

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST BENEDICT CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

Derby

LEA area: Derby

Unique reference number: 112973

Headteacher: Mr Christopher Reynolds

Reporting inspector: Tom Comer  
15109

Dates of inspection: 15 – 19 October 2001

Inspection number: 183600

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 – 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Saint Benedict Catholic School Duffield Road Darley Abbey Derby Derbyshire
Postcode:	DE22 1JD
Telephone number:	01332 557032
Fax number:	01332 553032
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr David Walker
Date of previous inspection:	September 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
15109	Mr T Comer	Registered inspector		Information about the school The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
11077	Mrs J Harrison	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
115080	Mr C Griffin	Team inspector	English	
10308	Mr J Paddick	Team Inspector	Mathematics	
21866	Dr D Tracey	Team inspector	Science	
11966	Mr J Clay	Team inspector	Design and technology	
30901	Mrs S Schofield	Team inspector	Art and design	
4105	Mr A Kendrick	Team inspector	Geography	
14841	Mr M Duffy	Team inspector	History	
19452	Mr A Pearson	Team inspector	Physical education	
27803	Mr J Clark	Team inspector	Information and communication technology  Equality of opportunity Special educational needs  English as an additional language	
3793	Mr J Ratcliffe	Team Inspector	Modern languages	
5851	Mr M Robottom	Team inspector	Business studies  Leisure and tourism	
11975	Mrs T McIntosh-Clark	Team Inspector	Music  Performing arts	

15678	Mrs J Radford	Team Inspector	Special educational needs  English as an additional language	
4193	Mr C Radley	Team inspector		How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
28882	Mrs B Jones	Team inspector	Special educational needs (Enhanced Resource Base)	
22985	Mrs J Sparkes	Team inspector	Biology	
2959	Mr B Leek	Team Inspector		

The inspection contractor was:

North West Education Services Ltd  
Cheshire House  
164 Main Road  
Goostrey  
Cheshire CW4 8JP

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Benedict Catholic School is a very large mixed 11-19 comprehensive school educating 1440 pupils, including 245 in the sixth form. The pupils come from a wide area covering the city of Derby, its suburbs and the surrounding villages and small towns. The proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal is average. The pupils' overall attainment when they join Year 7 is below average. The proportion of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs is above average and has doubled since the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils with formal statements of special educational needs is well above average because the school has a special unit attached to it (the Enhanced Resource Base) which provides for sight impaired and physically impaired pupils. The school has specialist arts college status. The number of pupils who have English as an additional language is a little above average but none of them are at an early stage of learning English. The school has an open-access policy for its large sixth form and many students, a third of the total, are attracted to it from other schools. Overall, the attainment of students joining the sixth form is below average.

### HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a sound school with a number of good features. It is a caring and inclusive school, which is well led and managed. Teaching is satisfactory overall and pupils generally achieve average standards. The examination results are rising, particularly in the sixth form. The overall value for money is satisfactory but the funding of the sixth form, which is relatively low, is subsidised by the main school.

#### What the school does well

- pupils achieve very well in English throughout the school
- the GCSE results in physical education are well above average
- sixth-form students of performing arts achieve high standards
- the teaching of literacy and numeracy is effective
- the teaching of visually and physically impaired pupils is very good
- the provision for pupils' welfare, guidance and personal development is good
- the provision for pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good

#### What could be improved

- the GCSE results in science
- the time given for teaching the AS-level mathematics courses is insufficient
- the lack of continuity in pupils' learning of music in Years 7-9
- The monitoring of teaching and learning

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

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

The school was last inspected in September, 1996. Since then, the school has made a good overall improvement. The examination results have improved considerably in the sixth form and the A-level results in science, which were unsatisfactory, have improved. The GCSE results have been sustained at an average level at a time when the proportion of pupils with special educational needs doubled. Since the previous inspection, the use of information and communication technology in subject teaching has improved. The school has made a satisfactory improvement in its monitoring of pupils' progress; however, its monitoring of teaching and learning in order to raise standards is inconsistent. Although there are still some large classes in the main school, which can make teaching and learning difficult, there are fewer of these than found at the time of the previous inspection.

### STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and sixth form students at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	All schools			Similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	C	

Well above average	A
Above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E

A-levels/AS-levels	E	E	C		
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The results of national tests taken by the Year 9 pupils in 2000 were in line with the national averages in English, mathematics and science, and were good in comparison with those of other schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. The test results are gradually improving, matching the national trend. The standards of the present Year 9 pupils' work are average. In relation to the pupils' attainment when they joined Year 7, their overall achievement by Year 9 is good, and boys and girls achieve equally well. Standards are improving in English and mathematics and are now above average in these subjects because of improved teaching of literacy and numeracy. Standards in science are also rising and are broadly average. Pupils are underachieving in music because lessons lack continuity.

The GCSE results are close to the national average. Although the rate of improvement was below the national trend over the four-year period 1997-2000, the results improved in 2001. The 2000 results did not meet the targets set by the governors, but were too ambitious. Standards of work of the present Year 11 pupils are average and represent a satisfactory overall achievement for these pupils. Standards are above average in English and average in mathematics. They have risen in science and are close to average but they are still not as high as in most other subjects and can be improved further. Standards of work are above average in art and design, and design and technology and information and communications technology. Standards are average in other subjects. The GCSE results in physical education are well above average.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in mainstream classes and very good progress in the Enhanced Resource Base. Those learning English as an additional language also make good progress.

Standards are average in the sixth form and in relation to the students' earlier performance at GCSE the overall standards achieved are good. A-level examination results were below average for a number of years but rose to match the national average in 2000, and were similar in 2001 to those of the previous year. Of the subjects inspected in detail, the highest standards are found in English, where they are well above average, and in performing arts, where many pupils achieve very high standards of personal performance. Standards are above average in art and design, design and technology, French and physical education and are average in all other subjects except mathematics, where they are below average in Year 12 mainly because the time given for teaching the subject is insufficient for average and below average students to master the work in sufficient depth.

#### **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have good attitudes to school. They are well motivated and organised.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils rarely misbehave. They are self-disciplined and their behaviour around the large site is very good and responsible.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good and pupils of different abilities and backgrounds work and play happily together. Pupils are considerate. They show respect and concern for others, and take care of those with physical or visual impairment. Pupils are willing to exercise responsibility and take initiative. They participate in a wide range of out-of-school activities, for example, in sports and performing arts. They raise money for good causes.
Attendance	Good. Above average.

#### **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	<b>Years 7 – 9</b>	<b>Years 10 – 11</b>	<b>Years 12 – 13</b>
Quality of teaching	Good	Satisfactory	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.*



Overall, the teaching meets the needs of the pupils including those with special educational needs, and those at an early stage of learning English. It is satisfactory overall and enables the pupils to make steady progress. The pupils concentrate on their work and complete their written and practical assignments diligently and on time. The teaching of basic skills of literacy and numeracy is good and pupils apply these essential skills effectively in their learning. Teaching and learning are not as good in Years 10 and 11 as in earlier years or in the sixth form. Because of this, pupils make faster progress in the earlier years and sixth form than in GCSE courses. The main strengths of the teaching are the teachers' good subject knowledge and lesson planning.

Teaching is good in English, mathematics and science in Years 7, 8 and 9. In Years 10 and 11, the best teaching is found in English, art and design, design and technology, physical education and information technology and pupils make more rapid progress in these subjects than in others and achieve above average standards. The teaching of mathematics is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The teaching of science is also satisfactory but not as effective as in most other subjects.

The teaching and learning are good in the sixth form. Teaching is very good in English and in performing arts. Teaching is good in biology, art, business education, design and technology, French, leisure and tourism and physical education. In all of these subjects, students learn well and achieve good standards. Teaching is satisfactory in mathematics, chemistry, history and ICT.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall but the time-tabling of music lessons leads to a lack continuity in Years 7 – 9 and to underachievement. The sixth form curriculum is very good and includes a wide range of A-level and AS courses, and also five vocational courses leading to AVCE qualifications.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall. Pupils receive good support in mainstream lessons. The work of the Enhanced Resources base, which provides for physically and visually impaired pupils is a strength of the school.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	These pupils have special support when at an early stage of learning English and make good progress. When they no longer need this support they make the same progress as other pupils in lessons. The subject teachers are aware of these pupils' linguistic and learning needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Provision for pupils' personal development is good and they learn to take initiative and responsibility. They are helped to become mature and socially responsible young people. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall. Procedures to assess pupils' progress and to eliminate individual underachievement are good. Good procedures are in place to ensure good behaviour and attendance. Pupils' welfare is effective. The quality of careers guidance provided by an external agency has been unsatisfactory, as the students and teachers say. The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher and senior team provide clear educational direction, which is reflected in the school's aims, its ethos for learning and its plans for improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their responsibilities well, especially those for the financial management of the school, and are aware of the financial subsidy to the sixth form from the mainschool. Legal requirements are

	met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has a good system in place to manage the individual performance of teachers. The performance of subjects is monitored effectively by senior staff and governors, making good use of assessment data. However, the monitoring of teaching is inconsistent between subjects and varies in its effectiveness.
The strategic use of resources	The headteacher and governors ensure that the principles of best value are applied when placing contracts and making major purchases. Special grants are spent as designated. Staffing is adequate. The accommodation varies in quality and condition but improvements are now in hand. Resources for learning are adequate overall although there is a shortage of textbooks for history and of computers for pupils with special educational needs, art and design and music.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the children are expected to work hard</li> <li>the children make good progress</li> <li>the children become mature and responsible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the annual progress reports</li> <li>the school's partnership with them</li> </ul>

Overall, parents have positive views of the school and are pleased with its work. The inspectors generally agree with the parents' positive opinions. However, they find that the school does whatever it can to ensure an effective home-school partnership. The inspectors agree with parents about the annual reports, which were unsatisfactory. The headteacher recognises the shortcomings in the writing of some recent reports, which were caused by computer software problems which prevented errors from being corrected. These problems have now been solved.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

St Benedict Catholic School has a large, open-access sixth form which educates 274 boys and girls. Because it has open access, many students come to it from other secondary schools, about a third of the total population of the sixth form. The students' overall attainment when they join the sixth form is below average. The school provides a wide range of courses leading to AS and A-level examinations and also five vocational courses leading to AVCE.

## HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The school has an effective sixth form which meets the needs of its students well and provides exceptionally well for students of performing arts, and for those with visual or physical impairment. The sixth form is well managed and the teaching is good; consequently, students learn effectively and make good progress. Overall standards are average but good in relation to the students' starting points at the beginning of their courses. The funding of the sixth-form, which is relatively low, is subsidised by the main school.

### Strengths

- a wide range of academic and vocational courses
- very good teaching and high standards in performing arts and English
- very good provision for students with special educational needs
- students become independent learners

### What could be improved

- the time given for teaching AS-level mathematics is insufficient for some students to cope with the demands of the syllabus
- insufficient use is made of computers in lessons in A-level business studies, biology, and art and design
- the monitoring of teaching and learning is inconsistent

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan. Strengths and areas for improvement in individual subjects are identified in the sections on individual subjects in the full report.*

## THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

The table below shows overall judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses that were inspected in the sixth form. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Satisfactory overall and teaching is satisfactory but standards are below average because the average and lower attaining Year 12 students struggle to cope with the work in the time given for the course.
Biology	Good overall. Teaching and learning are good and students achieve average standards but not enough use is made of computers.
Chemistry	Satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and students achieve average standards.
Design and technology	Good. Teaching and learning are good and students achieve above average standards. Not enough use is made of computer-aided design.
English	Very good. Teaching and learning are very good and students achieve very well. English is an increasingly popular subject and the management of the subject has effective strategies to ensure that students complete the course successfully.
French	Good. Teaching and learning are good and students achieve above average overall standards. The accommodation is poor.
Business studies	Satisfactory and students achieve average standards. Insufficient use of computers in the A-level course. The accommodation and resources for A-level are unsatisfactory.
Information technology	Satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and students

	achieve average standards overall and good standards in A-level computing.
Physical education	Good. Teaching and learning are good and students achieve above average standards, particularly in practical work.
Leisure and tourism	Good. Teaching and learning are good and students achieve average standards - which are good in relation to their starting points at the outset of the course.
Art and design	Good. Teaching and learning are good and students achieve average standards which are good in relation to their starting points at the outset of the course. The resources are good except for computers.
Performing arts	Very good. Teaching and learning are very good and students benefit from impressive specialist expertise and achieve above average standards on all courses. Many achieve very high standards of personal performance. The accommodation is very good.
History	Satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and students achieve average standards. There are some shortages of resources such as basic textbooks.

During the inspection, inspectors also visited lessons in A-level physics, home economics (food studies), geography, sociology, psychology, English literature and Russian, and a lesson for students taking AVCE in Health and Social Care. Standards were at least satisfactory in all of the lessons seen in these subjects although the numbers taking the course in home economics (food studies) in each of Years 12 and 13 are too small for the course to be viable. The Russian course is presently being taught out of school hours.

A good proportion of the sixth-form students take part in a well-organised programme of recreational sporting activity which gives them opportunities to develop their personal performance and to benefit from the social aspects of these activities.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The assessment system is good and enables teachers to identify underachievement accurately. Students receive good personal guidance through the work of the pastoral system and in the school's personal, health and social education programme. However, careers guidance provided recently by local services is unsatisfactory, as the students themselves report.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	This is an inclusive sixth form which provides equally for all of its pupils. It is well led and managed. Subject performance is monitored well through analysis of examination results. However the monitoring of teaching in order to raise standards is inconsistent across subjects.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the wide choice of courses</li> <li>the good quality of teaching</li> <li>their teachers are friendly and approachable</li> <li>they enjoy the sixth form</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>information about their progress</li> <li>the quality of careers advice</li> </ul>

The students' views were expressed in discussions and in questionnaires returned as part of a survey of their opinions. The choice of courses is certainly very wide and it is true that the teaching is generally good. Teachers are accessible and relationships between teachers and students are good. The inspectors do not agree that students do not have adequate information about their progress. In fact, information is good and they have twice-termly interviews following subject assessments. The headteacher agrees that the externally-provided careers advice has recently been unsatisfactory.

## COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

*Inspectors make judgements about provision in subjects and courses, and about leadership and management, in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.*

*Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement “outstanding” in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to “very weak”.*

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

##### ***Years 7, 8 and 9***

1. Pupils' overall attainment when they join Year 7 is below average. Although the annual intakes of pupils to Year 7 span the full range of attainment, and include some very high attaining children, they also include more below average ones than would be expected and many others who have special educational needs. At the start of Year 7, pupils' reading and writing and their basic skills of numeracy are below average for their age.

2. Pupils make good overall progress through Years 7, 8 and 9. In relation to their starting points in Year 7, boys and girls of all abilities and backgrounds achieve well because they are well taught and because they have good attitudes to their learning. By Year 9, overall standards are average. The results of the national tests in English, mathematics and science were average in 2000 (the latest reporting year) and are rising in line with the national trend. The test results are good in comparison with those of other schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. In 2001, the test overall results were similar to those of 2000.

3. In English, the standards of the Year 9 pupils' work are above average. Pupils make good progress in lessons and achieve well because the teaching is good. Standards are rising and are higher than the national test results indicate because teaching is improving: teachers are now giving more attention to developing the pupils' basic skills, in line with the National Literacy Strategy. The results of the national tests taken by the Year 9 pupils in 2000 were average but were better than those of most schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. The results were similar in 2001 to those of the previous year. There is no significant difference between the standards of boys and girls. By Year 9, the pupils' standards of speaking and listening are above average. Reading is generally good, and most pupils read well; however, some of the lower attainers still cannot read fluently and need more help. The most significant improvements are occurring in the standards of writing; however, there is some inaccuracy in construction and spelling.

4. In mathematics, overall standards of work in Year 9 are rising and are now above average and represent good achievement in relation to the pupils' attainment at the beginning of Year 7. Standards are rising because the subject's new management is working hard and successfully to improve teaching. In 2000, the results of the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were average but were above average for schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. The test results have risen at the same rate as the national trend since the previous inspection, and boys and girls do equally well. In 2001, the results improved further. Because the teaching is good, pupils make good progress. Overall standards of numeracy are good. Although the weakest pupils have difficulty with basic calculations, and need more help, mental arithmetic has improved since the previous inspection. Algebra is well developed, particularly amongst the higher attaining pupils by Year 9.

5. Standards of work in science are average in Year 9 but nevertheless represent a good overall achievement for these pupils. Results of National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2000 were average but above average when compared with those of schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. Boys and girls perform equally in these tests. Results improved in 2001 and, over the past three years, improved broadly in line with national trends. Because teaching is good, pupils make good progress and their overall knowledge in each is broadly average for their age. The pupils' ability to investigate and to experiment are also average.

6. Pupils reach average standards in all other subjects except music. Pupils are underachieving in music because it is taught in rotation with other arts subjects and the interval between the

pupils' music sessions may be as long as eight months. Consequently, they forget what they have previously learned, for example, in performing and in reading music, with subsequent adverse effects on their performing and their composing skills. This situation is similar to what was found at the time of the previous inspection.

### ***Years 10 and 11***

7. Overall standards of work are average by Year 11 and are satisfactory in relation to those achieved by the pupils at the end of Year 9. This is because the teaching is satisfactory rather than good in Years 10 and 11, and not as effective as in Years 7, 8 and 9, and pupils therefore make less rapid progress. However, there are signs that standards are beginning to rise. The standards achieved are consistent with the results of recent GCSE examinations which have been average and have not, until very recently, matched the national trend of improvement.

8. A characteristic of the GCSE results in past years has been the below average proportion of pupils achieving passes at grade G or above in five or more subjects. This is partly because of the relatively large number with special educational needs, especially those with impaired vision or physical impairment, many of whom cannot take five GCSE subjects and cope successfully with the demands of the coursework. In the past, it was also partly because the school took a considerable number of traveller children who tended not to remain in school for the period when examinations are taken. No traveller children are on roll presently or have been recently, and none are included in the examination statistics. Significantly, the 2001 GCSE results show a considerable increase in the proportion of pupils achieving GCSE passes in five or more subjects. The results were well above average in physical education.

9. In English, the current Year 11 pupils' overall standards of work are above average but are rising and represent good achievement for these pupils. The GCSE results in 2000 were broadly average and were similar to those of the previous two years. In 2001, the results improved and there was a significant increase in the proportion of pupils achieving grades A\*-C. The pupils' results tend to be better in English than in most of their other subjects and there is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Speaking and listening are well above average. In reading, the work of higher attaining pupils reaches the very highest standards but some middle attaining pupils do not read the questions in their assignments accurately enough and this leads to some underachievement. Some lower attaining pupils are still well below average in reading but are making good progress because of good, well-focused teaching. Writing is above average and the best is outstanding but some pupils need to improve their standard written English and their accuracy of spelling and punctuation. Lower attainers make good progress, learning to write extensively, and mostly observing rules and conventions, such as those for paragraphing.

10. Standards in mathematics are average by Year 11. The GCSE results have improved considerably over the last three years, and were average in 2000. Overall, pupils did as well in mathematics as in most of their other subjects. In 2001, the results were similar to those of 2000 and there has been no consistent difference between girls' and boys' results in the last three years. These standards represent a satisfactory overall achievement in relation to the pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9. The higher attaining pupils make the most rapid progress because they have good attitudes to their work and try hard, but some of the more average pupils should work harder. Numerical skills are mostly good although the lower attaining pupils still have considerable weaknesses with number which adversely affect their progress.

11. Pupils' knowledge of science and their competence in practical work are broadly average for their age by Year 11. Because the teaching is sound, pupils' progress satisfactorily through Years 10 and 11 and their overall achievement by Year 11 is satisfactory. Results in 2000 were slightly below the national average but improved in 2001. The proportion of pupils who pass the examination with at least a grade G is above average. Although the GCSE results have steadily

improved over the recent past, pupils still tend to do less well than in science than in their other subjects and the difference could be made up with improved teaching. There is little difference in the performance of boys and girls.

12. Amongst other subjects, standards are above average in art and design, design and technology, history, information and communication technology, and pupils achieve well in these subjects. Standards are average in other subjects and the pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall. Standards of those taking GCSE in physical education are above average. Overall, the strongest subjects at GCSE in 2000 were physical education, drama, history, art and design, and design and technology. The lowest results were in German and Russian.

### ***Pupils with English as an additional language***

13. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress throughout the school. Teachers are aware of the pupils' individual needs and take steps to involve these pupils fully in lessons, for example, by ensuring that they can take part in discussions.

### ***Gifted and talented pupils***

14. Gifted and talented pupils are not formally identified but gifted young mathematicians have good opportunities to take part in national competitions and, with an extra lesson after school in Year 10, they can take GCSE statistics a year early as an extra subject.

### ***Pupils with special educational needs***

15. Most pupils with special educational needs attain the standards they are capable of and make good progress. The progress of pupils who are withdrawn for help with basic skills, especially through the corrective reading programme, make particularly good progress due to the good teaching they receive and the positive attitudes they bring to their work. Pupils make satisfactory progress in mathematics, which is a significant improvement since the previous inspection, when the pupils were underachieving. Pupils with sight impairment make very good progress, for example, in mathematics, because they are ably assisted in class by specialist staff. The effective work of learning support assistants in many of the lower mathematics classes enables pupils with learning difficulties to do the same work as the others. Even though numeracy skills are generally well taught, there is no remedial programme for pupils with the weakest numerical skills to master subtraction, multiplication and division before they move to Years 10 and 11. These pupils make very good progress in art and design, and good progress in English, science, design and technology, music and physical education, but their progress in ICT is unsatisfactory because some teachers are unaware of the pupils' learning difficulties and, for example, give the pupils worksheets which they cannot read.

### **Sixth form**

16. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is below average overall. A third of the sixth formers join Year 12 from other schools because St Benedict Catholic School has an open-access policy and recruits many students who might not gain places elsewhere. This open-access policy has led to some students taking difficult courses, for example, in mathematics, for which they are unsuited. The time given for teaching AS-level courses in mathematics is less than usually seen – only four hours a week – and this is not enough for the average and below average attaining students and adversely affects their progress.

17. Overall standards are average, though they vary considerably between subjects. However, the students' overall achievement is good in relation to their earlier performance at GCSE. Of the subjects inspected in detail, standards are highest in English subjects and performing arts, and students achieve particularly well in these subjects. The provision for talented young musicians, dancers and those who intend to pursue careers in performing arts is very good.



Standards are above average in design and technology, French and physical education. Standards are average in nearly all other subjects but are below average in mathematics.

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

18. Pupils have good attitudes towards school and their work. In nearly all lessons they work well, are motivated and organise their work efficiently. The pupils are friendly and helpful. Behaviour is good in lessons and at breaks and lunchtime. The pupils are clear about the school's code of conduct and respond positively. They cope well with the difficulties posed by the large split site and move sensibly between buildings at lesson changeovers. The school makes every effort to keep pupils who display challenging behaviour in school and exclusion rates are less than average.

19. Pupils with special educational needs are generally willing to learn and respond well in lessons. They mix well with other pupils and are fully integrated into the daily life of the school. Behaviour in class is usually good and the relationships they have with their teachers is marked by mutual respect. This was particularly noticeable in the Supported Study Room where pupils with emotional or behaviour difficulties treat their teachers and each other with tolerance and consideration.

20. Relationships are very good and pupils of different abilities, social and ethnic backgrounds work and play happily together. There is no evidence of racial tension. Pupils collaborate effectively in lessons. Pupils show respect and concern for others, especially those with physical or visual disabilities.

21. Attendance is good and is above average. Pupils arrive punctually to school although the buses are sometimes late. There can be some delays to lessons, whilst pupils or teachers move from one building to another.

22. Pupils' personal development is good. They respond positively to opportunities to exercise responsibility and take initiative. They are keen to take part in the range of activities offered by the school in sports and performing arts. They devise ways to raise money for good causes; for example, to help a partner school in Kenya. Several pupils contribute responsibly to school life, for example helping in the library or with office duties. The school council is starting to make an effective contribution to decision making, for example, about the necessary refurbishment of the toilets of North Block.

### **Sixth form**

23. Sixth-form students have positive attitudes, good behaviour and a willingness to work. The vast majority enjoy school, are interested in their courses and feel they have made the right choices. Relationships are caring and supportive. There is relatively little absence and students remain on site during their free periods. Students would like better facilities for quiet study as their common room is cramped, but despite this they work independently. Several students help with lessons in the rest of the school or the special needs department. Others help to run clubs and productions.

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

24. Overall, the teaching is satisfactory and meets the needs of all pupils well and enables them to learn effectively and to make steady overall progress. A small proportion, about one lesson in twenty, was unsatisfactory but there was no poor or very poor teaching. The majority of the lessons observed were good but the proportion that was very good or excellent was smaller than that usually seen. Teaching and learning vary in quality throughout the school. Teaching is good in Years 7, 8 and 9 and better than in Years 10 and 11, where it is satisfactory. Because of this difference in quality, pupils learn more quickly in the earlier years than in their GCSE courses.

25. The strengths of the teaching are the teachers' very good subject knowledge and their good planning of their lessons. The pupils respond well in lessons, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9, and concentrate on their work and make satisfactory overall progress. Pupils complete their written and practical assignments on time and the work is well presented.

26. Teaching varies in quality between subjects. In Years 7, 8 and 9, the teaching is good in English, mathematics, and science. Pupils make good progress in each of these subjects though standards of the present Year 9 pupils' work are higher in English and mathematics than in science. In Years 10 and 11, the teaching is most effective in English, art and design, design and technology and information technology and pupils make more rapid progress in these subjects than in others and achieve above average standards. Although teaching is satisfactory in science, the pupils' GCSE examination results tend to be lower in science than in other subjects.

27. The teaching of basic skills of literacy is good in English and the teaching of numeracy is also good in mathematics, and pupils make good overall progress in these essential skills in consequence. The use of ICT in lessons has improved considerably since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory overall in the main school.

28. English is the most successful subject. The teaching and learning are good throughout Years 7-11 and pupils consequently make good progress and achieve good standards. The English teachers are placing appropriate emphasis on the basic skills of literacy, in response to national initiatives, and this is having a positive effect on pupils' learning in all subjects. English lessons are interesting and move at a brisk pace. As a result, pupils work hard, think about what they are doing, and succeed. However, the marking of written work is inconsistent and teachers do not make enough use of assessment data to set targets for the pupils. Improvements in these aspects of the teachers' work would help to raise standards further.

29. In mathematics, teaching is good in Years 7-9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7-9, pupils of all abilities are presented with tasks at an appropriate level and are constantly faced with challenging work. Weaknesses in numeracy are tackled effectively in mathematics lessons in Years 7-9 in response to the national strategy. Consequently, pupils make good overall progress and quickly improve their mental arithmetic. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is only satisfactory and not as good as in the earlier years. Although teaching and learning are good in higher classes, where pupils work hard to master topics at the higher levels of GCSE, the teaching and learning of average and lower attaining pupils is less good. Although teachers coach these pupils effectively for their examinations, the pupils do not always respond well.

30. Teaching in science is good in Years 7, 8 and 9 and consequently pupils make good progress in their learning though not as good as in English or mathematics. Teaching is only satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, for example, when learning objectives are not always made clear to pupils. As a result, pupils' achievement is only satisfactory, overall, by Year 11. The quality of marking is patchy and does not highlight pupils' strengths and weaknesses or show them how to improve.

31. In Years 7-9 the teaching is good in art and design, modern languages and physical education. In these subjects, together with English, mathematics and science, pupils learn most effectively and make their fastest progress. Teaching is satisfactory in design and technology, geography, history, ICT and music. Although teaching is never unsatisfactory in music, pupils' learning is unsatisfactory and pupils underachieve because of the lack of continuity of their experience of the subject, caused by the time-tabling.

32. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is good in art and design, design and technology, history, ICT, music and physical education. In these subjects, together with English, pupils make their best progress and learn most effectively. Music is better than in Years 7-9 because pupils experience a more coherent course which leads smoothly to their GCSE examinations.

33. On occasions, in history, the teachers tried to do too much in the time available and set work which was beyond the capacity of less able pupils. In music and German lessons, the work set does not always match the needs of the more able pupils.

34. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good overall. It is good in mainstream lessons and very good in the Learning Resource Base. Although the support assistants make a sound contribution to pupils' learning in lessons, they could be even more effective if they were more involved in lesson planning. Teachers make too little use of ICT in the teaching of pupils with special educational needs and computer-based resources are poor. In the Learning Resource Base some of the teaching is outstandingly good. Lessons are thoroughly prepared in collaboration with main-stream teachers, with careful attention given to all individual needs. Assessment is used effectively and teachers' expectations are high both for effort and achievement.

### **Sixth form**

35. Teaching is good in the sixth form and is better than in the main school. The proportion of very good lessons is around twice that in Years 7-11. Because the teaching is good, students learn effectively and achieve well.

36. The best teaching is found in English, as in Years 7-11, where it leads to high achievement and well above average standards. Teaching is also very good in performing arts, which is a special strength of the school, and as a result many pupils achieve very high personal standards of performance. The teaching of the performing arts course is enhanced by the addition of specialist staff, for example, both a composer and an actor in residence.

37. Teaching is consistently good in biology, art, leisure and tourism, design and technology, physical education and French. In all of these subjects, students learn well and achieve good standards in relation to their starting points at the beginning of their examination courses. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in chemistry, history, business education and ICT.

38. Teaching is satisfactory in mathematics. There is a need to monitor students' work more closely and to give them more feedback on their progress through marking of key pieces of written work. For example, revision for examinations would be much easier if earlier errors were identified clearly and correct solutions recorded accurately.

39. In Year 13 chemistry lessons, the size of the group is too small for the exchange of views in discussions to be broad enough and, as a result, some students become passive, relying on the teacher for information. In biology, however, students are encouraged to learn independently by researching information for themselves, especially for the planning of their practical assessments.

40. Advanced level business studies and biology students would benefit from the greater use of computers in lessons. At present, there is only one computer for art and design and no other ICT equipment such as scanners or digital cameras and this restricts the development of work in this area.

41. Most students of art and design work independently, as shown in their long-term project work. Sketchbooks reflect a high level of personal commitment with research from visits to galleries and places of interest.

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

42. The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils reasonably well. Statutory requirements are met; however, large numbers of pupils do not study a modern foreign language or design technology subject in Years 10 and 11. The governors have informed the Local Education

Authority and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) of their decision to disapply the requirements of the National Curriculum for these pupils.

43. The disapplication of the National Curriculum makes it possible for pupils to choose courses from business, health and social care, performing arts, information and communication technology, or leisure and tourism, as part of the school's strategy to widen opportunities for vocational education.

44. This is an inclusive school which provides equally for boys and girls of all abilities and backgrounds. The work of the school's Enhanced Resource Base is excellent and meets the needs of visually and physically impaired pupils very effectively. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs take as full a part as possible in the full range of curricular and extra-curricular activities including games, other physical activities and school trips. Pupils with special educational needs take the full range of National Curriculum and GCSE subjects and have the same opportunities as other pupils to follow vocational courses leading to GNVQ qualifications.

45. In Years 7 – 9, a lack of continuity in the teaching of music arises because it is taught in rotation and there can be a long interval between sessions – as much as eight months – and this leads to unsatisfactory progress.

46. The personal, social and health education programme is satisfactory but its teaching lacks consistency of quality and continuity. The school has recognised these shortcomings and is currently reviewing the programme and its teaching. At the end of each day, pupils have a 20-minute form time but the quality of these periods is variable and would benefit from improved planning and monitoring.

47. The provision for extra-curricular activities is good. Boys and girls participate enthusiastically in sport, for example, football, rugby, netball, cricket, tennis, rounders, badminton and basketball. Other activities include science and mathematics clubs, aviation, musical and dramatic activities and chess. To make participation easier for pupils, arrangements have been made for a late bus to take them to the town centre from where they may travel home by normal public service transport.

48. Careers education is satisfactory. It begins in Year 7 and gradually prepares pupils for GCSE subject choice in Year 10 and for career options and sixth-form choices at the end of Year 11. Year 10 pupils experience a valuable work experience programme. The school's links with the community help to supplement the school's own work in careers guidance effectively.

49. Effective links with primary schools help to smooth the Year 7 pupils' transition to secondary school. For example, in the summer term prior to their entry, they spend a day at the school; they meet their new classmates and teachers and take part in lessons.

50. The overall provision for the pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The provision for spiritual development is very good, for example, in English lessons. The school has its own chapel and chaplain, and its denominational character is evident in its ethos for learning. Moral development is also very good and the school teaches right from wrong very effectively. Pupils learn how to deal with bullying, and how to care for others.

51. Provision for pupils' social development is also very good. The School Council is organised and led by the pupils themselves and has a positive influence on the life of the school, for example, in bringing about necessary refurbishment of parts of the buildings. Pupils learn to accept responsibility, for example, as members of the School Council or as assistant librarians. Pupils raise money for charity and each year, the year groups adopt a particular cause and organise activities to raise money. At Christmas, pupils make gifts of food and clothing to less fortunate and elderly people. Pupils have many opportunities to work together and to take part in musical ensembles, choirs and concerts.

52. Provision for pupils' cultural development, particularly through the curriculum, is also very good. The school is a performing arts college with special strengths in drama and music. Art and design, modern languages and English also make very substantial contributions to pupils' cultural development. There are regular trips to the theatre, and educational visits and exchanges to France, Germany, Denmark, Finland and Russia. In music pupils have the opportunity for instrumental tuition and there is excellent promotion of music from other cultures.

### **Sixth form**

53. The school provides a very wide range of AS and A-level courses and a number of vocational courses leading to GNVQ and AVCE qualifications. The school is responsive to local demand and is socially inclusive, offering open access to the sixth form for any student, regardless of background, likely to succeed in an examination course. Open access and the range of provision are significant factors in the recruitment of a large proportion of the sixth form from other schools

54. Statutory requirements are met in full and all students in the sixth form attend one lesson a week of religious education. The provision is enhanced in Year 12 through a course in general studies and all students take a personal health and social development which includes sex and drugs education. The overall quality of the curriculum is very good. However, the time given to teaching mathematics AS-level courses, four hours per week, is insufficient to cover the syllabuses for these subjects in appropriate depth for some of the students.

55. Sixth-form students continue to avail themselves of the wide range of extra-curricular activities offered in the main school. Students can pursue their individual sporting interests during the afternoon set aside for the purpose each week. Other activities include a Young Enterprise programme, in association with a local bank.

56. The provision for students' personal development, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development continues to be very good overall, as in Years 7 - 11. Students have the opportunity to take part in residential retreat to a Catholic youth centre and spiritual development is enhanced through religious education and a course in Christian life skills. The school has a clear expectation that sixth-form students should present good examples for younger pupils to follow and students fully meet that expectation. Sixth-form members of the School Council initiate important whole-school initiatives, such as participation in award schemes in support of environmental causes. Some students have recently raised money to fund a small expedition to Kenya, where they spent part of their time teaching at a village school. All students follow an enrichment programme which deals with issues important to young people. This programme includes study skills and university applications. The facilities for private study are cramped and this adversely affects the students' ability to conduct their research.

57. Links with commercial and industrial enterprises broaden students' experience of the world of work and all Year 12 students undergo a programme of work experience and some students to undertake their work experience abroad. Links with the local Business and Education Partnership, which has supported a work-related information and learning programme for students, are productive. Unfortunately, the local provision of careers education and guidance to the students has recently been unsatisfactory, as the students themselves made clear to the inspectors.

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

58. This is a caring and inclusive school. Pupils' personal development is monitored and fostered effectively and pupils receive good personal guidance. As well as help from the tutors and heads of year, the school chaplain is readily accessible to support pupils and their families. The school also has a full-time nurse to help with first aid and health education.

59. Welfare and guidance are effective. Child protection procedures which comply with legislation are in place, appropriate key staff have been trained and suitable guidelines are given

to all others. The safety procedures are generally good. In particular the site has been considerably adapted to cater for the needs of the physically or visually impaired. Pupils complain about the condition of the toilets in North Block but plans to improve these are now in hand.

60. Procedures for identifying special educational needs are good. Pupils are identified principally from their results of National Curriculum scores at the end of primary school and of the tests they undergo on joining Year 7. Weak readers are tested regularly and helped to make good progress in improving their reading skills. The provision for pupils with statements of special educational needs is very good. However, there are shortcomings in the provision for pupils with less severe needs; for example, some mixed-ability classes in Years 7-11 are quite large and teachers find it difficult to cope with the range of learning needs. Individual education plans are in place, and those for pupils who attend the Supported Study Room are exceptionally good with short-term attainable targets agreed by teachers, parents and pupils.

61. Pupils with English as an additional language are well supported and make rapid progress through the early stages of English language acquisition.

62. Pupils meet with their form tutors for a twenty-minute registration and tutorial period at the end of the day, which helps to develop relationships and iron out potential problems. The quality of this period varies; whilst it is often used well, sometimes it is little more than a social occasion.

63. The systems to encourage and promote good behaviour are effective. Pupils appreciate the recognition they receive for good work and effort, which is celebrated in assemblies, and they find the system of rewards and sanctions fair. Constructive arrangements help disaffected pupils to re-integrate into mainstream lessons. The large site is well supervised at break and lunchtimes. Although there are incidences of bullying, these are dealt with swiftly and effectively.

64. The procedures to monitor attendance are good but the school does not analyse attendance data by gender, ability and ethnicity and the attendance of pupils with special educational needs is not monitored.

## **Sixth form**

65. A survey of students' opinions, taken before the inspection indicates that the students have positive overall views of the sixth form. Students generally enjoy being in the sixth form and feel they are expected to do their best and are following courses which suit their aptitudes and interests. They say, correctly, that their study facilities and common room are crowded. Students are expected to remain on site and have useful contact with their tutors at registration and form times. Registration procedures are very good.

## **Assessment**

66. Teachers use assessment data well to predict examination results for sixth-form students on the basis of their prior attainment at GCSE, to monitor individual students' progress, and to set targets for them. Assessment information is also used effectively to evaluate and compare the success of subjects in examinations.

## **Advice, support and guidance**

67. In the July before entry to the sixth form, students have a two-day induction programme and most of them settle quickly into the sixth form. The majority of students in reply to the survey indicated that their teachers are helpful and they had adequate information on the range of courses and options. However, some students said that they needed better advice on the courses that they should take. The inspection showed that some students enrol on courses

without appreciating how difficult some of them can be, especially in information technology and mathematics.

68. The school provides good advice to students to ensure they are informed both about the full range of courses available and about courses run by other institutions. At the beginning of Year 12, students are individually interviewed. The students say that they have adequate information on the range of courses provided. Entry to Year 13 is negotiated after consideration of the student's performance in AS examinations taken in Year 12. Each Year 13 student has a progress interview with a senior member of staff after the results of the mock examinations are known.

69. A significant number of students expressed the view that they did not receive enough information about their progress. This is difficult to understand because, in fact, all students have planned progress meetings twice-termly with their tutors, who maintain records of regular assessments in each half-term. This monitoring process provides the school and individual students with an overview of their progress and is linked to a career action plan. When concerns arise, students discuss their difficulties with senior staff with responsibility for the sixth form. Teachers are very willing to help and advise them at any other time.

70. The students say that the quality of externally provided careers guidance and advice has been unsatisfactory. The school produces a very useful *Careers Newsletter*. Students are well supported when making university applications but the quality of broader, external careers advice has been unsatisfactory in the recent past. The headteacher agrees and has taken steps to improve this situation.

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

71. Parents' views of the school are generally positive. Most parents say that their children enjoy school, make good progress and are becoming mature and responsible young people. Parents endorse the aims of the school and the distinctly Catholic values which it teaches. However, a number of parents consider that the school's partnership with them could be better, and some are dissatisfied with the quality of annual progress reports.

72. The inspectors agree with parents' positive views and with their concerns about the reports, which have been unsatisfactory. Two years ago, the school introduced computerised reporting statements and some reports were sent to parents with typographical and other errors which could not be corrected because of faults in the design of the computer software. The headteacher recognises the shortcomings in recent reports but says that the software problems have been now eliminated and should not occur again. However, the inspectors think that the reports would be more useful if they were to include the form tutor's overall summary of the individual pupil's progress and a comment on personal development.

73. Despite the opinions of some parents, the inspectors find that the school has a satisfactory home-school partnership. The prospectus and the *Saint Benedict School Newsletter* provide good information about school events. The school holds curriculum evenings to involve parents in their children's learning. Parents raise funds to supplement the school's resources through the parents and teachers association. School productions and religious festivals are popular occasions. Parents generally support their children's work at home effectively and attendance at annual consultation meetings is good. Parents of those pupils with special educational needs help to monitor the progress their children make towards their targets. Changes in the organisation of the consultation meetings have aroused mixed feelings, however. Whilst some parents say that they find it more difficult to meet subject teachers, others say that the new arrangements are better managed than in the past.

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

74. The leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher and senior leadership team provide clear educational direction, which is reflected in the school's aims, its ethos for learning and its plans for improvement. The ethos for learning reflects the school's distinctive Catholic character.

75. The governing body energetically supports the work of the school and governors fulfil their responsibilities effectively; their work is particularly beneficial in financial management. Governors receive presentations from subject departments on a planned cycle and hold the professionals to account. The governors are aware of the financial subsidy from the main school to the sixth form but have made their decisions in order to maintain the breadth of the sixth form curriculum.

76. A good system to manage the performance of the individual teachers is in place and the final review meetings are to be held shortly. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning in order to raise standards within the different subjects is inconsistent. The school has shed two deputy headteacher posts to provide a wider and bigger leadership team, eleven strong, with each of them linked to one or more subject departments. The team is a good one and is potentially very effective for improving teaching and raising standards. The school uses assessment data such as examination results effectively to compare the school's performance with that of others nationally and locally.

77. Middle management responsibilities are carried out satisfactorily overall. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is well managed. Some curriculum directors (subject heads) monitor and develop the teaching within their departments independently of the leadership team, and this is well done in English, mathematics, modern languages, physical education and in performing arts subjects in the sixth form.

78. The school has made a number of improvements since the previous inspection. The A-level results have improved from well below average to average. Although GCSE results have not kept pace with the national trend of improvement they rose in 2001. Resources for information and communication technology are better than they were. The monitoring of teaching and learning, which was found unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection, still remains an important issue for the school's development.

79. The school has a sufficient number of suitably qualified and experienced teachers. There is a good match between the curriculum and their expertise. The school has an adequate complement of educational and technical support staff. The school has satisfactory arrangements for the induction of new staff, including newly qualified teachers. Similarly, the professional development needs of teachers are generally identified to support whole-school priorities.

80. Although the overall quality of the accommodation for teaching is satisfactory, the older North Block is in need of refurbishment, renovation and improvement; for example, the pupils' toilets and the changing rooms for physical education. The accommodation for business education and modern languages is also unsatisfactory. However, the governors have drawn up a long-term plan to replace temporary classrooms with modern, purpose-built accommodation. Most subject departments enjoy the use of a suite of adjacent rooms, although the science laboratories are dispersed over the site. The school is crowded and the level of room occupancy is very high.

81. Following a period of a low level of funding for learning resources, improvements are now being made with the result that overall resources for teaching and learning are generally adequate. However, there is a shortage of textbooks for history and computers for pupils with special educational needs, for music and for art and design. The school library's bookstock is satisfactory with an appropriate ratio of fiction to non-fiction, even though the annual level of funding for the library is slender.

82. The school's finances are in good order and money is spent appropriately, including funds for special purposes, such as special educational needs. Financial management and control are very good, and the school has adopted most of the recommendations arising from the recent audit. In financial and curriculum matters the school applies the principles of best value very well.



## **Sixth form**

### ***Leadership and management***

83. Management of the sixth form is good and the delegation of responsibility is appropriate. Both routine organisation and longer-term planning are effective. The management of subjects is good overall. Schemes of work are well matched to the specifications of different examinations and meet the different needs of students. Within each department there is a strong sense of partnership. Curriculum directors know their staff well, and new and newly-qualified staff are well supported.

84. Three senior members of staff jointly have oversight of the coherence of the sixth-form programme as a whole, of the co-ordination of sixth-form courses, and of pastoral and academic guidance for students. Each of the three senior managers is linked to a number of subject departments; they monitor subject performance, the quality of pupils' work and the marking of written work. When there are indications of under-performance, the curriculum director concerned is required to make plans for improvement. However, monitoring of teaching and learning through observation of lessons, by the managers and curriculum directors is inconsistent across the subjects.

### ***Resources***

85. The sixth form has sufficient suitably qualified and experienced teachers. There is a good match between the curriculum and the teachers' expertise in academic and vocational courses. There are shortages of textbooks for history and of ICT equipment for art and design.

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

86. In order to improve teaching and to raise standards further, the governors, headteacher and senior staff should take the following action:

### **Main school**

- (1) raise standards in science in Years 10 and 11 by, for example, making lesson objectives clear to pupils; (*paragraphs 11,26,30,121,124,125*)
- (2) raise standards in music by ensuring better continuity in the timetable; (*paragraphs 6,21,45,172*)
- (3) monitor teaching and learning more rigorously in order to show where and how to raise standards in subjects;  
(*paragraphs 76,78,125,127,134,139,149,156*)

### **Sixth form**

- (1) ensure that sufficient time is given for all students of AS-level mathematics to cope with the demands of the course; (*paragraphs 16,192*)
- (2) make more effective use of computers in A-level business studies, biology, and art and design; (*paragraph 202,220,256*)
- (3) as in Years 7 – 11, monitor the quality of teaching and learning more rigorously in order to show how standards can be raised.  
(*paragraphs 76,78,84,211,247*)

### **General**

87. In addition to the above issues for improvement, the governors may wish to consider including in their action plan the following more minor points:

- (1) improve resources of information and communications technology for teaching pupils with special educational needs, and for art and design and music;  
*(paragraphs 34,81,134,157,174)*
- (2) improve resources for history, particularly basic textbooks, throughout the school;  
*(paragraphs 81,85,149)*
- (3) improve the accommodation for modern languages and business education.  
*(paragraphs 80,162,220,284)*

### **Enhanced Resource Base for Visually Impaired and Physically Impaired pupils**

88. The provision for visually and physically impaired pupils is excellent and has improved continuously since the previous inspection. Provision has been enhanced by a recently opened new building with excellent facilities of accommodation and resources. Careful thought has been given to colour and design, which is particularly important bearing in mind the nature of the pupils' sensory and physical difficulties.

89. The resources include specialist technology, the use of Braille, large-print books or audio-tapes, maps and diagrams in tactile form. Braille and touch-typing are taught to pupils as needed; the teachers have the necessary ability to teach these skills and are helped by a voluntary teacher of Braille. The staffing complement is good.

90. At present 28 pupils are taught in the Resource Base, eight of them physically impaired, some in wheel-chairs. The visually impaired pupils are either registered blind or partially sighted. In addition, a combination of many other disabling conditions exist, such as difficulties with movement co-ordination, hearing, behaviour, learning or speech and communication difficulties, and some pupils have health problems such as epilepsy, asthma and diabetes. Pupils may suffer from more than one impairment, sometimes several.

91. Despite all their difficulties, pupils take the full range of National Curriculum subjects. They make very good progress towards their individual targets and often take GCSE examinations. Seven students are in the sixth form, of whom four are visually impaired and three physically impaired. These students study at A-level or vocational courses leading to GNVQ or AVCE in a range of subjects. Open College Network also offers them a wide choice of study for Year 10 – 13. Pupils persevere tenaciously and often re-sit examinations to improve their grades.

92. The quality of teaching is very good overall and some is outstandingly good. Lessons are thoroughly prepared in collaboration with main-stream staff, with careful attention to all learning needs. Classroom support is given according to individual need and pupils' progress is assessed regularly. Teachers' expectations are high and pupils are constantly urged to make maximum effort. Teachers are supported by the exceptionally good work of the learning support assistants whose work is excellent.

93. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards their learning. They try hard and respond well to their teachers. In lessons, they concentrate well and are keen to tackle new goals. Their behaviour is very good and they are aware of the needs of others. Pupils settle well in class and work well with each other. They have an excellent rapport with their teachers and support staff.

94. Parental support is very positive. Regular meetings are arranged at school and frequent contact is maintained through letters, by telephone and sometimes home visits. Induction

courses for parents of new pupils take place and parents are involved in all review procedures. Personal relationships are very good.

95. The school has a very close partnership with the specialist services of the Local Education Authority and the Health Authority. The physiotherapist visits weekly and provides advice and essential movement training for pupils, and also takes part in setting individual programmes of physical education for the pupils. The mobility officer gives essential training to the visually impaired. The orthoptist works with the visually impaired pupils to advise on suitable low-vision aids. A speech therapist sets exercises for staff to use with some pupils and there is occasional contact with an occupational therapist. Specialist teachers of the hearing and physically impaired are closely linked with the school and close ties also exist with feeder schools.

96. All Year 10 pupils have work experience and pupils have worked very successfully in a wide range of jobs. Pupils take part in day and residential visits with their mainstream peers; for example, three older pupils have recently made an educational visit to France.

97. The management of the Resource Base is excellent and receives strong support from the school's senior managers. Staff are well trained. All required documentation is in place and strategic planning is very effective and effective liaison is maintained with mainstream staff. Individual education plans are very well constructed and reviews are carefully structured to meet individual needs.

98. All staff are committed to equality of opportunity for each pupil. Pupils with visual or physical impairment interact happily with their peer groups and with each other. Because this is an inclusive school each pupil is valued and is successful in all areas of the life of the school. The attitudes of the pupils are admirable in every respect.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	140
	Sixth form	75
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		54

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	0	16	73	49	3	0	0
Percentage	0	11	52	35	2	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	3	12	38	21	0	0	0
Percentage	4	16	51	28	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for the sixth form as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1195	245
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	189	N/a

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	54	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	230	5

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	22

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	27
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	74

### Attendance

<b>Authorised absence</b>		<b>Unauthorised absence</b>	
	%		%
School data	6.5	School data	0.6
National comparative data	7.7	National comparative data	1.1

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	101	121	222

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	51	62	60
	Girls	96	83	82
	Total	147	145	142
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	66 (70)	66 (66)	64 (61)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	19 (26)	40 (38)	25 (30)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	54	64	54
	Girls	98	93	78
	Total	152	157	132
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	68 (75)	71 (70)	59 (66)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	30 (41)	36 (40)	26 (30)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2000	111	110	221

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	42	97	103
	Girls	50	93	99
	Total	92	190	202
Percentage of pupils achieving The standard specified	School	42 (43)	86 (89)	91 (94)
	National	47 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score Per pupil	School	36 (36)
	National	38 (38)

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

### Attainment at the end of the sixth form (Year 13)

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year Who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	49	54	103

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	16.5	13.8	15.0 (13.0 )	3.4	4.3	3.8
National	17.7	18.6	18.2 (17.9)	2.6	2.9	2.7

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

### Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	8
Black – African heritage	8
Black – other	10
Indian	9
Pakistani	6
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	3
White	1373
Any other minority ethnic group	7

### Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	4	1
Black – African heritage	1	0
Black – other	5	0
Indian	4	0
Pakistani	2	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	49	1
Other minority ethnic groups	1	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)	79.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.2

#### Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	54
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1383

#### Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75
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#### Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	28.6
Key Stage 4	23.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

### Financial information

Financial year	2000-01
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	£
Total income	3740074
Total expenditure	3791008
Expenditure per pupil	2662
Balance brought forward from previous year	104598
Balance carried forward to next year	53664

## Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	19
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	18

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1.5
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.5
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1149
Number of questionnaires returned	162

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	47	7	1	-
My child is making good progress in school.	35	53	5	-	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	26	55	10	1	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	61	13	3	4
The teaching is good.	23	63	4	1	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	13	49	21	11	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	39	40	17	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51	38	7	1	3
The school works closely with parents.	11	47	18	21	3
The school is well led and managed.	29	52	6	3	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	51	7	-	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	48	6	1	8

## Other issues raised by parents

99. Some parents said that, since the organisation of parents' consultation evenings had changed, it was difficult to meet subject teachers but others said that the new arrangements, involving consultation with the form teachers only, were much more efficient.

## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4**

### **ENGLISH**

Overall, the quality of provision in English is **good**.

#### **Strengths**

- the consistently good teaching
- The department is well led and managed
- Increasingly effective teaching of literacy
- The subject makes an effective contribution to pupils' personal development

#### **Areas for improvement**

- The use of assessment information to plan lessons and to set targets for pupils
- The challenge for higher attaining pupils in Years 7-9
- The consistency and quality of marking pupils' written work.

100. Standards are rising in Years 7-9 and are higher than the national test results indicate because teaching is improving and is focusing more sharply on developing the pupils' essential skills. This development follows the appointment of a new head of department who is establishing effectively the teaching of the National Literacy Strategy. The results of the national tests taken by the Year 9 pupils in 2000 were average. They were also average in 1999 but above average in 1998. Results of the 2001 tests were similar to those in 2000. In 2000 fewer pupils reached the higher Level 6 or better than in most schools. The results are better than most schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. There is no significant difference between the standards of boys and girls and the pupils' performance in English is broadly the same as in mathematics and science.

101. Overall standards in the current Year 9 are above average and pupils are achieving well in relation to their below average standards when they started school in Year 7. By Year 9, the pupils' standards of speaking and listening are above average and most pupils make good contributions to class discussion although some make shorter spoken contributions and need to be encouraged to speak at greater length. Reading is above average, and most pupils read fluently and with good expression. Higher attaining pupils are making good progress in using evidence to support their views and draw inference and make accurate and independent deductions from text. The average attaining pupils are less independent in their reasoning but their literal understanding is good. However, some of the lower attainers still cannot read fluently. The most significant improvements are occurring in the standards of writing. Most pupils organise their writing well and higher attaining pupils write interestingly and accurately in a range of styles. Middle attaining pupils produce well paragraphed and coherent writing, although some writing contains flaws in punctuation and spelling. A very small number of pupils is well below average in their writing because of a persistent lack of accuracy. Overall, the progress made by the pupils confirms their good achievement.

102. The GCSE results in 2000 English were broadly average and were similar to those of the previous two years. In 2001, the results improved considerably and there was a significant increase in the proportion of grades A\*-C. The results are better than the average for similar schools. The pupils' results are better in English than in most other subjects and there is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. The results of the 2000 English literature examination were average but improved significantly in 2001.

103. Standards of the current Year 11 pupils' work are above average and represent a good achievement in relation to their average test results in Year 9. In Year 11, standards are above



average and rising, as indicated by the examination results. Speaking and listening are well above average and all pupils make thoughtful and well structured contributions. The work of higher attaining pupils reveals the very highest reading standards through closely argued comparisons of texts in their reading assignments. Middle attaining pupils are making good progress, applying their knowledge and understanding of a range of texts effectively to deal with their assignments. However, some middle attaining pupils do not focus their knowledge and understanding closely enough on assignment requirements and their work is therefore below average. Lower attaining pupils are well below average in reading but make good progress in recalling the main points of texts. Writing standards are above average and the best work is outstandingly good, as shown by one boy's sensitive and reflective account of bereavement. Middle attaining pupils make good progress in organising their work coherently and in their control of expression. Some pupils need to improve their control of standard written English, and their accuracy of spelling and punctuation. Lower attainers make good progress in writing longer pieces and in basic paragraphing, although they still make a number of mistakes.

104. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, benefiting from the school's inclusive approach to educational provision. They receive good support in lessons, have full access to the English curriculum and succeed in the GCSE examinations and Year 9 national tests. The department's provision for information and communications technology is satisfactory, although still more use could be made of it.

105. The quality of teaching and learning is good. With the exception of a very small number of Year 11 boys, pupils show consistently positive and enthusiastic attitudes in lessons and in their written work. This promotes a classroom atmosphere in which learning can flourish. Pupils learn effectively because they are well taught by teachers with good specialist expertise. Lessons are well planned and activities are well matched to learning aims. The activities of lessons are varied and invariably gain and hold the pupils' interest as a result. Lessons move at a brisk pace. As a result of these good features of the teaching, pupils work hard and concentrate on their work. A Year 7 lesson was a typical example of varied teaching that led to good learning: the lesson began with a brisk whole-class activity on plurals, followed by a recapitulation of the pupils' class reading of *Skellig*. After reading a section, the pupils worked in pairs to identify the feelings of the main character, and found examples to support their opinions. They brought these together as a whole class, noted them in their exercise books, and in silent concentration they completed a diary extract written in the person of the main character. Each pupil in this all-ability class achieved well in the lesson because of the teacher's high expectations, thorough planning, very good classroom organisation and their own positive attitudes towards their learning.

106. Although the teaching is good overall some aspects need improvement. There is a lack of consistency of both methods and procedures for the marking of pupils' written work. The best marking is very good and helps pupils to improve their writing but some is not up to this standard. Teachers do not make enough use of assessment information to set targets for individuals or to plan lessons. In Years 7–9 the higher attaining pupils are not set sufficiently challenging work, although this is beginning to change.

107. The department is well led by a head of department who monitors and evaluates its work and the quality of teaching and learning effectively. Despite a number of recent staffing changes, there is a strong, shared commitment amongst the teachers to improvement and standards are rising. The subject has made a satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. A rise in standards has been achieved despite large class sizes in Years 9-11. The importance of reading is given due weight and pupils read in all lessons from Years 7 – 10. There is also a good library induction course in Year 7. The subject matter of English and the frequent opportunities for group work and independent learning mean the lessons make a good contribution to the pupils' personal development.

## **Drama**

108. The results of the 2000 GCSE examination were average. In 2001, the proportion achieving grades A\*-C increased, maintaining the steady improvement since 1999. Standards in the

current Year 11 are above average. The teacher has high expectations and the pupils respond positively to the opportunity to evaluate their performance honestly. The learning atmosphere inspires confidence and pupils are keen to improve. In their practical work, Year 11 pupils show a good awareness of dramatic effects. They use pitch and expression effectively when speaking. In Year 9, standards of work are below average. Although some pupils make perceptive and evaluative comments in discussions these are not consistently developed and extended. Overall, teaching is good throughout the school. Teachers have good subject expertise and high expectations regarding behaviour and attitudes. The accommodation is very good and enhances the pupils' learning.

### **Key skills - literacy**

109. The emergence of a whole school approach to the systematic development of literacy is a relatively recent feature and the school is putting into place plans to respond to the requirements of the National Literacy Strategy. A newly appointed co-ordinator has achieved a great deal in a short time, including initial training for colleagues on different types of writing and a training day for teaching reading, writing and spelling. Her development plan shows she has a clear vision about what needs to be done and how to evaluate its effect. Subjects have identified their own particular literacy targets for development. As yet, however, the school lacks the formal policy for literacy which would help to guide and evaluate the teachers' work. The involvement of the librarian in the literacy action group is a positive step. She already plans and teaches, in conjunction with the English department, a Year 7 course on library skills and fiction.

110. In other subjects the teaching of literacy skills is satisfactory. Many subjects, such as mathematics and business education, ensure good development of vocabulary, through the careful explanation of the technical language of the subject. Some good work was seen in information and communications technology lessons, where a good liaison with the English department is leading to effective support for the pupils' writing. The school provides teaching of spelling to Years 7- 8 as part of their personal development programme and the effect of this is being evaluated in the light of the experience of the National Literacy Strategy

## **MATHEMATICS**

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### **Strengths**

- leadership of the subject
- the teaching of numeracy skills
- rising standards in Years 7-9
- standards in algebra in Years 10 and 11 are good
- provision for pupils with the greatest special educational needs
- provision for the highest attaining pupils

### **Areas for improvement**

- some average attaining pupils should work harder
- some classes are too large
- the use of information and communications technology

111. Standards are rising. They are now above average in Year 9 and represent good achievement in relation to the pupils' slightly below average attainment at the time of joining Year 7. In 2000, the results of the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were average but were

above average for schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. The test results have risen at the same rate as the national trend since the previous inspection and boys and girls do equally well. In 2001, the results improved further. Good teaching moves the pupils on quickly through the levels of the National Curriculum so that they make good progress. Mental arithmetic is well taught and is better than at the time of the previous inspection. Although the lowest attaining pupils still have problems with basic numerical calculations, they make good progress more generally. In Year 9, the highest attaining pupils are developing skills of algebra well and their numerical skills are good. Average pupils can use circle formulae to calculate areas and circumferences.

112. GCSE results have improved considerably over the last three years and were average in 2000, although a slightly smaller proportion of the pupils was entered for GCSE than nationally. Overall, pupils did as well in mathematics as in their other subjects. In 2001, the school entered a greater proportion of pupils for GCSE and the results were similar to those of 2000. There has been no consistent difference between girls' and boys' results in the last three years.

113. In Year 11, standards are average and are in line with the results of the 2001 GCSE examinations. These standards represent satisfactory achievement in relation to the average test results achieved by these pupils at the end of Year 9. Pupils in higher classes make good progress; they have good attitudes to their work and try hard. As in Years 7-9, most pupils' numerical skills are good although the lower attaining pupils' number skills are weak. Algebraic manipulation is well above average, for example, enabling higher attaining pupils to investigate properties of parabolic curves by solving inequalities. Pupils persist when challenged by demanding work. Average pupils are moving successfully towards C grade standards at GCSE. Many of these pupils work well but others, although co-operative, should work harder. Several understand the work when the teacher explains topics but do not put in sufficient effort to master them fully in their own time. Hence, they often make good attempts to answer written questions but they make basic arithmetical and algebraic errors in their work. The lowest attaining pupils understand the principles of probability at a very basic level and are working towards the lower GCSE grades F and G. Poor attendance and restlessness in some of the lower groups inhibits progress.

114. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress in Years 7 - 9 and satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11. Teachers attend to their needs, as they do with other pupils, and include them fully in discussion. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. This is an improvement compared to the unsatisfactory situation at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils with sight impairment make very good progress because they are assisted in class by specialist staff. Learning support assistants in many lower classes successfully enable pupils with learning difficulties to do the same work as the other pupils. Gifted and talented pupils are served well with opportunities to take part in national competitions and, with an extra lesson after school in Year 10, can take GCSE statistics a year early as an extra subject.

115. Pupils' attitudes to their learning are generally positive. They are good in Years 7-9, because pupils are fully co-operative, work hard, and complete their homework on time. The learning atmosphere in lessons is usually good. This is also the case in higher sets in Years 10 and 11 and pupils try hard to produce work of good quality. However, teachers have more difficulty motivating some of the average and below average pupils and some of these pupils do not complete their homework. Because of the differences in attitudes and the pace of working, overall progress in Years 10 and 11, although satisfactory overall, is slower than in Years 7-9.

116. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7-9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. All lessons observed during the inspection were at least satisfactory. Around half were good. In Years 7-9, the combination of organisation of the pupils in classes by ability, and good teaching, challenges pupils and enables them to learn quickly. Teachers plan their lessons well to include several different well-sequenced activities. Explanations are clear, logical and well matched to the pupils' needs. Teachers explain the technical terms relating to all branches of mathematics

well. This helps to improve pupils' literacy skills, enhancing their vocabulary and enabling them to solve written questions posed in technical language.

117. Pupils respond well to the good teaching and learn quickly, developing skills in mental arithmetic, algebra, solving problems, geometry and statistics equally well. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall. It is good in the higher classes, where pupils work hard to master topics at the higher levels of the GCSE. As in Years 7-9, teachers prepare lessons well, explanations are clear, and topics are matched well to pupils' needs. The teaching of average and lower attaining pupils is satisfactory. Teachers give them good coaching for GCSE but the pupils do not always respond as positively as they should.

118. The management and organisation of the subject are good and the subject has improved well since the previous inspection. The head of department and other teachers with management responsibilities lead by example through their effective teaching. The assessment system is good and enables teachers to target pupils who underachieve. However, more use could be still be made of information and communications technology to enhance pupils' learning. Some mathematics classes are still too large at well over 30, putting a considerable strain on teaching staff, especially in relation to keeping up with marking pupils' work.

### ***Key Skills: numeracy across the curriculum***

119. Most pupils' numerical skills are sufficient to cope with the demands of the other subjects and the improvements in pupils' arithmetical skills since the previous inspection have helped considerably in this respect. Pupils' good algebraic skills are evident in work in science, where they use formulae with relative ease. Good statistical skills are evident in work on the interpretation of graphs in physical education, geography and history. In design and technology, pupils are able to apply their numerical skills well to projects involving measurement, scale and proportion.

## **SCIENCE**

Overall, the quality of provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### **Strengths**

- good teaching in Years 7, 8 and 9
- good assessment procedures

### **Areas for improvement**

- the effectiveness of monitoring of teaching and learning
- the marking of pupils' work
- the teaching in Years 10 and 11

120. Standards of work in Year 9 are average and represent good achievement for these pupils in relation to below average standards when they joined Year 7. Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2000 were in line with the national average but were above average when compared with schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. Boys and girls perform equally in these tests. The results improved in 2001 and, over the past three years, they improved broadly in line with the national trend. In lessons pupils make good progress as a result of good teaching so that at the end of Year 9 their knowledge and understanding of biology, physics and chemistry is average for their age. In this age range, the teachers focus effectively on the teaching of practical science so that standards of enquiry science improve steadily and, at the end of Year 9, are average. Higher-attaining pupils have a good understanding of the function of the skeleton and how the various joints work as a result of well-structured teaching.

Middle-attaining pupils know how sound is produced and test experimentally the relationship between frequency and pitch; for example, by altering the tension of an elastic band. Lower-attaining pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the different ways energy is produced and transferred and, can distinguish between useful and non-useful energy when performing experiments.

121. Standards of work in Year 11 are also average and achievement is satisfactory. Although pupils make satisfactory progress it is a little slower in Years 10-11 than in Years 7-9 because teaching is not quite as good. In 2001, all pupils took GCSE Double Award science. Results in 2000 were slightly below the national average overall but the proportion of pupils who passed the examination (with grades in the full A\*-G range) was above the national average. Over the past three years, results have steadily improved although pupils tend to do less well in their science examinations than in their other subjects. There is little difference in the performance of boys and girls. Results in 2001 continued the steady improvement of previous years. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of scientific facts and theory is average. For example, higher-attaining pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the electronic structure of elements and can explain how atoms join together to form ionic and covalent compounds. Middle-attaining pupils can describe the electromagnetic spectrum satisfactorily in terms of its properties and successfully calculate the speed of a wave from its wavelength and frequency. Lower-attaining pupils know that photosynthesis is necessary for plant growth and can write a simple word equation to describe photosynthesis.

122. Pupils with special educational needs make the same progress as other pupils because the work is well matched to their needs and because of effective support. Pupils with English as an additional language also make the same progress as other pupils.

123. Pupils have positive attitudes to science and standards of behaviour in the laboratory are good. They work at a good pace and show interest in their work. For example, Year 9 pupils had worked hard preparing and presenting work on topics to do with healthy living. They collaborate well together when doing practical and investigative work. Good working relationships between teachers and pupils exist and these improve the pupils' learning.

124. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and no lessons were unsatisfactory and the teaching is good in Years 7, 8 and 9. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject specialisms. Scientific theories and ideas are clearly explained so that pupils make progress in their understanding of the subject. Lessons are usually well planned although learning objectives are not always clear or outcomes checked. For example, when a higher-attaining Year 11 group prepared presentations on photosynthesis, the task was made clear to the pupils but the objectives were not.

125. Practical activities are usually well managed and teachers ensure that pupils work safely, for example, by wearing safety glasses. Teachers have high expectations of pupils both in terms of behaviour and achievement; homework is set and marked regularly. In Years 7, 8 and 9, teaching is better and more focused on learning outcomes than in Years 10 and 11; the schemes of work are also better for this age range. The monitoring of teaching and learning is insufficient to show teachers how to improve their work and raise standards. The quality of marking is patchy and it does not highlight pupils' strengths and weaknesses or show them how to improve. The grading system used by the department confuses pupils so that they are unsure about their progress.

126. The department makes a satisfactory contribution to literacy skills. Numeracy skills are well taught; for example, pupils learn how to manipulate scientific formula from first principles. The teaching of ICT in science is satisfactory. The department makes a good contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

127. Management of the department is satisfactory and has some good features. There are good procedures for assessing pupils and these are used well to teach an effective science curriculum. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection though it can be improved further. Examination and test results are steadily improving as a result of the improved teaching.

The science curriculum is broad and well balanced. Schemes of work are better than they were. Although the department has improved well since the previous inspection the management should improve the effectiveness of its monitoring of teaching and learning, and teachers should make the marking of written work more effective.

## ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **good**.

### Strengths

- above average standards
- good teaching and learning
- pupils make good progress

### Areas for improvement

- the use of sketchbooks in Years 10 and 11
- monitoring of teaching and learning
- provision of ICT equipment
- identification of gifted and talented pupils

128. The current Year 9 pupils' standards of work are average. Most pupils are confident in art activities and show a sound understanding of visual expression. They apply technical skills competently and have a developing knowledge of art and artists. Year 9 pupils have a clear understanding of line and proportion when producing drawings of packages to develop into a composition based on Pop Art. Higher attaining pupils discuss the work and ideas of artists such as Andy Warhol and give informed opinions, whilst lower attaining pupils describe his work. Most pupils are familiar with art vocabulary and use it appropriately. The achievement of all pupils is good. Pupils begin Year 7 with a wide range of experience and skills, but many have a below average level of skills and understanding. They learn quickly in Years 7-9 and achieve well because the quality of teaching is good. Boys and girls make progress at a similar rate.

129. The standards of work of the current Year 11 pupils is above average. The progressive structure of the course leads to good achievement by all pupils. Technical skills are well developed and pupils have good knowledge of a range of artists and knowledge of their work. The GCSE results are steadily improving: they were below average in 1999, above average in 2000 and rose still further in 2001 although there were few candidates. For the last two years all of the students have passed the examination and there is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Many pupils reach high standards when interpreting whole-class themes and confidently use a range of materials and processes to express their creative ideas. For example, they demonstrated a good ability to explore and interpret when researching Cubism as an influence for the development of still-life work. In this work the higher attaining pupils experimented successfully with methods used by Braque to produce high quality mixed-media paintings on a large scale, using the techniques of relief.

130. The pupils with special educational needs, and particularly those who have impaired vision, make very good progress because of the good teaching and highly effective learning support assistants, so that these pupils enjoy a positive learning experience. For example, a visually impaired Year 11 pupil achieved very well when she used textile techniques using blocks of defined colour to produce a high quality weaving of a sunset.

131. Attitudes and behaviour are good. Students respond well to their teachers and enjoy their art lessons. They arrive promptly at lessons and settle quickly to work, listen attentively and are enthusiastic. Year 8 pupils, on being shown the kiln where their aboriginal masks were to be fired, showed great interest about how the process worked and asked pertinent questions. Pupils

organise themselves efficiently, share equipment and stick to their task. Year 11 pupils take responsibility for mounting and presenting research work and are proud of it. However, sketchbooks are not used at this stage and this has an adverse effect on student's capacity to learn independently.

132. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout Years 7-11. In the best lessons, teachers give very clear explanations and manage the pupils well, using a variety of activities to engage and sustain the pupils' interest. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on making marks, the teacher gave an interesting demonstration of different techniques and set time limits on the short tasks given. The pupils applied themselves very well and gained a good understanding of how to use a variety of pen lines to create the form of a seashell. All work is well marked and gives pupils clear direction about what they have to do to improve.

133. Homework is built into project planning but is presently underused to develop pupils' understanding of artists' work. Specialist vocabulary is built into projects and displayed prominently in the art room which promotes literacy skills. The teachers have a good command of their subject, which is evident in the frequent reference to artists and cultural influences and this strongly supports learning. The high quality of individual advice plays an important role in keeping standards high and gives pupils clear direction on how to develop work to a higher level. The lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are given the support and confidence to respond confidently and teachers ensure that these pupils succeed. The structure of the examination course leads to a high level of technical ability and understanding of artists' work but its prescriptive nature limits the pupils' personal creativity.

134. Schemes of work and policy statements are clear and informative and have given good direction to new teachers. Assessment structures are sound: pupils are involved in their own target setting and most have a clear understanding of how well they were doing. Examination grade criteria and examples of good work on display show pupils how to improve their marks. There is presently no formal system for the identification of gifted and talented pupils. Systems for the monitoring and evaluation and development of teaching need to be more rigorous. At present the development of ICT is in its early stages and its teaching is limited by poor computer provision. At present, ICT is used well in Year 7 where art-related projects are taught in ICT lessons. Since the previous last inspection, the overall improvement is satisfactory. Accommodation and resources have been improved which has allowed for a broader curriculum and this has resulted in sound standards in three-dimensional work. The good quality of display supports learning and acts as an inspiration for pupils.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- above average GCSE results in resistant materials and graphics products
- standards of manufacture, of formal drawing and of presentation
- the use of ICT to present work

### Areas for improvement

- freehand drawing skills
- pupils' decision-making in their designs
- monitoring of teaching and learning

135. Standards of the current Year 9 pupils are average and pupils achieve satisfactorily in relation to their previous attainment. The results of the teachers' assessments of the previous

Year 9 were well above average but these are unreliable because the system of assessment does not take sufficient account of National Curriculum levels. Pupils learn good manufacturing skills during Years 7 - 9. They make good formal drawings and are skilful with colouring techniques, but the use of freehand drawing to develop their designs needs improvement so that they can explore their ideas more readily. In most of their projects, pupils follow a given design without making decisions for themselves. An exception seen during the inspection was Year 9 pupils' design of a board game in which they adapted the design as a result of their own evaluations. Some experimenting is also done with food recipes. Since the previous inspection, some areas that were found to be good, such as manufacture, have been further strengthened but the weaker areas, such as design, still need improvement.

136. Standards of work are above average in Year 11 and pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9. The results of the GCSE examination in 2000 were above the national average. The trend in results since the previous inspection, when results were average, is an improving one and they are now amongst the best in the school. Girls' results are better than boys' results but not by as much as is found nationally. Results in resistant materials improved further in 2001 but declined in food technology. Despite good standards, pupils need more practice with written questions in the food technology course so that they are better prepared for the written examinations, this being the main reason for the lower GCSE results in 2001. In graphics products results have been consistently good. Formal drawing skills are good but pupils include little freehand sketching in their design folios. Folios mostly follow a routine to ensure that all areas of the examination marking scheme are covered, but without the work contributing to the development of their designs. Nevertheless, some pupils create imaginative designs in resistant materials and graphic products, and the standards of manufacture are good. Pupils' food technology folders show some good use of testing and adapting recipes. Pupils present their work to a high standard, even to the extent that they are inclined to neglect the development of their designs. They use ICT well for presentation, for analysing data such as the results of questionnaires, and for nutritional analysis.

137. Pupils with special educational needs usually make good progress because they receive good individual help and their individual education plans include targets specific to the subject. Visually impaired pupils are helped to achieve well even when the task is a visual one, such as packaging, and in practical tasks in cooking. The proportion of girls taking courses in resistant materials and boys taking food technology is higher than usually seen and, the standards they achieve are more equal than is found nationally.

138. Pupils are mostly keen to learn and take a pride in their work. They respond well to questions and collaborate well during group work. Their positive attitudes are a significant factor in the good standards achieved in examinations.

139. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory up to Year 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have good relationships with their classes. They have a good knowledge of their specialist areas and give effective individual help to pupils, particularly with their examination projects, and setting targets for them. Questioning is used well to reinforce pupils' understanding but too little attention is given to developing pupils' decision-making about their work. Whilst the general organisation of the subject is satisfactory the monitoring of teaching and learning lacks rigour.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **satisfactory**

### **Strengths**

- standards of mapwork, human and physical geography
- relationships and the pupils' positive attitudes and behaviour



### Areas for improvement

- the match of work to the full range of attainment in mixed ability classes
- the project work of average and lower attaining pupils
- monitoring of teaching and learning

140. A significant minority of pupils join Year 7 with below average numeracy and literacy skills. Their understanding of geography is also below average overall. A literacy strategy is in place which improves their oral and written skills as well as their technical vocabulary. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress throughout Years 7, 8 and 9 with sound consolidation of subject knowledge and skills. Pupils with special educational needs also make satisfactory progress with help provided by support staff for specific individuals. By Year 9, standards are average. The majority of pupils acquire a reasonable foundation for a GCSE course and their achievement is satisfactory. Some good coursework on the Kobe earthquake was seen and, when Year 9 pupils were examining types of volcanoes, they explained the sequence of activities well with good opportunities for discussion.

141. GCSE examination results were average in 2000 although they fell in 2001, and whilst boys' results were maintained, girls' results were below the school's predictions. Standards of the current Year 11 pupils' work are average, which represents a satisfactory achievement. Some of the abler pupils produce good standards of GCSE coursework. This work confirms a good use of enquiry techniques and the capacity to use resources and evidence in presenting conclusions. More pupils are opting for the subject, and work seen provides evidence of gains in applying knowledge to a range of contexts. For instance, in a Year 11 lesson when the class was studying depressions, pupils were assessing and discussing patterns and sequences of weather effectively.

142. Teaching and learning are satisfactory but there is a need to match the level of work more effectively to the range of attainment in mixed ability classes. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of their subject; they provide a good range of source material and other resources. As a consequence, pupils make sound gains in knowledge. Pupils make sound progress in using maps and improve their knowledge of physical and human geography. Examples include work seen during the inspection on climate and natural hazards, when pupils were required to look in detail at geographical processes and patterns. Numbers taking the subject in Years 10 and 11 are increasing. Pupils are building on the foundation from Year 9 and their learning is satisfactory. They are encouraged to reflect and appropriate challenges are set; for example, a class of Year 10 pupils were asked to undertake a difficult analysis, using film archives, and to compile, in a newspaper format, a geological report of the Mount St Helen's eruption.

143. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, and lessons are orderly and well managed. Pupils are generally keen and enthusiastic, and respond positively in lessons.

144. The management of the department is satisfactory and has some good features. The curriculum is effectively planned. The curriculum director has established clear directions and priorities for the subject including monitoring of pupils' work but the monitoring of teaching and learning lacks rigour. The subject has made a satisfactory improvement since the last inspection but standards and examination results have not risen. The use of information technology has improved and is now satisfactory. The department is now staffed by appropriately qualified and experienced teachers.

## HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **good**.

**Strengths**

- good GCSE examination results
- pupils' very good behaviour and attitudes
- enthusiastic and capable teachers

**Areas for improvement**

- monitoring of teaching and learning
- resources, particularly for Years 10 –11

145. Standards of pupils' work by Year 9 are average. In relation to their slightly below average attainment at the start of Year 7, this represents a satisfactory achievement for these pupils. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of key features of the past and their ability to understand change over time are good. Their use of sources and understanding of chronology are less well developed, however. Oral responses are good and, when they have the opportunity to do so, pupils express their ideas in a variety of ways: in their writing, diagrams, tables, maps and drawings. An increasing emphasis on extended writing, as part of the school's literacy programme is effective, for example when Year 9 pupils' project work about the Industrial Revolution focused specifically on developing essay writing skills.

146. By Year 11, standards of work are above average and the pupils' overall achievement is good. The results in both 1999 and 2000 were well above the national average and were much better than reported at the time of the previous inspection. The results for 2001, while not as good as in the two previous years, were still good. Year 11 pupils' understanding of basic political concepts and terminology are above average, as shown in their study of GCSE topics such as the *New Deal*. Year 10 pupils have a good understanding of the work, as shown in their writing on propaganda and censorship, and are achieving good standards.

147. The behaviour and attitudes of pupils are very good throughout the school. The teachers set high standards and establish a calm and purposeful environment for learning. Pupils enjoy their work and contribute to class discussions, and they are polite and considerate to each other when working in groups.

148. Teaching and learning are good. In all lessons, the teachers are clear about what the pupils should achieve, lessons are planned carefully and teachers set tasks which pupils can do and complete. The teachers use a wide variety of teaching methods to motivate the pupils, including role-play, group-work, and independent research. Satisfactory use is made of ICT to enhance pupils' learning. The teachers have good subject knowledge and set tasks appropriate to the GCSE syllabus.

149. There has been a good improvement in standards since the previous inspection. The subject management monitors pupils' work but does not monitor teaching and learning. The subject has, nevertheless, a clear and coherent development plan with identified priorities to raise standards. The resources are unsatisfactory, especially textbooks for Years 10 and 11.

**INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

**Strengths**

- teaching in Years 10 and 11
- pupils' attitudes and behaviour

**Areas for improvement**

- more manageable class sizes
- teaching of pupils with special educational needs

150. GCSE results for summer 2000 were above average. A high proportion of the pupils achieved grades in the range A\*-C grades but the proportion who failed the examination was above average. Overall, pupils tended to do better in their ICT examination than in their other subjects. Provisional figures for 2001 indicate that results were about average.

151. Standards in Year 9 are average. Pupils join Year 7 with mixed experiences of ICT but with average standards overall, and their achievement by Year 9 is satisfactory. By Year 9 pupils have learned sound skills in word processing and desk-top publishing and can create documents and posters incorporating text, pictures and graphics in an interesting and original way. They are familiar with the use of spreadsheets to organise information and can use simple formulae to make calculations. They can create and retrieve information from a database. They are aware of how computers can be used for control and can simulate simple procedures, for example, in the operation of a lighthouse. Internet research skills, however, are underdeveloped.

152. Standards in Year 11 are above average because the teaching is good and because of the pupils' positive attitudes. Given their average starting point at the beginning of Year 10 this represents good achievement. Pupils have well-developed skills in design analysis. When analysing what is required for a given task they discriminate between different software packages. Their evaluation skills are good and they can work independently of the teacher. Higher attaining pupils understand and use applications to organise, refine and present information for different purposes and produce results of good quality. As in Year 9, the use of the Internet for research and retrieving and downloading information is under-developed.

153. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 with special educational needs, except when they receive individual support, do not achieve as well as other pupils. This is because teachers are largely unaware of their learning difficulties and do not always set appropriate work and, for example, giving them worksheets which they cannot read. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve as well as pupils of similar age.

154. All pupils enjoy their work and their behaviour is good. They listen attentively to instructions and collaborate with each other when sharing resources. They treat equipment with care and work hard to master new skills. They arrive promptly to lessons and are co-operative and responsive. They show enthusiasm for the subject and are capable of working independently; for example, they attempt to solve their problems for themselves before asking the teacher for help.

155. The teaching and the learning it promotes are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. There was very little unsatisfactory teaching. In Years 10 and 11, most of the teaching was good and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. When teaching is good, pupils are managed effectively so that little time is wasted at the start of lessons and teachers ensure that pupils make the most of the available time to learn new skills or acquire new knowledge and understanding. Relationships are positive and encouraging so that pupils are not afraid to risk making mistakes. Good subject knowledge is a feature of the teaching which enables teachers to set challenging work and to encourage pupils' independent learning skills. In the unsatisfactory lesson, expectations were too low and planning was weak, for example, in setting pupils low-level tasks such as drawing pictures or doing word searches. Teaching could be better still if class sizes were not so big, and if teachers had access to a computer linked to a screen for demonstration purposes.

156. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory and the subject head is working hard to raise standards. Assessment procedures are good and pupils are involved in self-evaluation and target setting. The subject makes valuable contributions to developing pupils' numeracy and literacy skills. There is insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning to enable the best features of the teaching to be shared across the department and this is a weakness. Accommodation is good.

***Key Skills: information and communication skills across the curriculum***

157. At the previous inspection opportunities for pupils to use ICT in other subjects was unsatisfactory. Since then, there has been a satisfactory improvement and most subjects now make some use of ICT to support learning. The best use of ICT, particularly of word processing skills and desk-top-publishing, is found in English and history. In modern foreign languages pupils use specialist software effectively to produce and display work in Russian text. However, it is still underdeveloped in mathematics, music and art and design.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **good**

### Strengths

- good teaching and learning
- good listening and speaking skills
- pupils work independently
- experience of French, German and Russian lessons before choosing in the first term of Year 7

### Areas for improvement

- writing skills
- the accommodation.

## French

158. Pupils begin Year 7 with four-week, successive 'taster courses' in French German and Russian before they make a choice of their National Curriculum language. The majority of pupils choose French, and from the evidence of lesson observation and the analysis of pupils' work, it is clear that they now reach average standards by Year 9 and that standards are rising. The teachers' assessments of the Year 9 pupils in 2000 indicated that only half of them reached the standard expected for their age, which was below the national figure, but the proportion increased in 2001. In relation to below average starting points at the beginning of Year 7, and the limited time available for study, pupils' overall achievement by Year 9 is good.

159. The Year 11 pupils' standards of work are average and in relation to this particular year group's below average standards at the end of Year 9, this represents a good achievement. This is because teaching is good. The examination results for those taking the full GCSE course in 2000 were slightly below the national average. In addition, 26 pupils took short-course GCSE and all but two of these pupils achieved a grade in the examination. There is no consistent difference in the performance of girls and boys at GCSE. The examination results over the three-year period 1999-2001 have steadily improved.

160. The strengths in pupils' attainments are listening and speaking, which remains true throughout the school. Writing is a relative weakness. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress.

161. Pupils' attitudes are good. They are well motivated and enjoy their learning, responding readily in the foreign language when expected to do so. They remain interested, and are used to working independently or in pairs.

162. Teaching and learning are good throughout Years 7-11. Teachers have good language skills, plan their lessons well to include sufficient variety, and use effective methods despite the unsatisfactory accommodation. Homework is more useful than in many schools because pupils have their own textbooks. Pupils' work is conscientiously marked, and each half-term a cumulative assessment in language skills informs them of their progress. The usefulness of this is however limited by the fact that organisation of classes by ability is not always possible. There

were no examples of learning adversely affected by poor behaviour. Pupils are generally well organised, using planners to good effect. The use of ICT does not extend to all pupils.

163. The modern language department is well managed and the monitoring of teaching and learning is effective. A detailed analysis of examination data is used effectively to inform curriculum planning. However decisions about the organisation of the curriculum taken two years ago have adversely affected the uptake in Years 10 and 11 and learning in German. The overall improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

## **German**

164. Just under half the previous Year 9 pupils, in the Summer of 2001, reached the nationally expected standard, which is below average. However, the current Year 9 pupils' standards of work are broadly average and are better than the teachers' assessment of the previous Year 9 pupils indicate. Overall, pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points in Year 7. Some very good work was seen in a German Year 7 'taster course', in which pupils had an impressive degree of competence after only two weeks. Pupils have a broad vocabulary but their speaking and listening are better than their writing. Year 10 pupils are taught in a single class and the more able pupils are not achieving as well as they should. In Year 11, pupils are organised in classes by attainment level.

165. Standards are average by Year 11 and pupils' achievement is good in relation to their below average attainment when they were in Year 9 because they have been well taught. Learning reflects teaching and was good or very good in almost all the lessons seen. The GCSE results were well below the national average in 2000 and below the results for French. Boys' results were lower than those of the girls to a greater extent than nationally. However, the 2001 results show a big improvement, and more than half of the pupils achieved at least a grade C.

166. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress. They make good progress when there is special support for them and, in a Year 8 class, a visually impaired pupil could note her German vocabulary in Braille, whilst another preferred to use a large font on a lap-top computer.

167. Pupils are well motivated and focused. They relate well to the teacher and to each other working well together. Behaviour is good.

168. Teaching and learning are good and similar to those in French because most teachers teach both languages. Two very good lessons in German were seen; however, in one Year 10 mixed ability class, whilst teaching was satisfactory, the work was aimed at the average pupils and failed to challenge the more able ones. Since the previous inspection, standards in both French and German have been sustained though German is no longer taught in the sixth form. Numbers taking a modern language in Years 10 and 11 have also declined.

## **Russian**

169. Russian is well established over at least a decade though it is studied by a small minority of pupils. It has attracted a number of pupils whose parents are Russian speakers, and their presence contributes to the learning of others. There are important links with two universities, and a live link with a school in Moscow.

170. Although fewer than one in four gained a GCSE grade C or better in 2000 the rate improved to one in two in 2001. Teaching and learning are good, and pupils' attitudes are very good. Standards seen in Year 9 and Year 11 are above average. Pupils are developing competent listening and speaking skills; they can read both hand-written and printed Russian script, and writing skills are assisted by a Cyrillic (Russian alphabet) font on the school's ICT network.

## MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- good provision for pupils' spiritual development
- good provision for music technology and for multicultural music

### Areas for improvement

- unsatisfactory continuity in Years 7-9, which leads to underachievement
- the monitoring of teaching and learning lacks rigour
- the provision for ICT is unsatisfactory
- there are too few spaces for pupils to work in small groups

171. In 2000, the GCSE results were well above average although there were few candidates. All pupils achieved at least a grade C. The results were similar to those of 1998, 1999 and in 2001.

172. In Year 9, standards are below average. Students enter the school with limited experience in music, and few learn to play an instrument. Pupils give perceptive responses to recorded and live music they hear, and are able to use technical terms correctly. Because music is taught in rotation with other creative arts subjects, pupils may have as much as eight months between music sessions and lose skills they have gained in playing and in reading notation. This adversely affects both their performing and their composing skills and leads to underachievement. A similar situation was found at the time of the previous inspection.

173. In Years 7 and 8, a fifth of pupils have instrumental lessons, which are currently provided by the school free of charge. Eight instrumental teachers provide lessons on a wide range of instruments. As a result, the pupils concerned make better progress in reading and performing.

174. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in music and make good progress. Pupils understand uncomplicated staff notation and use this to score short pieces but lack of sufficient access to ICT discourages them from writing longer pieces. Pupils sing competently; for example, Year 7 pupils sang a complex three-part round with assurance.

175. Standards in Year 11 are average. Taking into account the pupils' previous experience, their achievement is good. The better musicians perform very well and almost all pupils perform at least satisfactorily. The listening responses of higher ability pupils are good but average and less able pupils do not express their ideas clearly because they do not have a sufficiently wide descriptive vocabulary. Pupils compose attractive pieces but do not know how to extend these or create variety and interest because they do not readily use common composing devices.

176. The attitudes of most pupils are good. They respond well to the high expectations of their teachers, and concentrate and co-operate well. When working in small groups, younger pupils display high levels of independence and organisational abilities. The department makes particularly good provision for pupils' spiritual development and encourages pupils to acknowledge that each individual has a particular talent. Many are, as a result, sensitive to the special needs of some of their peers, and openly recognise the achievements such pupils make, giving them great encouragement and raising their self-esteem.

177. The quality of teaching in Years 7-9 is satisfactory despite the lack of continuity. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is good and pupils make good progress. Teachers share their enthusiasm for their subject and most lessons are well planned and conducted at a good pace. Teachers' expectations of pupils have risen and the level of challenge has been raised since the previous inspection. Pupils' understanding of the wide range of possibilities in music is enhanced by

contact with sophisticated music technology and by the imaginative use of a number of ethnic instruments.

178. The previously well-supported, extensive range of extra-curricular activities, some of which take place at lunch-time, is struggling for survival as a result of recent changes in lunch-time arrangements. In association with other subjects within the creative arts faculty the department is involved in a programme of concerts and other musical events within the school and the locality.

179. The improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Management of the department is satisfactory but monitoring of the quality of teaching needs to be more rigorous in order to ensure that pupils systematically develop their skills. The assessment system is good, and reports about pupils' progress are clear, but day-to-day assessment information needs to be analysed to ensure that the needs of different pupils are recognised and met. The accommodation is extensive and is well equipped with high standard music technology. However, many classes in Years 7, 8 and 9 are large, and when more than one such class is taught in the music block there are not enough practice spaces to allow pupils to hear their ideas properly when they are working in small groups.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **good**.

### Strengths

- GCSE results are well above average
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs
- The teaching is good
- Pupils are well behaved and have good attitudes to learning

### Areas for improvement.

- Monitoring of teaching and learning
- Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning
- Changing facilities in North Block

180. Standards reached in physical education in Year 9 are broadly average. In relation to their slightly below average attainment at the start of Year 7, the pupils' overall achievement by Year 9 is good. Year 7 pupils make good initial progress in learning basic games skills and tactics on which they build in Years 8 and 9, where they are taught in classes by ability. In lower attaining classes, standards in hockey and rugby, for example, are below average; nevertheless, these standards are good in relation to the pupils' capabilities.

181. Pupils generally have effective skills of observation and evaluation of their work. For example, in a Year 9 rugby lesson, boys talked discussed their work and slowed down the pace of their practice drill so that they could learn more effectively. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of fitness and health is above average because they benefit from participation in a well-designed unit of work, which deals with this aspect of the National Curriculum programme of study. Year 8 pupils appreciate the important contribution which exercise can make to a healthy lifestyle for people of all ages and have a good basic knowledge of, for example, the cardiovascular system.

182. Standards of work of the Year 11 pupils in their compulsory physical education lessons are broadly average and their achievement is satisfactory. They have a good understanding of the effects of exercise on the body and, when given the opportunity, prepare themselves well for exercise. Year 10 boys understand the principles, which underpin fitness training, and they monitor their own progress in fitness programmes. Year 11 girls devise and practise advanced tactics in netball, and organise and run their own tournament. Boys perform skilfully in football with good control and effective team play. For those taking the GCSE course, standards are well above average in their chosen practical activities and average in the theoretical aspects of

the course. Boys and girls achieve well, for example, to reach good standards in volleyball. A good programme of extra curricular activities gives many pupils throughout the school the opportunity to develop their interests further. Teams and individuals achieve good levels of success in competition at local, area and sometimes, national level.

183. Considerable numbers of pupils take GCSE examination courses in this subject and achieve high standards. The GCSE results have improved since 1999 when they were above average. Results in 2000 were well above average and all but one of the pupils who took the full GCSE course achieved at least a grade E. During this time, girls' results have been much better than those of the boys and have been consistently high. However, the boys' results have improved significantly, from average in 1999 to above average in 2000, when their results in physical education tended to be better than in most of their other subjects. In 2001, the proportion of pupils who achieved the higher A\*-C grades increased still further and the difference between boys' and girls' results narrowed. Small numbers of pupils are entered for the short GCSE course: the results were below average in 2000 but improved in 2001.

184. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress in their lessons. They are taught in groups of broadly similar attainment; teachers know their pupils well and provide sensitive support for the lowest attainers. Effective liaison with the school's special needs unit ensures that pupils with visual or physical impairment participate in individual programmes which are well matched to their needs and, when practicable, they take part in lessons with other pupils. When they have additional support in lessons; for example, in gymnastics in Year 8, they make very good progress. Resources and activities are adapted to ensure that the challenge is appropriate for them and they are well supported by learning support assistants. Appropriate technical vocabulary for the subject is well taught and, in most lessons, pupils are encouraged to discuss their work. Opportunities are provided, particularly in examination classes, for pupils to develop and use their numeracy skills, for example, to record and analyse changes in heart rate during exercise.

185. Pupils' attitudes to learning are mostly good and, in GCSE classes, they are very good. Participation rates are generally good. Most pupils are enthusiastic performers and work constructively with each other, even when the teacher does not directly supervise them. Standards of fair play and sportsmanship are high and pupils acknowledge each other's success with spontaneous applause.

186. The quality of teaching is good and pupils learn well. Teachers use their subject knowledge well in explanations and demonstrations, which ensure that pupils learn and consolidate skills and tactics in games. Teachers analyse pupils' performance accurately and this helps the pupils to improve. However, in some lessons, pupils could be given more opportunity for personal involvement in this process and could take more responsibility for some aspects of the lesson, for example, in suggesting and leading warm-up activities. Teachers adapt their planning in lessons in order to ensure that pupils are learning basic skills effectively before moving on. Relationships are good and this helps to motivate pupils to work hard at demanding physical activities. Non-participant pupils are kept occupied and their work is monitored by the teachers.

187. The management of the subject is satisfactory overall and improvement since the previous inspection is good. Issues raised at that time have been resolved and curriculum planning and assessment procedures have improved and are now very good. Assessment information is used well in examination classes, for example to identify and respond to differences in standards achieved by girls and boys in theoretical aspects of the GCSE. Good procedures are in place to evaluate much of the work of the department, but teaching and learning are not routinely monitored in order to improve teaching further and to raise standards, and this is a weakness. The quality of changing accommodation for pupils, in North Block, is poor.



## PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

188. In the inspection, 13 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2000.

### ***GCE AS level courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	6	50	63	0	17	1.0	1.6
Art and design	1	100	80	0	18	3.0	2.1
Dance	10	100	77	70	41	3.6	2.6
Religious studies	1	100	76	0	19	1.0	2.0
Other soc???	4	50	70	25	18	1.3	1.7
French	1	100	78	0	17	1.0	1.8

### ***GCE A level and AVCE courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	15	100	89	47	45	6.7	6.0
Chemistry	11	100	89	55	42	6.6	5.9
Biology	16	94	88	44	34	6.1	5.3
Physics	8	63	88	25	41	4.0	5.7
Design and technology	6	100	92	50	29	7.3	5.4
Business studies	9	78	91	0	30	3.1	5.3
Business V	12	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	9.0	10.8
Computer studies	23	87	85	13	23	4.4	4.6
Sports studies	15	93	91	20	25	5.1	5.0
Leisure and tourism V	6	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	7.0	10.5
Art and design	12	100	96	17	45	5.3	6.4
Music	2	100	93	50	35	5.0	5.7
Drama	16	94	99	38	36	6.1	6.5
Geography	2	100	92	0	37	3.0	5.7
History	11	73	89	18	34	4.0	5.4
Sociology	14	100	88	21	37	6.1	5.5
Other Soc?	10	100	88	30	35	6.2	5.3
Religious studies	1	100	91	0	35	4.0	5.4
English literature	18	72	96	17	36	3.6	5.9
English language (1)	10	90	90	30	29	5.2	5.2
English language (2)	7	86	92	57	31	7.1	5.4

Communication studies	6	100	93	50	30	6.3	5.4
Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
French	2	100	91	50	39	5.0	5.7
German	4	75	92	50	41	5.5	5.9

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

#### Mathematics

189. The main focus was on the work of AS and A-level students in pure mathematics with statistics and pure mathematics with mechanics. The work of pupils retaking their GCSE in mathematics was also inspected and most are working at a level well below the requirements of GCSE grade C.

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

#### Strengths

- above average standards in statistics
- teaching is always at least satisfactory
- bridging the gap between GCSE and A-level

#### Areas for improvement

- teaching time for AS-level study is too little for some of the students
- standards in mechanics and pure mathematics in Year 13
- requirements for entry to courses are too low
- marking of written work
- the accuracy, precision and presentation of some of the written work.

190. In 2000, the mathematics A-level results were above average and much improved over previous years. All students taking the examination gained at least a pass at grade D. Boys' results were well above average but the girls' results were average. In relation to their GCSE results, students did largely as expected at A-level. In 2001, the overall results fell compared to 2000 but this was mainly owing to a reduction in teaching time for the subject. Results in pure mathematics and statistics were as expected from students' GCSE results but results in pure mathematics and mechanics were lower.

191. The standards of work of the current Year 13 students are below average overall. Standards are above average in statistics but below average in pure mathematics and mechanics. Since the courses began, several students have left, finding the work too demanding. Some of these students were allowed to start the courses with mathematical competence which was inadequate to allow them to make satisfactory progress at this level. Achievement of the pupils now studying for A and AS level qualifications is broadly satisfactory. Although several students achieved low grades in their modular examinations in the summer of 2001 they have substantially improved their work since then. In pure mathematics, the highest attaining students have good skills of algebraic manipulation and calculus but the lower attaining students are hesitant and lack confidence.

192. The Year 12 students' standards of work are average and they are achieving as expected. Most have suitable mathematical competence for study at AS-level, and are moving successfully into more advanced levels of study. Insufficient teaching time - about four hours a week - means that teachers tend to take the students through the work at a rapid pace: whilst the most able mathematicians can manage this, it is sometimes too demanding for the lower attaining students. Teachers now provide lessons to bridge the gulf between the expectations of GCSE and A-level and to allow the students fully to master algebraic and graphical topics at the highest levels of GCSE, giving them a sound preparation for advanced work. Students are confident and feel that they are doing well. In a mechanics lesson, most students worked quickly through examples on speed-time graphs showing good understanding of what they had been taught. However, the accuracy, precision and presentation of some of their written work could be improved.

193. Teaching is satisfactory overall. The constraining factor is the insufficiency of time on the timetable, which often causes teachers to adopt a lecturing style to cover the necessary ground. The approach is suitable for the higher attaining pupils who then master techniques through their own further study. However, the lower attaining students cannot always follow the explanations fully and then struggle with the set examples in the textbooks despite teachers making themselves available for individual help outside lesson time. Teachers have good subject knowledge and explain mathematics clearly and logically. Formal assessments are helpfully marked according to A-level grade criteria, enabling students to understand how they are progressing and how to improve. However, there is a need to provide students with more regular feedback on the standards they achieve through the marking of written work completed outside the classroom.

194. Students have good attitudes, and their learning is satisfactory overall. They are interested in their work and listen intently to their teachers' explanations, which they are mostly able to follow. Often they spend a considerable amount of time ensuring that they have mastered the skills they have been shown. By answering all of the questions at the ends of the chapters in the textbooks, many pupils ensure through independent study that they understand the topics fully and can recall facts and processes quickly. However, much of the work they produce in this way remains unmarked, either by themselves or the teacher.

195. Revision for examinations would be much easier and more productive if errors were identified earlier and more clearly, and correct solutions were recorded accurately. Not all students spend sufficient time on written exercises with the result that they only partially understand some topics. These pupils' learning would improve considerably with more regular monitoring of their work for quality and quantity.

196. The A-level courses are organised as well as the lack of curriculum time allows. The school is aware that good A-level results were achieved in 2000 when the time given for teaching was higher. Management of the subject is satisfactory. Results of modular examinations are analysed carefully to enable students decide on the best course of action to maximise their performance.

## **Sciences**

197. The school offers A-level courses in biology, chemistry and physics. The main focus of the inspection of sciences was on chemistry and biology, and these subjects are reported in detail but physics was also sampled.

198. In physics, examination results from a small entry were below average for the years 1998-2000 and the 2001 results were similar to those in earlier years. Two lessons were observed. In a Year 13 lesson the teaching was good and students gained a good understanding of how different signals can be transmitted through a medium at the same time. The teaching in a Year 12 lesson was satisfactory; although students gained a sound understanding of internal resistance, their practical skills in setting up an electrical circuit were underdeveloped.

## **Biology**

Overall, the quality of provision in biology is **good**

### **Strengths**

- good A-level results
- good teaching
- good leadership, management and clear direction

### Areas for improvement

- insufficient use of ICT

199. The GCE A level examination results in the year 2000 were above the national average and show an upward trend since the previous inspection. The results for 2001 were not as good as those for 2000. The current Year 13 students' standards of work are above average. The students are making good progress and achieving well, as indicated by their overall results at AS level in relation to their GCSE results. During one lesson they discussed, with good understanding, the functions of various endocrine glands, negative feedback mechanisms and the importance of insulin in the human body. In another lesson, they showed that they understood, through role-play, the stages of oxidative phosphorylation, and explained these reactions afterwards. They can recall and apply knowledge from previous lessons well.

200. The standards of work seen in lessons are above average. Year 12 students have a good knowledge and understanding of basic biological concepts such as the structure and properties of water and its importance to living organisms. They can discuss the fine structure of cells and the functions of individual organelles. They are competent in their practical work, for example, food-testing investigations, and in handling chemicals and apparatus with care and respect. These students are successfully building on earlier work at GCSE.

201. Teaching is good overall and enables the students to learn well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and make clear and confident explanations. They show an enthusiasm for the subject which is caught by the students. Lessons are well planned and have a brisk pace with a variety of teaching styles to maintain students' interest and assist their learning. However, aims are not always clear at the beginning of lessons although a comprehensive lesson review usually takes place. A Year 13 lesson on the endocrine system was particularly good in this respect and included teacher-led discussion, flow-chart construction with the aid of an overhead projector, and the use of textbooks for reference. Students share ideas and help each other, which is facilitated by the fact that their class sizes are not too large.

202. Teachers' expectations are high and they question the students rigorously to reinforce knowledge and understanding, and ensure that all students make a contribution to lessons. The working relationship between teachers and students is friendly and helps to provide an atmosphere conducive to learning and students ask questions freely. Homework is set regularly. Students are tested at the end of each unit of work and they appreciate the rapid feedback on their progress provided by the teachers. Their written work includes notes, structured questions, essays, past examination questions and experimental write-ups. Marking is thorough and appropriately annotated, giving guidance to students on areas for improvement. Students learn independently by researching information for themselves, especially for the planning of their practical assessments. There is insufficient use of ICT in lessons.

203. Students learn well, are motivated and make good progress, as shown during question and answer sessions and class discussions when they are keen to contribute ideas. They collaborate effectively with one another, particularly during practical work, helping each other and sharing ideas in a mature and sensible way.

204. Leadership and management of the subject is good. There is a clear focus on the continued improvement of examination results. Resources are satisfactory. The department has good technical support.

### Chemistry

Overall, the quality of provision in chemistry is **satisfactory**.

**Strengths**

- teachers' good specialist knowledge of the subject
- good assessment of students' work especially practical assignments
- good working relationships between teachers and students

**Areas for improvement**

- the clarity of the aims of some lessons

205. The attainment of students starting the chemistry course in Year 12 is low in relation to the demands of the A-level course. A-level results for the period 1998-2000 are variable: this is to be expected because, in some years, there were only a small number of examination candidates. In 1998 and 1999, the results were below the national average but improved considerably in 2000 and were above average. In 2001, (a small entry) results fell back to the levels of 1998 and 1999. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. In 2000, a significant proportion of the Year 12 students dropped out of the A-level course in chemistry.

206. The current Year 13 students' overall standard of work are average. Their achievement is satisfactory in relation to their starting points at the beginning of the course and their GCSE grades in combined science. In Year 13, standards are average in inorganic, physical and organic chemistry. Practical skills, although average overall, are improving with students achieving good standards in planning and carrying out experiments as a result of teaching which is always at least satisfactory. In physical chemistry, for example, students have a good ability to predict whether certain chemical reactions are viable, making decisions from a consideration of the entropy and enthalpy changes associated with the reaction. Careful explanation of these complex concepts by their teachers ensures that the students make good progress in this area. In Year 12, standards of work are average overall and represent satisfactory achievement. In organic chemistry, the students are becoming proficient at using analytical data, for example, to calculate the molecular formula of organic compounds. Essential numeracy skills are well taught so that students' confidence grows and this ensures a good degree of success.

207. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The students work at a good rate and concentrate well. Year 13 and 12 students make satisfactory progress in their studies as a result of consistently sound teaching combined with their positive attitudes towards the subject. For example, in their study of the relation between intermolecular forces in solids, liquids and gases and their properties, Year 12 students made sound progress in the understanding of these concepts. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject and teach the individual modules of work to a satisfactory standard. The relationships between students and teachers are good and inspire the students' confidence in their learning. Students appreciate the help they are given when they encounter difficulties. Explanations are clear; for example, in a Year 13 lesson the concepts of entropy, enthalpy and free energy were particularly well explained so that students successfully performed difficult but necessary calculations. However, in some lessons, the teaching would be improved if learning aims were explicitly shared with the students and they were given more opportunities to contribute to their own learning. In Year 13 the small class size results in some students being too passive and a lack of students' active participation in their own learning; consequently, independent learning skills are underdeveloped.

208. Marking of students' work is regular and accurate and provides the students with a good picture of their progress in the subject. The assessment of students' practical coursework is rigorous and helps students to make progress.

209. Students are well behaved, mature and sensible. They have very positive attitudes towards their work and this combined with the sound teaching results in their learning being at least satisfactory.

210. Students have access to ICT in their work outside of lessons to consolidate their learning but have few opportunities to use computers in chemistry lessons. They are developing good

numerical skills as a result of teaching that is systematic and well focused on the essential mathematics of the subject. Students are developing note-taking skills well and this also helps to consolidate their learning effectively.

211. The management of the subject is satisfactory. Schemes of work are well written. Staff are approachable and students can discuss their difficulties with them. There is no regular monitoring teaching and learning which would improve the quality of teaching and help to raise standards.

## ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

212. The school provides courses leading to A-level in design and technology and home economics (food studies). The main focus of the inspection of the curriculum area was on design and technology but home economics (food studies) lessons were also sampled. In food studies, students embarked on the course for the first time in 2000 and their results in 2001 were low. Two lessons were sampled, both were satisfactory but the number of students in each year is too small for the course to be viable and for students to discuss their work with others.

### Design and Technology

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **good**.

#### Strengths

- above average A-level results
- well presented design folders
- good teaching

#### Areas for improvement

- selecting and using design processes
- facilities for designing

213. A-level results in 2000 were above average, as they were in 1998 and 1999 although the number of students taking the subject was low. Results were very good in 2001 with three of the five students achieving grade A. No student achieved less than grade C in 2000 or 2001. These grades are well above what would be expected from the students' average GCSE grades at the start of the course.

214. Standards of work seen during the inspection were above average although students are only at the start of their AS and A-level courses and consequently their projects are at an early stage. The Year 12 students' work shows some imaginative designs. Pupils are presenting the early stages of their projects well using ICT, but are inclined to spend too more time on presentation than on the development of their projects. Most of the research for the students' A-level projects, for example, jewellery and a wrist-watch, are not very far advanced because of this and the designs tend to replicate existing products and lack individuality. The students have a sound knowledge of the theory work covered so far. Both boys and girls are achieving well in relation to their previous attainment but the AS level students, in particular, need to give more attention to improving their application of design processes.

215. Students enjoy their designing and manufacturing and work hard, and this is a significant factor in the high standards that they achieve. They collaborate well in group-work, for example, when carrying out risk assessments of various workshop processes. They respond well to individual tuition about their projects.

216. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have a good supportive relationship with the students. Individual discussions of students' project work are well directed and are backed up by written comments and targets. This good individual support enables pupils with differing backgrounds of the subject to feel confident and make equally good progress. Teachers are always well prepared with examples, both to support theory work and to encourage imaginative ideas for projects. The teachers have a broad knowledge of the subject. Whilst facilities for computer-aided design and manufacture are not yet installed, teachers have attended courses related to this work.



217. The subject is well managed and the teachers share the teaching effectively. The facilities for designing both in and out of lessons are unsatisfactory and in most lessons students work on metalwork benches with poor quality drawing boards.

## **BUSINESS**

218. The school offers vocational courses in this curriculum area leading to A-level and the AVCE qualification in business studies. The detailed subject report evaluates both of the courses.

Overall, the quality of provision overall in business studies is **satisfactory**.

### **Strengths**

- keen and interested students
- syllabuses for A-level and AVCE are well organised
- teachers have good experience of teaching vocational courses

### **Areas for improvement**

- teaching methods to include more visual resources and group methods
- Insufficient use of ICT in the A-level course
- the accommodation for A-level

219. The A-level results were below the national average in 1999 and 2000 but improved considerably in 2001. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. The results of the Advanced GNVQ in 2000 were below average, but also improved in 2001. Retention rates have generally been good.

220. The current Year 13 A-level students' standards of work are average and their achievement is satisfactory. They work well unsupervised and have good written skills. They use graphs and statistics and can interpret them well. They have a good understanding of marketing and personnel matters. Their main weakness is that they hardly ever use ICT. This is partly because of lack of access but also because they are not set any work in areas such as business finance or supply and demand, in which the use of computers would contribute to their speed of completion and understanding of their assignments. The accommodation for A-level students is unsatisfactory, in a poorly furnished and dilapidated mobile classroom, which provides a poor learning environment and adversely affects the quality of learning.

221. The Year 13 AVCE students are also reaching average standards which represent a satisfactory achievement overall. They are taught in a computer room and, in contrast to the A-level students, their folders show good application of ICT. They make satisfactory progress, can work independently and are mature in their attitudes to learning. They use initiative in designing marketing material, such as advertisements, and enjoy working in small groups.

222. In Year 12, AS and AVCE students are achieving at a satisfactory level and reaching average standards. They have settled down to being able to work unsupervised but their work output is too low. The AS students say that they hardly ever use the school's computers, but use their own at home, whereas the AVCE students, who are taught in the computer suite, make good progress in computer applications and also in their ability to use their numerical skills in their analysis of business data. The GNVQ Intermediate level students in Year 12 are making good progress and are achieving well in relation to their low GCSE grades. In a lesson on share values, they were able to extract information well from financial newspapers and used computers well to draw graphs from their study. They understood the reasons for the fall in share prices of a local aircraft engine company. Lower ability students are achieving well at Intermediate level, but are not yet able to comprehend the more complex issues of world share movements. A physically impaired student was making good progress in the intermediate class, being helped to the room

by a support worker. Retention rates are good and most students progress to advanced studies in the following year.

223. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and account for the students' satisfactory achievement. Teachers have relevant business experience as well as subject qualifications and are also trained GNVQ assessors and can use up-to-date examples to illustrate business topics. Teachers have interpreted the specification for each course well. Assessment is good and teachers follow the criteria well. Teaching methods are satisfactory, but would be improved by using more visual stimulus in lessons and more group-work, which students say they enjoy. A-level students would greatly benefit from greater use of computers.

224. Students have good attitudes to the subject and feel that they have made a good choice of subject. For many, business studies is a secondary subject that gives a good background to their main choices. Many students have high grades as their target and feel they are well supported. The subject helps to develop their key skills in numeracy though ICT is neglected in the A-level classes. The subject contributes to students' awareness of social and moral issues such as global resources and helps them to understand immediate day-to-day consequences on employment, consumer choice, and the effects of the European Union.

225. The organisation of the curriculum and monitoring of the students' work is good. However, there is no monitoring of teaching. There are shortages of computers, which detract from the quality of teaching.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

226. The school provides AS and A-level courses in both computer studies and ICT, and AVCE courses in ICT. The detailed subject report includes an evaluation of both of these courses.

### **Information and communication technology**

Overall, the quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

#### **Strengths**

- good standards in A-level computing
- good knowledge of the experienced teachers
- a wide range of courses

#### **Areas for improvement**

- students' explanations in their written answers

227. Results of A-level computer studies were above average in 1998 and 1999 and average in 2000. In 2001 they declined and were lower than in 2000. Results of A-level information and communication technology (ICT) students were slightly below average in 2000 having been average in 1998 and above average in 1999 and in 2001 they were similar to 2000. There were no significant differences between the results of male and female students and overall they achieved the grades that could be expected from their GCSE grades at the start of the courses.

228. Current overall standards are average in Years 12 and 13 and students achieve satisfactorily. Standards of the AS and A-level computing students are above average. Pupils' programming abilities are good. For example, two classes in Year 13 have written a program to simulate the National Lottery. They had learned how to divide up the task and solve problems that arose when the parts of the programme were linked together. Although most students had a good understanding of programming their written record did not contain sufficient explanation of why they had taken a particular approach. In Year 12, students have picked up the basics of

programming quickly at the start of the course. They grasp theory quickly because the teacher explains it well and they respond well to questions, which reinforces their learning.

229. Standards of the AS and A-level students' work are average. Year 12 students make clear notes about theory and have acquired a satisfactory range of knowledge at this early stage, including the applications of ICT, for example, in technical aspects of computing, such as validation rules. Their written responses to questions show a sound understanding of the topics covered but rarely include specific examples to illustrate general statements. Year 13 students also have a satisfactory range of knowledge. They are acquiring a sound understanding of systems analysis techniques in preparation for their projects. An AVCE course in ICT was introduced for the first time in 2000 because of increasing demand but several students have found the course more difficult than they anticipated and hence a significant number left the course without a qualification during the first year. Those that remain are reaching below average standards but are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their starting points.

230. Most pupils chose to study ICT subjects because they enjoy using computers rather than for career reasons, although that interest is leading some to consider related careers. Several of the computing students enjoy the intellectual challenge of programming. They work well in groups and are increasingly able to work independently, especially on their projects. They make good use of the Internet and e-mail to transmit work between school and home. Students make good use of computers outside taught lessons, for example, to extend and present their work.

231. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers with extensive experience of teaching examination classes in ICT teach most of the lessons. Their knowledge of the subject is good and they respond with confidence to students' questions which, particularly on the computing course, can be quite probing. Teachers also use questions skilfully to guide the students through logical sequences which develops their reasoning. Some lessons are taken by teachers with more limited experience and who are less confident. These lessons keep more closely to the textbooks and are not enlivened by examples closely linked to the students' experience. Individual help with projects ensures that pupils learn at an appropriate pace, but in some lessons teachers do not take sufficient account of the range of ability in the group by, for instance, providing more examples to help the weaker pupils to understand theoretical concepts. Students receive oral comments about their written work but written comments would help to reinforce their learning. They do receive written comments on their projects.

232. The subject is well organised and managed. There is a wide range of courses, which provides good opportunities for students to select an appropriate course for their needs and aspirations. They receive good initial advice on their choice of course and the courses are organised so that pupils can usually change to a more suitable course if their initial choice proves inappropriate. The organisation and teaching of course is revised in the light of assessment information and thorough support is provided for the less experienced teachers. Students have sufficient access to computers outside taught lessons.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

233. The school offers A-level and AS courses in physical education, vocational courses leading to AVCE in leisure and tourism and, for Year 12, a GNVQ Intermediate in leisure and tourism. All of these courses are reported in detail. Provision for recreational physical education for the sixth form is good. A good proportion of the sixth-form students take part in a well-organised programme of recreational sporting activity. This provides opportunities for serious development of personal performance as well as more social and recreation activities, most of which are organised by the students themselves.

### **Physical education**

Overall, the quality of the provision in physical education is **good**.

### **Strengths**

- standards in the current Year 13 are above average
- students achieve well, particularly in practical performance and its analysis
- teaching is good

### **Areas for improvement**

- knowledge and understanding of physiological and psychological aspects of performance.

234. In 1998 and 1998, A-level results were above the national average. In 2000, the results were average overall but the proportion obtaining the higher grades (A and B) was below average. In 2001, all students obtained at least a pass grade and their overall results were similar to those in 2000. All 16 students who took the new AS-level examination in 2001 passed, and a third achieved the higher grades.

235. The standards of work of the current Year 13 students are above average. Most of these students already obtained higher grades in the AS-level examination last summer (2001). Their standards of practical performance are high and several have achieved representative honours in their chosen activities. Their analysis of their own performance is good, and they use their evaluations well to identify ways in which they can improve still further. The highest attainers use their research skills effectively to add to their portfolio of work with, for example, wide-ranging accounts of the development and organisation of their chosen sports. The least competent students tend to limit the scope of their study to the framework for investigation provided by their teachers. The quality of students' theoretical work varies but it is generally weaker in the area of exercise physiology. Across the course as a whole, students achieve well.

236. Year 12 students make good progress and are thriving. Most of them achieved higher grades in their GCSE PE examinations and many are skilled performers in their own areas of sporting interest. They come to lessons well prepared and take notes assiduously. Some already have the confidence to challenge each other, and their teachers, in discussion.

237. Teaching and learning are uniformly good. Teachers have good relationships with students and adopt a lively approach which encourages their full involvement in lessons. Year 13 students gained in understanding of energy systems because the teacher skilfully increased the level of challenge in the questions and gave them the confidence to relate the theory to their own performance. Discussion is particularly well handled; for example, in Year 12, where numbers are high, a wide range of students contributed to discussion and the interest of the whole class was well sustained. Resources are exploited effectively, for example, the published course specification materials, and this is appreciated by the students.

238. The new AS-level course is a popular choice with numbers increasing from 16 in 2000, to 28 this year and retention rates are high. Around a third of these students have joined the sixth form from other schools and are pleased with their choice of course. Students have very good attitudes to learning, in both theoretical aspects and personal performance. Most convey their views and opinions confidently and effectively and have a sound understanding of current national and international issues relating to sport. Students are using their knowledge and understanding gained from the course effectively to improve their own performance in their own sports. Some students make good use of computers in their research work.

239. The subject is very well led and well managed in the sixth form. Examination results are analysed well and students' strengths and weaknesses in different aspects of the course are well known. A high proportion of A-level students hold representative honours in team or individual

sports at school, county or national level which contributes well to the development of confidence and skills in their chosen activities.

## **Leisure and tourism**

Overall, the quality of provision in leisure and tourism is **good**.

### **Strengths**

- well qualified teachers, experienced in GNVQ methods
- well organised curriculum based on examination specifications
- good vocational context, using up-to-date materials
- well motivated students, capable of independent study

### **Areas for improvement**

- Year 12 students' ability to analyse statistics
- students' extended writing
- the monitoring of teaching and learning

240. Results in the GNVQ Advanced in Leisure and Tourism in 2000 were well below the national average but they improved in 2001. Results in the Intermediate GNVQ in Year 12 were average in 2000 and improved in 2001. Retention rates have been good although some students drop out to take up employment.

241. In Year 13, the AVCE students in Travel and Tourism are reaching average standards and for these students that is a good achievement. Students show good learning skills and are well motivated. They use computers well, although many of them rely on their home computers because it is difficult to find a computer at school. They work well with minimum direction. They understand the precise requirements of assignments and know what to do to improve their grades. When told of the standards required by the external moderators, the students agreed to produce the extra evidence needed, which was to demonstrate their knowledge of tourist destinations by setting up a simulation, which could be video-recorded. They organised themselves in their respective roles and invited others to participate. They revealed good attitudes and a willingness to raise their standards. Students have good numeracy skills, evident in their handling of complex data about the economics of tourism. They can also research Internet web sites effectively, but their written work is below average.

242. In Year 12, the current AVCE students are reaching average standards and their achievement is good. The work output of the class is slow, but their work in discussions is good and they have grasped the main features of the tourist industry in Britain. However, they still lack the necessary background in analysing the complex statistics they need to use. Most of the students can work with minimum supervision, but a few are immature and hold back the rest. They can research using the Internet to search for tourist destinations.

243. Standards of work of the students taking the Intermediate GNVQ course in Leisure and are average and the students are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their poor GCSE results. Students of middle to lower ability can speak well and can understand difficult concepts. In examining the segmentation of the tourist market, they analyse tourist destinations by reference to social classifications, and suggest suitable marketing material. Their understanding of precise technical language is good.

244. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are trained in GNVQ methods. They plan lessons well and have good relationships with their students. In some cases, students are not given sufficient opportunities to question when teachers feel they must impart a lot of information. The most successful lessons are those when

students are fully involved but this is not always the case. Teachers use assessment effectively and provide good guidance on the detailed criteria set out in the AVCE specification. Teachers pay attention to preparing students for examinations and help them to develop good study skills.

245. Students have positive attitudes and many have mapped out a career in this vocational area and many students work part-time in the industry. In class, the students behave and act in a mature manner and seek opportunities for additional study, as in their extensive use of the Internet to research material from the main tourist operators.

246. The subject helps to develop students' key skills in numeracy, as statistical analysis of destinations by type of person is central to many of their enquiries. Their good computer skills are shown in their folders, often with examples of good graphical presentation. Spoken communication skills are well developed in their presentation of findings, but their extended writing needs further improvement in order to achieve higher overall standards in their assignments. Overall, the subject makes a good contribution to their key skills.

247. The curriculum and assessment are well organised by the subject leader. There is a need, however, to clarify their role in monitoring of teaching and learning in order to raise standards.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

248. The school provides AVCE courses in Health and Social Care. The results were good in 1998 and 1999. There were six students taking the courses in 2000, when results were poor. One lesson was observed during the inspection in which Year 12 students were achieving average standards in their study of physical aspects of health care and teaching was satisfactory.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

249. A-level and AS level courses are offered in art and design (textiles) and in art and crafts. The performing arts course is offered at AVCE for students in Years 12 and 13. Dance, drama, music, performance studies and music technology are offered at GCE AS and A Levels. These courses are becoming increasingly well established. The focus of the inspection took in all of the above courses.

### **Art and design**

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design (textiles) and art and crafts is **good**.

#### **Strengths**

- teachers have a good command of their subject
- a good range of extra curricular activities
- good resources to support independent learning

#### **Areas for Improvement**

- the proportion of students achieving the higher grades at A-level
- the use of assessment to inform departmental planning
- the use of ICT

250. The A-level results have been below average overall but have steadily improved over the past three years. Although the proportion of students gaining grades A and B in 2000 was below the national average, all students passed the examination. Two students with modest grades at GCSE did particularly well. Students entered for the A-level art and crafts course tended to be more successful than those entered for textiles. Results improved in 2001, although the entry was small. All of the students passed, with three of the four students achieving a grade B and one a grade C. In relation to their GCSE results, they did as well as expected. At AS level, all students passed.

251. The standards of work of current A - level students are average. The range of ability is wide with a number working at a high level. In Year 13, students are achieving well in relation to their earlier GCSE results. In the lessons seen, they were doing well as a result of effective teaching which demands much of them. Students work with a sound degree of individuality and many show in-depth analysis and exploration of ideas and styles. Studies based on *The Water Edge*, in which the students experimented with the pattern of waves as an influence for dress and hat design resulted in high quality design sheets, which reflected a good level of conceptual and personal response. A higher attainer's research on natural form showed a critical analysis of images and texts which resulted in excellent sculptural forms influenced by *Art Nouveau* but this understanding was less evident amongst less talented students. Students achieved well when working with a professional designer and learned the techniques of producing a mood board.

252. Year 12 students taking the AS course are only a little way into it but are achieving well. They are successfully moving on from their GCSE work into new areas and build on the challenge of individual study and interpretation. In the lessons seen, students experimented with a range of printing techniques to be developed in a textile project. They showed growing ability to interpret and convey ideas and to use analytical and documenting skills. The lesson structure clearly focused their ideas and gave them clear direction on how to use exploratory techniques to develop projects.

253. Teaching is good and students learn well as a result. The teachers have a good command of their subject and the specialisms they teach. A major strength of the sixth form is the emphasis given to independent thought and learning. The high quality of individual attention and knowledgeable advice plays an important role in developing this and raising standards. Students are treated as individual artists and well supported by the staff when working on their own projects. For example, a Year 13 student was given good direction when advised to look at work by environmentalist artist Andy Goldsworthy and was encouraged to experiment with a similar piece on the local reservoir. Units are well planned and often culminate with a presentation by the students of their projects. These are well supported by study sheets, which give clear direction on what is to be done and how it will be assessed.

254. The quality of dialogue about analysis and evaluation of the work is particularly high and, in some lessons, students and teachers record the results of their discussions for future reference. This gives clear reference about the routes to follow to raise standards of work. There is scope for this good feature to be developed further and fed into the department's formal assessment systems.

255. Students learn well. They have very positive attitudes to their work, enjoy art and respond enthusiastically to the supportive teaching and different learning styles that they experience in their lessons. Many students choose to extend their work in the art-room in their own study time. Most can work independently and pursue lines of development in longer-term project work. Sketchbooks reflect a high level of personal commitment with research from visits to galleries and places of interest. For example, a student had taken interesting photographs of formations of wet sand and pebbles on the seashore, which led to high quality textural collages based upon the sea. The teachers' enthusiasm for the subject encourages students to be receptive to new ideas and fresh viewpoints and most of the students are eager to consider views and beliefs other than their own. Students support and help one another effectively and talk and listen to each other's ideas and confidently contribute to discussions.

256. The independent work students undertake is well prepared and tasks complement the content of the lessons well. Students have access to a wide range of media and competently use these to extend their practical work. Books and artefacts linked to themes being studied act as a very effective stimulus and support to learning. The teachers have produced good quality resources such, as topic boards, with ideas on projects and an emphasis on contemporary artists which greatly assist students who are less confident in independent learning. At present there is only one computer and no other ICT equipment such as scanners or digital cameras and this restricts the development of work in this area.

257. The department is well led and managed and the good teaching and learning are a direct result of this. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved – which is considerable - and to improving standards. Since the previous inspection, the department has introduced new schemes of work which have resulted in a more personal response from students. Consequently, students now confidently work in a variety of media and scale. Individual teachers use assessment well. They analyse results and set targets but they are not presently used to inform whole departmental planning. Extra-curricular activities are good, with the curriculum strongly enriched by links with performing arts, visits to exhibitions and working with artists such as an American painter of murals. The department contributes well to students' spiritual, moral and cultural development through class projects, multicultural study and autobiographical studies.

## PERFORMING ARTS

Overall, the quality of provision is **very good**.

### Strengths

- standards are above average on all courses
- the good teaching and impressive specialist expertise
- the good leadership and management
- relationships between students and teachers inspire confidence
- the very good accommodation

### Areas for improvement

- resources for music within the performing arts area

258. Overall, standards are above average. In 2000 the A-level results were broadly average, with three of the six candidates gaining grades A or B; this was an improvement on the previous year when, in a larger group, results were again average but no candidate gained grade A. The most recent results, in 2001, show a very good improvement, both in numbers entered and in grades achieved: all nineteen students passed and of these, eight were grades A or B. The retention rate for the course is good; most students who take the advanced vocational course go on to complete the A-level course successfully, and several also take another A-level course in music, drama, dance, performance studies or music technology.

259. Students usually go on to study at degree level, but an increasing number of students are exploring opportunities in the music industry, and one or two go directly into professional performing. Students are becoming increasingly versatile in developing their musical, acting and dancing skills. All perform well, and several achieve a very high standard. In practical work, they show a high ability in interpreting situations and emotions, communicating these effectively to an audience through movement, music and characterisation. Year 13 students created a dramatic realisation of a little-known but compelling piece of local history for performance in the local community, successfully combining the various strengths of composing, singing, acting and dancing skills that different members of the group possess. Their research into the background was thorough, ideas were judiciously selected, planning was coherent and the dramatic realisation maintained a consistent sense of the historical period. Consistency was evident, too, in the style of the musical setting which had aptly taken its stimulus from Brecht and Weil. Rehearsals of different scenes showed great commitment to presenting to the public work of the highest possible standard. Students' written work shows good levels of literacy, and more able students write economic accounts of their work in which essential technical terms and points of reference are appropriately used. Music students confidently make use of the sophisticated music technology equipment to record and edit their work. Students start with levels of attainment which are average in comparison with those on similar courses in other schools nationally. Their achievement is therefore good overall and many achieve very well. Some Year 13 music



students compose very well and are developing individual styles; all are competent performers, and some perform at a very high standard.

261. Teaching and learning are good. In addition to its teachers of dance, drama and music, the department staff includes both a composer and an actor in residence. All staff draw on their considerable expertise to provide students with a broad range of practical experience and theoretical knowledge. Lessons are well planned and time is used effectively. Teachers know their students well and provide a suitable range of targets for their individual needs. Students aiming to improve their articulation were set a homework task of devising a tongue-twister. Teachers allow students to develop their ideas independently, but are prepared to intervene to ensure that time is used productively. Relationships are very good, within an atmosphere of mutual respect which encourages students to develop confidence and a willingness to experiment with unfamiliar concepts. As a result of the teacher's personal experience and skilful, enthusiastic communication, in one lesson the students developed good understanding of the cross-rhythms of African music and were able to emulate the basic characteristics of movement in African dance. Occasionally, lessons are not sufficiently tightly structured, students do not know how to improve further and time is lost.

262. Students concentrate and work hard in response to the high expectations of teachers, and collaborate well with one another. The girls are more confident in suggesting ideas and in planning and organising the use of their time than are the boys. All students are anxious to succeed and set themselves high targets. When discussing a choral speech arrangement of a poem, students carefully considered the effectiveness of different gestures, body attitudes, and the use of space and different levels in communicating their interpretation to an audience, making very good progress both in stagecraft and in the use of appropriate technical vocabulary.

263. As a result of acquiring special status as a Performing Arts College, much of the accommodation has been adapted to provide a high quality suite of dance and drama studios and a theatre which has a professional quality lighting board. The music department's recording studio has professional standard recording and editing equipment.

264. Leadership is good. Courses are efficiently organised and teaching and learning are monitored to maintain high standards. The assessment of students' work is very good. Routine assessment ensures that the work set is modified to assist students with particular difficulties and to show them how to improve, and the students are involved in a good self-assessment system. Staff meet regularly, and although there are several part-time members of staff care is taken to keep all fully informed and involved in the development of different courses and activities. Staff are alert to the importance of combining different art forms and work in close collaboration with each other. As a result, students have regular opportunities to accompany each other's musical or dance performances, or compose music for particular events. One Year 13 student had started to create the score for the dance and mime sequences of a community theatre project, and planned to work with a video-cassette to ensure that music and movement were effectively synchronised. Performances take place frequently, both in school and in a variety of venues outside. The annual musical performance permits students of all art-forms to make significant contributions to a large-scale production.

## **HUMANITIES**

265. The school offers courses in history, geography, sociology, psychology and religious studies at A-level and AS level. The main focus of the inspection in this curriculum area was on history but geography, sociology and psychology lessons were also sampled.

266. In geography there were no A-level students in 2001 and only 2 in 2000 and they did not do as well as expected from their GCSE results. The number of students of geography has increased in the current Year 12. Two sixth-form lessons were seen and, in these lessons the teaching was good and standards were average in the Year 12 lesson and above average in Year 13. A Year 12 sociology lesson was seen in which the teaching was excellent and students

were achieving high standards. A Year 12 psychology lesson was also seen, in which the students were practising a past examination paper, and standards were judged to be average in this lesson.

## History

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- good results achieved by AS students in 2001
- the marking of students' work

### Areas for improvement

- resources, especially of basic textbooks
- use of assessment data to clarify the students' potential

267. The A-level results for 1999 and 2000 were below average. In relation to their predicted grades, based upon their performances at GCSE, students in 2000 did not do as well as they should have done. However, the results significantly improved in 2001. Although no student gained the grade A, the results were better than predicted. Similarly, the AS results were encouraging, with 14 of the 22 students gaining at least one A grade in one or other of the two papers.

268. The standard of work of current Year 13 students is average overall and represents a satisfactory achievement for these students. Their coursework is above average but other work is average. A lack of resources limits the amount of independent work the students can undertake. There are no maps available which are adequate for teachers and students, for example, to clarify important aspects of Russian foreign policy. The standard of work of the two Year 12 classes is also average and achievement is satisfactory overall.

269. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. However, some of the marking is exemplary - it is detailed, informative, illuminating and encouraging. The teachers have a good knowledge of their subject. Because of a lack of textbooks, the students' independent learning is unsatisfactory. Books are referred to in class but specific reading requirements are not made clear.

270. The subject management is satisfactory but the quality of assessment varies and the department makes little use of existing data to inform planning or set expectations.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

271. The focus in English was on the combined English language and literature course but English literature was also sampled. In literature, results were below average in 2000. The students did not do as well as expected considering their GCSE results. Standards improved significantly in 2001. One lesson was observed and the teaching was very good. The standards of the current Year 13 students are above average, confirming their grades in the AS examinations in Year 12. They worked quickly and perceptively when comparing the symbolic similarities and differences in three poems. They were especially good at identifying the implied ambiguities in the poets' choices of language.

### English language and literature

Overall, the quality of provision is **very good**.

**Strengths**

- examination results are well above average
- the teaching is very good
- the subject is becoming increasingly popular
- the leadership and management are very good
- support strategies ensure that students complete the course successfully

**Areas for improvement**

- use of target grades for individual students to aim for
- teaching of higher attaining students

272. The results of the A-level examination in 2000 were well above average, although there were only seven candidates. Six students passed at grades A-E and more than half passed at A-B. No students failed to complete the course. The girls tend to do better than boys. In relation to their GCSE results the students did much better than expected. Overall results fell slightly in 2001 at the highest grades but overall they were good.

273. Since 2000, the numbers studying English have grown rapidly to 30 in Year 13 and 40 in Year 12. Standards of work are well above average in Year 13, as indicated by the students' Year 12 AS results. No student failed to complete the AS course; all passed and nearly half of them achieved grades A and B. The students are achieving well because of a combination of their own strong motivation and very good teaching. In one lesson, students made good use of their knowledge of linguistic frameworks, as well as cultural and historical perspectives, to analyse different nuances of the word 'dream' in different contexts. In another, they were probing in their analysis of a scene from *Richard II*, often using other knowledge of Shakespeare's themes to enhance their understanding. The work of the highest attainers is well argued and supported with detailed references.

274. Year 12 students are only a little way into their course but are coping well with the transition from GCSE to AS work. They acknowledge that they are on a steep learning curve but the work seen showed clearly that they are developing the ability to read critically that underpins success. One girl quickly perceived how the rhythm of Sillitoe's prose matched the rhythm of long distance running. They are developing confidence with the technical language of the subject. They analysed another piece to show how its sentence structure conveyed the persona of a young girl.

275. Teaching is very good overall and leads to very effective learning. The teaching has no particular weaknesses except for the guidance of the higher attaining students. The main strengths of teaching are considerable subject expertise, thorough planning, good pace, and very high level of challenge. Lessons are varied, and this helps to motivate the students and engage their interest. A lesson on *Richard II*, in which a student led the analysis of a section of the text, was demanding and the students drew others into an interpretation of the text's meaning. Richard's complex character was taken apart and when a key point was in danger of being lost, the teacher stepped in at just the right moment to draw attention to it.

276. In all lessons there was a clear challenge to the students' independent thinking and support for their difficulties. For example, in one lesson, the teacher's individual help enabled the students to make good progress in their coursework - they were clear about how to improve the work, yet retained ownership of it. The teachers' enthusiasm for the subject also has a beneficial effect on students' learning; for example, in the etymology of words, illustrated by a teacher's explanation of the meaning of the term *interposition* in an American English context.

277. Students learn very well. They concentrate very well when working by themselves and waste no time. They are keen to participate in lessons and work independently, often using the Internet to research texts.

278. The subject is well led and managed. The monitoring of teaching and learning is effective and leads to improvements and to rising standards. The rising numbers taking English courses means that most teachers can specialise to a degree which enhances their own professional development. Target-setting is in its infancy regarding expectation of grades to be achieved, and this is acknowledged both by teachers and students. The support for students is an important factor in the high retention rate on the course. Those students who start the course with only a GCSE grade C are carefully supported and monitored to ensure that they can cope with the transition to advanced work. However, there is less guidance and help for the higher attaining students, other than in the provision of individual coursework aimed at an appropriate level.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

279. The focus was on French, but Russian was also sampled. At present no German is being taught at all in the sixth form, and Year 12 Russian is being taught this term outside school pending the arrival of the new co-ordinator of Russian. One Year 13 Russian lesson was observed. Standards are good, as they were in GCE A-levels in Russian in 2001 and in German in 2000. The teacher is fluent in Russian and can draw out from the students comments which demonstrate their developing fluency in the language, for example in discussion of environmental issues in present-day Russia. Students' achievement is good.

Overall, the quality of provision in French is **good**.

### Strengths

- good teaching
- above average standards
- the resources are good

### Areas for improvement

- writing skills of the weaker students in Year 12
- the accommodation is poor

## French

280. Most students, nearly always girls, pass the examination. Because there were so few A-level candidates over the past few years, comparison of the results with national figures would be misleading. The numbers of Year 12 students taking the course have increased from three or four a year to eight in the present Year 12. The Year 12 students' standards of work are rising and are above average. In the two Year 12 lessons seen, it was clear that students' speaking and listening skills are already advanced. They are expanding their vocabulary considerably and their comprehension skills are good. The learning atmosphere in lessons is lively and the work proceeds at a brisk pace.

281. In Year 13, standards of work are also above average although there are only four students. These include two high achievers with A grades at AS level gained at the end of the previous year. The students are working well in response to good teaching. The outcomes of discussion in pairs leads to informative plenary sessions with insights shared, for example, into the causes and consequences of delinquency. Written work is also good and reveals a good knowledge and understanding of structures such as the subjunctive of the verb.

282. Teaching is good overall. On occasions, the teaching is very good and when this is the case students achieve very well. The students are expected to imagine themselves in the position of others and to express in French their associated feelings and thoughts; for example, of French resistance workers in World War 2, and this linked easily and naturally with similar concerns about war in Afghanistan. The teachers are fluent speakers of French, providing good role models for the students and developing effective use of French through skilled questioning techniques. Students learn well, acquiring good language skills which they are already using, for

example, on work-experience in France. The students are well organised and familiar with the ICT resources available to them in the library, especially satellite TV with a recording service. From early in their school career they have been trained to work independently and they do so with confidence. They are attentive in lessons taking a full part, but there is also an awareness that an important aspect of their learning is what they do on their own.

283. All four Year 13 students can speak freely in French. They all have clear career ambitions which they can discuss in French. They spoke of their acceptance of responsibility within the school, both in assisting Year 7 pupils with their early language work and in the organisation of a 'Modern Languages at Work' day for Year 9 pupils.

284. The leadership and management of the curriculum area. is good. An updated, detailed scheme of work covers the syllabus and provides the basis for good lesson planning. Examination outcomes are analysed, so that the department's situation and potential are well understood but teaching and learning are not monitored formally. The accommodation is poor, as was also reported at the time of the previous report.