

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **WAINGEL'S COPSE SCHOOL**

Woodley

LEA area: Wokingham

Unique reference number: 110070

Headteacher: Richard Green

Reporting inspector: Brian Evans  
1049

Dates of inspection: 12-16 March 2001

Inspection number: 186741

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: Community

Age range of students: 11 to 18 years

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Denmark Avenue  
Woodley  
Berkshire

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Michael Vosser

Date of previous inspection: January 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1049	Brian Evans	<i>Registered inspector</i>		How high are standards? The school's results and students' achievements; How well are students taught? How well is the school led and managed?
14032	Marion Saunders	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Students' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20609	Carol Worthington	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
12844	Mick Saunders	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Drama.	
27585	Ken Hounslow	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science.	
3753	Hamish Wilkie	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.	Assessment.
11672	Peter Harle	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music.	
11838	Derek Cronin	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern foreign languages.	
15407	Muriel Harrison	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography.	
17556	Michael Miller	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art.	Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
10895	David Wasp	<i>Team inspector</i>	History; Equal opportunities.	
7926	James Bowden	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education; Special educational needs.	
27407	Bill Stoneham	<i>Team inspector</i>	Business studies; Economics; Sixth Form.	
1578	Maureen Sinclair	<i>Team inspector</i>	Religious education; Personal and social education.	

1990	Graham Preston	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and communications technology.	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Waingel's Copse is a large comprehensive school situated to the east of Reading. It draws students from several estates of rented and owner-occupied housing. There are 1479 students, including 262 in the Sixth Form, a roll which is bigger than that of the average secondary school. The intake of students from primary schools represents the full range of ability, and students' attainment on entry to Year 7 is just above the national average. Employment levels in the area are well above average and the proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well below average. The school has a small proportion of ethnic minority students, and the number of students who come from homes where English is not the first language is low. The proportion of students on the register of special educational needs and with statements is well below average. A high proportion of students stay into full-time education after the age of 16 years. Waingel's Copse is accredited as an Investor in People school.

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

Waingel's Copse is a good school. Standards are above average, and students, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in most subjects. Students have good attitudes to learning. Significant improvements have taken place in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. There is an effective focus on raising literacy and numeracy standards and on the personal development of all groups of students in the school. There are good care and guidance arrangements. Behaviour is good. The good leadership of the headteacher, with the full support of the senior management team, is having a positive impact on students' academic achievements and on the quality of teaching and learning. Measures leading to improvement are delivered in a cost-effective way, providing good value for money.

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

- Good teaching and positive attitudes to learning;
- Very good behaviour. The school implements a good social inclusion policy;
- Above average standards in English and mathematics;
- Students achieve well in literacy and numeracy;
- Students with special educational needs achieve well;
- Provision for students' moral and social development;
- Above average attendance.

### **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

- Standards of average attainers in science;
- The monitoring of Sixth Form students' attainment and attendance;
- Application of new technology across subjects;



- Students' spiritual development in all key stages.

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since the previous inspection in 1996. It has maintained the momentum for improvement and there is a clear trend towards higher achievement throughout the school. The proportion of good or better teaching has improved significantly and the range of teaching styles has improved. There is a good learning environment. Provision for students' personal and social development is better co-ordinated, and taught by a small group of teachers. There has been good improvement in the provision for students with special educational needs. Individual education plans for students with special educational needs meet the requirements of the Code of Practice. Progress has been made in bringing about a more balanced allocation of teaching time in Key Stage 3 subjects, but there is a need of further review. The school has good strategies and systems to maintain improvement in standards, but this improvement is jeopardised in some subjects by difficulties in recruiting specialist staff. The school does not meet requirements for collective worship.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	B	B	B	D	<i>well above average</i> A <i>above average</i> B <i>average</i> C <i>below average</i> D <i>well below average</i> E
A Levels/AS Levels	D	B	C	N/A	

GCSE results have been above average for the past three years. The average GCSE point scores for both boys and girls have been above the national average. However, in 2000, boys' average point score was above the national average and girls' results were well above the national average. This reversed the position which obtained in 1999. The trend in the school's average point score per student between 1996 and 2000 was broadly in line with the national trend. In 2000, the GCSE average point score was below the average for similar schools. Inspection evidence shows that, by the age of 16, students' standards in English language and literature, mathematics, drama, information and communication technology (ICT), geography, French, German and physical education are well above average, and students achieve well. Standards are above average in science, history, business studies and economics. Average attainers in science underachieve. Standards are below average in religious education. Students make good progress in Years 10 and 11.

In mathematics and science between 1997 and 2000, the average point score per student in Key Stage 3 tests at age 14 has consistently been well above average. The average point score in English has fluctuated during the same period but since 1998 has moved upward, from average to well above average in 2000. In English and mathematics, average scores were above average in 2000 when compared with those of schools in similar contexts. In science, the average point score

was average when compared to similar schools. The proportion of students reaching the higher levels in English was well above average in comparison with schools in a similar context; in mathematics it was above average, and in science it was average. In the period 1996-2000, trends differ in the three subjects. Mathematics shows a gradual upward trend, English shows a more erratic upward trend, and science shows a gradual downward trend. Overall, across the core subjects, the trend from 1996 to 2000 in average points score was below the national trend. Inspection evidence confirms the above standards in the core subjects. By the end of Year 9, standards in most other subjects are above those expected by age 14. Students make good progress overall in Key Stage 3.

In A Level examinations, the average points score per candidate has fluctuated. It was above average in 1996 and 1999, below average in 1998, and close to the national average in 1997 and 2000. On the basis of the average for the last three years the points score was close to the national average. In 2000, all students gained A-E grades in art, business studies, design and technology (DT), English language, English literature, French, geography, mathematics and theatre studies. Results in the advanced General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) course were well above average, and below average in the GNVQ Intermediate course.

Standards in numeracy and literacy are above average in all years and students achieve well. Students' ICT skills are above average in ICT lessons, but most subjects are still in the process of planning its use in their schemes of work.

High attainers and students with special educational needs make good progress. The school sets itself high performance targets in Key Stage 3 tests and in GCSE examinations, and in most years it succeeds in meeting them.

## **STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Students respond well to the positive ethos in the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good around the school and in nearly all lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. There is good involvement of staff and senior students, and they provide good role models. Students show maturity in carrying out their responsibilities.
Attendance	Above average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Very good

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

Teaching was good in 37 per cent of lessons, very good in 32 per cent and excellent in a further 5 per cent. Teaching was satisfactory in 25 per cent of lessons and unsatisfactory in 1 per cent. There has been a very significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the inspection in 1995. Since the previous inspection, senior managers have placed a priority on improving teaching and learning, and inspection evidence shows that this emphasis has had a positive effect on standards.

Teaching in the Sixth Form is very good. In all key stages, teaching is very good in English, mathematics, and drama for all groups of students. It is generally good in most other subjects. All groups of students make at least satisfactory progress, and inspection evidence shows that most students apply themselves well to gaining further knowledge and skills. Most teachers show good awareness in developing the learning skills of all groups of students, including those with special educational needs. Students acquire good learning routines and respond positively to the targets set for them in classwork. They concentrate well and take pride in their work. Many take advantage of open-ended tasks to produce work of a high standard.

Literacy and numeracy are well taught in most subjects. The school has adopted an imaginative approach to raising standards of literacy across all subjects. Two Advanced Skills Teachers are effectively co-ordinating a school approach to the teaching of basic skills. The teaching of ICT skills in subjects is not as good, and most teachers are at an early stage of monitoring and assessing students' ICT skills.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum does not fully meet statutory requirements in ICT and the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good, and improved since the last inspection. Students identified as having special educational needs are making good progress in their lessons and towards the objectives set out in their individual education plans.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Very good for the low number of such students in the school.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Moral and social provision is very good; cultural provision is good, and spiritual provision is unsatisfactory. There is a good personal, social and health education programme.
How well the school cares for its students	Good. Child protection procedures are satisfactory. The school has a wide range of effective strategies to support students' academic and personal development. The new termly arrangements for reporting to parents include a good review of a student's progress, and targets are set for each student to achieve. There is a comprehensive performance database, and routine analyses to support planning. The school works well with the majority of parents.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides good leadership and has a clear vision for further raising standards. The senior management team is effective and supportive. Most middle managers monitor performance and standards effectively but there are weaknesses in the management of science and the Sixth Form.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governing body operates well and provides good support for the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. A performance management system is being implemented in line with statutory requirements.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The new building programme addresses deficiencies in accommodation. The investment in new technology is providing a good base for the integration of ICT into all subject programmes of study. The library provision is well used and is a good learning resource for all students. The school applies effectively the principles of best value.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The school expects their children to work hard.</li><li>• Their children like school.</li><li>• The school helps their children to become mature and responsible.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Homework.</li><li>• The school working closely with parents.</li></ul>

The inspection team agrees with the parents' positive comments. Inspection evidence shows that homework is generally set regularly, is recorded in students' record books and is in line with school policy. A significant number of parents found it difficult to communicate with the school, but the inspection evidence showed that most parents are happy that the school's arrangements are responsive to their needs.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Students' results in standardised tests and in national tests in Year 6 show that the overall profile of attainment on entry is just above average for Year 7 in comprehensive schools. By the age of 16 students are achieving standards that are above average.

2. In mathematics and science, average points scores per student in Key Stage 3 tests at the end of Year 9 have been consistently well above average between 1997 and 2000. Students' average point score in English has fluctuated during the same period but since 1998 has moved upward from average to well above average in 2000. In 2000, average scores in English and mathematics were above average. When compared to those of schools in similar contexts, results in the Year 2000 were well above average in English, above average in mathematics, and average in science. In English, the percentage of students reaching higher levels was well above average in comparison with schools in similar contexts. The percentage was above average in mathematics, and average in science. Trends between the three subjects differ in the period 1996-2000. Mathematics shows a gradual upward trend, English shows a more erratic upward trend, and science shows a slight downward trend. Inspection evidence confirms the above standards in the three core subjects. Overall, students achieve well in the core subjects and make good progress.

3. Inspection evidence shows that, by the end of Key Stage 3, standards are above average in art, geography, history, French, German, music and physical education. They are well above average in drama and in DT, and students achieve well. In religious education, standards in Years 7 and 8 are in line with the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus. In Year 9, however, students receive a lower than average allocation of lesson time, and attainment is below that generally expected at the age of 14.

4. Provision for literacy is good and is managed well by the designated Advanced Skills Teacher. Standards are above average. Inspection evidence shows good practice in English, drama, music, history, geography and learning support. Key words are displayed in classrooms and referred to regularly by teachers. Students are given support with the reading resources in these areas, and structured worksheets are used to support their written work. Sixth-form students are trained to help younger students with their reading. The draft literacy policy links well with the assessment procedures.

5. Standards of numeracy are above average. Number and graphical skills are applied well in science, geography, ICT, and DT. The school has a good strategy for building on the National Numeracy Strategy in primary schools. An Advanced Skills Teacher is effectively developing numeracy in all subjects.

6. Students' ICT skills are above average. The improved staffing and resources in ICT, together with the more closely focused whole school management, is beginning to prove effective in raising standards. However, the development of ICT in other subjects has been slow, and current curriculum and assessment arrangements need improvement to cover fully the National Curriculum requirements in Key Stage 3.

7. The proportion of students achieving GCSE five or more grades A\*-C has shown gradual improvement since 1996. It has been well above average for five or more grades A\*-C and grades A\*-G for the past three years. The GCSE average point scores for both boys and girls have been broadly in line with the national average, and rising in line with the national trend. They are below the average when compared with those of similar schools. Overall, inspection evidence confirms these standards and students achieve satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11. A key factor in the rising standards has been the significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection.

8. The proportion of GCSE A\*-C grades in English language in 2000 was well above the national average, and all students achieved an A\*-E grade. Inspection evidence indicates that current standards are well above average in Years 10 and 11. In mathematics, the proportion of students attaining GCSE grades A\*-C was well above average in 2000 and significantly higher than in English and science. The school enters a significant number of students for their GCSE mathematics examination at the end of Year 10. In 2000, all 25 candidates achieved an A\* or A grade. The proportion of students in 2000 attaining GCSE grades A\* to C in science was above average. High attainers achieved well, but inspection evidence shows some underachievement for students of average ability.

9. Inspection evidence shows that students' attainment in art and in DT, by the age of 16, is above average for both full and short courses, with girls achieving higher standards than boys. In drama, geography, physical education, French, and German, GCSE standards are well above average and students achieve well. All students are entered for a GCSE modern foreign language examination and they perform better in this subject than in most of their other subjects. In travel and tourism, attainment is below average because students' independent learning skills are not well developed. History standards are above average and students achieve well. In religious education, attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is below the levels expected. Students are not taught the locally Agreed Syllabus in sufficient depth and make unsatisfactory progress in their understanding of world religions. Business studies and economics standards are average by the end of Key Stage 4. Standards in full and short GCSE courses in ICT are well above average, and generally above average for all students by the age of 16. Most students make at least satisfactory progress.

10. The number of candidates entered for two or more A Levels has risen since 1996. Average points score per candidate has fluctuated – above average in 1996 and 1999, below average in 1998, and close to the national average in 1997 and 2000. On the basis of the average for the last three years the A Level points score per candidate is close to the national average. In 2000, all entrants achieved A-E grades in their A Level examinations in art, business studies, DT, English language, English literature, French, geography, mathematics, and theatre studies. Results were below average in history, and well below in computer science and physics. Advanced General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) course results were well above average, with over 80



per cent of candidates gaining merits or distinctions. In Intermediate GNVQ courses, completion rates were well above average, but only a third of candidates gained merits. This is below average. The school needs to develop its use of value-added data in the Sixth Form, to help students make informed choices of courses and to monitor their progress and the standards they achieve.

11. Sixth Form students achieve satisfactorily. In French, progress is very good. Students work with confidence and are developing a good understanding of the French language. Their oral skills are developing well. Students' progress in history and mathematics is good and the history department has made good provision for the new curriculum requirements, introduced in September 2000. Students in other subjects make satisfactory progress. Business students' research skills are not well developed, because they need access to up-to-date information technology equipment. Students' progress in the key skills of communication, application of number and the use of information technology are satisfactory, but there is a need to address further the teaching of key skills throughout the Sixth Form.

12. Students identified as having special educational needs make good progress in relation to their capabilities. Teachers plan work effectively to match the ability range of the students, thus enabling them to make good progress. Since the previous inspection there has been good improvement in the provision for students identified as having special educational needs. The number of learning support assistants has been increased considerably, and students at all stages on the school's register of special educational needs are now supported. The school's policy has been re-drafted and all students with statements of special educational needs now have individual education plans.

13. The school is meeting its realistic and challenging examination targets. These are based on a sound analysis of students' attainment levels on entry to the school.

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

14. Students' attitudes to school are good. They enjoy their lessons and respond with enthusiasm and commitment to their work. Students take a full part in school activities and in events such as Red Nose day, which occurred at the end of the inspection. This resulted in a number of very worthwhile activities such as a Balloon Debate, which was both enjoyable and raised money for charity.

15. Behaviour in classes and around the school is very good and in some lessons excellent. Students are very clear about the school's expectations regarding behaviour, homework and school uniform, and understand the sanctions for not complying with these. Permanent exclusions from the school are few, and the school carefully analyses the pattern of fixed term exclusions.

16. Relationships throughout are very good and students respond well to the adults in the school. Staff provide good role models for students. Occasional incidents of bullying occur. Most students believe that these are dealt with effectively, and do not see oppressive behaviour as a problem at the school. There is a well-organised system which involves Sixth Formers in mentoring students on issues such as bullying.



17. Students' personal development is good. They help during various school activities such as parents' evenings. The head boy and girl co-ordinate meetings for Years 7 and 8, and their views feed into the main school council meetings. This gives students an opportunity to raise issues of concern, and the students see it as worthwhile and effective in achieving change. Sixth Form students set a good example. Their attitudes towards work and school are very good. Older students are involved in a reading programme with younger students. Students with special educational needs are appreciative of the help and support they have received from the learning support department and subject teachers. This is reflected in their positive attitudes to the school.

18. Attendance is above average. For the year 1999/2000, the attendance rate was 94.2 per cent, which is well above the national average, and the rate of unauthorised absence was 0.3 per cent, which is below the national average.

19. Most students are on time at the start of the school day and lessons start promptly throughout the day. In a few Sixth Form subjects, standards are adversely affected by above average levels of absence. A few Sixth Form students commented on the levels of absence from some lessons by some students, and on what they perceived as a lack of consistency and rigour in monitoring attendance.

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

20. Teaching was good in 37 per cent of lessons, very good in 32 per cent and excellent in a further 5 per cent. Teaching was satisfactory in 25 per cent of lessons and unsatisfactory in 1 per cent. There has been a very significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the inspection in 1996. Overall, teaching is good in Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good in the Sixth Form. The quality of teaching for the small number of students for whom English as an additional language is good.

21. Overall, the considerable emphasis by senior management on improving the range of teaching styles since the last inspection has borne fruit. Teaching is mostly very good for all groups of attainment in all years in English and mathematics, and there are some outstanding lessons. An example of excellent teaching occurred in a Sixth Form lesson on dialect. There were three major elements which enabled students to make very good gains in knowledge and understanding. First, the teacher had high expectations which led to students striving hard to achieve their best work. The teacher's subject knowledge and lesson plan built on these high expectations. Second, the high standards were based on very good teaching of the basic analytical skills needed to tackle the interpretation of the text. This skill encouraged students to work independently, with sensitive support when necessary from the teacher. Third, the teacher's assessment of how well the students were learning meant that the work matched individual achievement levels. It was difficult, but skilful questioning ensured that lesson objectives were not beyond the individual student's reach. In consequence, students were well-motivated and made very good progress.

22. Specialist teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is good. There are good policies for identifying underachievement and taking account of students' needs. These policies benefit all students, including those with special educational needs, boys and girls, and high, average and low

attainers. Teachers plan well for students to practise their ICT skills in English, but in mathematics these opportunities are more limited. There are good examples of ICT teaching in English and art, and most heads of department are in the process of planning its use in their schemes of work. At present, most subjects do not have satisfactory procedures for monitoring and assessing students' ICT skills.

23. In science, the quality of teaching is good but there is a variation between teachers from very good to satisfactory. Science teaching is weaker in Years 7 and 8 because work is not as well matched to students' levels of attainment. Teachers' expectations in science are good for high attainers and satisfactory for average and low attainers. In art, teaching is good in Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good in the Sixth Form where very good learning takes place with students learning from each other. Drama teaching is very good in all years. Teaching is generally good in DT, French, German, geography, history, discrete ICT, economics, business studies, religious education and physical education. Most teachers teach basic literacy and numeracy skills well. The few unsatisfactory lessons are characterised by low expectations and lack of subject expertise on the part of the teacher, and by work which is too easy for many students in the class.

24. Students make good progress and acquire good learning routines. They take pride in their work and are keen to complete tasks. In a Year 7 mathematics lesson, students were highly motivated and showed a clear enjoyment of learning when experimenting with different number patterns. In a Year 9 music lesson on exploring the rock and roll genre, students arrived keen and enthusiastic, ready to build upon previous work and improve their performance. Students respond well to the school's process of target setting and take pride in their completed work. Students with special educational needs in a Year 11 class asked permission to take home their computer disk so that they could continue working. Students readily work in pairs or in groups, as was seen in a Year 12 French lesson which produced lively discussion on a newspaper article. In a Year 8 food technology lesson, good collaboration amongst students making a flan enabled them to divide the work between them and operate more efficiently.

25. Teachers mark work regularly. In the best practice seen, teachers indicated clearly what students needed to do to improve their work. Homework is well designed and supports learning effectively. A range of tasks is set, including some that encourage students to acquire knowledge and understanding for themselves. A few students take advantage of open-ended assignments to produce work of a very high standard.

26. The quality of teaching for students with special educational needs is very good, particularly in the small group withdrawal lessons. Well-structured and clearly focused activities help to ensure students that are on task and motivated. Students respond positively to teachers' high expectations, in a positive learning atmosphere which enables all students to make good progress. In a Year 11 youth award lesson, for example, the teacher effectively diffused the potentially challenging behaviour of one student. Such progress is indicative of the teachers' expertise and their very good knowledge and understanding of students identified as having special educational needs.

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

27. Curriculum provision has improved since the previous inspection and is satisfactory. All students study a modern foreign language and time allocation for science has been increased. Religious education is now compulsory in Key Stages 3 and 4 and the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is much improved. The quality and range of learning opportunities is satisfactory in all key stages. A good range of options is offered in Key Stage 4. However, there are weaknesses. The curriculum is broad and relevant in Key Stage 3, including all National Curriculum subjects, religious education, drama, PSHE and a second modern foreign language in Years 8 and 9, but it is not entirely balanced. Students who take a second modern language lose half their physical education teaching time. The rotation of music, personal and social education, religious studies and drama disrupts continuity in learning in these subjects. In the previous inspection, this rotation was criticised as limiting the students' progress in vocal and instrumental skills, and this is still the case. The ICT curriculum does not meet statutory requirements because it does not include measuring and monitoring. Time allocation for religious education in Years 9 to 11 is insufficient to cover the locally Agreed Syllabus adequately.

28. The school broadly succeeds in its aim to provide courses suitable to challenge all abilities. High attainers in Key Stage 4 take three science courses, for example, and an accelerated mathematics course, which enables them to sit the examination for GCSE in Year 10. Low attainers are given good support in developing their basic skills and have the opportunity to study for the Youth award and other work-related courses.

29. Students in the Sixth Form are offered a good range of academic subjects at A/AS Level, some vocational courses, and a general studies course, but statutory requirements are not met for the provision of religious education. There is a lack of enhancement and enrichment in the provision for Sixth Formers. Links with industry are not well developed. There is no co-ordinated work experience or work-shadowing programme.

30. Provision for students with special educational needs is good. The learning support department integrates its provision well into the school curriculum, to ensure that the breadth and balance of students' learning experience is not affected. Appropriate provision is made for a student with a statement of special educational needs who is disapplied from the National Curriculum. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 meets the needs of students identified as having special educational needs and offers them appropriate choice.

31. The range of extra-curricular sporting, music and learning activities is good. The school has a good record in team and individual sports, and many students gain representative honours. A large number of students receive instrumental tuition and participate in choirs and bands. Dramatic productions are of a high quality.

32. The school shows a strong commitment to providing all its students with equality of access to the full range of the curriculum. Public examination results are analysed closely for gender imbalance. Provision for gifted and talented students has improved since the previous inspection. Provision for PSHE is satisfactory overall with some considerable strengths, and the 'virtual babies'

give students valuable insight into parenting. A newly appointed co-ordinator has developed a good programme which includes health and sex education, drug awareness, careers education and units in economic and industrial awareness. Well-chosen materials relate to the students' experiences and support good teaching. A noteworthy feature is the involvement of students in evaluating these learning resources. An audit of subjects which already teach aspects of citizenship has been completed and forms the basis of a more structured programme. Although the co-ordinator attends head of year meetings, other aspects of the pastoral system are not strongly linked with the PSHE provision. For example, whilst some form tutors emphasise targets that centre on personal development, most focus on students' academic achievement.

33. Provision for careers education and guidance in PSHE is satisfactory and is timetabled from Year 9 onwards. Satisfactory arrangements are in place for Year 10 students to undertake work experience, and the school ensures that Year 11 students are given sufficient information and advice about education and work opportunities to plan their careers beyond the age of 16. Sixth Form students are given very good advice about higher education, including the opportunity to attend a higher education convention hosted by the University of Reading. In all aspects of careers education and guidance, school staff work harmoniously with staff from the careers service.

34. The school has satisfactory links with the local community, and is regularly used during the evenings; there is an adult education centre on the school site. Regular links are maintained with the local police, clergy and others to extend the curriculum. Good links with contributory primary schools have improved continuity in literacy and numeracy strategies. The head teacher chairs a useful meeting of the heads of local primary schools once a term.

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

35. The overall provision for the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is good, though no member of senior management has specific responsibility for the monitoring of it. Neither do all departments include statements on provision in their policy documentation. Consequently, improvement since the previous inspection in the school's provision for students' spiritual development has been unsatisfactory. There are isolated pockets of good practice but no co-ordinated approach across the curriculum. The school has not properly considered what its common spiritual focus should be, either in 'religious' or 'secular' terms. Spirituality is largely seen as the domain of religious education. Opportunities for students to gain self-knowledge and consider life issues are satisfactory in religious education and personal, social and health education (PSHE). There are good opportunities for students to enrich their creative imagination in English, drama and art. The school works hard at improving the quality of its environment, and teachers emphasise self-respect and the value of individual achievement.

36. The school does not meet the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship. Overall provision remains unsatisfactory. There are accommodation constraints, but a weekly assembly is held for each year group. An alternative 'Thought for the Day/Week' is provided, but few form tutors take any opportunity to consider this with their students. There is no whole school policy on collective worship. Representatives from local Christian churches sometimes take assemblies, and the religion's major festivals are celebrated. No records of assemblies are

maintained, and the school was unclear as to the extent of its celebration of other world faiths through collective worship.

37. In contrast, provision for the students' moral and social development is very good. There are high expectations of good behaviour, and the students themselves have been involved in drawing up the school's code of conduct. Provision for sex education and drugs awareness is good through PSHE. The school makes very good use of outside agencies such as the police and theatre groups in such work. Students properly understand what is acceptable both morally and socially. There are good opportunities for students to respond to moral issues in debate, particularly through English, drama, religious education and history. Year 11 students showed a mature approach to their consideration of rights and responsibilities in relation to euthanasia, whilst a Year 8 class reflected upon different types of relationships. The school celebrates good behaviour, and this raises students' self-esteem. It is a socially inclusive approach. This strong mutual support, which underpins and values the individual, is to be seen, for example, in art, music, drama and sporting activities. All Sixth Form students undertake some form of community service. Students are given the responsibility to act as receptionists and guides for visitors, and there is an active school council. Older students are involved in supporting reading work with younger students, and Sixth Formers undertake pastoral support work. The development of citizenship is currently sound through PSHE. Planning is properly in place for its full introduction as required under the new National Curriculum orders. The school's ethos promotes values of kindness, generosity, loyalty, politeness and honesty. Students are enabled to recognise when they have made a mistake, and they are not afraid to apologise.

38. Provision for the students' cultural education is good. The inspection identified a variety of opportunities for students to study, and become aware of, the rich range of multicultural and multiethnic influences which enhance contemporary British society. In general, however, the school presents a Eurocentric approach and there are missed opportunities, for example, through display work, to promote a broader cultural awareness in the minds of the students. Again, this imbalance results from a lack of overall monitoring of SMSC provision. For example, in art there is good evidence for students studying work from African, India, Japan and indigenous American and Australian cultures, but work of this kind is not yet given a sufficiently high profile across all subjects of the curriculum. Use of the Internet to promote students' cultural and multicultural understanding has yet to be fully developed. There can be significant contrasts in subjects such as geography. Here, displays about lesser economically developed countries tend to focus on disasters, which can lead to a negative impression. However, the department is very positive in its preparation for a visit to Nepal and Tibet. The school offers a wide range of European cultural, residential and exchange visits through modern foreign languages. English and drama contribute well through extensive theatre visits, public speaking opportunities, and the range of texts studied. Economics presented a high quality display of information about different world currencies. Religious education provides good coverage of the major world religions. Music places its studies effectively in world, as well as historical, contexts.

## HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

39. The school provides a safe and secure environment for students. The school premises and grounds are very well maintained and there is a planned programme of maintenance and repair. In general, health and safety procedures are closely adhered to but there is not yet a programme of full risk assessments in all subjects. New procedures for child protection are satisfactory, but staff need to be regularly reminded of these procedures. First aid provision is well managed and carefully monitored.

40. The school has very good procedures for promoting and monitoring both attendance and good behaviour. Systems such as the behaviour reporting booklet are used consistently across the school with good effect.

41. Monitoring of students' personal development is good. The academic tracking system effectively identifies potential problems. The developing role of the head of year, and the fact that each class retains the same tutor from Year 7 to Year 11, provides an effective structure for monitoring personal development. A mentoring system, which uses Sixth Form students attached to individual classes, provides students with an alternative means of support should they require it. The mentoring system is understood throughout the school. Students with special education needs receive good support, and many students make very good use of the extra-curricular activities and support provided within the learning support unit at lunchtimes.

42. The school has made good progress in addressing issues raised in the previous inspection. New termly reports to parents, called 'Tracking Summaries', have been developed, taking into account the views of teachers, students and parents. These reports provide student assessment data in the form of National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades in all subjects and judgements on aspects of personal development. Targets are set at a level to challenge students appropriately. Individual progress is reviewed termly. Assessment procedures are good and records are kept on a comprehensive database. A member of the senior management team conducts routine detailed analysis of these, including analysis of gender differences, subject variations, teaching group variations and forecast grades. This data is now being used very effectively in conjunction with data from the termly report tracking, to help pinpoint underachievement.

43. Assessment practice varies between subjects. Practice is good in mathematics, English, special educational needs and history, but it is unsatisfactory in science. Assessment is used very well to plan future learning in mathematics, history, music, modern foreign languages and sociology but less effectively in science, religious education and physical education. Overall, the school has made good progress in assessment since the last inspection. It now needs to ensure consistency across subjects.

44. Support for students with special educational needs is good. Reviews draw upon a wide range of professional opinion and consultation with parents or carers and students. This provides for and effectively informs the updating of students' records on a regular basis. Individual education plans are in place for all students at stages 2 to 5 of the special needs Code of Practice. Targets set for students are generally clear, concise, challenging yet



attainable. The learning support department is able to draw upon a range of assessment data to enable it to identify those students who need support and place them on the school's register of special educational needs. Other data is collected, but the use of this to plan further practice and planning is not yet fully developed.

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

45. Most parents have positive views of the school. Parents are particularly pleased with the progress their children are making and believe that the school expects students to work hard and achieve their best. Some parents are not happy with the style of information they receive about their child's progress and the school is aware that the recently introduced reporting system that emphasises the use of tracking forms is not universally welcomed. A significant number of parents are dissatisfied with the way the school works with parents. The inspection found that in many instances there is a considerable amount of liaison between home and school and that this is generally very productive.

46. The school's links with parents through parents' meetings are good. Over 90 per cent attend parents' evenings. There is good use of homework diaries and there are monthly newsletters home. Written reports on students' progress give clear information on what they are achieving, but do not include clear targets as to how they can improve. Information about the school in the prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents is clearly written. Information for new students and parents is very good.

47. Parents give good support to their children's learning and progress. Many students have access to computers at home and a number of parents are active in the Parent Teacher Association, which organises fund-raising and social events. Some parents also help with school trips and with extra-curricular activities such as rugby.

48. Parents and carers of students identified as having special educational needs receive copies of their child's individual education plan, and students have their targets from these pasted into their school diaries. This helps heighten awareness of the support offered to students by this process.

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

49. The headteacher provides strong personal leadership, supported by other senior staff. He is a visible presence around the building and sets the tone of the school. His clear-sighted leadership ensures that in all its activities the school works purposefully towards clear aims which are shared by staff, students and parents. Management structures have improved since the previous inspection. A good performance management policy, based on a restructured leadership group, is being put into practice. The two Advanced Skills Teachers with responsibility for literacy and numeracy contribute effectively to discussions on policy at a senior level. The senior management team has successfully focused on raising the quality of teaching and learning and is leading the improvement of standards in most subjects.

50. The school development plan is a good management tool and is built on good consultation with staff and governors. It is clear, and offers a realistic one-year improvement plan linked to a five-year strategic plan. The school development plan includes strategies to raise students' achievement in science and in ICT. With the help of the governing body, the school evaluates its initiatives well. School policies are clear and reviewed regularly, though there are some omissions. For example, there is no policy for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

51. Members of the senior management team have complementary strengths and give strong support to the headteacher. Responsibilities across both pastoral and academic areas have been delegated efficiently. There are clear lines of management and accountability aimed at raising academic standards and the quality of teaching and learning. The senior management team is a very effective and visible presence around the school during lessons and during breaktimes and lunchtime.

52. The headteacher is now in a position, with the support of the senior management team, to focus on strengthening the role of middle managers in monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning. Most middle managers fulfil their leadership and administrative roles well but there are weaknesses, notably in the management of science and of the Sixth Form. The Sixth Form has virtually doubled in size since the previous report and has remained cost-effective. In other respects, the management of the Sixth Form is unsatisfactory because students' work and attendance is not monitored effectively. The use of value-added statistics to target and drive improvement in the weaker subjects lacks rigour.

53. The governing body operates well, fulfils most statutory requirements, and provides good support for the school. However, the curriculum does not meet fully the National Curriculum requirements in DT and in ICT. There is little religious education teaching in the Sixth Form. Governors adopt a sensible 'critical friend' approach to the development of the school.

54. Administrative staff play a valuable role in the overall efficient management of the school. Good support is given by community liaison staff and by those responsible for the maintenance of the site.

55. Induction and mentoring arrangements for newly qualified and newly appointed teachers are good, and are supplemented by a very comprehensive handbook. The programme for staff development is good and is integrated into the school's performance management policy. The school has Investors in People accreditation.

56. Accommodation is satisfactory. Library provision is good. The main library and Sixth Form library are both well used by students and teachers, and library stocks have markedly improved since the last inspection. The librarian works well with subject departments to ensure there is good provision of books for learning support. In addition, good use is made of the library loans service, and books may be kept in boxes in the library or sent to classrooms to encourage topic research by students. Computer equipment and a limited range of software are available for use by individual students at lunchtimes and after school. The library also holds a good collection of careers information and videos for students' use. The school buildings are maintained in a very good condition. Resources are satisfactory overall, and are good in physical education.

57. Financial planning is good. The governors' finance committee meets regularly and is well informed. The senior management team implements an annual planning cycle for the school development plan. Subject development plans and those of other budget holders, such as the special educational needs co-ordinator, are linked to the school plan and monitored by senior staff. The school pays due regard to the Code of Practice for special needs, and the register of special needs is effectively organised and up to date. The special educational needs co-ordinator has successfully introduced the use of new technology to make administration procedures more efficient. The budget is managed well and the school balances its annual budget. Financial control is good. The finance manager is very efficient in administering the budget and keeping track of spending. Routine management and administration are efficient, and good records of all the ancillary accounts are kept. The very recent audit was satisfactory and included only a few minor recommendations, all of which have since been fully implemented.

58. The strategic use of resources, including grants by central government and the local education authority (LEA), are used effectively and have a positive effect on students' learning. For example, students' performance in national tests in Year 9 and GCSE examinations are well above the average when compared with similar schools. All funds for students with special educational needs are used correctly and efficiently. The school applies the principle of best value well in its use of resources.

59. Students' attainment on entry is just above the average for comprehensive schools. Attendance is above average. Attitudes to learning and students' behaviour are generally very good. By the end of Year 11, attainment is well above average. Students' achievement is satisfactory and often good. The deployment of staff makes effective use of their expertise, and a high percentage of teaching is good. These factors, considered in relation to high costs per student, indicate that the school is providing good value for money.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

60. In order to raise standards further, the headteacher, governors and staff should:

- improve performance of average attainers in science by:  
(*Paragraphs: 8, 23, 52, 83, 89, 90, 91*)
  - \* including in the science scheme of work guidance for teachers on the matching of work to students' level of knowledge and understanding;
  - \* broadening the range of resources to meet the needs of average attainers;
  - \* bringing the science handbook up to date and reviewing the policy on teaching and learning.
- improve management of Sixth Form students by:  
(*Paragraphs: 10, 11, 19, 29, 52, 53*)
  - \* monitoring the performance of individual students more rigorously;
  - \* applying a more effective value-added approach to the setting of targets for the individual student;
  - \* monitoring attendance at lessons.
- extend opportunities for students to apply their ICT skills in all subjects by;  
(*Paragraphs: 6, 22, 27, 53, 77, 90, 104, 110, 115*)
  - \* fulfilling National Curriculum requirements for ICT in all subjects;
  - \* improving staff expertise by continuing to implement the staff development programme for information technology (IT).
- improve provision for students' spiritual development by:  
(*Paragraphs: 3, 19, 27, 35, 50*)
  - \* agreeing and implementing a school policy on students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;
  - \* ensuring that all departments include statements of provision for spiritual development in their policy documentation;
  - \* reviewing arrangements for meeting the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus in all key stages.

61. The following matters are identified as weaknesses which should be considered by the school:

- Collective worship and arrangements for thought of the day.  
(*Paragraph: 36*)
- Timetabling and carousel arrangements.  
(*Paragraphs: 66, 136, 172*)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	182
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	52

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

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	32	37	25	1	0	0

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

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

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth Form
Number of students on the school's roll	1217	262
Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals	48	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth Form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	26	0
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	219	0

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	63

Student mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

### *Attendance*

Authorised absence	%
School data	94.2

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.3

National comparative data	93.7
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National comparative data	0.4
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*Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

### *Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3*

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year:	<b>Year</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>
	2000	102	143	245

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of students at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	75	84	76
	Girls	137	127	112
	Total	212	211	188
Percentage of students at NC Level 5 or above	School	87 (78)	86 (80)	77 (80)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of students at NC Level 6 or above	School	52 (23)	64 (58)	48 (44)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of students at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	63	85	86
	Girls	126	128	126
	Total	189	213	212
Percentage of students at NC Level 5 or above	School	77 (85)	87 (83)	87 (80)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of students at NC Level 6 or above	School	36 (53)	60 (60)	51 (44)
	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*

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:	<b>Year</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>
	2000	116	121	237

<b>GCSE results</b>		<b>5 or more grades A* to C</b>	<b>5 or more grades A*-G</b>	<b>1 or more grades A*-G</b>
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	57	110	112
	Girls	86	119	121
	Total	143	229	233
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	60 (60)	97 (98)	98 (100)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student – 2000	School	42
	National	38.4

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	0	N/A
	National		N/A

*Attainment at the end of the Sixth Form*

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A Level or AS Level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	54	61	115

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	14.7	16.7	15.7	3.4	1.3	2.0
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7



***Ethnic background of students***

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	1
Indian	28
Pakistani	7
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	6
White	1404
Any other minority ethnic group	31

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	1	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	49	2
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	82.5
Number of students per qualified teacher	17.2

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

Total number of education support staff	28
Total aggregate hours worked per week	566

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74
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***Financial information***

Financial year	<b>1999/2000</b>
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	£
Total income	3426,118.00
Total expenditure	3442,335.00
Expenditure per student	2323.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	82000.00
Balance carried forward to next year	65783.00

**Average teaching group size:**

**Y7 – Y13**

Key Stage 3	23.1
Key Stage 4	22.5

*Results of the survey of parents and carers*

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

1479
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Number of questionnaires returned

306
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**Percentage of responses in each category**

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Tend to agree</b>	<b>Tend to disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
My child likes school.	35	55	8	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	40	54	4	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	18	64	10	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	57	17	6	1
The teaching is good.	22	65	4	1	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	52	16	5	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	39	47	8	4	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	50	45	3	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	18	55	18	6	4
The school is well led and managed.	30	52	6	5	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	55	7	1	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	18	49	9	5	19

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

### **ENGLISH**

62. Key Stage 3 English test results in 2000 were well above the national average and above average when compared to similar schools. In the GCSE English language examinations in 2000, students achieved a well above average proportion of A\*-C grades. The improving trend in results in Key Stage 3 tests and in GCSE examinations over the past three years is broadly in line with national trends. In both language and literature GCSE examinations, all students achieved an A\*-G grade. Girls in GCSE English language performed significantly better than their performance in the average of their other subjects. Boys, by the same comparison, performed to an equivalent standard. In English literature, performance was below the average of results in other subjects, particularly so for boys. In the 2000 A Level GCE examinations, one out of every three students who were entered for English language and literature examinations achieved an A or B grade. This was broadly in line with students' performance nationally.

63. Inspection evidence shows that standards in the current Years 11 and 13 are higher than those indicated by the 2000 results. This is due to a combination of factors. After a period of staffing difficulties, new specialist appointments have been made. Good staff deployment has brought better coherence and direction in the teaching and has led to improved teaching and learning and good progress. New syllabuses more closely reflect the interests and capabilities of students, particularly boys.

64. By the end of Key Stage 3, low attainers are able to write in clear and structured ways. High attainers are able to sustain the reader's interest, and show a developing and sophisticated awareness of audience and style. As well as writing to tell stories and to record and inform, students are able to review, analyse, and reflect. For example, a review of *My Parents Are Aliens* for a primary school audience enabled students of a wide range of ability to write with genuine engagement and purpose. *Carrie's diary*, a response to a reading of *Carrie's War*, was a similarly well-chosen task which opened up opportunities to show empathy and understanding.

65. By the end of Key Stage 4, students make good progress, so that writing for argument and analysis is a strong feature of their work. Low attainers communicate straightforwardly and with a reasonable grasp of grammatical and presentational conventions. The best work of high attainers showed students capable of extended and assured analysis and argument. These skills were shown in their discussion of the supernatural as a force in *Macbeth* and when they compared the satirical devices used by Orwell and Swift. The same qualities are evident in the writing of Sixth Form students. Their analyses of film, narrative and newspaper texts show engagement, intelligence and originality.

66. Most students achieve well in all years. Students' attitudes to learning are very good. The majority expect to work hard and to be enjoyably challenged by their experience of English. They pay attention and concentrate. They trust their teachers and respond well to opportunities to learn through writing, reading, talking and listening. Opportunities to support others' learning through the

paired reading scheme or mentoring programme are taken up enthusiastically. The same is true of the extensive menu of extra-curricular activities associated with English. Students are keen to be involved in public speaking competitions, theatre visits, the creative writing club and much more. Good attitudes are also encouraged by the accommodation for English. Classrooms are well-kept and colourful. Displays exemplify students' best work and achievement.

67. Overall, standards of teaching are very good in all years. Support for students with special educational needs is good. Particular members of staff advise on and oversee provision for special educational needs, including those of gifted and talented students. Lessons are planned well and take account of students' levels of knowledge and understanding. They are well paced, with varied and motivating activities. Setting arrangements work well, and the wide range of resources ensures that students of all abilities are attended to and supported. However, timetabling arrangements are sometimes not conducive to the best achievement in English. Single lessons of 35 minutes, for example, do not allow for the development and extension of students' learning. Conversely, where classes have the majority of their English lessons concentrated in a single day, there is overload for both teacher and taught. Overall, standards of teaching are very good across all key stages. No lessons were unsatisfactory.

68. In Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form, some outstanding lessons were seen. In a Year 11 lesson, students were preparing to give presentations on poems from the GCSE Anthology. Mixed gender groups had been carefully designated, and texts assigned to match the level of difficulty with students' abilities. Assessment criteria for the work were clearly explained to the students. The teacher's careful attention to detail enabled boys and girls of varying ability to discuss the work in focussed and supported ways and to present to their peers convincing readings and interpretations. Enjoyment, challenge and attainment were clearly evident.

69. The same was true of a lesson on *Macbeth*, to a class in which there were eight students on the special educational needs register. A learning support assistant and a Sixth Form mentor contributed to a thoroughly productive series of activities. These included brainstorming, annotating, and presenting orally and in writing significant findings concerning plot and character. In a Sixth Form lesson examining the lexical and grammatical features of dialect, students were taken through a series of activities of increasing complexity. They were presented with film and written extracts of Roddy Doyle's dialogue, leading them progressively to understand how non-standard English might be creatively represented. It was remarkable teaching characteristic of the quality seen in the Sixth Form. Teaching is based on very good schemes of work. Lesson plans make explicit what is to be learned, and include clear target-setting procedures. Students of all attainment levels, including those with special educational needs, receive particular and appropriate attention.

70. The teaching of literacy has high priority. Students show a confident grasp of technical terminology. They are given opportunities to use talk for learning in a variety of ways and are generally good and supportive listeners. Their writing shows substantial progress over time. Knowledge of grammar, style and audience is explicitly developed. Well-constructed worksheets give students good support for their writing in a variety of genres. Students' awareness of their development is encouraged through a direct reference to National Curriculum levels. Each student has a personal file of assessed pieces from Year 7 onwards, which traces and exemplifies progress.

71. Leadership of the department is excellent. The department handbook includes comprehensive and imaginative schemes of work. Roles and responsibilities within the department are clearly defined. Specific attention is given to the development of key skills, including ICT skills. The strengths of the department are known and appropriately deployed through the school's arrangements for the monitoring of performance, though the monitoring aspect of the head of department's role needs to be further developed. The continuing professional development of its staff is a good feature of the department's planning. The ethos of the department is collaborative, supportive and professional.

72. The points for action arising from the last inspection have been successfully addressed. There are good strategies in place to tackle the comparative underachievement of boys in examinations at Key Stage 4, and work is modified appropriately for different groups of students. Provision for students with special educational needs is good. Access to ICT facilities has improved, and students have good opportunities to apply their word-processing skills. Monitoring and marking of students' work is good, and reporting on students' progress is consistent and supportive.

### **Literacy**

73. Provision for literacy is good. A designated Advanced Skills Teacher, who is a member of the school's senior management team, provides strong and effective leadership. Each department has conducted a literacy audit to identify subject needs and current strategies to meet them. Inspection evidence noted good practice in English, drama, music, history, geography and learning support. Key words are displayed and taught. Support is given for the reading resources in these areas, and modified worksheets are used to guide students' written work. Sixth-form students are trained to contribute to a programme of paired-reading activities with younger students. Good liaison takes place between English teachers and primary colleagues who are teaching literacy at Key Stage 2. A successful Literacy Summer School was run for Year 6 students. A bridging initiative has been set up with primary teachers to provide continuity in the literacy programme between primary and secondary schools. The action plan for the school has been well thought through and sensibly staged. The draft literacy policy is concise and clear. It links well with the school's assessment and recording policy. The student-friendly level descriptors, the tutor reviews of progress, the tracking summaries, and the marking policy; all are elements in an effective battery of measures to attend to and develop students' literacy skills.

### **MATHEMATICS**

74. When they enter the school, students' attainment is just above the national average in mathematics. Standards of attainment in the 2000 National Curriculum tests at age 14 were well above those expected nationally and above those for similar schools. The proportion achieving higher levels was also well above national averages. There was little difference in the attainment of boys and girls, and the results were similar to those for the previous year. The results were also similar to those for science and English.

75. In the GCSE examinations in 2000, students attained well above the national average for grades A\*-C. Girls attained significantly better than boys, and this changed the previous pattern, where there was little difference in their attainment. Attainment was significantly higher than in English and science. The policy of entering Year 10 students for the mathematics GCSE examination has been very successful. In 2000, the 25 students achieved 15 A\* and 10 A grades. In A Level examinations, students attained above average grades overall and an average proportion of grades A and B. This was a similar picture to that in 1999. Small numbers of students were successful in their further mathematics A Level examination. The high level of knowledge and understanding gained by students in Key Stage 3 and 4 provides a good base for many to continue their mathematical studies into the Sixth Form.

76. Inspection evidence confirms the standards achieved in the 2000 examinations. Students achieve well in all years. By the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4, students' work is generally well above the national average. Standards in A Level mathematics are above the national average. High levels of achievement reflect teachers' high expectations and the positive attitudes of the students to learning. Students enjoy mathematics. Standards in all aspects of mathematics, including investigations and problem-solving are above average. Numeracy skills are generally above average. The National Numeracy Project has been introduced in Key Stage 3 and provides further impetus to improving number skills across all subjects.

77. By the end of Key Stage 3, high attainers handle linear inequalities with confidence, while low attainers calculate simple probabilities with accuracy. By the end of Key Stage 4, high attainers use the radian measure for angle and solve simple trigonometric equations. Low attainers can calculate bills accurately and use metric and imperial units with some confidence. In the Sixth Form, students use their advanced knowledge of the integral calculus to solve first order differential equations with confidence. Students' standards of presentation are generally good. In many lessons, students discuss their work with confidence, using appropriate mathematical language. Good application of ICT was seen in a small number of Year 11 investigations, where students used spread sheets effectively to calculate formulae and to display data. However, students' application of ICT skills in mathematics is limited and is an area which requires further development. Calculators are used sensibly and generally appropriately in lessons.

78. Students' progress in lessons is generally good. A major feature of many lessons is the eagerness of students to progress and the enthusiasm of teachers to help them fulfil this desire. Students enjoy explaining their understanding of topics to the class and enjoy working in pairs. Particularly good progress was seen in a higher attaining Year 9 group working on sketch graphs. These students progressed from simple sketches to understanding some of the basic concepts involved in differential calculus. Another example was seen in a Year 12 A Level lesson, when students moved very quickly from basic expectation theory to applying it with confidence to linear functions of discrete probability density functions. Students with special educational needs make good progress in lessons. Talented mathematicians are entered for GCSE mathematics in Year 10.

79. Teaching is good. In half the lessons observed, it was very good. This is a significant improvement on the previous inspection. The behaviour and attitudes of students to learning mathematics are good. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and demand high standards. The past records of most classes are on display in the classroom to motivate students. For example,

the third highest attaining teaching group in Year 11 was striving to match the results of the similar group from the previous Year 11. The competition is healthy and students enjoy measuring their progress in the regular tests in all years. Teachers use assessment effectively to plan progress. Homework is used well to complement classroom learning. Students in all teaching groups of a year are challenged appropriately. Very good relationships underpin the learning process. Students enjoy using and considering real world data. For example, displays of the cases of foot and mouth disease from the 1966 and present outbreak were being used to help data handling skills.

80. Management of the department has some excellent strengths. Teachers work well together to secure high standards. The head of department has established a very efficient and effective delegated structure for the department and is supported totally by a group of very dedicated and hard working senior and experienced teachers. Teaching is monitored well and the assessment procedures within the department are very efficient. However, a weakness is the absence of a formal department handbook outlining structures, procedures, policies, development planning, and responsibilities for the day-to-day and long term functioning of the department. Since the previous inspection the department has raised standards significantly because the quality of teaching has improved. Overall, it has made good progress.

## **Numeracy**

81. Standards of numeracy are generally above average. The school has recently introduced a good numeracy initiative to help raise standards. This is being efficiently co-ordinated by an Advanced Skills Teacher whose particular brief is to raise standards of numeracy across the curriculum. The initiative involves regular testing to determine progress. It is too early to assess the impact of this initiative. Number skills are applied well in several subjects of the curriculum. In science, students plot experimental data accurately and evaluate formulae; in geography, they plot river flow data and investigate correlation between gradients and flow rates; in DT, they learn to weigh and measure accurately; and in ICT, they learn to use formulae within spreadsheets. Students make good use of data handling and of display skills in A/AS Level and vocational courses.

## **SCIENCE**

82. In 2000, students' attainment in Key Stage 3 tests was well above the national average. Between 1997 and 2000, students' average point score in Key Stage 3 tests showed a slight downward trend. In this period, average point scores in science have fallen by about 4 per cent, while those in English and mathematics have increased by about 2 per cent. Results in science were broadly similar to those in mathematics and English when compared with all schools in 2000. However, when compared with those in similar schools, the results for both English and mathematics were above average, while those for science were below average. At the age of 11, students enter the school with well above national average results in science and above average results in mathematics. By the age of 14, students make greater progress in mathematics than in science. There has been no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls in the past three years.

83. Attainment in GCSE examinations in 2000 was above the national average. GCSE results over the last three years have remained fairly constant. There is no significant difference in the

performance of boys and girls. The performance of students in GCSE science, based on improvement from their Key Stage 3 test scores at the age of 14, is well below average, whereas performance in mathematics and English is well above average. Average attainers underachieve in their GCSE science examinations. In contrast, high attainers achieved the expected highest GCSE grades. Overall, students achieve satisfactorily in Key Stages 3 and 4. Students with special educational needs make good progress because teachers respond to targets identified in their individual education plans.

84. Sixth Form students achieve well in their A Level studies. The proportion of students who achieved A Level examination grades A-E was close to the national average in 2000. This has consistently been so over the past five years. Over time there is no significant difference in the performance of students in A Level physics, chemistry and biology. All three science subjects are popular with students, with the departments achieving above national average take-up rates. Sometimes departmental heads allow students to start their A Level course with lower than expected GCSE grades, which occasionally results in the student failing to obtain a grade A-E.

85. By the end of Key Stage 3, students make sensible predictions about how well known metals will fit into a reactivity series. A key feature of the well above average work is the ability of students to apply their knowledge and understanding well to previously unknown situations. For example, they can describe how it is possible to separate two liquids by distillation after a brief introduction to the process. Above average numerical skills enable students to use a calibration graph of a spring to find the mass of a stone. High attainers have high levels of recall and understanding of previous work, but this is not the case for average and low attainers. Students' understanding of the principles of fair testing is good. They have a good awareness that variables must be controlled, and they apply these principles well during their practical work.

86. By the end of Key Stage 4, students have good literacy skills which enable them to interpret difficult pieces of technical writing. Above average levels of numeracy support the high attainers to achieve well above average GCSE results in Year 11. Good graphical and data-handling skills enable this group of students to achieve the highest marks for their coursework. Middle and lower attaining students have relatively low levels of knowledge and understanding of previous work, which inhibits their attainment at GCSE.

87. Students in Year 13 have good knowledge and understanding of previous work. Advanced level biology students interpret graphical data well when learning about biotechnology. In chemistry, students apply well the concept of oxidation number to redox reactions. Students studying A Level physics show good understanding of fields and potential.

88. Students' attitudes to learning are very good, and they concentrate well. Behaviour is mostly very good. Students work very well together when carrying out experiments. They work safely and wear safety glasses properly when required. Students answer teachers' questions in a courteous manner and to the best of their ability. These very positive attitudes on the part of students are not consistently reflected in their test and examination results.

89. Overall, the quality of teaching is generally good in all years but there is some variation between teachers. The support of the senior management team has been effective in addressing



some of these variations. During the inspection there were no unsatisfactory lessons. Classroom management is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding. Expectations are good for high attainers and mainly satisfactory for average and low attainers. Lessons are carefully planned, often using a range of resources and methods, but teachers do not pitch work suitably for differently attaining groups of students in the same class. Work is better matched to varying levels of attainment in Years 9 to 11. Teachers provide work usually matched to the needs of the gifted and talented students, who obtain very good results. There is inconsistency in the quality of marking. Comments on work frequently do not indicate how students should improve their work. The quality of written reports to parents is unsatisfactory, because they do not fully report the strengths and weaknesses of students in all four science attainment targets. The use of homework to support students' learning is satisfactory.

90. The department has addressed most of the issues raised in the last inspection but, overall, management of the subject is unsatisfactory. The departmental handbook has not been revised since 1995 and is out of date. The programme of study and GCSE dual science GCSE course meets the needs of high attainers. It is less suitable for average and low attainers, because it requires high levels of recall and understanding of previous work. Lesson planning for mixed ability groupings in Years 7 and 8 does not meet the needs of all groups of students. ICT requirements in the National Curriculum are not fully met because there is not enough equipment to carry out data logging experiments.

91. The department is well supported by an efficient technician team. The quality of the accommodation is satisfactory. However, small laboratories, a limited preparation area, and a significant proportion of lessons taught out of laboratories does have an adverse impact on the quality of learning especially in the Sixth Form. The department gives due regard to health and safety but some problems exist. For example, the department makes use of written risk assessments through the Hazcard system but does not have written risk assessments for all experiments and demonstrations.

## **ART**

92. In 2000, students were entered for both GCSE full and short courses. More students took the short course. In the full course, results for GCSE grades A\* to C were just above the national average. They were well above average in the short course. GCSE results have been inconsistent and have fluctuated since the last inspection, but overall attainment has been above average. However, although A\* to G grades have remained just above average, the higher A\* to A have been consistently below. There were no A\* grades in 2000 in either course. Girls consistently achieve significantly better than boys in art. In 2000, students averaged over half a grade lower than in other subjects taken at the same time.

93. In the Sixth Form, students study a range of examination courses. In 2000, one student was entered for AS Level art and gained a grade E. All students entered for A Level since the last inspection have gained an A to E. However, the higher A to B pass rate was below the national average in 2000. There has been a steady decline in these higher grades from a point where they were well above average following the previous inspection. Seven students entered the advanced

General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) course in 2000. Six gained a merit, but there were no distinctions. However, this represents the best results since the department adopted the course in 1997, and indicates a steady improvement. Seven students also entered the intermediate GNVQ, which the department has been offering for only two years. There were no distinctions, but two gained a merit and three a pass.

94. Standards in lessons are mainly above average for current students in Years 9 and 11, and students in Year 13. This results directly from the teachers' concentration on the development of key artwork skills, starting in Year 7. There is a very firm emphasis on the importance of sketchbook work for preparation and work on the development of ideas. Students are helped to provide themselves with a range of creative and imaginative ideas for final pieces and this gives them confidence in their work and ability. Levels of achievement are therefore consistently good. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 gives students experience of a wide range of two- and three-dimensional work and materials. Students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, gain a secure understanding of a wide range of media, and the techniques required in manipulating them successfully. Research work, including the use of the Internet and CD-ROMs, confirms students' good commitment to this aspect of their studies. For example, in a very good Year 9 textiles lesson, a good balance of written and image reference material had been built up as a result of classwork and homework. Students show a clear understanding of the work of artists such as Mirò and re-interpret his style in their own designs. Older students have developed a good artistic vocabulary, which not only supports their literacy development but also enhances their critical and analytical skills. By the time they are in the Sixth Form, students confidently discuss their work, show good levels of self-criticism, and in dialogue with teachers are able to resolve artistic problems. For example, some good observational plant drawing was seen in Year 12 GNVQ, and some exciting experimentation with collagraph printing from Year 13 A Level students.

95. Students' attitudes and response to the subject are good, and sometimes very good in the Sixth Form, particularly for the GNVQ groups. Students show good application and involvement in their work. There is an emphasis on quality. Students respect and value each other's work and efforts. Such positive attitudes and levels of concentration are very sustaining of each individual student's potential for learning. Art provides a lively and stimulating environment with well-focused and supportive teaching. There are, consequently, consistently good working relationships, which help to establish a secure teaching and learning partnership. The department is successful in encouraging and enabling students to become independent artists in their own right. This is a very important strength in its approach and philosophy. It also underpins the good contribution the department makes to the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

96. Overall, teaching is good. It was very good in half the lessons observed. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 11 and very good in the Sixth Form. In all year groups, learning is good because the teaching clearly shares the aims and targets for each lesson and unit of work. Marking, for example in sketchbooks, is evaluative and students know what they have to do to improve. Classwork and homework tasks are properly related. The development of key artwork skills is very well supported through demonstrations of a professional standard by the teacher, for example of claywork techniques. Resources are used well and there is effective monitoring of work during practical sessions. Students are encouraged to share their knowledge and experiences with each other, for example from their research work. Questioning is skilful, and designed to help

students think through artistic problems. It is also well focused on enabling teachers to assess students' work and understanding. Consequently, students have a clear appreciation of what is required of them in their work. Good, relaxed, professional working relationships are established. This is especially true in the Sixth Form, where very good group dynamics are created, particularly in GNVQ classes.

97. Leadership and management of the department are good. The curriculum is well chosen to enrich the students' artistic experiences by making good use of the professional skills and interests of the teachers. The introduction of GNVQ courses in the Sixth Form has been particularly positive in this respect. There is good planning for further development, for example the provision of dark room resources for a photography course. Such longer-term planning exemplifies the department's very good commitment to improvement.

98. To build on the good work already being undertaken in the department, further analysis of examination performance is required. Overall, the department does well in enabling potential grade D candidates to achieve a grade C at both GCSE and A Level. However, improvement is required in the department's targeting of potential higher attainers in all examination courses. Technician support for the department is minimal; the need to spend time on practical preparation can impinge on professional teaching time. Multicultural art resources in the library require significant improvement to support students' independent research.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

99. GCSE results for 2000 show an above average percentage of A\*-C grades and an average percentage of A\*-G grades. When account is taken of all courses, both long and short, in DT, the overall points score was below the average of that of other subjects.

100. This is an improvement over the results achieved in 1999, but it represents a fall since the last inspection, when there were no short courses. There was a marked difference between the performances of girls and boys, particularly in graphics, where girls' attainment was well above the national average. Boys' attainment was below average, especially in food. In A Level examinations, results in resistant materials were well above the national average and those of similar schools, and have been rising steadily over the past few years. Teacher assessment in 2000 showed that in Key Stage 3 the percentage of students achieving the expected National Curriculum level was well above average; it was above average for the higher levels.

101. During the inspection, much above average work was seen, particularly in the top sets in Year 9, notably in resistant materials. The standard of the automata, for example, is particularly high, and for the higher ability students, the creative designs, and the care with which even quite delicate parts are made and finished, are well above the average for 14 year-olds. Particularly good finishing work was seen in a bouncing 'Tigger' and an interesting mechanism in a 'leaping dolphin'. In food technology, there were many examples of open-ended projects designed to stretch all abilities, such as food processing, and a bread project ending in a well researched 'design a pizza'. In textiles, examples of T-shirts and pillowcases showed imaginative design, well researched and produced.

102. Current work in finished projects in Key Stage 4 showed standards above average in many areas. For example, students produced a very well thought out and amusing cow-in-a-box, characterised by very good finishing in wood and textiles. High attaining Year 11 students showed in their revision exercise an above average knowledge of operational amplifiers, although average attainers found this concept difficult. A Year 11 food project on the Coeliac diet by high attainers was well above average; average students achieved a lower standard, particularly in the extent of their individual research and analysis.

103. Sixth Formers in Years 12 and 13 seen working on their A/AS projects, showed average skills for their age, though some projects, such as the poker table, were above average, and a self-turning music stand showed imaginative but workable solutions to a problem. The rainwater collection device showed good use of ready-made components, adapted well. These well-considered designs were competently made, revealing a good variety of skills in working wood, plastics, metal and textiles.

104. A major strength of the department's work is the way in which the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are developed through its curriculum. Teachers emphasise key technical words in all subjects, and encourage good speaking practice through presentations. They have high expectations of numeracy, as students have to measure precisely in order to get components of their products fitted together accurately. Information and communication technology is not used well, however, and its application is lacking in many projects.

105. The quality of teaching is good. In Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form, most students were revising and completing coursework, with fewer formal lessons. Teachers have very good expertise in all areas of DT, and these complement each other, as evident in the projects seen in wood, electronics, computer control, food and textiles. Students are well motivated and have a good attitude to the subject. Behaviour is very good; students comply with workshop discipline, including safety regulations regarding clothing and footwear. A great strength of DT is the way in which it helps students to develop their interpersonal skills. The giving and taking away of team points for very good or shoddy work is a powerful incentive, and the opportunities to present work to others in their groups gives students confidence in their own ability and a pride in their work.

106. The teaching of basic DT skills is very good. In food technology, for example, teachers make sure that their Year 7 students are thoroughly grounded in basic food preparation, such as chopping, mixing, whisking, using the cooker, and basic hygiene. In the workshops, students are similarly guided very well in measuring, cutting, joining and basic safety. Teachers' planning is also a strength. The comprehensive student workbooks are constantly modified and improved according to teachers' evaluation and assessments. They show good coverage of the National Curriculum programme of study and are written in language easy to understand, with integral assessment and homework which enables students to follow their own progress well, and to know how to improve their work.

107. All students are encouraged to succeed at DT. Teachers plan well for all abilities, liaising with classroom assistants for students with special educational needs, who get good support, and providing differentiated tasks to match differing abilities. The automata

produced by average and above average Year 9 students, for example, are to have two or more different mechanical movements; those by below average students must have a minimum of one, and students are encouraged to aspire to more. There is also more written and research work for the above average.

108. Teachers use a good variety of teaching methods, and most involve practical work at some stage. They manage their students well, many of whom are at different stages of their projects, and make sure that all have help where needed. Time is used to good effect in lessons. This was particularly noticeable in food technology, where young students in their second practical lesson were managed and organised so well that they all finished. Indeed, they had time to clear away and evaluate their crunchy flans as a class with a few minutes to spare.

109. The department's assessment procedures are a considerable strength. Students and teachers all know the National Curriculum levels and assess each module of work effectively. Particularly valuable are the interim project grading sheets for Key Stage 3 and 4, which tell students exactly how well they have done and how they can improve further.

110. The management and running of the department is good. Efficient use is made of allotted funds to provide a curriculum with a wide range of learning opportunities. However, the school's provision for Key Stage 4 does not meet the National Curriculum statutory requirement for DT to be provided for all students. Thorough assessment records are kept for all students. The use of ICT is in its early stages, and not enough use is yet made of it in the presentation of projects. There is a significant difference between the performance of boys and girls, and this is not being fully addressed by the department. The department has maintained the high standards reported at the last inspection and has the good commitment and expertise to enable it to improve further.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

111. Attainment by age 14 is above average. Number skills are applied well in graphical work and in mapping and when students are making models of contour maps and volcanoes. Literacy is supported and developed by good displays of key words and corrections in spelling, and through providing students with a variety of writing opportunities. Students' responses in lessons show a mainly accurate use of geographical terms and an increasing understanding of the relationship between physical and human features in the landscape. All students achieve satisfactorily.

112. GCSE results are well above average and have improved since the previous inspection. Three-quarters of students entered for GCSE in 2000 achieved grades A\*-C. Results for both boys and girls show a steadily improving trend. Coursework for all students is good and is based on the effects of management on local rivers. Students analyse data well, and their evaluation is at least satisfactory and often good. Students' data collection, graphical presentation, and calculations of river discharge are above average. Overall, students achieve well and make good progress.

113. Attainment in the GCSE Travel and Tourism examination is below average. Most students are entered the Foundation level. Students are able to extract information from the course textbook and complete the written exercises satisfactorily, and map work is satisfactory. However, students' work is heavily dependent on input from teachers and there is little evidence of independent thinking and analysis.

114. Attainment in A/AS Level work is above average and students make good progress. Students apply their knowledge and understanding of physical and human geography well. Their work on plate tectonics showed good evidence of background study. Essays are constructed well and their use of sketching and graphical analysis is good. Students have good research skills and use the Internet and a wide range of up-to-date textual and data resources in their work. Note-taking skills are satisfactory.

115. By the end of Year 9, most students present their work well, though there are examples of unfinished writing tasks and sketches. All groups of students show improved written work. Varied writing opportunities help to motivate students and there is some good poetry on pollution issues. Good, empathetic writing was illustrated well when students described the changes seen in the tundra during the lifetime of their grandparents. Students develop good writing, research and creative skills in their projects. In their coursework on Swanage, Year 9 students researched geographical data, publicity material, and maps before they produced their booklet for tourists. On fieldwork visits, for example to Kew Gardens, students develop an awareness of human dependence on the natural world. Here, they investigated the products we use which are dependent on rain forest products, and produced posters of information. High attainers produce very good detailed writing and have good mapping and graphical skills. Opportunities for students to present their work by applying their ICT skills are limited. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress but need more help in structuring their written work.

116. By the end of year 11, students show good understanding of topics in their written work. High attainers make good use of annotated diagrams for their own notes, and the low attainers show clear evidence of improvement in detailed writing and in presentation skills for coursework. Good oral responses in the classroom show confidence in the use of key geographical terms and good progress in knowledge and understanding. Good use of graphs and good written conclusions were apparent in Year 11 work on Amazonia.

117. All students are attentive, and have good listening skills and concentration. They work well in groups and co-operate well with the teachers and with each other. Where tasks are less demanding there is some off task chatter, but this is rarely disruptive.

118. Teaching in geography is generally good in all years. Teachers' subject knowledge and their teaching of basic literacy and numeracy skills in geography are good. In lessons where teaching is very good, teachers pitch their questions skilfully to match the capacity of individual students. Good pace is maintained by a series of timed tasks, and students are clear as to what is expected of them. Extension work is available for high attainers and expectations are high. These strengths were illustrated in a Year 11 lesson where crisp, targeted questioning by the teacher was followed by group discussions on the planning of changes to the London Docklands. Each group provided good

feedback to the class before watching a short video which showed the final developments. In another Year 11 revision lesson, the teacher showed slides illustrating local urban changes, and developed students' understanding by probing questions which led to good gains in understanding on the interpretation of land-use maps. Satisfactory lessons are characterised by students' over dependence on the teacher or the textbook.

119. In a few lessons where the range of ability is very wide, the work is pitched in such a way that it is too easy for some and too hard for others. In the GCSE travel and tourism lessons, teaching by the non-specialist teacher was satisfactory. However, the range of resources and activities is limited and does not always stimulate students' interest.

120. The management of geography, by a committed and enthusiastic teacher, is good. Assessment procedures are good and are used to influence planning. Marking and lessons are monitored well, and there is good provision for standardisation between teachers. Students in Years 7 and 8 have opportunities to evaluate their own work. There is a very good variety of assessment tasks.

121. Provision for fieldwork is good in Years 9, 10 and 12 but very little opportunity is provided in other years. Development plans are regularly and helpfully reviewed. Information and communications technology is used well when possible, but access for specific use in each year group is needed. Numbers of students opting for geography at A/AS Level have increased and resources for Sixth Form teaching are only adequate.

122. Since the last inspection, results have improved and are now above average in Years 9 and 11. The quality of independent learning in geography has improved at all stages, and the use and understanding of subject terminology is now good. Assessment procedures are good, and there is improved provision of learning resources for students of all abilities from Years 7 to 11.

## **HISTORY**

123. In recent GCSE examinations, results in terms of the proportions of students achieving grades A\*-C and A\*-G range have been average, and in 2000 they were above average.

124. In the Sixth Form, results at A Level have fluctuated over time but fell below national averages in 2000. In the lessons seen and the work analysed during the inspection, standards were high in all key stages and students achieved well.

125. From the beginning of Year 7, students develop a good knowledge and understanding of history and soon acquire a range of historical skills, such as the use of sources, and a sense of chronology. They also learn to organise their work very well and higher attainers are able to write for a variety of purposes. Year 9 students had produced very good extended on volunteer soldiers in World War One. These essays showed a clear understanding of the differing reasons for volunteering to fight in the war. As a result of their advances in skills, most students achieve standards above national expectations by the age of 14. These high levels are maintained in Years

10 and 11, when students develop a detailed knowledge of the subject and begin to analyse historical issues in depth. This was seen to very good effect well in a Year 11 lesson on the introduction of the National Health Service in 1948. During this lesson, students made considerable gains in understanding how and why central government became increasingly involved in health care during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the Sixth Form, students show considerable maturity in their oral and written work. They are honing their historical skills well, and their coursework folders contain voluminous notes and essays of a high quality. In all years, there is a very strong emphasis on raising standards of literacy through the development of writing skills and the correct use of subject terminology.

126. The attitudes and behaviour of students are always positive. All students are encouraged to take part in classroom debate, and they do so willingly. They respond well to challenges and are motivated to learn by good teaching. They show commitment to history and clearly enjoy their lessons. This was demonstrated fully in an excellent Year 9 lesson in which paired work, video, and class discussion were used to examine the main reasons behind Hitler's rise to power. Students responded to the challenge admirably and the lesson provided them with a full and rich range of learning opportunities.

127. The quality of teaching in history is good, and often very good. Teachers have a very secure grasp of their subject, and this is used very effectively to enhance the learning process. Classroom management is strong, and this gives students the confidence to air their opinions and to develop their learning skills. Lessons are planned well and aims and objectives are shared with the students at the start of lessons. There are occasions when students are also given time to reflect on their progress at the end of sessions. This good practice needs to be disseminated more widely throughout the department. Teachers have high expectations of all students, and this lends an air of rigour to history lessons. It was shown to very good effect in a Year 12 skills-based lesson, during which the teacher prepared students very thoroughly on how to achieve higher grades in the forthcoming coursework assignment. A variety of teaching techniques is used to give impetus to students' learning, such as role play, video, class discussion, and timed written tasks. Students in some lessons, however, do not have enough opportunities to develop their group work skills. High attainers are encouraged to develop their knowledge and understanding through extension work. Low attainers, and those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress and the department is producing a wider range of materials to suit their individual needs.

128. The department is led very ably and enthusiastically, with a strong and committed teaching team in support. The monitoring of students' progress is very thorough, and individual targets are set at all levels. There is a commendable use of self-assessment which involves students fully in the whole process. As a result, the shortcomings in assessment and marking noted in the previous inspection report have been addressed fully. Display is used very well to enhance the visual environment, and there are clear guidelines in classrooms on how students can improve their historical writing and standards of literacy. There has been an improvement in the use of ICT within the history curriculum, but this area of the department's work is not yet fully developed.

129. Overall, the history department has maintained the high standards noted in the previous inspection report. There is a clear focus on raising standards through monitoring of classroom practice and a thorough analysis of examination and test results. A key issue now is the



improvement of public examination results, particularly in the Sixth Form. The very clear educational direction given by the head of department, and the experience of the teaching team, leaves the department well placed to achieve these aims.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

130. Students opting for the GCSE full and short courses in ICT reach standards well above national average. All students are successful, over four-fifths gaining GCSE grades A\*-C compared with half nationally. Results in A Level computing are a little below national average, though the majority of students do at least as well in the subject as in their other GCE Advanced levels.

131. Inspection evidence shows that standards in Key Stage 3 are above average in those areas of the National Curriculum covered in the taught programme. In terms of organising and presenting their work, students come to the school with some skills in using computers, many of which were developed on home facilities rather than in primary school. The Year 7 ICT programme consolidates and develops these, and most students can use word processing, desktop publishing, and presentation software with independence. Those students with special educational needs are well integrated and work with increasing confidence to achieve successful outcomes. In lessons, the students' strong literacy skills are reflected in a range of leaflets and posters which are well designed and accurate. In the following two years, the much restricted taught programme enables students to competently construct spreadsheets and databases and students develop a good understanding of computer control in DT. Even so, few go on to use these skills in solving problems or carrying out investigations.

132. Over the key stage, students achieve satisfactory if uneven progress in developing their skills and knowledge. Most regularly practise their word processing and desktop publishing skills through the occasional opportunities offered in different subjects, and in work completed at home. Within the school there is also a talented minority who take advantage of the improving facilities to develop a considerable understanding of computer systems. However, most students develop more basic research skills using the Internet, and make only limited progress in understanding how ICT can be used to measure, record and model events.

133. Standards in Key Stage 4 are above the national average, and students use word processing, spreadsheet and desk top publishing software to organise and present their GCSE coursework and National Record of Achievement. The third of students taking GCSE in ICT demonstrate knowledge and skills well above national average. This was evident in completed project work on databases, where students constructed and evaluated their own systems, as well as in the confident and informed way they discussed the uses, strengths, and weaknesses of different forms of electronic mail. Most students in the key stage achieve satisfactorily, given that facilities have only recently improved and that the school has yet to co-ordinate fully the learning opportunities in Years 10 and 11. Those taking GCSE in the subject make good progress in developing their knowledge and skills as a result of greater access to computers and effective teaching.

134. Standards in the Sixth Form are in line with national average. Students use ICT with some confidence to research and present their work in AS Level and in the Vocational Advanced level courses. Those taking the A/AS Level course in computing showed a sound understanding of different applications. This was exemplified in a lesson where students were creating 'help' files as part of their project on databases.

135. The quality of teaching is good, and on occasions very good; it is never less than satisfactory. Specialist teachers have developed carefully structured teaching materials for the Key Stage 3 programme. They enable students to develop practical skills and give them opportunities to work collaboratively. As a result, students work with greater confidence and a growing independence. All teachers, including non-specialists, are conscientious and have clear standards about the work required in class and at home, and students mostly respond well to those high expectations. The good teaching is reflected in well-produced class presentations which make effective use of digital projectors and whiteboards to develop learning points and to engage the interest of the students. This was illustrated in which introduced the students in most years to the new school based e-mail system. Very good teaching quickly established the purpose of a lesson, set high expectations for outcomes, and provided well-informed support that challenged the higher attainers and supported low attainers. In the few instances when learning is less productive, the teacher does not always ensure that students have understood technical language and intervenes less effectively to ensure all students are on task.

136. The school has only recently been able to establish what is now an increasingly good ICT provision, with a modern school-wide network and large and flexible computer suites. The previously limited facilities and staffing have restricted curriculum development in the subject. In consequence, there is not enough curriculum time to deliver the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum programme of study either as a discrete programme or within other subjects. The use of a carousel system in Years 8 and 9 and in Key Stage 4 adversely affects the cumulative development of students' skills. There are some good examples of ICT in some subjects, such as art and DT, but most are still in the process of planning its use within their schemes of work. Currently, the school relies on the contribution of subjects in the teaching and assessing of ICT, but there are not yet sufficient means of monitoring and assessing the progress of all students in both key stages and in the Sixth Form.

137. The taught programmes in both key stages and the Sixth Form are very well managed, with structured learning materials and clear and effective systems of monitoring provision. The school has yet to begin the training of all staff in ICT, and does not have sufficient technical support for its large computer network.

138. Since the last inspection the school has maintained overall standards in the taught courses, and improved them at GCSE level, mainly because of higher quality teaching and learning. The development of ICT in other subjects has been slow, and current curriculum and assessment arrangements need improvement, particularly at Key Stage 3, in order to meet the National Curriculum requirement for the subject. The improved staffing and resources, together with more focused whole school management, is beginning to prove effective in raising standards, and overall the school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

139. Attainment at the age of 14 is above the national expectation. Girls perform much better than boys, especially in reaching the higher National Curriculum levels. There is a steady trend of improvement. At the age of 16, students' GCSE results for 2000 at grades A\*-C in French were

well above the national average. Though the percentage pass rate has been similar in the last three years, this represents a considerable improvement since the previous inspection, when only the top half of the ability range was entered, whereas it is now the school's policy to enter all students. Boys' results, though slightly above the national average for boys, fell sharply in comparison with those of the previous year. Girls' results, on the other hand, improved equally sharply, and were high compared to the national average for girls. In German, GCSE grades A\*-C for a smaller number of students were high compared to the national average, with both boys and girls attaining high results compared with boys and girls nationally. There is a trend of improvement. Students perform better in modern languages than in most of their other GCSE subjects. In 2000, all students, including those with special educational needs, gained a GCSE grade, and the numbers of able linguists gaining A\* or A grades also rose significantly. Students taking A Level French achieved very good results in 2000. This has been the consistent picture in the last three years, and represents improvement since the previous inspection.

140. In Years 7 to 9, students make satisfactory progress overall in French, given their levels of attainment on entry in other subjects. High attainers, many of whom study German as an additional language in Years 8 and 9, make good gains in all skill areas. Their comprehension and written work is well developed and they are reasonably confident in speaking tasks. They begin to apply new tenses in Year 9 and to experiment with language in productive activities. For example, they write a letter of invitation to a pen friend, suggesting arrangements. Average attainers follow the same work, but weaker command of vocabulary and structures means that comprehension is less developed and that they are less ambitious in speaking and writing. There is significant under-achievement by some students in lower sets in Years 8 and 9. They recall previous learning with difficulty, so that oral contributions often consist of single words and writing is very inaccurate. However, they identify important details in messages they read and hear, and convey information at a basic level. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in appropriate sets.

141. Students' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good. Higher attaining students write well in both languages. Written coursework improves their awareness of tenses and key grammatical rules. They write about a range of topics, including health and fitness, accounts of past holidays, plans for future holidays, and job application letters. Content and accuracy are impressive. They extend their oral range into short conversations. Their breadth of vocabulary enables them to understand the meaning of extended passages, written or spoken. Average and low attainers make good progress in line with their ability. Students in lower sets in Year 11 are largely well motivated, and some of them feel they could achieve a C grade at GCSE. Their oral skills are comparatively weak but they communicate key details well in role play exercises. Students' coursework is briefer and contains many more basic errors. They have sufficient retention of vocabulary to identify key details in comprehension work, and make informed guesses at what they do not readily understand.

142. Inspection evidence confirms high standards in the Sixth Form. Students make very good progress as they build on their achievements at GCSE. They increase their vocabulary rapidly, and learn and apply new complex structures, especially in their writing. They produce a wide range of written work, including poems and arguments on ecological issues. The content is interesting and accuracy good. Few students make basic errors consistently; they learn from their mistakes. Some

speaking more confidently than others, but all make good progress as they benefit from regular contact with foreign language assistants and from

exchange visits. Comprehension skills continue to be very good. Students quickly pick out the sense in challenging articles or spoken extracts, and summarise them in their own words. A number of students take a Spanish GCSE course in the Sixth Form for two terms, largely at lunchtimes, and the majority succeed in gaining grades A\*-C.

143. Work in the subject focuses on the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. This ensures a good contribution to literacy. Though numbers are used in transactional language, such as shopping and room numbers, the contribution to numeracy is inevitably slight. The use of new technology is so far underdeveloped, though the recent provision of six computers has boosted planning in this area.

144. Attitudes to learning a foreign language are largely positive. In lower attaining sets, however, especially in Years 8 and 9, there is less enthusiasm and some negative views. Attitudes are sometimes adversely affected where students have suffered from discontinuity in their teaching. Students collaborate well in pair and group work. They are polite, and appreciate the efforts of classmates. Most work is neatly presented, and there is very little unfinished work. Behaviour is nearly always good in all but a few lessons. Commitment in the Sixth Form is excellent.

145. The quality of teaching and learning is good. It is consistently good or better in Years 10 and 11, and very good in the Sixth Form. There are a few weaknesses in teaching in Years 7 to 9, sufficient to affect progress in learning. Teachers have good command of the languages they teach. They use the foreign language consistently to conduct activities, providing a good model and showing high expectations of students. In lessons in the lower school, teachers use too much English, and this reduces the impact of their expertise on students' learning. Planning for individual lessons is usually good, especially in Year 11 and in the Sixth Form, where interesting and challenging activities have a positive impact on preparation for examinations. Students learn to work independently and to organize their own work. Occasionally in Key Stage 3, learning is impaired by a lack of variety in activities, some of which last too long, with the result that students lose interest and concentration. Teaching methods vary considerably across the department, but are usually effective in promoting learning. In longer lessons, some teachers make very effective use of a carousel of activities. In a Year 11 French lesson in which two classes were combined because of the absence of a teacher, students were given four different tasks, all with a focus on improving their GCSE examination techniques. Teachers make imaginative use of visual stimuli to prompt oral routines and games, and to consolidate grammatical knowledge.

146. In Years 7 to 9, teachers tend to use well-established sequences of tasks, which are effective in individual lessons but can become repetitious over time. Students in middle and lower attaining sets in Years 8 and 9 tend to lose interest where this is the case, and there is no acceleration in their rate of progress.

147. Teachers generally manage their classes well. Most of them inject humour, and make good use of praise and encouragement. Relationships are good, and support learning well. Where teachers are confident in the attention and behaviour of students, they provide plenty of opportunities for students to use the foreign language for themselves. The 35 minute lesson is short, but teachers provide several tasks which, in the best lessons, are conducted briskly, and engage attention. A Year 12 German group experienced a vocabulary revision session through brainstorming, responded

to a quiz to test their factual recall, had individual conversations with the foreign language assistant, and began individual reading tasks – all in 35 minutes. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, it is because activities are not sufficiently varied, or because explanations are not clear, leaving students confused. Teachers make good use of overhead projectors and cassette players to stimulate learning. Foreign language assistants for French and German are well deployed, and have a positive impact on oral standards. Though resources for the subject are good, students' learning experience would be enriched by more regular use of new computers, and of reading materials, including the excellent provision in the library.. Marking is conscientious but brief in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 and in the Sixth Form, teachers make reference to GCSE or A Level criteria in their marking, and write extensive constructive comments to clarify errors and assist future learning. Homework is set regularly. It usually complements work done in class. In Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form, teachers use homework well to extend students with challenging tasks.

148. The work of the department is well led and managed. Good systems are in place for monitoring standards of teaching and learning, including classroom observations with structured feedback. Assessment procedures, including individual target setting, are good. Students know how well they are doing and how to improve. The creation of a portfolio of moderated GCSE coursework aids consistency in judgements. This should also be done for teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, to support the accuracy of assessments. Results are analysed and data are used to inform curriculum planning, for example to address the comparative weakness in speaking through measures listed in the subject development plan. The disparity in the performance of boys and girls has not been satisfactorily addressed. Girls outnumber boys by two to one in most top sets, and lower sets consist predominantly of boys. This is the only inclusion issue for the department. Schemes of work are being overhauled. Current schemes for Key Stage 4 and AS Level are insufficiently developed to support learning, but are being improved in response to national developments. There are good opportunities to participate in trips and exchanges to France and Germany, and these enrich and accelerate the learning of the considerable numbers who take part. The subject area is slightly under-staffed and this has led to large class sizes in accommodation which, though normally adequate, does not allow for energetic activities where class size is large.

149. The previous inspection report was largely positive. Nearly all the minor criticisms have since been addressed, and strengths have been maintained. Importantly, examination results and standards of teaching have improved, so that overall improvement has been good.

## **MUSIC**

150. Over the past four years the GCSE results in music have been at the national average for grades A\*-C and average points scores. The results in 2000 were unusually below this level, but standards in the current Year 11 group are at the national average . There have been no A\* or A grades over the last three years. The small numbers of candidates entered for A Level achieve satisfactorily in line with their capabilities. Inspection evidence shows standards to be above the national average by Year 9, and the small group in Year 11 are working above the national average. Sixth Form students are working at the national average.

151. Students in Year 7 produce three-part multi-rhythm patterns but find syncopation difficult. By Year 8, this is within the capacity of all students. A Year 8 class produced an exciting seven-part performance involving four independent keyboard parts and three independent percussion parts, plus vocals. A recording of a Year 9 *Lightly Row* project showed good quality variations with changes of tonality, pace, time signature and melodic and harmonic variation. Students with special educational needs achieve well in music, and those showing musical talent work at an appropriate level in class as well as taking full advantage of instrumental and extra-curricular opportunities. Music provision in the school is fully inclusive in nature.

152. A significant number of students receive instrumental lessons both within the school and at the local Music Centres. Many students take part in the lively extra-curricular programme, which includes a choir, a band, regular concerts and productions, and concert tours to Denmark, Germany and Italy, and this year to Austria. Because of the staffing situation, with the second in department on long term sick leave, the extra-curricular programme is inevitably limited at the moment.

153. Teaching and learning are both very good at Key Stage 3, and good in Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form. In the best lessons the passion, commitment and enthusiasm of the teacher shine through, and students respond equally positively and achieve well. Teaching is characterised by very good planning and preparation, linked to clear target setting with criteria for success; students know exactly what is expected of them and how their success will be measured. Relationships are excellent, and classroom organisation and management are very good. Students feel secure and confident in their learning. Feedback from the teacher is good, helping students to refine their targets individually and in groups, so that students work and learn at an appropriate level. Students learn from example, by experiment, by listening and analysis, and by ‘doing’ and refining their skills and music-making. Students’ mutual and self assessment are very well used to support learning, and the clear links into the new attainment target levels give students a clear idea of their own attainment and progress. The necessary use of supply staff to cover for long term sickness often means that learning is about rather than through music, and can be satisfactory at best.

154. Students’ response is very good at all three key stages. It is open and positive, and students are keen to be fully involved. There is an active response to challenge, and in the best lessons fun and hard work are closely linked. Students support one another well. Their concentration is good and there is an excellent working atmosphere, and often a sense of pace, vitality and urgency, especially with the Year 11 students.

155. The curriculum meets National Curriculum requirements, and full account has been taken of changes with Curriculum 2000; the new attainment target levels are fully in operation, and clearly linked to the whole school assessment system. There is appropriate multi-cultural content at Key Stage 3. New technology is used well and is limited only by ICT resources, which are just adequate. Time allocated for music in Year 9 is barely adequate in terms of curriculum coverage and continuity. Support for literacy work is very good in music. The assessment scheme is very good, and includes self assessment by students. Homework is of good quality and important in the development of students’ work.



156. Leadership in music is good, and the focus on improvement in standards is already having an impact. Understandably, the head of department is preoccupied with the problems caused by the long term absence of his assistant. The two minor issues at the last inspection have been addressed. The accommodation for group work is just adequate, and an effective programme to improve and update resources is linked to development planning. However, the central curriculum issue concerning barely adequate time and continuity for music in Year 9 has not been resolved.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

157. The proportion of students achieving A\*-C grade passes at GCSE declined after the last inspection, and by 1997 was well below the national average for similar schools. Since 1998 standards have improved, and in 2000 the proportion of students achieving A\*-C grade passes was well above the national average for similar schools. Because of the small number of girls taking the course it is not possible to comment on differences in achievement between boys and girls.

158. Standards in lessons in Years 7 to 9 are broadly in line with national age-related expectations and are similar to those at the last inspection. By age 14, most students are on line to achieve appropriate levels for their age. In the course which all students take in Years 10 and 11, standards are above average in terms of age-related national expectations and have improved since the last inspection. The above average standards of those students who follow the GCSE physical education course is having a positive impact on overall standards in Years 10 and 11. There are no significant differences between the standards of boys and girls.

159. By age 14, achievement in games and gymnastics is good. In association football, boys' all-round individual skills are secure and they are developing the use of crossing the ball by use of lofted passes. In hockey, girls are developing the use of the reverse stick dodge. In gymnastics, girls have developed sequences of paired balances showing symmetry and asymmetry. Body tension and poise at the start and finish of movement is developing well, but there is still a long way to go to reach high standards for their age. By age 16, boys' association football skills have improved further, as has their tactical awareness. In trampoline lessons, girls have developed their confidence and are developing the quality and variety of moves in their sequence work.

160. Across all years, students have a secure understanding of the principles and procedures of warm-up. However, they are not given the opportunity to lead aspects of this nor are they encouraged to name the muscle groups which are being stretched. If this were to be done, particularly in Years 7 to 9, it would help prepare those students who go on to take the GCSE option in Years 10 and 11. Although no students identified as having special educational needs were observed receiving additional help, they are well supported, integrated, and make good progress. The overall challenge offered in lessons and grouping arrangements also enables the more physically able to make good progress.

161. Students are making good progress in their GCSE lessons. Year 11 students, for example, have developed their skills and techniques successfully both in badminton and volleyball. A scrutiny of a sample of their theory folders indicates they have a secure grasp of anatomy and physiology and, using information and communications technology, they have produced the required coursework element. Year 10 students are also making progress in their understanding of anatomy and physiology, and sports-related fitness issues.

162. Students respond very well to the high expectations of teachers in terms of discipline, behaviour and students' ability to work to their best. They work very well together as pairs, in small groups and in small-sided teams. They show clear respect for the capabilities of one another. Their very positive attitudes, relationships and excellent behaviour helps promote a very positive learning atmosphere in lessons, which enables all to make good progress. In a Year 11 girls' trampoline lesson, for example, learning was characterised by enjoyment and eagerness to develop expertise.

163. The quality of teaching is good overall in all years. In half the lessons observed, teaching was either good or very good, and in one lesson it was excellent.

164. In a very good Year 9 gymnastics lesson, for example, girls were fully involved in aspects of planning, performance and evaluation. This deepened their knowledge and understanding of the principles involved in symmetrical and asymmetrical movement and enabled them to improve their sequence work by the end of the lesson. In an excellent Year 11 lesson, there was very effective and specific coaching for individuals, linked to their ability on the trampoline.

165. The structure of practical lessons and the use of a variety of planned activities are indicative of teachers' overall very good knowledge and understanding of the activities they are teaching. This range of activities also helps to ensure that students are motivated, as well as offering challenge through, for example, both pair and small group work. Clear introductions to lessons, and effective demonstrations, including those by students, ensure that students are aware of what is expected of them and what they have to do to make progress. In a Year 11 boys' association football lesson, this practice was effective in that it made students aware of the importance of adapting their dribbles and defensive tackles to take account of the strengths and weaknesses of an opponent. Effective questioning in a Year 7 gymnastics lesson helped highlight appropriate terminology as well as enhancing students' literacy skills. Students are made aware of their capabilities in lessons because teachers circulate well and offer constructive criticism throughout.

166. There are a few shortcomings in the teaching. On occasion, particularly in games lessons, there is not enough opportunity for peer evaluation and coaching, because of the task-orientated structure of the lesson. Sometimes, at the end of practical lessons, teachers tend to do all the evaluation rather than extend students' thinking and analytical skills by asking them for their views as to how they think they have made progress and what they feel they need to do to improve further. Though there are few non-participants, there are occasions when these students are not as fully involved as they should be, for example as part of whole-group introductions and demonstrations or in coaching and evaluative roles. The quality of marking GCSE students' work and the guidance and structure they are given in their theory work are not always consistent. The result is that some students are not always making suitable progress.

167. This is a well-led and organised department that makes a positive contribution to the ethos of the school. Standards of achievement have generally improved and the quality of teaching and learning has been maintained. The proportion of students achieving A\*-C grade passes at GCSE has improved over the last three years. However, as at the time of the last inspection, not all students in Years 8 and 9 have the same time allocation for the subject, which makes it difficult to raise standards further by age 14. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and the department has started to adapt schemes of work to meet the demands of the new National Curriculum for physical education. The new assessment levels have been introduced, but whole school assessment and tracking procedures do not fit comfortably with the requirement for a summative level for physical education to be provided by the end of Year 9. There is excellent quality accommodation, which enables a full range of games and activities to be taught throughout the year. It is enhanced by equally excellent display, which gives information and celebrates students' work.

168. A range of extra-curricular provision is available throughout the year and includes competitive fixtures as well as recreational activities, which enhance students' learning experiences. As a result of this provision, individual boys have gained representative honours at county level in association football and cricket. Individual girls have gained representative honours at county level in hockey and netball, and one girl represents the region at hockey. Boys' cricket teams are district winners at under-12 and under-14.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

169. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below the expectations of the local Agreed Syllabus although the standards reached in Year 7 and Year 8 classes are always satisfactory, and very good in 25 per cent of the lessons. Year 9 students receive only half of the teaching time deemed necessary to deliver the religious education curriculum and this problem is compounded by the fact of its being taught every other week in alternative half term blocs. This reduces the students' ability to continue to make the good progress that they make in the earlier years. There is not time to develop in-depth knowledge or to reinforce understanding.

170. The pattern of insufficient time continues at Key Stage 4, where 90 per cent of the students study one unit of religious education for seven weeks of the year, within the personal, health and social education programme. Students are not taught the Agreed Syllabus and are unable to extend their understanding of world religions and the links between belief systems and behaviour. Attainment is below the levels expected by the end of the key stage. In the Sixth Form, the curriculum does not include religious education, and statutory requirements are not met. Students are not offered the chance to study ethical questions in a structured manner and to consider issues such as the existence of good and evil, or the relationship between religion and science.

171. A very small number of students study for the GCSE examination in religious studies. The results for 1999 and 2000 were well below the national average. The size of the group makes statistical comparisons difficult, as the performance of one or two candidates can have a disproportionate effect. These results are not representative of those of earlier years, when attainment was generally in line with national standards, as it is for the current GSCE classes. These

students are benefiting from an emphasis on improving results by the detailed tracking of student achievement. Revision techniques have been strengthened.

172. Inspection evidence shows GCSE attainment to be average. Students have a sound understanding of Christianity and Judaism, and can relate religious teaching to moral and social questions such as the debate about the cloning of humans. They are helped by the teachers' good subject knowledge and the emphasis on using a good range of current articles and videos to stimulate interest, as, for example, on the religious perspective on the 'guilt free' divorce proposals. At times, however, the students find it difficult to present an informed overview. For example, Year 10 students studying fox hunting in relation to Christian teaching had not considered the Assisi declaration, or ideas about man as the Steward of God's Creation. Such omissions reduce their ability to reach the higher level grades. Students who are not taking religious studies in GCSE learn a little about religious views on a number of moral and social issues, such as abortion, during their seven-week unit within the personal, health, social education carousel.

173. Teaching is good. In general, students in Years 7 and 8 lessons achieve well. Teachers carefully recap previous learning and effectively use questions and answers to test the understanding of all groups of students. Well-planned lessons ensure that most students gain a knowledge of specialist vocabulary, and those studying Judaism use terms such as Shabbat and Torah confidently and correctly. Teachers also promote literacy skills in a number of other ways, such as the use of structured worksheets in a Year 7 lesson when viewing students were viewing a video on barmitzvahs. This resulted in well organised, focused attention on the key learning points. Students are well motivated by a range of teaching strategies which include the good use of artefacts, for example when they considered the significance of the Seder Night meal in Jewish belief. They enjoyed role-play and asked questions normally asked by the youngest child as to why that night is so special. They learned well, as well as enjoying the food. Well-planned homework increases the pace of learning as students come to the lesson with relevant information which then acts as a stimulus and a basis for new knowledge. An example was the learning of the spelling and definition of words associated with Easter Week, such as 'supernatural'.

174. Students with special educational needs are withdrawn from religious education classes but receive adequate instruction within their specialist groupings. The quality of teaching is good overall, with a third very good, and students respond accordingly.

175. Students' attitudes to learning are good. They are interested and respond well, and boys and girls alike contribute ideas and questions. In many classes a strong sense of partnership creates an environment within which students learn easily, not afraid to ask questions, to query and to discuss. Spiritual development is enhanced through opportunities to reflect on prayers, and many moral issues such as pollution are discussed. The emphasis on learning about Judaism and Islam enables students to develop an informed and tolerant attitude to the beliefs of others.

176. The management of the department is satisfactory. Rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning has begun, and structures to promote a consensus on the assessment of the students' work among all staff are at an early stage. No progress has been made on provision for religious education in the Sixth Form since the previous inspection. The majority of students in Years 10 and

11 do not study religious education in a coherent and meaningful way, and time allocation is minimal in Year 9.

## **DRAMA**

177. Students' attainment in drama at GCSE in 2000 was well above the national average. In A Level theatre studies all students achieved A or B grades. These results were in line with a consistent pattern of high achievement for both boys and girls over recent years. This very strong tradition was reflected in the standards seen during the inspection. Students are impressively committed to their work in drama. They expect to be challenged, to work hard, and to do well.

178. The overall quality of teaching at all key stages was very good. Lessons observed ranged from good to outstanding. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. Planning is detailed, and lessons well structured and purposeful. Learning objectives are made clear to students, together with the criteria by which achievement is to be assessed. Teachers have high expectations of students and create the circumstances in which they might be met. Students are introduced to drama from Year 7. They create, perform and evaluate drama, each element being essentially interrelated. Good self-assessment procedures create thoughtful and well-informed learners, confident in the use and understanding of dramatic conventions. For example, at the beginning of a lesson Year 9 students had explained to them Stanislavski's contention that the imagination could be exercised in disciplined ways, like a muscle, and become strong on that account. The class were taken through a series of exercises and improvisations to show the theory in action, always returning to contemplate Stanislavski's key question, 'What if?' In the final phases, students were brought to see how their improvised scenes related to a reading of an extract from *Look Back in Anger*, on which they would be focussing in future lessons for their assessed piece of drama work for the term. This was highly organised and tightly planned teaching to which students responded very positively. Their work was concentrated, thoughtful and disciplined.

179. Similar qualities characterised drama work at GCSE and at A Level. Written work, though sometimes less impressive than practical skills of staging and performance, showed developed capacities to record, justify and evaluate. Rehearsals for an A Level project on the seven deadly sins showed students operating securely and creatively, sure of what they wanted to do and the theatrical means by which to achieve it.

180. The extra-curricular contribution of drama to the enjoyment and achievement of students is outstanding. 'In a number of ways drama provides an invaluable dimension to the cultural life of the school. These include the school plays, such as *HMS Pinafore*, *Kes*, *Birdy*, *The Sound of Music*, and *Equus*, the residential workshops in Spain and elsewhere, and the involvement and appreciation of students, parents, governors and the local community.

181. The department is very well led. Schemes of work are comprehensive and model effective planning. Assessment procedures are clear and supportive of achievement through target-setting and detailed feedback. The development plan for the department echoes the school's objectives for attending to literacy and differentiation. Teaching in drama is specifically geared to making students

aware of, and progressively responsible for, their own learning. The head of department is instrumental in making those principles underpin practice in the subject.

182. In order to further encourage development of achievement in drama the school should make available more dedicated space for the subject. Currently, because of the use of the hall for examination and other purposes, students are often being taught or rehearsing in unsuitable accommodation.

### **Business studies and economics**

183. GCSE business studies students achieved average standards in 2000 for grades A\*-C, but above average standards for grades A\*-G. All students gained at least a grade G, though in terms of grades A\*-C girls did significantly better than boys, whose results were below average. The results in 2000 were an improvement on the results in 1999. A small number of students were entered for GCSE economics. All gained at least a pass grade. A Level results in economics were well below average for grades A and B and below average for grades A to E. No A grades were awarded and, for the range of grades A to E, the results for boys were above average, but were below average in the case of girls. These results were a marked deterioration from those achieved in 1999. A small number of students were entered for A Level business studies. All gained at least a pass grade, but the small entry precludes any valid analysis. A number of students were entered for AS Level business studies. Results were above average for grades A to E and well above average for A and B grades. The standards achieved by vocational business students are good. All intermediate and advanced GNVQ students gained accreditation. This outcome is well above average. At advanced level, nearly 80 per cent gained merit or distinction grades; such results are well above average. At intermediate level, just under 40 per cent gained merits. There were no distinctions. These results are below average.

184. The standards achieved by current students in Years 10 and 11 are above average, though the standards of girls are higher than those achieved by boys, many of whom are of lower ability. Standards are similar in both GCSE economics and GCSE business studies. In business studies a number of girls are achieving well above average standards. All students are developing a basic knowledge of the business environment. Economics students use appropriate language in context and can, for example, explain the impact of changes in the sterling/dollar exchange rate on prices of both imports and exports. In a business studies lesson on the location of industry, very high standards were achieved. All the students were girls and their levels of analysis were most impressive; they identified and explained a range of relevant factors which help firms to decide on the location of their businesses. The standards achieved by other business studies students are less consistent. In lessons on marketing, most students were seen to be developing basic ideas about how a product might be attractively marketed, but they were not sufficiently aware of costs. They could, however, explain how and why many markets are segmented.

185. Standards in the Sixth Form on both A Level and vocational courses are below average. Students are developing their knowledge and understanding of relevant issues, but their analytical skills are less well developed. This is depressing the standards achieved. Vocational students tend to plan their work well, but their evaluative work is less strong. A and AS Level economics students

have good factual knowledge, but they are less confident in offering reasons for outcomes, and many lack confidence in analysing diagrams. Higher attainers, who tend to be girls, do achieve higher standards, but they represent a minority of students.

186. Students behave well and their attitudes to their studies are often very good, or even excellent. They are keen to learn and to take an active part in lessons. The quality of oral comments from students in Years 10 and 11, and from Sixth Formers, are frequently excellent; many students and students are confident speakers and they enjoy opportunities to become involved in lessons. Students also show responsibility for their work. Class notes, assignments and essays are usually well presented and, in GCSE business studies, much work is word processed to a high standard. Classes work harmoniously, and relationships between students and between students and staff are very good. This fosters good learning. In Sixth Form classes, however, there is some above average absence, and this has the potential to depress standards.

187. The quality of teaching in economics and business studies is good. All lessons observed were at least satisfactory, with over a half at least good. Two lessons were graded as either very good or excellent. A number of strengths of teaching can be identified. Staff are keen and enthusiastic. They are knowledgeable and they plan well. In the better lessons, expectations are high and all members of the class are challenged. For example, in a Year 13 economics lesson, the quality of teaching developed the students' learning of demand-side and supply-side policies. Students could identify the differences in approach and could explain how each school of thought believed that beneficial outcomes would be achieved. Higher attainers were able to enhance their applications by making reference to relevant diagrams. In a very good Year 11 business studies lesson on location, learning benefited from the quality of the teacher's planning and the challenging questions asked. All students contributed, with higher attainers able to identify short and long run influences that determine location. Students identified and discussed other relevant points, such as government intervention and the use of incentives. Where teaching occasionally has less impact on the quality of learning, pace tends to be slower and the lessons are too teacher-centred. This is a feature of some vocational lessons. Learning would be faster if students were offered more opportunities to research information for themselves. The only other inconsistency identified relates to the quality of marking. Much written work is assessed in detail, with helpful comments offered on how the work might be improved. On other occasions, marking is less rigorous. Few helpful comments are made and the correction of mistakes, both in content and with spellings, lacks consistency. Such lapses in the quality of teaching are not common, and the good quality of teaching is making a significant contribution to the learning and achievement of all students.

188. No assessment of improvements can be made since the department was not reported on in the previous inspection. The management of the department is good, and some staffing problems arising from maternity leave have been handled well, with minimum disruption to teaching and learning. Most lessons are taught in good quality accommodation which is enlivened by interesting displays, but which could include more examples of students' work. Some vocational lessons are taught in rooms that are less attractive. Though these rooms have an adequate number of computers, the quality of the machines is not good; they are slow and unreliable and do not offer speedy access to the Internet. This restricts the opportunities students have to undertake their own research, and it also constrains the options open to the class teacher to use different teaching strategies. Some vocational students also complain of feeling isolated, and they would welcome an opportunity to be timetabled in rooms located in the main part of the school.

