the school, their achievement by the age of 14 is good. Their very good achievement by the age of 16 is reflected in their examination results. These pupils are able to take an idea and produce quite personal works of art. The students who join the sixth form are from a variety of secondary schools and they too have had varying experiences of art. Their achievement by the age of 18 is also very good. Their drawing skills allow them to analyse an object or situation and interpret it, step-by-step, into highly original works on surprisingly large scales.

130. Teacher assessments in art show that, by the age of 14, standards are above the national average in the work of both the girls and the boys. The work of the girls is better than that of the boys.

131. At the age of 16, the GCSE results are well above the national average with ninety per cent of all candidates gaining passes between A* and C. While both the boys and the girls exceeded the national figures, the attainment of the girls was especially good. Furthermore, one fifth of all pupils gained a grade A* or A pass. These results reflect a steady improvement since 1997, which was the first year that pupils sat the examination.

132. Results in the sixth form also continue to improve and are above the national average. Every student who sat the Advanced Level GCE examination in 2000 was awarded a pass and more than a third were awarded a Grade A. Both the GCSE results and the A Level results were amongst the very best in the school.

133. The use of sketchbooks for collecting information, and for recording ideas and investigations, is a very good feature in pupils' learning from Year 7 onwards. Observational drawing is central to the work of the department and is used in a variety of ways to develop skills of analysis. Even the youngest pupils are able to produce drawings from natural forms and man-made objects, and then to use them to develop ideas or to record information. These same pupils also have a clear understanding of the basic elements of colour, composition and perspective. They also use their knowledge, in a quite individual way, to interpret works by famous artists, such as van Gogh's 'Starry Night'. The work of these pupils, up to the end of Year 9, is above national expectations.

134. There is continued emphasis on drawing from observation in Years 10 and 11, although a number of these pupils are copying illustrations from books and magazines. Critical studies occupy a large place in the curriculum and provide an influence through the study of African

art, the art of native North Americans and a range of modern European and American artists. By the time pupils reach Year 11, their attainment is well above average. Many have developed impressive skills of modelling in clay. Drawing skills, too, are impressive in many cases and the use of computer-generated imagery is developing.

135. Sixth form students continue to make good progress, partly as a result of the continuing emphasis on developing the skills of observational drawing. The students produce interesting and original work in both two and three dimensions, using a range of innovative materials, as well as the traditional paper, paint and clay. They make very good use of sketchbooks for collecting information and experimenting with ideas. There is good evidence of increasing personal and cultural development as the students move through the sixth form. A recent visit to Belton House, the stately home near Grantham, has had significant influence on students' work. This has resulted in the students developing very individual work, including a well-planned Japanese screen, influenced by the flower paintings on the ceilings. Another student has constructed a 'space frame' containing a book, with references to events suggested by the visit, suspended on strings.

136. There is a healthy, competitive spirit in the department. The challenging nature of much of the work ensures there are good opportunities for gifted and talented children to develop their ability. To further aid their progress, pupils in the lower school are encouraged to meet and discuss their work with sixth formers. Those pupils who have special educational needs benefit from the caring nature of their teachers and make good progress.

137. The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils in the department are very good. They respect their teachers, the subject and the fabric of the department. The great majority arrives at lessons on time, in spite of the distances they need to walk from one building to another. Pupil volunteers appear at break and lunch-time to help their teachers prepare for lessons, while tidying away at the end of lessons is done efficiently and without fuss. There is usually a good, creative atmosphere in lessons allowing pupils to reflect on their own and their friends' work. The pupils are also capable of discussing their work in a most articulate way. They are keen to do well and happily accept responsibility for their work.

138. The quality of teaching in the department is very good, with the best teaching occurring in Years 10 and 11. A feature of the teaching throughout the department is the very good subject knowledge of the teachers. Their expectations of creative effort and behaviour are clear, and their enthusiasm and genuine feel for their subject generate co-operation and a good learning atmosphere.

139. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good overall and occasionally very good. Lesson introductions contain a revision of previous learning as well as guidance on the planned activity and learning objectives. Teachers frequently demonstrate the work to be carried out and use these opportunities well to suggest ways forward or point out potential difficulties. The work set for these younger pupils is challenging and designed to improve technical skills and creative talent. Throughout the lessons, teachers circulate, assessing their pupils' work, and offering guidance and encouragement. Lessons usually end with an opportunity for pupils to review what they have learned and to receive guidance on their homework. Good

relations between teachers and pupils are a positive aid to learning. In a particularly good lesson on Cubism, pupils were able to speak knowledgeably about elements of composition, form and shape, before going on to develop their own paintings. Lessons are less successful when pupils work in groups without having had sufficient guidance and with some pupils less involved than others.

140. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good and occasionally excellent. In a particularly effective lesson, the teacher delivered an outstanding introduction, describing the development of three-dimensional pots from the pupils' two-dimensional drawings, then discussing with the class how and why their work was improving. Good use is made of previous pupils' work to illustrate good working methods.

141. The teachers' manner continues to have a significant impact in the sixth form, where the students clearly want to please their teachers as well as to improve their work. The activities in these lessons allow particularly personal interpretations. During one of the regular sessions devoted to the criticism of sixth formers' work, the teacher asked particularly probing questions. This resulted in the students responding to a high standard, explaining their work in a most mature way.

142. The curriculum is broad and balanced, with a good range of opportunities for pupils to work in painting and drawing, ceramics, sculpture and collage. There are many good references to critical studies and multi-cultural art and artists. There are also occasions when work makes reference to texts by Shakespeare and other writers. The use of some of the new technologies that are now in common use in other schools has yet to be developed. There is a noticeable lack of printmaking in its various guises and pupils have insufficient opportunities to work with textiles. Statutory requirements are met, however.

143. The department makes a contribution to the pupils' literacy through extended writing in the sixth formers' personal study in art history, as well as those occasions when pupils review their learning or plan future developments. As at the time of the previous report, there remains a need for increased use of a subject-specific language.

144. The leadership and management of the department are good. The leadership is particularly strong, but there is a need to further improve the monitoring of teaching. Planning for the short, medium and long-term is not sufficiently detailed. The curriculum does not fully reflect the technological status of the school. The accommodation is satisfactory, with two large studios, a smaller studio and a working area for the sixth form. Two of the studios have small windows and require the pupils to work under artificial light at all times. The size and number of sinks in the studios are inadequate, especially when large classes are working with clay. The school's gallery area makes a positive contribution to the cultural provision, as does the work displayed around the school. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

145. At Key Stage 3, with entry levels just above average, pupils attain levels well above average across all aspects of technology by the end of the key stage. This demonstrates very good progress. Pupils make very good progress in Key Stage 4 and standards of attainment are consistently well above average. Attainment in the sixth form is well above expectations and the added value from GCSE is considerable.

146. Results in the 2000 A Level examinations (only the second year of entry for the department) saw a combined food and technology pass rate at grades A-C of 89 per cent, with 44.5 per cent of students gaining a grade A. There were no grades below D. One Year 12 student gained the gold Crest Award, from the Creativity in Science and Technology Award Scheme, for work with education and engineering. The 1999 and 2000 pass rates for technology were 100 per cent, but candidate numbers were half those entered for this year. The year 2000 was the first year that candidates were entered for A Level food technology. The four candidates entered all gained either grade A or B. This year also saw the first set of AS Level results in systems and control, resistant materials and food technology. The systems and control students performed beyond predicted levels, with 77.7 per cent gaining A-C. The resistant materials students performed up to predicted levels, with 62.5 per cent gaining grades B or C. The food technology students also performed up to their predicted levels, with 75 per cent gaining grades B or C. These students are now focusing on further developing their results during their final A2 Year. From modules of current students' work seen and assessed, achievement is set to maintain the previous high levels of attainment and improve further standards at AS and A Level. The added value from AS to A2 Level is very good.

147. At Key Stage 4, the well above average levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are maintained and improved further. Progress over the key stage is very good. In 1997, 64 per cent of pupils gained A*-C grades. In 1998, 74 percent gained grades A*-C. In 1999, the results took a sharp upward turn and the proportion of A*-C grades, 86 per cent, was very close to double the national average and very high in relation to other subjects in the school. In 2000, the A* - C pass rate was 92 per cent, demonstrating a further improvement in results. There is a slight variation in the performance of pupils studying food and textiles, where the combined percentage grades are slightly higher than for resistant materials. In each of the aspects of systems and control, electronic products and graphics, 100 per cent of pupils entered gained grades A*-C.

148. Each year since 1996 has seen an increase in the number of high achievers gaining the silver Crest Award, from 18 to 26. This award, supported by a number of neighbourhood engineers, encourages Year 10 pupils to produce work with a strong community/industry link. From pupils' work seen and the results of assessed work, achievement is set to maintain and improve on previous high levels of attainment in all aspects of the subject. Highly motivated pupils are identified and enabled to take their GCSE at the end of Year 10. This has proved to be very successful, with two such pupils gaining A* and one A in electronics this summer. Last year the department was runner – up in the technology college movement's prestigious Susan Fey award for sustained high achievement at GCSE. This year the department is runner up in the Findlay award for outstanding achievement at Advanced Level.

149. There has been very significant improvement in attainment since the last report, when there were no results available for the end of Key Stage 4 or the sixth form. There has been an exceptionally strong upward trend in results at all key stages since the last inspection.

150. By the end of the sixth form, students design and make prototype products from very detailed research, investigations and detailed modelling techniques. They use and develop a very broad range of skills and techniques to produce specialist products and develop their very innovative ideas. Presentation skills and the techniques used are of very high quality and standard. They frequently use information communications technology with the digital camera to record the developmental processes involved in their product designs. The high level of analysis and research mirrors industrial practices.

151. Pupils in Year 11 can successfully research, develop and use a range of techniques, skills and processes to produce high quality project work. For example, in textiles, pupils can develop and use a broad range of surface decoration techniques using a wide range of materials to inform their product development. They select and use the most appropriate methods and techniques in their finished work, and high levels of skill to make quality products. However, making skills in resistant materials could be better developed to enable pupils to use them with less teacher support.

152. Year 9 pupils demonstrate a very good breadth and depth of study and use a range of study skills in investigations and evaluations. They demonstrate very good construction skills in making their mechanical toys. Their knowledge and use of computer-aided design and manufacture to produce printed circuit boards are excellent. They can model their design ideas to cope with design constraints before starting production in electronics, and they successfully use a range of information technology skills in the presentation of their work

153. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good and frequently excellent. They enjoy technology and relish the learning opportunities presented to them. They respond very well to the quality of their learning environment, to which they have open access all day and after school. They are very trust worthy and behave honestly and responsibly in response to the high standards of behaviour consistently expected by all staff. Pupils' confidence and self-esteem grow as their achievements increase, and attitudes to learning become even more positively focused. They respond well to opportunities to use their initiative, and they work extremely well with other pupils and all staff, including the technicians. They respond very well to the opportunities presented by all staff, particularly in connection with examination work, to gain relevant expertise and specific technical advice to support their practical work.

154. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is very good overall. Of the nine lessons observed, one was excellent, three were very good and four were good. The teachers' knowledge and subject expertise are considerable, and this makes a very positive impact on pupils' learning. The modular approach encourages the teaching of basic skills through focused practical tasks. This gives the pupils a very good breadth of study across a range of materials, systems and control, and electronics. It also develops, to a high level of competence, their designing and making skills. At Key Stage 4, the quality of teaching is good overall. Of the seven lessons seen, one was excellent and another was very good. Five were good. In the sixth form teaching is very good overall. Five lessons were seen. Three were very good and two were good.

155. Across all key stages and in the sixth form, there are hardly any weaknesses in the teaching. Expectations are very high. Because the objectives for lessons are very clear, pupils know what they are learning and the sequence of the lessons is clearly explained. The systems in place to record progress and attainment are rigorously applied and used to inform the teachers' planning. As a result, pupils know how to improve in order to achieve the standards expected of them. The staff monitors the progress pupils are making, and teachers adapt their teaching and planning to improve opportunities for pupils to make even better progress. Teachers encourage pupils to seek advice from all staff in the development of their individual work. This happens especially at A Level, when pupils need to access those high level graphic skills and when they want information about the more technical aspects of some materials. Planning includes opportunities for the development and use of pupils' literacy, numeracy and information technology skills. In the good lessons, there are many of the features of very good teaching, but not enough time is built into teachers' planning for pupils to think about how to use new learning in their work.

156. The planned curriculum provides a range of learning opportunities that make a good contribution to pupils' moral and social development. The curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The planned provision for the most able pupils is very good and includes master classes that begin with local primary school pupils. All pupils have equal access to all aspects and areas of technology.

157. This is a very effective department. It sets high standards for academic performance and has established an ethos in which pupils and students work very hard to succeed and meet the staff's high expectations of them. The management of the department is very good overall. It provides an education of high quality, largely because of the excellent ethos for learning that ensures that pupils and students are both very well behaved and very hard working. The high expectations of all teachers have a direct impact on the quality of education, the standards achieved and the ethos for learning in the department. All aspects of the department's performance, especially teaching, learning and pupils' progress, are closely monitored and this information is used to very good effect to raise standards. The accommodation and resources are very good, and excellent in many areas. They contribute significantly to the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. However, accommodation is an issue when there is insufficient space for the teacher to circulate to support pupils' learning.

DRAMA

158. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 and students in the sixth form receive and experience a stimulating and creative curriculum in drama that adds an additional dimension to their learning. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is high and it is satisfactory in the sixth form, where most pupils achieve a grade.

159. Drama is taught as a discrete subject at Key Stage 4; at Key Stage 3 it is integrated into the English curriculum. Consequently, pupils opting to do the GCSE course begin with fewer drama skills than would be desirable, because there is insufficient time available to develop these within Key Stage 3 English. Furthermore, there is only one specialist drama teacher. Although results are

good overall, standards of attainment are affected because pupils begin the GCSE and A Level courses without a sound grounding in using drama conventions. In

consequence, the introduction to the courses is taken up with learning basics. This loss of valuable time affects the end results. In spite of these difficulties, pupils make very good progress because of the very good teaching and their diligence, enthusiasm and willingness to work hard.

160. They learn about and use drama skills and terminologies during role-play and discussion with the teacher. They listen very carefully to instructions, negotiate roles well and show a clear understanding of the importance of gestures and delivery of words when devising drama. By Year 11, pupils use good improvisation skills and experiment effectively with the use of space in order to understand a situation and the dynamics in a relationship. Sixth form students understand theatrical terms and evaluate their work critically in order to improve their performance, as was illustrated in a Year 13 lesson where they worked on 'The Bacchae'.

161. Teaching is very good, with patches of excellence. An experienced specialist teaches the subject and has very good subject knowledge. Teaching makes exacting demands on pupils in order to equip them with good drama skills, and these high expectations mean that pupils' learning progresses quickly. The teacher is aware of pupils' and students' shortcomings and works very closely with them to provide high quality support and guidance. Planning is very good with clear established routines at the start and end of lessons. Time is used well in drama lessons and the high level of intervention involves close questioning to enable pupils to strengthen aspects of their work. The use of music creates a positive working climate and pupils relate very well to it as part of their warm-up routine.

162. Drama is well led by a committed specialist teacher, whose teaching is well supported by good schemes of work and systems for monitoring and evaluating the progress of pupils and sixth form students. Since the last inspection, the department now has a very well equipped, specialist drama studio. The teaching of drama as a more discrete subject at Key Stage 3 is now a priority in the development plan. Drama is an increasingly popular subject at Key Stage 4 and at A Level. However, the development plan lacks a strategic approach and targets, although realistic, are not long-term. The plan reflects self-evaluation but is without objectives, cost, dates, staffing and training implications as well as strategies for improvement and success criteria.

163. The department has improved its standards since the last inspection and also its quality of teaching. It provides a good range of extra-curricular activities, including an annual school production, theatre visits, projects within the community and a drama club for the younger pupils at Key Stage 3.

GEOGRAPHY

164. Standards are slightly above average when the pupils enter the school. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment in geography is well above the national average. In 2000, the percentage of pupils gaining National Curriculum Level 5 and above was 86 per cent, which is 23 per cent above the national average. There is no significant difference in standards between boys and girls. Good progress is made in geographical skills, and pupils are confident with maps, graphs and diagrams by the end of Key Stage 3. They collect data in the field and use this to develop numeracy and basic analytical skills. Pupils use a variety of writing styles. For example, they produce

newspaper articles on the effects of an eruption, involving both factual and empathetic writing. There are some examples of different materials being set for low and high attaining pupils. This is best seen in Year 7 where pupils are in mixed ability groups. Both oral and written work is good, but some pupils need more literacy support to develop confidence with specialist terms. Numeracy is well developed and information technology skills are very good.

165. Before the end of Key Stage 3, pupils choose to take geography as either a full course or a short course. The latter is taken with a short course in history. Both full and short course geography are included in this report. Attainment in full course geography is well above average. In 2000, 76 per cent of pupils gained grades A*-C; the national average was 53.1 per cent. Both boys and girls perform well above national average. In short course geography there is no national average for comparison at this time and in 2000, 56.2 per cent of pupils gained grades A*-C, which is slightly above the national average for full course geography. Pupils make progress with numeracy and, by the end of Year 11, information technology skills in geography are excellent. Pupils use school websites, software and the internet with skill and confidence to develop their geographical knowledge. Amongst other work, they use these skills to develop a mini-coursework project on flooding in York. Progress in written work is shown by the increasing skills in the making of notes and in more detailed writing. Pupils also use geographical terms with increasing confidence in their oral work. Fieldwork and coursework show well developed evaluation skills by the higher attaining pupils. Lower attaining pupils produce a limited amount of analysis and most can carry out basic evaluation.

166. In A Level geography, students achieve below national expectations with regard to A-B grades, but point scores are in line with national averages. In 2000, pupils gained 25 per cent A-B grades compared with a national average of 34.8 per cent. All pupils gained A Level pass grades. Evaluation skills are further developed within coursework. The retrieval of information from databases is well developed. The art of essay writing is developed well.

167. Work seen during the inspection indicates that pupils make good progress by the end of Key Stage 3. All pupils have good presentation skills and complete their work. Lower attaining pupils benefit from in class support or from specially adapted worksheets in Year 7. This was seen in a class working on grid references. Some pupils were given an interesting task to develop confidence with 4 figure references. The remainder of the class worked on 6 figure references from the textbook and the most able progressed to using an OS map. There could usefully be more use of adapted worksheets with some pupils in the banded groups in Years 8 and 9. Higher attaining pupils often receive additional work or special extension work.

168. At Key Stage 4, progress overall in lessons is good. Presentation remains good and numeracy is well developed. Pupils use and analyse hydrographs, triangular graphs, population pyramids and do Spearman Rank correlations using fieldwork data. Tally charts, environmental impact analysis and questionnaires are all used well in fieldwork on Lincoln. Pupils also use information technology to process data and produce graphs and charts. Pupils' oracy remains good and there is a more confident use of key terms. Written work becomes much more detailed and pupils learn to use a variety of resources. In one Year 11 lesson, pupils revised the factors of industrial location and also built up a case study on industrial change in South Wales. For this exercise, they were given two book references and two information sheets. Guided by three

questions on the board, they used this information to build up answers and to help them to understand part of a video. Finally they were referred to the Welsh Development Agency website to ensure their case-study details were correct. These pupils were learning to use skills of selection and to focus their work.

169. In lessons seen, pupils' behaviour overall was very good. Their listening skills are very good and they work well together when required. They have good, confident relationships with their teachers and there is a very good, co-operative atmosphere in lessons. All pupils are polite, helpful and courteous to visitors.

170. Teaching is good overall, good at Key Stage 3, very good at Key Stage 4, and good at A Level. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen. In all lessons, there is good, positive encouragement to pupils to respond. A good variety of teaching and learning strategies includes the use of information technology. Pupils understand what is expected from them. In the best lessons, there is good, clear board-work, crisp questioning to elicit answers from pupils and then further questioning to ensure most pupils contribute orally and have some input into the answers. In a Year 7 class on mapwork, pupils gathered round a map and answered questions about the map as the teacher indicated different features. With this stimulus, responses were enthusiastic and pupils readily responded. In the next stage of the lesson, clear instructions were given on the board and pupils worked in groups or pairs on full sized OS maps to identify examples of settlement size. All pupils were fully involved in answering questions, looking at the map, and later in finding examples or writing answers. Information technology is used well to support and extend learning.

171. Learning is good overall. Almost all pupils develop a good range of geographical skills, including those of evaluation and analysis. At Key Stage 3, pupils produce a variety of written work, including fact files, small posters, news articles and a rainforest board game to address issues in the management of rainforests. The use of detailed tabulation, spidergrams and flow diagrams improves learning and note-taking skills in Key Stage 4.

172. At all stages, homework is given and marked regularly with useful comments. Pupils in Key Stage 3 and 4 have regular assessments, and these are marked thoroughly with National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades added. In addition, pupils have self-assessment sheets in their books on which they record assessment grades, modules completed and target grades for improvement. Assessment data are used to monitor pupils' progress and to target pupils needing additional input. The use of assessment to further pupils' progress in geography is very good. The head of department is also head of faculty and the leadership is very good, giving clear direction to both department and faculty. The geography area includes good displays of work and maps, although there is less evidence of displays of key words to support literacy.

173. Since the last inspection, the department has shown good improvement. Key Stage 3 and 4 results are now well above national averages and teaching is now almost always good, never unsatisfactory. The use of information technology is excellent and overall resources for the department have been improved.

HISTORY

174. Attainment is above national averages throughout the school, although more markedly and consistently so at Key Stages 3 and 4 than in the sixth form. In teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3, attainments is some 15 percentage points above the national average and the difference between the attainment of boys and girls is rather less than it is nationally. In the GCSE examination at the end of Key Stage 4, over 90 per cent of the pupils entered gained grades A*-C, compared with 50 per cent nationally in 1999. They achieved slightly higher results in history than they did in the combined total of their other subjects, and, on average, their results were a grade higher than their counterparts nationally. At A Level, results have fluctuated around the national average over the past few years.

175. Pupils entering the school are slightly above the average in terms of their attainment. They make good progress in learning how to analyse and interpret historical sources, as in one Year 9 lesson where a pupil offered a clear conceptual explanation of how to assess the reliability of conflicting evidence on working conditions in nineteenth century factories. They undertake extensive written work, which is, for the most part, well presented, although a minority of lower attaining pupils make elementary mistakes in spelling and grammar and have a below average knowledge of chronology.

176. Pupils learn to adopt an independent and self-reliant approach to their work, which, combined with developing research and empathetic skills, builds a firm foundation for later examination success. Confident and articulate oral contributions, resulting from the regular use of paired and group explanation and discussion, are a notable feature of lessons. In Years 10 and 11, pupils make very good progress, so that, by the end of Key Stage 4, nearly half of them achieve the top two grades in the GCSE examinations. Observations of local studies coursework reflected the effective use of annotated diagrams, plans, photographs, overlays and, occasionally, timelines to describe the history of Lincoln castle. Pupils develop high levels of skill in information and communication technology, including word processing and internet research. More unusually, Year 11 pupils have designed a history web site and composed a 'PowerPoint' presentation on the relative influence of Christianity and Islam upon the progress of medieval medicine. Pupils achieve well because they have acquired detailed subject knowledge, undertake comprehensive revision programmes and have a thorough understanding of the requirements of the examination papers.

177. At A Level, detailed note-making helps students to accumulate impressive knowledge and understanding of the prescribed periods. In an essay on 'The Duke of Northumberland; Villain or Statesman?' they reached well-argued conclusions based on evidence skilfully adduced from conflicting sources. In individual presentations on Russia and Germany before and during the First World War, students were able to identify significant similarities and differences and to explain why Lenin and the Bolsheviks did not support 'this imperialist war'.

178. History lessons are characterised by very good relationships based on mutual respect. The variety and inclusive nature of teaching methods and pupils' involvement in their own learning, mean that they often 'trip over each other' in their eagerness to contribute to lessons. Homework is completed conscientiously, and often enthusiastically, and a clear understanding and recording of what is necessary in order to progress results in a high degree of motivation at all levels.

179. Teaching is very good throughout the school and at each of the key stages. Thoughtful planning, well structured and briskly paced lessons, and varied teaching styles all contribute to pupils' active involvement in their own learning. Teachers' energy and evident enthusiasm for their subject are very effective at engaging their pupils' attention, interest and enjoyment. Their knowledge, monitoring and support of the individuals in their care help the vast majority, including those with special educational needs, to realize their full potential. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to extend the learning of some groups of pupils. For example, more visibly addressing the weaknesses in literacy skills would help those who find it difficult to express their ideas in writing. Assessment of work is thorough and informative, and the provision of mark schemes for pupils at all levels plays an important role in enabling them to raise their standards of attainment. Teachers have put considerable effort into the creation of a wide range of resources on the computer network, and open access to this material, during lunchtimes and after school as well as in lessons, significantly enhances pupils' progress.

180. The head of department provides very effective leadership and management in the subject. She has played a key role in the development and use of a wide range of information and communication technology resources. The work of the department is monitored well and, overall, good progress has been made since the time of the last report.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

181. GCSE results in information studies for the last three years have been consistently well above national average, with over 80 per cent of pupils gaining grades A*-C, compared with 50 per cent nationally. Pupils who took the GNVQ Part 1 in information technology in 2000 were all successful in gaining the equivalent of two GCSE grades at A*-C. In the sixth form, students taking GCE A Level in computing achieved a pass rate in line with the national level, though a smaller proportion than nationally gained the highest grades. Students who took the GNVQ Advanced in information technology were all successful in gaining the full award, compared with around three-quarters of GNVQ students nationally. The finding of the inspection is that attainment is currently above average at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form.

182. Pupils come to the school with widely differing knowledge and skills in information and communications technology, though overall standards are in line with national average. In Year 7 lessons, for example, most are familiar with the common word processing and graphics applications, and a significant minority work with greater independence and confidence gained through considerable primary school and home use of computers. About a third of pupils are less familiar with activities that combine text and graphics and so require more teacher support. In Years 7-9, pupils make good progress in developing their understanding and practical skills, because of the taught programme and the considerable use of computers across the curriculum. Higher attaining pupils in Year 8 show a secure understanding of graphic images and their construction. In the design and technology programme, Year 7 pupils are able to use applications in computer aided design and manufacture to design and etch an acrylic key fob. At the end of Year 9, over three quarters of pupils demonstrate standards in line with or above national average in most of the main applications of information and communications technology including those for modelling and measurement.

Particular strengths exist in using the Internet for research and in organising and presenting work. The most committed and talented pupils have sufficient knowledge and skills to help the school develop its web site. The new taught programme provides worthwhile extension opportunities for the higher attaining pupils, though it has still to enable pupils to demonstrate the highest levels of attainment. However, almost all pupils achieve well at the end of Key Stage 3 compared with their knowledge and skills on entry.

183. All pupils now take GCSE information studies, with a small number also choosing to take GNVQ Part 1 in information technology. In work seen in Year 11, pupils demonstrate above average attainment. The higher attaining pupils display a wide and sophisticated range of photographic and graphic skills in well designed publications that show stronger underpinning knowledge and careful development. The work of lower attaining pupils illustrates a general competence in the main applications. Those pupils taking the GNVQ Part 1 in information technology combine their practical competences with better developed research skills than average for such pupils. In their other subjects, pupils continue to make considerable use of information and communications technology for GCSE coursework. For example, they use applications in design and technology and science to design and model electronic circuits, spreadsheets for modelling in mathematics and geography, and various presentation software in most other subjects. Over Key Stage 4, pupils continue to make good progress in their broader information and communications technology skills, though the highest standards in the GCSE course are constrained by the limited curriculum time. The school is seeking to address this by beginning GCSE preparation in the latter part of the Key Stage 3 programme.

184. All sixth form students now take information and communications technology as a key skill, and continue to make use of computers for their research and for the presentation of course and project work. In the specialist information and communications technology courses, students continue to make good and, in some cases, very good progress. Standards in the vocational Advanced Level course are above average. This was evident in a lesson on relational databases, where the higher attaining students could work independently in designing and testing their procedures. In the GCE A Level in computing, the students are more tentative in their programming skills and, in a Year 12 lesson, they needed teacher support to make progress. However, they demonstrated firm understanding of computer systems in discussion and could use information and communications technology effectively in a stock control project. Students also demonstrated confident use of information and communications technology in other courses, particularly the GNVQ Advanced. For example, in both business and health and social care lessons, students frequently make effective use of presentation software and digital projectors in their assessed group presentations.

185. Pupils are very positive in their attitudes to information and communications technology and take advantage of the considerable opportunities to use it in lessons, at lunchtimes and after school. Homework is readily completed and often pupils spend considerable time developing and improving class work. Pupils readily collaborate, particularly when the classes are so large that computers have to be shared. Behaviour is almost always very good, with pupils acting responsibly in their use of equipment.

186. Teaching in the taught information and communications technology courses is good overall and never less than satisfactory. Nearly four fifths of teaching is good or better, with over a quarter being very good. Lessons are well planned, sharing the learning objectives with the pupils to give them a clear idea of the desired outcomes. Class management is always very good, with regular monitoring of progress that helps to keep pupils on task and sustain a brisk pace. Pupils move forward rapidly in their learning as a result. The departmental team shares strong specialist knowledge, particularly in the sixth form courses, and they use this effectively to challenge and develop student understanding. The best teaching makes use of a very good variety of teaching strategies, such as brainstorming, effective questioning and group discussion, all of which are used to involve pupils and consolidate learning. Other teachers contributing to the Key Stage 3 programme, though very competent in their teaching and information and communications technology skills, are more reliant on the commercially produced learning materials. This occasionally resulted in missed opportunities to introduce new skills to a class or guide some pupils to more challenging work. Monitoring of pupil progress is a further strength, particularly in the Key Stage 4 and sixth form classes, where teachers provide guidance against examination criteria to help pupils to improve their work. This is less developed in the Key Stage 3 course, where the National Curriculum levels are less consistently used. All the teaching is characterised by good working relationships with pupils and a mutual respect.

187. The management of information and communications technology is shared between a senior manager, the new ICT co-ordinator and the network manager. They work well as a team and provide very good, whole-school leadership of the subject. The school is justifiably well regarded in the local area for its provision of information and communications technology training and resources, and the senior manager has had an active and effective role in that development. The high level of staff expertise has enabled the school to be a major training provider for local primary and secondary schools, and also to establish a link with local universities in teacher training for information and communications technology. The school also helped establish the county area network as part of the National Grid for Learning. Both staff and sixth form students are currently involved in the 'European Computer Driving Licence' that is intended to be common standard in the European Union. The information and communications technology provision benefits from excellent technical support provided by the network manager and two skilled technicians. These are able to build equipment and maintain the large and sophisticated school network and management and information systems.

188. The accommodation and resources are excellent and give a provision that is substantially better than the national average. In addition to the large library computer suite, there are further suites in almost all the major subject areas, as well a cluster of suites to deliver the taught information and communications technology courses. The school has a web site that involves the pupils in its development, and increasing use is made of internet and email facilities to provide links between home and school. The range of facilities clearly enhances pupils' learning, though the school has yet to ensure that class sizes match the number of computers in suites in order to optimise that learning.

189. In the last inspection, the provision of information and communications technology was highly praised and the school has worked hard to sustain those high standards. Much of the management of the subject curriculum, staff development and links with outside are very strong, though aspects of the curriculum and assessment, particularly in Key Stage 3, are still being developed.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

190. The Year 9 teacher assessments in 2000 were substantially above the national average, and the percentage of pupils, both boys and girls, achieving the higher Level 6 was four times greater than the average. There has been no consistent pattern to GCSE results recently, but in the past three years the percentage of pupils attaining A*-C grades in both French and German has been above or well above the national average for all maintained schools, except for German in 2000, when results were in line. The difference in attainment between boys and girls broadly reflects the national picture, except in French in 1999, when the gap of 39 per cent in favour of girls was over twice the national average. The number of A Level entries has been too small for statistical analysis but in 2000, 75 per cent of candidates in French and 100 per cent of those in German gained a pass at grades A-E, with one student achieving an A grade in both languages.

191. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards of attainment are generally above the national average in the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Listening skills are well developed because of the extensive use of the foreign language in lessons by nearly all teachers. Pupils respond confidently with good accents to questions from the teacher and they can initiate short dialogues in paired work sessions. As yet, however, they are given little opportunity for extended utterances or to use the language for their own purposes. A notable exception to this was in a Year 9 French lesson where the teacher insisted that all requests, such as to lower the blind or leave the lesson early for a dental appointment, were made in French. Reading skills are developing well in some classes, with occasional use of readers to supplement the textbook. One Year 9 German class has library lessons, but the opportunities to read for pleasure in the foreign language are uneven and a systematic extended reading programme needs to be implemented and incorporated into the schemes of work. Copywriting achieves a good level of accuracy in Year 7 and pupils make very rapid progress in their writing skills through Key Stage 3. By Year 9, higher and average attainers are using different tenses well in both languages. Writing a one page letter in German, they display a sound grasp of word order and in French they are able to write accounts of *Le weekend dernier* in the perfect tense, demonstrating an excellent grasp of the use of auxiliary verbs and past participle agreements.

192. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards continue to be above average in both languages. By Year 11, higher attainers are writing at length. In German, they are using subordinate clauses routinely and are able to convert accounts from the past to the future with ease. In French, their ability to write successfully in different registers is displayed in two contrasting letters about an umbrella left on a train: one describing the incident to a friend, the other a formal enquiry to SNCF about lost property. A two and a half page description of a holiday in French contained only a few minor errors. At both key stages, the strong emphasis placed on the understanding of grammatical concepts enables pupils to increase their grasp of the structure of language, self-correct their work and so achieve a higher level of accuracy.

193. Attainment on the A Level courses is broadly in line with the national average. Students make very rapid post-GCSE progress and, although their written work still contains a few basic errors, they are able to demonstrate an increasing sophistication in manipulating language in discussions and essays on social issues such as vegetarianism (Year 12 German) and equality in the workplace (Year 13 French).

194. Gifted and talented pupils are given work of sufficient rigour in most top sets and benefit from the fast-track German course just started in Year 10. The setting system enables those with special educational needs to make good progress and this was seen during the inspection in French classes in Years 9 and 11 where the teaching was both encouraging and demanding. There are occasions when the lower attaining pupils are not set appropriate work and the suitability of course materials for lower attaining pupils needs to be kept under review.

195. Pupils are almost invariably enthusiastic language learners, eager to demonstrate their newly-acquired skills. In one Year 7 French class they were on the edge of their seats in their determination to respond in the guessing games. They have excellent concentration and perseverance, consult dictionaries sensibly when necessary and enjoy using information and communications technology to enhance their language learning when they get the opportunity.

196. Teaching is always at least satisfactory and is good overall. It is good or better in two thirds of lessons and very good or excellent in one third. The department contains some excellent linguists and two native speakers. Nearly all the teachers use the foreign language extensively in lessons, both as a medium of instruction and for routine interaction. Lessons are very well prepared and nearly always delivered energetically and at a brisk pace, with good use of varied resources-mainly the overhead projector, the tape-recorder and flashcards. Content is nearly always carefully graded and geared to the age group, with frequent change of task and good coverage of the four attainment targets. Teachers make frequent use of pair and group work and enjoy an excellent relationship with their pupils. There is a calm, productive learning atmosphere in lessons, and skilled teaching combined with excellent motivation, enables rapid progress to be made in the acquisition of new skills. The very best lessons are delivered with rigour, along with panache and enthusiasm that sweep the pupils along. In lessons that are only satisfactory, there are occasionally problems with unstimulating materials, or a too leisurely pace, or tasks that are insufficiently demanding to stretch the highest attainers.

197. Nearly all pupils study both French and German from Year 7 and the two languages have equal status throughout the school. In spite of the heavy investment at Key Stage 3, however, the number choosing to study both languages at Key Stage 4 is below the national average. Numbers on the A Level courses are increasing, but, as yet, there are no other foreign language courses available in the sixth form. A very good programme of visits abroad, including work experience for A Level students, ensures that the department makes a strong contribution to the cultural development of pupils. The department benefits from dynamic leadership. The head of department is an excellent manager and administrator. The language teachers work well as a team; documentation is sound, and schemes of work are in place. Rigorous assessment procedures ensure that pupils' progress is carefully monitored.

198. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection. The issue then raised of promoting good pronunciation has been successfully addressed. The department has changed considerably in size and structure, bringing benefits in terms more varied teaching strategies. The department is staffed by ten graduate linguists, who bring a wealth of exceptionally varied experience to foreign language teaching at the school. Accommodation is much improved, now very good, with a newly decorated suite of seven rooms. It includes a departmental computer room, the use of which, however, needs to be increased. All pupils now have a personal copy of a good quality modern textbook and this helps them to learn at home, as well as giving support to parents who want to assist their children in their learning.

MUSIC

199. Standards in music at the end of Key Stage 3 were above national expectations in 2000, according to teachers' assessments. They showed an improvement on those of the previous year. The GCSE results for music in 2000 were in line with the school's averages and above the national averages. A-Level results for this period were below average, owing to some candidates' late submission of course work and irregular attendance at lessons.

200. In work observed during the inspection, standards attained by the end of Key Stage 3 are slightly above national expectations. Pupils in Year 7 begin their music lessons in the school by exploring sound through practical experiments using percussion instruments. They learn about the instruments of the orchestra, pitch and rhythmic notation, and use these skills well when playing the electronic keyboard. Pupils in Year 8 cover traditional music from selected areas of the world, including England, Scotland, Germany and Spain. They show good understanding and explore the compositional techniques found in the music of these countries, composing competently in the same styles. While studying Spanish music, pupils listen to the 'habañera' from Bizet's 'Carmen', and then produce good work in pairs, one pupil playing the distinctive rhythm in the bass whilst the other pupil plays an appropriate melody above it. Pupils in Year 9 study the birth of rock and roll and the various styles of music that influenced it. They can play a 12 bar blues chord pattern and compose a melody to be played on top of it. Continuation of this work involves adding extra instruments, with the pupils working in larger groups to produce work that is slightly above expectations for pupils of their age.

201. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are in line with expectations. Pupils in Year 10 revise the different forms learnt at Key Stage 3 and listen to various songs before writing their first composition, to a satisfactory standard. They also become acquainted with the layout of the questions for the listening paper and prepare a piece for performance in the Christmas concert. The work heard during the inspection was of an average standard, overall. Pupils in Year 11 have nearly completed the course requirements and are preparing for their mock examinations.

202. Standards at A Level are above average, although there are no pupils currently studying music at this level in Year 12. Pupils in Year 13 are skilfully completing extracts in the style of string quartets by Mozart, and comparing their compositions with the originals. They are also refining their essay writing technique as they also prepare for the forthcoming mock examinations.

203. Pupils' behaviour and attitude to the subject at Key Stage 3 are generally very good, and at Key Stage 4 and A Level, they are excellent. Pupils work well in pairs and groups, build good relationships both with each other and their teachers, and enjoy their music making. They concentrate on the task in hand and spare no effort to produce a worthwhile composition and performance.

204. Teaching is generally good in all years. Pupils make satisfactory or good progress. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are good, and this enables them to help the pupils discover knowledge from the music for themselves. Lessons are well planned and resourced, but more use could be made of time goals to encourage pupils to complete the various stages of set tasks in a shorter time. Many lessons contain opportunities for pupils to perform the results of their work to the remainder of the class at the end of the lesson. However, performances of partially completed work during the lesson might serve as inspiration and encouragement to the remainder of the class to improve their work before the lesson ends. Both teachers have a firm but friendly manner with the pupils and the relationships are generally good, with well-established expectations of behaviour. During practical work, the teachers circulate, assessing pupils' work and offering advice and encouragement. More use of the adjoining practice rooms for practical work would reduce the number of pupils practising in the main classroom, and thereby enable them to hear more clearly what they are playing. Homework is set on a regular basis for Years 10 to 13. It is only set for Years 7 to 9 when it enhances the learning of the previous lesson, or acts as beneficial preparation for the next.

205. At Key Stage 3 pupils are taught in musically mixed ability groups. Tasks are designed to be achievable by all pupils. Consequently pupils with special educational needs who are integrated with the remainder of the class generally achieve in line with their peers. However insufficient emphasis is given to gifted and talented pupils, who require stated targets at the beginning of the activity rather than an extension that follows early completion of a task, and so they occasionally underachieve.

206. The curriculum for Key Stage 3 is currently undergoing revision to include the requirements of the new National Curriculum, especially those involving the increased use of information and communications technology. Assessment procedures are sound, with end of year reports making reference to the end of key stage statements. Instrumental lessons provided by three private teachers are of a high standard, but few pupils take up this valuable opportunity. The department is well decorated with posters of historical periods, concert posters, and pupils' work, but the teaching accommodation is too small for present teaching requirements. There is a lack of rehearsal space and a shortage of multi-cultural instruments.

207. Since the last inspection the department has addressed the issues of the piano shortage and inconvenient classrooms and has made satisfactory progress overall.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

208. In 2000, the number of pupils gaining A*-C grades in the GCSE examination was well above the national average. The 1999 results were above the national average and results over the previous three years have shown a rising trend. The results in 2000 compare very favourably with most other subjects in the school. A Level results have been consistently in line with the national average and students achieved better than their GCSE results indicated that they would. Twelve sixth form students gained the community sports leaders' award in 2000.

209. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils attain levels that are in line with those expected nationally. In volleyball, gymnastics, basketball and girls' football, the majority of pupils perform with average skills. The standard of girls in dance is above the national expectation. They have good body tension and modify and refine movements to improve their performance. Boys and girls in Year 9 work constructively in pairs and small groups and most have a good understanding of warm up and stretching exercises.

210. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils are attaining well above the national expectation in both GCSE and core physical education. In the theoretical aspects of the subject, pupils have a good understanding of training methods, dietary requirements and sports injuries, and their written work is effectively organised. It is particularly well presented by the girls. Pupils in Year 11 use information and communication technology to research topics from the internet and from departmental resources. The majority of pupils in Year 10 are attaining well above the national expectation in both the theoretical and practical aspects of the subject. Trampolining is a new activity for pupils in Year 10. Boys and girls quickly learn the skills involved and can perform basic rotational techniques with good control. Boys in Year 11 have good football skills and apply successful tactics and strategies in a game. The majority of girls have a very good knowledge of the routines in step aerobics and perform with rhythm and confidence. A few girls perform below the national expectation in badminton, where they lack co-ordination and strength.

211. Students in the sixth form attain above the national expectation in their A Level studies. They have a good general vocabulary, use appropriate technical terminology and pay good attention to detail. Many have high standards of performance in their individual sports and understand the important factors involved in sport-specific training programmes.

212. Many individual pupils and teams achieve very high standards in district, county and national competitions in rugby, cross country, football, and netball. Pupils play to a high standard in inter form, inter school and club competitions.

213. Teaching is very good overall and none is unsatisfactory. Teaching has improved since the previous report. Teachers have very good subject expertise and are prepared to demonstrate to give pupils good examples of performance techniques. This helps pupils to improve their skills and was seen to be especially effective in trampolining and step aerobics. Lessons are thoroughly planned, clearly linked to the examination syllabus and engage pupils in a variety of progressive skills. Objectives are shared with pupils at the start of each lesson and pupils who have co-ordination difficulties are helped by the department's range of equipment, which is suited in size and quality to their needs. In the very good lessons,

teachers use a variety of teaching methods to involve pupils in independent learning tasks. Teaching does not yet fully promote the literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology strands of the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3, but pupils in the examination groups have good opportunities to use the readily accessible information and communication resources.

214. The very good lessons have excellent pace, and maximum learning is achieved during the short fifty minutes on the activity. Pupils in the GCSE and A Level groups understand how they can improve their work. This is because the marking of their tests and homework is consistent and teachers use target review sheets to inform them of their progress and to set new targets. However, pupils' notebooks are not sufficiently monitored to ensure they can be used as a good learning resource in the future. A small percentage of teaching does not address the development of pupils' planning skills, or of their analytical and evaluative skills, in the appropriate balance in each lesson.

215. The majority of pupils enter the school with below average attainment levels, especially in ball-handling skills. They learn very well, as a result of the very good teaching in the well-maintained specialist facilities and their own enthusiastic and energetic approach to their work. Progress is very good at all key stages. Pupils are well behaved and have very good relationships with one another and their teachers. Their enthusiasm for the subject is illustrated by the numbers who opt to study GCSE and A Level courses and by the 30 per cent of pupils who attend the extra-curricular activities. This very good extra provision includes games clubs, school matches and inter-form competitions. It would broaden the opportunities for all pupils if gymnastics and dance were included in the extra-curricular programme on a regular basis. There is no planned physical education provision for all students in the sixth form. This considerably limits the breadth of their curriculum and shows a lack of continuity in the schools' planning. However, the A Level course and Community Sports Leaders Course give very good provision for those students who wish to continue their interest in physical education.

216. An extensive system of certificates and colours rewards pupils for their achievement in physical education. These are presented at a recently established sports awards evening and they provide links to the department's good assessment procedures. The very good links with the community enable the department to promote talented and gifted pupils by encouraging them to join local sports clubs and to enter district and county competitions.

217. The good leadership of the department has established the GCSE and A Level courses since the previous inspection and pupils' attainment shows a rising trend. Facilities have been improved by the new sports pavilion, with its extensive computer suite. The assessment procedures have been changed to meet the new National Curriculum orders. The curriculum meets national requirements and the time allocated to physical education allows the programmes of study to be taught effectively. At Key Stage 3, all pupils have access to a broad curriculum of games, gymnastics, athletics, dance and outdoor and adventurous activities, but the amount of time allocated to games, especially for boys, is too great and the curriculum therefore lacks balance. The department has five very good specialist staff who work well together as a team and make a positive commitment to the continued development of the department.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

218. Pupils aged 11 to 16 pursue a course of study based on the Agreed Syllabus for Lincolnshire County Council. Between the ages of 14 and 16 they meet its requirements by studying for the GCSE examination. All pupils will sit the examination for the first time in 2001, except for a small minority pursuing a basic skills course. Previously, only very small numbers have pursued the GCSE course as an option. Religious studies is available as a GCE AS Level option, but there is no provision for the Agreed Syllabus to be studied by all sixth form students. The school, therefore, does not meet statutory requirements for all sixth formers to study religious education.

219. In the Year 2000 GCSE examination, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C was well above the national average for all maintained schools. It was significantly higher than in the 1999 examinations. The GCE AS examination results were broadly in line with national norms. In both instances, however, the very small number of entries makes comparisons with national averages insecure.

220. In work seen during the inspection, pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 were attaining standards above the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus for their age. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the richness and diversity of religion, of the place of Christianity and other principal religions in the country, and of their distinctive features. They understand how their adherents' lives are shaped by their beliefs and have a good grasp of religious language and concepts. Their skills in applying religious insights to their own experience, and to that of others, are very well developed.

221. In work seen during the inspection, pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 were attaining standards above national expectations for their age in their GCSE study of Christian perspectives on personal, social and world issues, and of Islam. Sixth form students were attaining standards in line with national expectations for their age in their GCE AS study of Ethics and Islam.

222. Pupils of all levels of prior attainment achieve well because of good teaching and the good attitudes they bring to the subject. The subject also makes a very good contribution to the development of pupils' information technology skills.

223. At Key Stage 3, the quality of teaching is at least good and very good overall, being very good in just over half of lessons. At Key Stage 4, it is also very good overall. The quality of teaching was satisfactory in a quarter of lessons observed, and very good in three-quarters. In the sixth form, the quality of teaching is consistently very good.

224. Where teaching is strongest, teachers have an excellent grasp of their subject and have high expectations of pupils. They know clearly what they wish them to learn, and plan their lessons effectively to achieve their aims. They engage and hold pupils' interest through a good variety of imaginative, interesting and challenging activities and tasks, which are well matched to their differing needs. For example, Year 8 pupils made very good gains in understanding the religious significance of pilgrimage through working in small groups to design board games on pilgrimage in Islam and Hinduism. Year 12 GCE AS students made very good progress in understanding metaphysical ethics through paired work researching, devising and delivering 'PowerPoint' presentations to the class. Teachers use very good questioning skills to extend pupils understanding. For example, questioning and discussion in a Year 9 lesson led pupils to understand the difference between

prejudice and discrimination and to explore strategies for combating discrimination in society. Year 8 pupils were similarly led to a very good understanding of the importance of ritual preparation for prayer for Muslims. Teachers make good use of praise to raise pupils' self esteem. They set worthwhile homework that extends work in class. Their marking of work helps pupils to understand how to raise the level of their attainment. They know their pupils very well and enjoy very good relationships with them, based on mutual respect and caring.

225. Where teaching is less strong, non-specialist teachers have good generic teaching skills, but their command of the subject is less secure. As a result, the potentially higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently extended and teaching is rarely illuminated by references to facts and ideas beyond those in the plan for the lesson. Opportunities for firing pupils' interest and enthusiasm are sometimes lost. Teaching can be overly directive in style, with pupils being given insufficient opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.

226. The attitudes of pupils of all ages towards the subject are very good. They are very well motivated; come to lessons keen to learn, and take pride in both their classwork and their homework. They are very responsive orally and listen with respect to each other's views and opinions. Year 8 pupils, for example, listened attentively to two of their class delivering a very well researched presentation on the causes of the current Arab Israeli crisis. Pupils behave very well, and they enjoy very good relationships with each other, and with their teachers.

227. The subject has shown good improvement overall. Standards of attainment have been raised. The quality of schemes of work has been improved at Key Stage 3. The quality of provision has been improved at Key Stage 4, with the introduction of the GCSE course for all pupils, and in the sixth form with the introduction of GCE AS Level. The school monitors pupils' academic performance and the quality of teaching and learning more effectively than at the time of the previous inspection. This good improvement is a reflection of the quality of leadership and management, which is very good. There is a clear vision of the educational direction the subject should take if standards are to be further raised. The head of department gives the five non-specialist teachers of the subject very good support.

228. If standards are to be raised further, the school should meet its statutory obligation to make appropriate provision for the Agreed Syllabus to be taught to all pupils in the sixth form. It should also seek to reduce the proportion of lessons taught by non-specialists.

OTHER COURSES

Business Studies

229. In 2000, GCSE results in business studies were well above national average, with over 80 per cent of pupils gaining grades A*-C, compared with about half of candidates nationally. Results were above average in the sixth form courses too, with all GCE and GNVQ Advanced Level students gaining passes. Those students who took the GCE A level in combined business studies and economics were particularly successful, with most achieving grade A.

230. In work seen in Years 10 and 11, standards in GCSE work broadly reflect recent examination results, with pupils having a good grasp of business and economic concepts. They are developing effective personal research skills that make very good use of information and communications technology. In a Year 11 lesson on trade unions, pupils' informed and considered questions to the guest outside speaker showed a good level of understanding.

231. In the sixth form, students taking the GCE A level in business studies and economics have very good knowledge and understanding of theory. This was evident in a Year 12 lesson, where students appreciated the interrelationships between government policy, exchange rates and international trade, and were able to use information and communications technology effectively by utilising spreadsheets to model exchange rate movement. In the GNVQ Advanced course, students have a secure understanding of business ideas and have well-developed personal research skills that enable them to produce effective presentations and assignments.

232. Pupils and sixth form students taking business studies and economics are interested in their studies and appreciate the opportunities for industrial and commercial links, as well as the regular access to information and communications technology facilities. Behaviour is usually very good, with many young people focused and prepared to make contributions to whole-class work.

233. Teaching is consistently good, with staff sharing a very good specialist understanding that sufficiently challenges the students and enables them to reach higher standards. Most teaching makes good use of information and communications technology and outside links. This engages pupils' interest and helps them be more active learners by, for example, researching information through the internet. To this end, the staff has constructed a directory of many business and economics web sites.

234. The department is well managed and the staff work well together. The department has considerable links with local business and higher education and uses these effectively to enhance teaching and learning. Resources and displays are good, though because of the course's growing popularity, the accommodation is limited, and teaching takes place in different locations. The plans for future development of the school buildings will resolve this problem.

Courses with small numbers of candidates

Travel and tourism

235. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is very slightly below the national average for all vocational GCSE subjects. In 2000, 44.4 per cent of pupils gained grades A*-C compared to the 1999 national average of 47.6 per cent. At present, there are only seven candidates in Year 11, but there are 24 in Year 10. Teaching is good and the use of information technology is very good. Standards of literacy show a wide range of ability, and work is needed to encourage better writing skills. Assessment is based on examination questions and all work is well marked. Pupils learn about a variety of places in the UK and abroad. Their study involves all aspects of travel and management and the economic and cultural effects of tourism.

Vocational A Level Travel and tourism

236. This is a new subject for the school and a new course nationally. There are no previous results. Teachers are developing work for pupils using internet skills which include search engines and power points. There is enthusiasm for the course and good positive encouragement is given by teachers to support a wide range of ability. In addition to the internet, students also work with a range of written sources and materials developed by teachers, because good published course material is scarce. Assessment modules are completed as the course progresses and pupils are currently working on aspects of travel and building up case studies of their own. The quality of teaching is good and students are making good progress.