

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **SMITHDON HIGH SCHOOL**

Hunstanton

LEA area: Norfolk

Unique reference number: 121157

Headteacher: Richard Brown

Reporting inspector: Denis Pittman  
16976

Dates of inspection: 5 – 8 February 2001

Inspection number: 187425

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 pupils: 11 to 19

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Downs Road  
Hunstanton  
Norfolk

Postcode: PE36 5HY

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr C Gillett

Date of previous inspection: 5 February 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
16976	Denis Pittman	Registered inspector	Sixth form	<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p> <p>The school's results and achievement</p> <p>How well are the pupils or students taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p>
9736	John Brasier	Lay inspector	ICT parents/ Community	<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils or students?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
5408	Brian Wilkinson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
20716	Arthur Grogan	Team inspector	Religious education	
14871	Beryl Buteux	Team inspector	English	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
22590	Robert Castle	Team inspector	Geography Physical education	
6620	Barry Juxon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
24894	Clive Petts	Team inspector	Design technology	Community links
27984	John Whitehall	Team inspector	Science	

10895	David Wasp	Team inspector	History Equal opportunities	
15023	Ali Haouas	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages English as an additional language	
30128	Shirley Stanley	Team inspector	Music	
2483	Priscilla Furey	Team inspector	Art	
30741	Paul Copping	Team inspector	Special educational needs	

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<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Smithdon High is an average sized mixed 11-18 comprehensive school, with 863 students on roll (423 girls, 440 boys). The school is situated in the town of Hunstanton. The school has a wide catchment area, which includes many small, rural villages. Overall standards of attainment on entry are average. Students are drawn from both primary and middle schools; a small cohort joins in Year 7. The school has identified 149 students as having special educational need; this number is in line with the national average. Thirty-seven students have statements of educational need, which is above the national average. No students with English as an additional language attend the school. Fourteen per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is close to the national figure.

## HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Smithdon is a good school with many strengths. It is well led and managed by the headteacher, senior management team, governors and other staff with management responsibilities. Students make good progress, achieve well and have an enthusiasm for learning. Relationships are excellent; there is a strong sense of community where everyone is valued. The school provides a secure and caring environment and encourages students' personal development. The quality of teaching is a strength; it effectively promotes students' learning. A shared commitment by staff to raising standards is evident. The school gives good value for money.

### What the school does well

- Attainment in comparison with similar schools.
- The effective leadership from the headteacher and the senior management team.
- Good standards of teaching promote good levels of progress, by students of all abilities.
- The quality of support and provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- The social and moral development of students.
- The excellent relationships between staff and students.
- Encourages positive attitudes to learning and very good standards of behaviour.

### What could be improved

- Attainment at 'A' level.
- Curriculum provision for textiles in design and technology.
- Use of target setting in Years 7 to 9.
- A strategy for the management of Information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum.
- Co-ordination of numeracy teaching across the curriculum.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress in addressing the key issues raised in the last inspection in 1996. Standards of attainment have improved; this is reflected in results for National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations. Attainment is now above average in comparison with similar schools where previously it was below. Lower attaining students are achieving well. Students with special educational needs have equality of opportunity in the curriculum.

Effective strategies for developing literacy have been introduced and successfully contribute to the progress being made in reading and writing. Assessment systems provide a comprehensive overview of students' attainment and progress. Subject data on students is used well at Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form to establish targets to raise standards.

The school has developed an effective cycle of self-review for departments. Staff with management responsibilities are now more involved in forward planning as part of this process. A communication and monitoring link has been established between senior management and departments. Financial management and control are very efficient and effective.

The quality of teaching has improved significantly; it has become a strength of the school. Teaching is good at all key stages, with many examples of high quality performance. The issues of low expectations, poor planning and lack of pace have all been successfully addressed. Planning is now very good in a number of subjects, and high expectations are promoting good standards. The learning objectives of lessons are effectively communicated to students.

Procedures for checking health and safety requirements are in place; risk assessments are carried out regularly. The statutory requirements for collective worship have not been met.

The school has a clear agenda for its development; it is well placed to sustain the creditable improvements since the last inspection. The school continues to have a good reputation within the local community.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE Examinations	C	C	C	B
A level / AS level	D	C	C	

**Key**

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

The 2000 Key Stage 3 test results were in line with the national average and above those for similar schools. In English, mathematics and science standards of attainment are in line with national averages. In comparison with similar schools, standards in all three core subjects are above average. There are no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls.

The GCSE results for students gaining five or more A\* to C grades (44 percent) and five or more A\* to G grades (90 percent) were close to the national average. However, the number of students gaining one A\* to G grade was well below average. In comparison with similar schools, the overall examination results

are above average. The performance of boys and girls are not significantly different from each other. The trend of improvement in GCSE performance is broadly in line with the national average. There were good standards of attainment in science, history and the short course in religious education. Results in English literature, food technology, geography and German are below average.

The school set realistic targets for its GCSE performance at A\* to C (45 percent) in 2000; subsequent results were close to this figure. The target for 2001 of 50 percent is appropriate and reflects the improved standards in the school.

National, post-16 comparitors, for students' A-level/GNVQ results, show attainment to be in line with national averages. However, attainment for students taking two or more A levels is below average. Attainment in GNVQ advanced courses is well above average.

Standards seen in lessons reflect the national test and examination results. At age 14 standards are in line with national expectations for all subjects, apart from art where attainment is above average. At the end of Year 11, attainment is in line with national expectations for most subjects; it is above average in art and history but below average in geography. Standards of literacy are improving particularly in reading and writing. Standards of numeracy are also improving but not at the same pace as literacy.

Students' progress is generally good in subjects; it is satisfactory in ICT and modern foreign languages. The progress and achievements of students with special educational needs are significant; they are the result of the very effective support given to them.

## **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Students enjoy school and are keen to do well. Many take an active part in clubs, sports and charity events.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Classroom behaviour is consistently very good. The school is an orderly, welcoming community.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Students show increasing confidence and maturity as they progress through the school. The excellent relationships between staff and students contribute significantly to the school's ethos.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance figures are marginally below the national targets for schools.

Many pupils show enthusiasm and interest in their work. The high standards of behaviour make a positive contribution to the effective working atmosphere in most lessons. The behaviour in 'community' areas like the dining hall and assemblies is very good. There is good participation in extra-curricular activities such as sports, drama, music, ICT and art clubs. The instances of bullying or oppressive behaviour are low.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	Aged 16-18 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Good

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

The overall quality of teaching is good at all key stages. In the lessons observed during the inspection, it was never less than satisfactory. Teaching was very good in 21 per cent of lessons and good in 49 per cent of them. There are examples of very good teaching in English, mathematics, science, art, history, music and physical education.

Good subject knowledge and high expectations of students are strong features of many lessons. Standards of teaching are good in all subjects apart from design and technology and religious education where they are satisfactory. In most subjects the thoughtful planning of activities helps to sustain students' interest and involvement in their work. Assessment procedures are good and are particularly effective in science. The skills of literacy are taught well in most subjects. The emphasis given to numeracy skills is not as strong. Teaching of key skills in the Sixth Form lacks consistency.

Students' learning is predominately good at all stages in their school career. Their positive attitudes to learning ensure that they develop subject skills well. The interest and commitment they show in lessons produce high quality work, as in art and the portfolios in advanced GNVQ courses. Overall, the school meets the needs of all students very well.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Breadth and balance are good and prepare students very well for the next stages of their education.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Very good. Efficient organisation; very good support and guidance. High quality teaching provided.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The provision for the social and moral development of students is very good. A rich diversity of visits, trips and activities extends students' experience. Spiritual development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its students	School has good procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare. Effective educational support and guidance are informed by careful monitoring of academic progress and personal development.

The school provides many opportunities for parents to be informed about and become involved in the education of their children. The interview with parents of all new students effectively promotes this objective. There are good links with the local community. Procedures for monitoring attendance are good. The school ensures good standards of behaviour.

The curriculum meets most statutory requirements. Continuity and progression are ensured through good schemes of work and productive links with feeder primary and middle schools. The personal and social education course provides informative and challenging opportunities for discussion and study. The extra-curricular provision is another strength of the school with many clubs and activities arranged to support students' personal development. Careers guidance is good. The school council encourages students to take responsibility and show initiative. There are some weaknesses in the curriculum provision: religious education in the Sixth Form; provision for textiles in the design and technology curriculum; the school does not fully comply with the requirements for a daily act of collective worship.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher is effective and efficient; he provides good educational direction for the school. Very good support is evident from other senior management staff, which promotes a good team ethos.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors take a keen and informed interest in the school's work. They take a full part in forward planning and fulfil their statutory responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Procedures for evaluating performance are effective. Monitoring programmes and subsequent reviews and support have improved the quality of teaching. The commitment to improve standards is very good.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Resources are efficiently deployed through detailed planning and a clear specification of educational priorities.

The school uses collated information on students very effectively to establish targets for raising standards and identifying areas for improvement. The positive value added data is a good indicator of the progress being made by the school. The school efficiently applies the principle of 'best value' to its financial decisions.

Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have an appropriate committee structure to monitor its work. The communication between the school and governors is open and productive.

Most departments are efficiently managed and good quality documentation establishes coherence for their work. The management of science is very good. The commitment and work of the pastoral teams are good. There have been technical problems with installation of the computer network; nevertheless, there is insufficient use of new technology in administration and some departments.

The overall staffing provision is good. In most subjects, staff specialisms meet the demands of the curriculum, apart from in Religious Education. The provision for accommodation and learning resources is satisfactory.

## 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 expectation that children should work hard</li> <li>• They feel comfortable about approaching the school about issues</li> <li>• Their children like school and are making good progress</li> <li>• The teaching is good</li> <li>• The leadership of the school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some parents feel that the school does not work closely enough with them and does not keep them well enough informed about their children's progress.</li> <li>• The amount of homework being set.</li> </ul>

The inspection team support the positive views of parents, especially in relation to the support offered and good teaching, which enables students to make good progress. Inspection evidence found the school works hard to involve and inform parents. The amount of homework is generally appropriate and is regularly set, although not consistently monitored.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Overall standards of attainment are in line with the national averages on entry to the school. Many students have under-developed literacy skills.
2. The 2000 Key Stage 3 test results were in line with the national average and above those for similar schools. In English, mathematics and science standards of attainment are in line with national averages. In comparison with similar schools, standards in all three core subjects are above average. There are no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls.
3. The GCSE results for students gaining five or more A\* to C grades (44 per cent) and five or more A\* to G grades (90 per cent) were close to the national average. However, the number of students gaining one A\* to G grade was well below average. In comparison with similar schools, the overall examination results are above average. The performances of boys and girls are not significantly different from each other. The trend of improvement in GCSE performance is broadly in line with the national average. There were good standards of attainment in science, history and the short course in religious education. Results in English literature, food technology, geography and German are below average.
4. The school set realistic targets for its GCSE performance at A\* to C (45 per cent) in 2000; subsequent results were close to this figure. The target for 2001 of 50 per cent is appropriate and reflects the improved standards in the school.
5. National, post-16 comparitors, for students A-level/GNVQ results, show attainment to be in line with national averages. However, attainment for students taking two or more A levels is below average. Attainment in GNVQ advanced courses is well above average.
6. Overall attainment in English is in line with national averages. Standards achieved by boys are below those achieved by girls although the results of both boys and girls have improved over the past three years. In lessons students speak confidently when they exchange ideas or plan group tasks. In Years 7 to 9 students write satisfactorily for a good range of readers and purposes including poems, stories, descriptions, instructions and to record information.
7. Sixteen-year-olds explore and develop ideas in discussion and most express their views confidently. Students understand the importance of supporting opinions with reasons in developing an argument. Most students write satisfactorily, and some well, in a variety of forms and for a range of readers. In the Sixth Form students explore critically the social morality and living conditions across time which are reflected in all art forms including literature. In all year groups students make good progress.

8. The well-planned 'Literacy across the curriculum' Project is supporting the development of speaking, reading and writing skills across all subject areas. These well-established cross-curricular schemes are contributing to raising the standards of reading and writing in every aspect of students' learning. Subject inspectors report that the strategies for improving literacy skills are beginning to bear fruit in some areas of learning. For example, in art, the texts of plays, poems and stories from a wide range of cultural traditions are used as the basis for classwork. However, there is still work to be done on literacy. For example, no subject specific lists of technical vocabulary were seen in classrooms or in students' notebooks.
9. In lessons, the overall attainment of students in mathematics is in line with the national average. By the end of Year 9 the majority of students understand and use fractions, decimals and percentages. Verbal reasoning and mental arithmetic skills are generally sound. By the end of Year 11 almost all students have secure basic number, measurement and graphical skills. They can plan investigations, organise activities and analyse outcomes. Overall standards in A-level classes are average. Most students have good number skills and cope well with algebra, trigonometry and statistics. Evidence from their earlier work indicates that students at all key stages are making good progress over time with respect to their earlier attainment
10. Students enter the school with numeracy standards that are about average. They make good progress as they move through the school not only in mathematics lessons but also by using mathematics in some other subjects. For example, in science students calculate fractions and proportions. They produce good quality line graphs for force, acceleration, engine size, pressure and time. They substitute in formulae and solve equations. In geography they represent rainfall, temperature and other data using line graphs and bar charts. They calculate percentages and averages. In history population and election results are presented graphically and pupils use percentages to calculate losses on the Wall Street crash. In design and technology students use measurement frequently in their designs. In physical education spatial awareness and angle are needed to improve basic skills in games and gymnastics. In these and other activities students' numeracy skills support and promote progress. By the end of Key Stage 4 the majority of students have developed good numeracy skills which they use confidently. However, the absence of a whole-school policy on numeracy limits the overall progress made across the school.
11. In science lessons, the levels of attainment, at age 14, are in line with national expectations and at age 16 they are above. In the Sixth Form, attainment is in line with the national average. Year 9 students understand the difference between physical and chemical changes and they are able to use word equations. Practical work is carefully carried out, results recorded and where appropriate graphs drawn and conclusions set out. Students in Year 11 have a good scientific understanding of physical and chemical properties. Relatively complex ideas are handled well in the Sixth Form. Progress is uniformly good for all students in successive key stages.
12. Attainment in art is above the national expectation for all key stages. Drawing and painting skills are well developed and subject specific language is utilised for discussions and reflections on progress. Significant gains in knowledge and skills are made by students in art, textiles and photography. In Year 11, technical skills are well developed particularly in sculpture and ceramics and the standard of sketchbook work is very good. Students in Years 12 and 13 show progress at making representations in different genres and traditions.

13. Attainment in design and technology, music and modern foreign languages is in line with national expectations at all key stages. In design and technology students can think analytically when responding to a design brief. Course folders are developed systematically, although students are not provided with experience in textiles. Food technology standards are well below the national average. In modern foreign languages students demonstrate a good grasp of conversations conducted in the target language with the teacher and a range of grammatical features. However, a significant number of students studying French do not read fluently and independently. Opportunities for reading in German are better developed and enable students to apply these skills when tackling new words. In listening and responding, students in Year 10 show understanding when listening to passages and dialogues on tape. In writing, high attaining students demonstrate good knowledge of vocabulary and a grasp of past tenses. Students make satisfactory progress in both languages. In music, Year 7 students learn the basic skills for playing the keyboard and reading the notes of the treble clef. In Year 9 most students are able to play on their own and in groups using a programmed backing and one-note chords. In Years 10 and 11 students make good progress in class and instrumental lessons.
14. Attainment in ICT and physical education is in line with national expectations at Key Stages 3 and 4; it is above average in the Sixth Form. In ICT most students are confident in using databases and spreadsheets. Students have a good understanding of how to use LOGO and control software to investigate and problem- solve with computer controlled devices. Students in Year 10 effectively planned how to use 'PowerPoint' to structure, refine and present information based on an assignment on tourism in the local area. The principles of handling and manipulating data are well understood in the Sixth Form. In physical education at age 14 students show competence in gymnastics, trampolining, dance and a range of games; for example, football, netball, basketball and hockey. They understand some of the simple physiological changes that occur when they warm up and understand the reason for stretching to minimise injury and maximise performance. In the GCSE course, students show a basic knowledge of muscles, joints and the cardiovascular system; they use the correct technical words associated with the anatomy. Progress is good through the key stages.
15. Attainment in religious education is in line with national expectations for Key Stages 3 and 4 but below average in the Sixth Form. The reduced time allocation in the Sixth Form is having an adverse effect on students' progress. At Key Stage 3, students build up a good knowledge of the basic beliefs of six major faiths. In Years 10 and 11 students show good understanding of Christian teachings on the moral issues being studied. Overall, students make good progress in the subject
16. Attainment in history improves from Key Stage 3 into Key Stage 4. In Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form attainment is above average. At the end of Year 9 students have developed a range of subject skills, such as a sense of chronology and the critical use of source material. They can appropriately use a range of writing such as descriptive, empathetic and analytical. In years 10 and 11, students have developed a detailed knowledge of the subject and can analyse historical issues in depth. In the Sixth Form, students develop their historical skills well and show considerable maturity in their written and oral work. Most students make good progress.

17. Attainment in geography is in line with expectations at Key Stage 3 but is below average at Key Stage 4. Girls, in particular are underachieving at the end of Key Stage 4. Students show good knowledge about environmental issues and the preservation of endangered species of animals. Overall students, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in map work, use of keys and scales and observational skills. Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9. At Key Stage 4 students have a good understanding of the differences between weather and climate. In the Sixth Form students show a good understanding of primary and secondary resources. They have a secure knowledge of ecosystems, and show a clear understanding of the energy flow that occurs within an ecosystem. Overall students make satisfactory progress.
18. Attainment of students with special educational needs in Years 7 to 9 is below average but improves at Key Stage 4. Students achieved well in the Year 2000 GCSE in relation to their prior attainment. There have been many improvements since the last inspection. The Literacy Blitz scheme has helped students to improve their skills in spelling, use of grammar, reading and writing. The Curriculum Support Unit provides withdrawal support in a very good educational environment conducive to good learning. Subject teachers are making use of differentiated tasks to provide learning opportunities for lower attaining students. For example, in modern foreign languages mime and physical movement are used to support understanding; in science assistance is given with note-taking; in history the subject teacher provides differentiated tasks. Students in the Curriculum Support Unit withdrawal groups in Year 9 benefited from intensive sessions relating phonics to spellings. Withdrawal groups in Year 8 were observed focusing on literal, inferential and evaluative comprehension of a text about 'the frilled lizard' found in Australia.

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

19. The positive attitudes of students, very good standards of behaviour and effective strategies for personal development are among the many strengths of the school. Relationships are excellent. This is a substantial improvement upon the last inspection and it has a significant effect on students' achievements.
20. Students enjoy school. They are enthusiastic in lessons. They speak highly of their teachers and other adults. They are keen to get down to work and show a genuine interest in their lessons, especially in answering questions. They speak out about their views with little embarrassment; for example in an English lesson where the task was quite challenging, the pupils in the 'hot seat' kept calm when they were struggling for answers and the audience were quietly supportive. These very positive attitudes are the result of the calm but firm application of the behaviour policy, the brisk and appropriate pace, and challenge in everything that takes place in the school, and above all, the enthusiasm of the teachers themselves. Many students take part in sport or other activities and there are many choices in the lunch-hour for them to choose from. Students who have special needs show interest in their work and are keen to learn. They value their extra reading lessons during tutor periods. Excellent relationships exist between support staff and special needs students.

21. Behaviour is very good. Around the school students move calmly and cheerfully. They are polite to adults and, nearly all the time, to each other. They are proud of their school and the recent improvements and keep the school tidy and in good condition. There is virtually no abuse of property and buildings, and unattended coats and rucksacks are left quite safely. Students behave well at lunch-time and talk to each other sociably. Behaviour on the playground is also very good. There are occasional boisterous games that are well controlled, but most students prefer to socialise at break-times. Oppressive behaviour occasionally occurs, as evidenced by the record of exclusions, which are only used as a last resort and run at a low level compared with similar schools.
22. Relationships are excellent. Teachers know their students well and enjoy working with them. Students work very amicably together. At lunch-time all learning support staff welcome students with special needs to join them for lunch in a special room and their social education benefits greatly. Students are appreciative of each other's work and are very tolerant of those finding difficulty in any task they have been set.
23. Personal development is also very good. There are many opportunities for students to take responsibility, whether planning some fund-raising for charity or representing their classes' views on the School Council. Some students have been trained as mediators and are valued as a means of resolving playground disputes. Others help with the induction of new students or staff the welcome desk at the entrance to the school.
24. Attendance has improved from 89.5 per cent at the last inspection to 92 per cent in the Autumn Term, 2000, but is still below the national average and the target for secondary schools. The main reason for this shortfall is a number of students who have joined late from other schools, often with a poor attendance record. The school is supportive of students who need additional chances to make a success of their education, a reflection of the strong tradition of caring. Attendance is rated as satisfactory. Unauthorised absence is high, the explanation being the same. Registration is efficient. There is very little lateness and lessons start on time.
25. Students with special educational needs have positive attitudes towards their learning, which reflects the well-planned support they are given. For example, students discuss their work openly, the subjects they enjoy and the help they are given to overcome difficulties. They have a sensible approach to their efforts to move from one set in mathematics to the next and know that their successes in moving from one stage of learning to the next will be celebrated with their teachers. The very good relationships throughout the school generally are reflected particularly well in the attitudes of the students with special educational needs to the support staff. A boy in Year 9 put it best: 'Well you see, all our teachers are not just teachers, they're our friends. We have dinner with them every day, we can talk to them about anything'. This pastoral care element is a key factor in the good progress of students with special educational needs.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

26. The overall quality of teaching is good at all key stages. In the lessons observed during the inspection, it was never less than satisfactory. Teaching was very good in 21 per cent of lessons and good in 49 per cent of them. There are examples of very good teaching in English, mathematics, science, art, history, music and physical education.
27. Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects; this is used well in physical education, history, German, music and geography to motivate and interest students. In history, teachers subject knowledge is used well to establish students' confidence in the subject. In German, teachers' subject expertise provides good models of pronunciation and effective explanations of grammatical rules. In these lessons, students use the language accurately and through the clear explanations provided can apply these rules successfully. In music, teachers' very good skills in playing and performing lead to both teacher and students working as a team. In an A-level lesson the student successfully harmonised a Schubert song whilst the teacher played the melody. In physical education teachers apply their knowledge very successfully in their teaching. This has a positive effect upon students' learning. For example, in football lessons in Year 9, very good knowledge of football linked with good diagnosis and fault correction challenges students, extending their skills and understanding of the game.
28. There are no general weaknesses in teaching; there were no unsatisfactory lessons seen during the inspection. The teaching of basic skills is good. The emphasis given to literacy skills is helping to raise standards. Opportunities to emphasise numeracy ideas are not consistently taken.
29. Detailed lesson planning is a good feature of most subjects. In English, lessons are planned well and teachers have a good knowledge of the range of poems, plays, fiction and non-fiction that students encounter. This is supported by a wealth of background information to stimulate students' interest. In art, teachers show a good balance of illustrating skills and allowing students to experiment for themselves. Teachers are skilled at repeating the same thing in different ways so that students understand fully. In ICT lessons teachers demonstrate a consistent approach to lesson planning, with clear learning intentions based closely on the schemes of work and well matched to students' different levels of learning. In history, lessons are planned well and aims and objectives are shared with students at the start. However, students would benefit from more time to reflect on their progress at the end of each session.
30. Teachers have high expectations of students' performance. In physical education, challenging tasks accelerate learning which is enhanced by opportunities provided through extra-curricular activities. Staff make every effort to provide an environment which promotes success. In most lessons, teachers move briskly from one task to another. This ensures that students sustain their concentration. In English lessons a brisk pace is sustained so that students are challenged but not stressed and there are appropriate tasks for both higher and lower achieving students. For example, students in Year 9 research the difficulties of a journey made by stagecoach; the students responded imaginatively to the cramped conditions and hardships of the long journey. In most subjects, teachers set high standards in relation to completion and presentation of work. In art lessons tasks are challenging and related to the ability level of the students; praise and encouragement help to sustain motivation. In general there are good levels of productivity and learning proceeds at a good pace.

31. The active involvement of students helps to sustain interest. Most teachers make good use of questioning techniques to extend students' understanding. In mathematics, skilful questioning is used well to establish not only what students do not know, but to help them to develop their ideas into more detailed answers. For example, in a Year 11 lesson on circle theorems, well led class discussions and effective questioning encouraged students to find the missing angles and justify their answers. Effective learning took place which enabled students to tackle more difficult problems later. However, in some ICT lessons teachers talk excessively, taking answers to questions hurriedly rather than allowing more students to reflect and contribute their ideas. In these situations, there are insufficient opportunities for paired discussions between students and groups. In religious education, teaching is very thorough and is based on stimulating booklets, which the department has produced. Good opportunities for discussion and reflection are provided; for example, using poetry in a Year 10 lesson to consider the possible effects of environmental pollution as sending creation into reverse.
32. Teachers have good control and management strategies. The good relationships between students and staff that exist in most lessons help to produce a positive working environment. In English, a particular strength is the very good rapport between teachers and students in the Sixth Form. These lessons are enlivened by touches of humour, which encourages the involvement of students. In art, staff create effective working relationships with students and provide regular feedback to reinforce learning. An improvement in the confidence of boys is particularly noticeable as a result of this approach. In ICT lessons teachers provide high levels of individual support and guidance, when pupils are working at their computers. In general, teachers create a secure and positive working environment in their lessons.
33. Most teachers use time and resources well. For example, most lessons have a time plan for activities that effectively sustains pace and productivity. In a Year 11 history lesson, a range of resources, such as cartoon sources and a video extract, were used effectively to examine the complex issues surrounding the Wall Street Crash. Teachers have the use of three ICT suites they can book and these are extensively used when not required for timetabled lessons in years 7 and 8. Subjects mainly make use of word processing, desktop publishing, spreadsheets, databases, modelling, control and data logging and multi-media compositions. The long-standing problems with the computer network are limiting more extensive use of ICT.
34. The day-to-day assessment of pupils' work is generally consistent and effective in most subjects. The marking of students' work in mathematics and science is good and comments are detailed and helpful. In science, the results of frequent tests are recorded centrally and used effectively to plot the progress of individual students. A good system of target setting is now in place. In art, teachers consistently give good oral feedback during lessons and this is reinforced by effective marking. Though covered well by the key skills and vocational courses, the cross-curricular assessment of students' ICT capability needs further development to ensure that their progress is regularly assessed. The setting of homework is a regular feature of most subjects. In mathematics, homework effectively extends the work begun in lessons.
35. Teaching for students with special educational needs is very good whether they are provided with support in lessons or withdrawn for special help. As part of their professional development programme all teachers work with the special educational needs co-ordinator on a whole-school approach to differentiation. This affects the quality and variety of structured tasks offered to students. Every teacher has a data

file and full details of each special needs student, including the individual education plans and assessments. This ensures that pupils make the best possible progress in their work as they move through school. Subject teachers use individual education plans effectively to target provision for those who experience difficulties. Support teachers work effectively as a team and are adept at planning provision in close collaboration with the subject specialists. Support teachers show a special understanding of the individual needs of the students involved, engaging their interests through an astute use of language activities to encourage a good learning response from each student concerned.

36. The good efforts of the literacy teaching combined with the support for students with special educational needs ensures that the students develop competence in their written work and increasing confidence in spelling and listening. Good support was seen within classes; for example, a boy in Year 9 wrote clearly and concisely about the problems caused by 'Eating Disorders'. In a Year 10 English class studying Shakespeare, students wrote a report of an interview between King Duncan and a reporter from Radio Scotland about the brave exploits of Macbeth. The tasks are planned to promote positive learning so that all students progress well. The support given to students with special educational needs in all subject areas is a strength because students are confident of their ability to achieve well, which has a positive effect on their learning. The commitment of the special needs co-ordinator and her team invites a reciprocal commitment from subject teachers for supportive teaching for students with special educational needs.
37. The standard of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now a strength of the school. There is a firm emphasis on adding variety to teaching methods and concentrating attention on how pupils learn.

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

38. Overall, the curriculum is broad and balanced throughout the school and provides a rich educational experience for all students. At Key Stage 3 students follow a common curriculum and a full range of National Curriculum subjects. The unusual patterns for entry to the school with a small intake at Year 7 and a larger intake at Year 8 create particular problems. The school circumvents these well. Nevertheless, there are problems with raising the literacy and numeracy levels of attainment for all students. The school has developed several strategies for meeting the demands of the split intake. The Literacy Hour is taught across Years 7, 8 and 9. The Literacy Blitz is helping students to reach the levels of attainment expected for their age in reading and writing. These schemes are proving to be successful; if not immediately reflected in the Year 9 SATS tests, then certainly with sixteen-year-olds at the end of Key Stage 4. Gains have been made since the last inspection through extending the provision of information and communications technology although the use that is made of this provision is still limited. There are two weekly assemblies for each tutor group and twenty minutes tutor time at the beginning of each school day yet the school does not meet the requirements for a daily act of collective worship. There is no provision in the Sixth Form for religious education. Teaching time for design and technology in Years 7 to 9 is below the recommended entitlement. This, coupled with group sizes above the recommended maximum, often in cramped accommodation, and the lack of double periods to complete a task in practical work, affects attainment levels and depresses the rate of students' progress. For example, only one food technology room is available for two groups timetabled simultaneously in Year 10. However, in all other respects the curriculum meets statutory requirements.

39. Curricular provision for the Sixth Form is very good. In Year 2000 there are five option groups offering sixth-formers a wide combination of subjects from which to choose. The introduction of more Advanced Subsidiary Levels provides more opportunities across a wider spread of subjects which students can continue to Advanced Level 2 if they choose. As a result of the more flexible opportunities offered, three quarters of the students at school continue with sixth-form studies. Also, increasing numbers of students are joining the school for post 16 education.
40. Curriculum time is slightly above the nationally recommended figure and time allocations are broadly in line with those recommended, with the exception of design and technology in Years 7 to 9, and religious education in the Sixth Form. English and mathematics have a generous allocation of time to allow for the several excellent schemes for raising the standards of literacy and numeracy. At the time of the inspection the provision for literacy is better supported than that for numeracy.
41. There are two major groups of learning and within these students are allocated to the 'set' that provides opportunities for them to progress at a level appropriate to their prior attainment. This works well because higher attaining students are challenged by the tasks set and lower attaining students are encouraged towards achievements within their grasp. In discussion, students explained that they like this system because they can move from one set to the next and they are aware of their own progress in learning. All students have access to the full range of the curriculum. The curriculum needs of students with special educational needs are well met and all receive extra support through the Literacy Across the Curriculum project. The quality of provision in this area contributes significantly to the progress made by the students concerned. Good individual education plans are in place for all students identified on the register. The Literacy Strategy taught to all students in Year 7, 8, 9, and the Literacy Blitz Scheme, provide opportunities for students to improve their skills in reading, spelling, use of grammar and writing which supports good progress in their work.
42. Whilst the requirements for ICT are met and the supply of materials is good, limited use made of this provision. However, there is a well-supported lunch-time club which is staffed continuously. Students from all year groups were observed, some researching information for a geography project on Kenya, others finding solutions for a difficult mathematics problem and others designing a poster for 'Macbeth'.
43. There is a good and effective programme of personal, social and health education that is taught to students by their form tutors. The programme is wide-ranging, and includes subjects that promote personal safety, efficient studying, moral and social attitudes, citizenship, preparation for careers and information on puberty and sexual responsibility. There is some good use of outside speakers. Teachers are supported by numerous worksheets and advice. Group, paired work and discussion figure appropriately in the programme. The programme is also delivered through assemblies. This programme is a marked improvement compared with the last inspection. Careers education is good. It is well planned and great care is taken to see that students receive whatever help they need to plan their future. Careers interviews with the Careers Service are available to those who require them. Much information is available in the new library and the new well-appointed careers office to guide students, and personal guidance is available every lunch-hour. Work experience is well planned for year 10, with a surprising two-thirds of students finding their own high quality placements. Work related curricula are available in Year 11 for students who are less suited to academic work. Work experience leads to offers of

permanent or holiday jobs at times.

44. The school demonstrates a strong commitment to the provision of equality of access to the full range of the curriculum for all its students. Issues arising from the previous report, such as access to ICT in Year 9 and the provision of equal opportunities for some students with special educational needs, have been addressed successfully. There is an overall equal opportunities policy in the school and this is disseminated well through departments. The school places considerable emphasis on social inclusion and there is very good extra-curricular provision for all.
45. A strength of the school is the comprehensive range of extra-curricular activities. There is good provision for extra-curricular competitive sport and games. A strong feature is the intramural sports competitions because students at all levels of sport can take part; there are opportunities for all. The school also takes part in league matches and competitions with other schools, particularly in football, hockey, netball, basketball and athletics. Extra-curricular schemes are available for the Community Sports Leader Award and the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Booster clubs are available every lunch-time for English, mathematics, science and ICT. Many teachers are involved in these activities and the participation rate of students is good. The 'Flying Start' summer school is especially supportive for students wishing to improve their literacy skills.
46. At the time of the inspection students from Year 12 were departing on a business studies trip to New York. Exchange visits are made regularly to France and Germany; these exchanges are available to all students. As part of the school's cross-cultural links, support is given to a secondary school in Nepal. A trip is planned to visit this school in its remote mountain area. Close to home there are visits to art galleries, museums, theatres and concerts. A great number of outside speakers visit the school and there are performances by the London Sinfonia and by theatre in education companies. This rich diet of extra-curricular activities makes a good contribution to students' learning and progress.
47. The curricular provision for students with special educational needs supports good progress in their work. Students are effectively assessed on entry and where necessary placed on the appropriate stage of the special educational needs register. Individual education plans with set targets for attainment are devised for each student. These are reviewed regularly in consultation with the class teachers and learning support assistants. A particular strength is the excellent guidance given by the special educational needs co-ordinator who plans for tasks that match the needs of each student. The pastoral care given supports students' emotional development, sustaining their self-esteem and encouraging them to persist in their intellectual efforts. The school takes good care to ensure that these students have access to the full curriculum.
48. There are good links with the local community, and to ensure further co-ordination, a Community Director was appointed at the beginning of the current school year. Sixth-formers ran a one-day Health Forum at the College of West Anglia where they led discussions, gave presentations and organised events generally. The school has good links with partner institutions and is part of a cluster of thirteen local schools. There are important curriculum liaisons with middle schools, for example the Smithdon Science Scheme of work for Year 7 has been adopted by three middle schools. Parents and potential students from local primary and middle schools are offered 'taster' days and two-day induction sessions are held regularly.

49. Provision for the spiritual development of students is satisfactory. The school has made efforts to address the issues highlighted in the previous report concerning the lack of an act of collective worship and the need to develop a more consistent approach to spiritual matters. There is now a consistent approach to assemblies, with weekly themes, and time is provided in some of these for students to reflect on spiritual and moral dilemmas. Students also participate in assemblies, for example by providing musical accompaniment to hymn singing. Elsewhere, however, opportunities for spiritual development are more limited. Form tutor times, for example, are used mainly for social and administrative purposes and, overall, the school still fails to comply fully with the requirements for a daily act of collective worship. Within the curriculum, opportunities for spiritual growth are provided in religious education, history, English, art and dance. Such opportunities are rare, however, in other subject areas.
50. The school makes very good provision for the moral development of students. The concept of a moral community is stressed both in documentation and in practice, and there are firm but fair disciplinary procedures which help students distinguish right from wrong. There is also a clear code of conduct which students themselves have helped to create. Issues of bullying and drugs education are dealt with effectively and teachers provide good role models throughout the school. There are also numerous initiatives to sustain the moral development of students, such as sports leadership awards and the Duke of Edinburgh scheme. Students are also involved in charity work and GNVQ students have recently helped to organise a local health forum. Moral development is also sustained in subject areas such as science, with debates on the drugs issue in Year 9; in geography, with a focus on ecological issues; and in English, religious education, modern foreign languages and history.
51. The provision for social development is also very good. The school council system encourages students to take responsibility and is a useful channel of communication between staff and students. Sixth-form students, in particular, are very active and are a considerable strength in the school. They provide a very useful counselling service for younger students and help out with reading schemes for those with special educational needs. There is a wide range of lunch-time and after-school activities to enhance the social development of students and the sixth-form enrichment programme is particularly impressive in its scope. The school provides a safe and harmonious atmosphere for all its students and there are very positive relationships both in classrooms and throughout the school buildings. Opportunities for social growth are provided in most subjects, especially in English, science, music, modern foreign languages, design technology and personal and social development.

52. Provision for the cultural development of students is good. There is a commendable programme of visits, exchanges and other activities to enrich their awareness and knowledge of the wider world. There are exchanges in modern foreign languages and a group of students recently went on a visit to Nepal, where links were forged with local schools. A business education trip to New York is about to take place and recent visitors to the school have included the London Sinfonia, the Tiebreak theatre company and the Soundnation group which worked with students to raise their spiritual and moral awareness. Cultural growth is also fostered through various clubs and activities, especially in sport and music. In the mainstream curriculum, cultural development is fostered particularly well in modern foreign languages, music, art and English. The previous inspection report noted that the multicultural development of students was not strong. There are now opportunities for the celebration of cultural diversity in Britain in religious education, with an emphasis on multifaith issues; in art, with an array of multicultural textile displays; and in music, which has a world-wide cultural approach to the subject. This area of school life, however, needs further development in other subjects.
53. Overall, the school has made good progress since the previous inspection in the promotion of the moral and social aspects of school life. There is still a need, however, to address the area of spiritual development and the preparation of students for life in a multicultural society. These aspects need tighter co-ordination and departments should clarify their contribution to these areas in their development plans.

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

54. Arrangements for child protection are good. One of the senior management team is the nominated person for child protection. He has been well trained, is familiar with local procedures and has established good contacts with all the local agencies. All staff are aware of his role. All new staff are trained in child protection as part of their induction procedure. All other staff are regularly referred to the section in the staff handbook on child protection but there has been no recent in-service training on the subject. Staff are aware of those few children in care, but there are currently no children on the at-risk register.
55. Arrangements for the welfare of students are good, the details of those with special health problems being provided to those who need to know. There are sufficient staff with qualifications in first-aid in the school. All the expected safety precautions, such as fire drills, are in place.
56. Highly effective pastoral management provides good support for students' personal development. Tutors normally remain with students from the age of 12 to 16 and each year group is managed by a Head of Year who is provided with sufficient non-contact time to do the job well. Personal support plans are devised for students needing extra support, usually in conjunction with their parents, and these are subject to a regular review. The support system works very well, with heads of year knowing their students well and able to talk about their priorities for development. Students with special needs are well cared for. For instance, one student who needs special occupational therapy at a hospital ten miles away is regularly driven there and back by a member of staff in her own time because the family has no means of transport. Their lunch-time club also provides excellent personal support. The Youth and Community personnel are available to talk with pupils during the lunch hour.
57. There are good procedures for promoting attendance. These procedures include the

usual routines of sending out letters, telephoning the homes of those with poor records when they do not appear and referring persistent offenders to the Education Social Worker. The school devises special plans for the re-integration of pupils with social or psychological problems, usually involving gradually increasing the amount of time spent in school. There are appropriate rewards for those with perfect attendance. Attendance records are effectively analysed to provide data for Heads of Year and Form Tutors to act upon.

58. There are very good procedures for promoting good behaviour. Students and staff drew up the school's code of conduct; it has wide acceptance and is widely observed. The school's behaviour policy is a model of clarity and is very comprehensive. All staff observe it and this consistency is a key to its success. Good behaviour is also promoted by the excellent relationships in the school. Students are treated as adult individuals and valued as people. The elimination of oppressive behaviour is dealt with in assemblies and personal development lessons. Bullying is dealt with directly in years 7 and 8, while year 9 tackles discrimination, and in years 10 and 11 the emphasis is on being a good citizen and equality. The befrienders', sixth-formers who have been trained to help those who are concerned about oppressive behaviour, also make a valuable contribution.
59. At the last inspection there were concerns about assessment and health and safety, but pastoral care was a strength of the school. The concerns have been successfully tackled and all aspects of care are now good, with very good procedures for promoting good behaviour and supporting personal development.
60. Procedures for assessing students' attainment are good and a strong feature of the school's drive to raise standards. The new whole-school policy explains clearly the main purposes of assessment and gives good guidance as to how it should be carried out. Most departments now have clear policies on assessment, which are followed consistently by staff. Assessment is accurate and is used effectively to monitor the progress of students. Pupils with special educational needs are properly identified by this process and given appropriate support. Regular 'Rapid Assessments' identify poor performance and form tutors notify parents when concerns arise. This enables prompt action to be taken to resolve problems. A wide range of assessment data, including statutory national tests and standardised test scores, is used to set targets and motivate students. It is most effective in raising expectations of GCSE and A-level students, although it is not yet fully established in modern foreign languages, religious education and music.
61. Comprehensive and accurate records are kept on all students. They are regularly updated and assist students as they move through the school. They are held on computer and are readily accessible by staff. This supports students' work by providing a clear picture of how well they are attaining and where they must focus their efforts. Subject departments generally make good use of assessment to inform curriculum planning.

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

62. There have been some valuable new initiatives to involve parents in the work of the school since the last inspection and the majority of parents think highly of the work of the school. The information provided by the school is very good and there is a good partnership between parents and the school.
63. Those who attended the parents' meeting were unanimous in supporting the school. However, of the 207 parents who completed the questionnaire, some were critical of three factors: the amount of homework set; the adequacy of information provided on students' progress, and the way the school works closely with parents. On the individual questionnaires the last two comments frequently went together and the criticism about working closely is considered to be linked to progress. Parents particularly liked the fact that their children were expected to work hard, that they made good progress and that the school was approachable and well managed. The inspection team supports the positive comments, finds that homework is generally good, although there are some inconsistencies in amounts being set. The reporting procedures give a good overview of progress.
64. The new initiatives are in the area of providing information. All new students are now interviewed with their parents in the summer prior to entry, so that the students understand what the school requires of them and parents know how they can be supportive. Apart from the normal induction procedures of meetings and taster sessions, prospective students have the opportunity to attend 'Flying Start' summer schools, partly to improve literacy and numeracy and to provide challenge to the higher attaining pupils, but also including some general interest topics. Parents are also invited to attend sessions about the learning process so that they are more able to help their children at home, and it is planned to add sessions on helping with homework. A similar session takes place on library familiarisation.
65. In addition, parents are bombarded with notes about special events and suchlike. They receive a well written and informative annual report, and there is a good prospectus and sixth-form handbook. Good information is also provided on GCSE and sixth-form choices, which is accompanied by special evenings. End of year school reports are factual, clear and have precise information about levels of attainment. They are good examples, except that they lack targets and suggested ways of meeting them. Once a year there are open evenings at which parents can discuss the progress of their children, and twice a term there are very brief written reports on how pupils are doing. Annual reviews for students with special educational needs are well attended by parents, who appreciate the information provided.
66. There is an active association called 'The parents, friends and teachers of Smithdon' that discusses school affairs and raises money. Attendance at school events is high, particularly celebrations of achievement. Parents support trips and sporting fixtures and get involved whenever it is felt that a parent can assist in solving a problem. Some tutors make a point of involving parents in good news, usually by telephone. Parents are expected to sign student's planners and take an interest in their homework. Staff are always available to talk to parents at short notice.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

67. The quality of leadership and management in the school is good. There has been good progress since the last inspection in 1996. Standards have improved; attainment is now above average in comparison with similar schools where previously it was below. Lower attaining students are achieving well. Good strategies for developing literacy have been introduced and successfully contribute to the progress being made in reading and writing. Assessment systems provide a comprehensive overview of students' attainment and progress. Subject data on students is used well at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form to establish targets to raise standards.
68. The headteacher provides good leadership and is fully committed to raising standards in the school. He is enthusiastic and hardworking and although only recently appointed has begun to establish a clear direction for the school's work. Central to his approaches to management are the principles of collaboration and delegation of appropriate responsibilities. To this end a very good team ethos has been created within the school at all levels of its activities. There is a strong commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity. Other members of the senior management team, whose individual skills complement those of their colleagues, support the headteacher very well. The management structure operates well and enables strengths to be recognised and areas for development and improvement to be identified.
69. The overall quality of leadership at middle management level is good. It is particularly strong and effective in science and is good in all other departments apart from design and technology and ICT where it is satisfactory. Most middle managers have established a clear direction for their subject and efficiently monitor the work of their department. The monitoring and evaluation strategies in design and technology need to be improved. The quality of documentation in departments is good. The very effective pastoral staff successfully promote the school's objectives to support and guide pupils' personal development. In general there is a shared and effective commitment by staff to improve standards within the school.
70. The leadership and management of the special needs department are very good. The special educational needs co-ordinator organises her team of four learning support assistants most efficiently to ensure maximum support is given across the curriculum. More training for these assistants would be an advantage; at present the training centres are too far away for this to be viable. There is regular contact with the educational psychologist but more help and support from the LEA would reinforce the very good support given by the school. Parents are kept fully informed of students' progress and individual education plans and targets set are discussed with parents and reviewed regularly.
71. The governing body has a good working knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and supports the school well. It takes an active role in monitoring the work of the school through its various committees. It has an effective programme of subject reviews and governors work well with the school's management team in identifying areas for development, setting targets and monitoring progress towards those targets. Governors have made an appropriate provision for working groups to take responsibility for special educational needs and performance management. The governor responsible for curricular provision is actively engaged on monitoring the work of the various departments, particularly those concerned with raising standards in literacy and numeracy. The governing body effectively fulfils its statutory responsibilities for the curriculum apart from the provision for textiles in design and

technology, religious education in the Sixth Form, and provision for a daily act of collective worship.

72. The monitoring and support of teaching are good. These comprehensive procedures have become a major and successful strategy for implementing change in the school. The school has made significant progress in remedying this key issue from the last inspection report. A programme of classroom observations is carried out by the headteacher, the curriculum line managers and heads of department. Subject performance reviews are regularly arranged, examination results are discussed and action plans drawn up to support subjects. The results of this approach are clear in the improvement in teaching and the substantial gains in students' progress and learning.
73. Development planning at a whole-school level and at departmental level is good, with carefully identified priorities appropriate to the needs of the school. Priorities are clearly linked to raising standards and improving the educational experiences of students. The work of the school is monitored closely by the school management team and the governors. Systems are used to compare the performance of departments in examinations with each other. The school sets challenging targets for both the standard of teaching and the standards which students should achieve.
74. Financial planning and the designated use of funding and grants are very good. The school manages its budget very efficiently and has a clear strategy redressing the current deficit. Financial priorities are clearly related to the school's aims and objectives. The costed development plan provides a suitable basis for the long-term improvement of the school. The governing body plays a full and active role in the financial planning and management of the school.
75. Routine administration of the school's budget is very good. Subject development plans are appropriately costed and relate well to the overall budgetary position of the school. The school monitors its expenditure efficiently and looks for the best value in its financial decisions; for example, in the re-arrangement of the catering contract. Competitive tendering is used widely for purchases. Greater use needs to be made of new technology to support the smooth running of the school and ensure efficient administration.
76. Given the significant improvements in the quality of teaching, the good progress most pupils make in their academic and personal development and the continuing commitment to raising standards, the school provides good value for money.
77. The number, qualifications and experience of teachers and support staff match well the demands of the curriculum, as for example, in mathematics, science, geography, art and design and physical education. In design and technology, there is a particularly good example of discrete support for pupils with special educational needs. In history and music, there is good balance of expertise amongst staff. More support staff is needed in English. Staffing in modern foreign languages is satisfactory but there are instances of non-specialist teachers in other curriculum areas. Staffing in religious education is unsatisfactory because there is only one specialist teacher and there is inconsistency, with additional staff changing from year to year. Self-evaluation is helping to identify the needs of teachers and departments. Additional training courses are directly related to departments' individual development plans. A good start has been made to the performance management and professional development of teachers. The school has compiled and presented their improved management systems for achieving Investors in People status and is currently

awaiting endorsement. Induction programmes for new staff and newly qualified staff are good.

78. Resources for learning make a positive impact on the quality of learning and standards of achievement throughout the school. In spite of recent financial difficulties, provision for resources have been safeguarded and have not jeopardised students' learning opportunities. An improvement since the last inspection is the relationship between school and departmental planning. The links are explicit and resource allocations now reflect school and departmental priorities. Following the submission of bids based on need, decisions about allocations to departments are widely publicised.
79. The quality and quantity of books, equipment and material is generally good. Departments such as music, religious education, history and science, whose resources were inadequate at the time of the last inspection, now have good provision. The newly built accommodation for English, history, geography and religious education provides those departments with good classroom equipment and very easy access to the library, all of which enhances learning. Provision in modern foreign languages is restricted because there are not enough textbooks for every student to take home.
80. In their annual bids for resources, departments are required to identify ten per cent for the purchase of differentiated materials for students with special educational needs. There have been improvements since the last inspection but the position is not yet wholly satisfactory. Religious education material is insufficiently differentiated for students in the lowest sets.
81. The library is well managed and provides an environment conducive to learning. Stock in all subjects is good and provision is enhanced by the word processing and study facilities for sixth-form students. Issues in ICT have improved since the last inspection. Hardware provision, accommodation and access are good. Cross-curricular usage is improving. Unfortunately due to the newness of some of the provision there are localised network problems which are currently being addressed by a consultant.
82. Accommodation is satisfactory. English, history, geography and religious education are housed in a new building, which provides very good classrooms, administration areas and circulation space. There is some reservation about the effectiveness of the sound insulation. Classrooms in the main block are of sufficient size but basic design problems cause disruption to lessons with the need to pass through one room to get to another. The noise of the heating system has an adverse effect on students' learning. There are storage problems for art and music and inadequate preparation facilities for science and DT. The two music rooms are far apart with insufficient space to enable group work to take place effectively. Facilities for DT are poor. The cramped accommodation is restrictive for 'design and make' activities and makes the establishment of sound standards difficult. The lack of a clean area restricts design opportunities. The single food room is unsatisfactory. Two groups have to be timetabled for its use at the same time. Modern foreign languages are housed in temporary classrooms.

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

**In order to raise standards the headteacher, governors and staff should:**

- Improve attainment at A level. (Paragraphs 5, 83, 140, 146, 165)
- Ensure a curriculum provision for textiles in design and technology. (Paragraphs 71, 38, 136)
- Develop target setting in Years 7 to 9. (Paragraphs 60, 131, 135, 137, 171)
- Develop a strategy for the management of ICT across the curriculum. (Paragraphs 34, 38, 42, 75, 81, 120, 139, 156, 162, 164, 179, 186)
- Develop a strategy for the co-ordination of numeracy teaching across the curriculum. (Paragraphs 38, 40, 113, 136)

### **Other issues for consideration**

- Make provision for religious education in the Sixth Form. (Paragraphs 71, 38, 191)
- Co-ordination of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. (Paragraphs 49, 53)
- Raise attendance levels. (Paragraph 24)
- Make more effective use of form tutor time. (Paragraph 49)
- Achieve greater consistency in monitoring procedures within departments. (Paragraph 69)
- Provide for a daily act of collective worship. (Paragraphs 38, 71, 49)
- Improve the accommodation provision in design and technology. (Paragraphs 38, 82, 139)

## PROVISION FOR STUDENTS IN THE SIXTH FORM

83. The attainment recorded by A-level students has been rising each year since the previous inspection although it fell back slightly last year. In 1999 the average A-level points score was 16.0; in 2000 it fell to 15.5. The standard achieved by students 2 or more A levels was below national averages. However, standards of attainment in advanced GNVQ courses were well above average. The aggregate of these levels of achievement shows that overall attainment is in line with national figures.
84. Attainment in lessons reflects these standards. Most students are meeting the appropriate levels of attainment for course requirements. The high quality of work in the advanced GNVQ courses in business studies has been maintained. GNVQ intermediate completion rates for health and social care and business studies are in line with national averages. For individual A-level subjects, some entry levels are low and national comparisons are difficult as, for example, in physical education. Attainment in art and design, mathematics and psychology exceeded national expectations in the awarding of grades A to B. For a number of subjects, including English, science, design and technology, ICT and religious education, attainment was in line with national results. Only history, geography and economics recorded results which were below national average figures. An analysis of A-level results in both 1999 and 2000 shows post-16 students are achieving well at A level (and its equivalent), given their prior attainment, although insufficient are attaining at the highest grades.
85. Entry to the school's Sixth Form is flexible and is characterised by an open access policy. Value-added data suggests that many students are making progress during their courses and are proceeding to gain additional qualifications. The development of vocational options, especially intermediate GNVQ courses, is offering opportunities for progression to a wider cohort of students. The progress of present post-16 students is good. Their learning is aided by good teaching and staff and are committed to the success of the Sixth Form. Good use is made of predictive data to monitor progress and for target setting. Insufficient use is made of new technology to co-ordinate this data.
86. A very good, broad, academic curriculum is offered with 21 AS/A2 courses, including an enrichment programme. A comprehensive programme of key skills is being developed for all students. The implementation requires more consistency at subject level in providing suitable evidence for students. The school appropriately provides courses in the Advanced Certificate of Vocational Education in business studies and health and social care. The size of the Sixth Form is increasing, in part because of the introduction of the education maintenance allowance that has reduced the financial burden for some students. A varied enrichment programme substantially enhances the academic curriculum. This provision includes courses in photography, sport, Young Enterprise, Duke of Edinburgh's Award and work placements. Students have scope to develop responsibility by involving themselves in initiatives such as paired reading with Key Stage 3 students and supporting younger students who want to 'share a problem'. The Sixth Form council is actively involved in fund-raising events. Musical and drama events are arranged, as are theatre visits. The school also fields sports teams at sixth-form level, for example in netball and soccer. Inadequate provision is made for religious education in the sixth-form curriculum. The Sixth Form is a harmonious community. The students are very loyal to the school, are appreciative of the opportunities offered, and are keen to succeed.
87. The Sixth Form is effectively led and the team of tutors work well together. A financial analysis of the sixth-form provision shows it to be cost effective, with no significant

subsidy from the main school. The viability of small groups is effectively evaluated and is based upon sound educational criteria as well as financial considerations. The Sixth Form makes a valuable contribution to the ethos and character of the school. It has maintained its strong position since the last inspection.

## **WORK WITH THE COMMUNITY**

88. The school makes a strong, impressive commitment to extending links with the community it serves. The recent appointment of a senior manager with Community Management responsibility reinforces the declared commitment of the school.
89. The school has increased the range of activities it offers. The successful summer school, now an established feature of provision, enhances transition from feeder schools, reinforces student literacy standards and further strengthens the level of parental support. An increasing number of parents provide direct support for activities, often travelling significant distances; this is a direct result of the implementation of a policy for partnership with parents.
90. Relationships with local businesses are increasingly productive and firmly underpin school objectives; for example, provision of funding for a pilot community newsletter. Practical support is also given to school/work related programmes and Young Enterprise initiatives. There is good use of school facilities, including use by the disabled as part of an ICT Community/Parents training programme; there is a programme for accredited adult education courses in place.
91. However, a systematic analysis of community need has recently been completed and incorporated into a community development plan; for example, the school is keen to encourage adults to join the current AS and A-level provision. In addition, the school aims to play its part in 'employment initiatives' designed to bridge the skills gap of the working age population. Initial contact with partner providers, for example Learning Skills Council, FE institutions and the Careers Service, are encouraging. Additional funding sources have been identified in order to create a realistic funding stream for future provision.
92. The management and organisation of community education are clearly identified as a school priorities; the governing body is playing its full part through the link governor. Developmental planning is effective; realistic and focused targets for the development of education programmes are planned.
93. The aims of the current community programmes enhance the aims and values of the school; progress since the last inspection is significant. The successful establishment of a regular adult presence in school strengthens the principle of life long learning; this can be further exploited in partnership with local providers.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	154
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	30

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	32	76	46	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	721	141
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	91	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	37	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	149	0

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	38
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	50

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.0
National comparative data	7.7

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	0.4

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	80	75	155

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	45	54	51
	Girls	55	52	47
	Total	100	106	98
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	64.5 (58.9)	68.4 (69.7)	63 (49)
	National	64 (63)	66 (62)	60 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (22.5)	42.6 (37.6)	31.2 (13)
	National	24 (28)	38 (38)	26 (23)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	52	46	46
	Girls	50	46	41
	Total	102	92	87
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	65.8 (69)	59.4 (66.9)	56 (51.7)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	32.9 (37.6)	34.2 (31.5)	9.7 (13.5)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	30 (28)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	2000	95	78	173

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	38	81	85
	Girls	38	74	74
	Total	76	155	159
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	44 (47)	90 (94)	92 (95)
	National	49	89	94

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	37.4 (37.8)
	National	38.7 (38)

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

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

### Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	95	78	173

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	15.0	16.1	15.5 (16.0)	2.7 (2.5)	2.1 (1.5)	2.4 (2.0)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9	2.6	2.9	2.7

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	6 (16)	100 (87)
	National		82.5

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the Percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	0	N/A
	National		

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	856
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	1	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	14	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	55.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.6

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	357

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.4
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13**

Key Stage 3	21.1
Key Stage 4	20.6

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000
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	£
Total income	2517106
Total expenditure	2476861
Expenditure per pupil	2921
Balance brought forward from previous year	-226001
Balance carried forward to next year	-185756

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	860
Number of questionnaires returned	207

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	32	56	10	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	35	58	4	2	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	57	9	1	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	51	16	5	3
The teaching is good.	25	64	7	2	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	55	16	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	42	50	6	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	50	45	4	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	17	59	19	2	1
The school is well led and managed.	23	59	7	1	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	32	55	8	4	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	52	9	3	11

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

### **ENGLISH**

94. Overall attainment in English is in line with national averages. In the Year 2000 national curriculum tests the performance of 14-year-olds was in line with national expectations for their age group. Since the previous inspection pupils' attainment has risen sharply which places their performance above that of pupils in similar schools. Standards achieved by boys are below those achieved by girls although the results of both boys and girls have improved over the past three years. This reflects the influence of the literacy strategy which is taught throughout Years 7, 8, 9 and of the 'Literacy Blitz' scheme that rigorously monitors standards in writing, to ensure students are using grammar, punctuation and spelling correctly. These excellent schemes are being implemented through the Literacy Across the Curriculum project to improve reading and writing in all subject areas. In lessons students speak confidently when they exchange ideas or plan group tasks. For example, students in Year 8 explore characters in a story through 'hotseating', expressing their thoughts and feelings in role as the character in the story. This develops confident use of speaking and listening skills. Standards in reading are being improved through the 'paired reading' scheme that provides opportunities each morning for less able students to read aloud to sixth-formers or to the Learning Resource Centre staff. Students write satisfactorily for a good range of readers and purposes including poems, stories, descriptions, instructions and to record information.
95. Standards attained by 16-year-olds are in line with national expectations. Year 2000 GCSE results are slightly above national averages in English language and above those attained by students from similar schools, representing the value added after four years of education at the school. The standards achieved overall by students in English language for the A\* to C grades represents a significant improvement on the standards reached in the previous year. Standards in English literature were below those attained nationally in the A\* to C bands but all students were successful in the A to G bands. The school does enter students over a wide range of ability in accordance with its policy of equal opportunities for all and this does influence results in English literature.
96. 16-year-olds explore and develop ideas in discussion and most express their views confidently. For example, in a Year 10 class, students practise the skills needed for good oral presentation in preparation for their first formal speaking assessment. The majority understand the importance of supporting opinions with reasons in developing an argument. Most students write satisfactorily, and some well, in a variety of forms and for a range of readers. Some examples were seen in Year 11. A student writing about his local seaside town at night started with 'To begin at the beginning' after the style of Dylan Thomas in 'Under Milk Wood'. Students explore genre and form in the style of different literary periods from classical poets like Robert Browning to contemporary writers like Seamus Heaney. An integral part of students' creative writing is the poetry written for the Pam King Poetry Prize. Some lively and imaginative poems are written using a range of evocative images.

97. Since the last inspection there are much higher standards of reading and writing. This improvement is largely due to the stimulus for reading offered by the new Learning Resource Centre combined with an excellent library. As a result most 16-year-olds are independent and competent readers of a satisfactory range of literature. However, fiction is the preferred form when reading for pleasure.
98. At both key stages dictionaries and thesauruses are used well for researching information and defining word meanings. However, basic errors in spelling and punctuation were observed throughout written work in lessons because students relied too heavily on the meticulous marking of their teachers before checking and correcting their own work.
99. Standards attained by students of sixteen years and over in A levels are broadly in line with national expectations. On the evidence of work seen in lessons and on the analysis of students' course work it is reasonable to expect that results in Year 2001 will reflect the steady rise in attainment of the older students. Standards achieved reflect the breadth of experience offered from Chaucer to the contemporary writing of Alan Bennett. Students explore critically the social morality and living conditions across time which are reflected in all art forms including literature. For example, in studies of 'The Rape of the Lock' students discuss how the vanities and insincerities of the eighteenth century are reflected in Alexander Pope's poem. They compare this with the 'slice of life' style of James Joyce writing of 'Dubliners' in 1914.
100. The performance of students with special educational needs is below national averages in the national curriculum tests for 14-year-olds. However, by 16 years many students are attaining grades close to national expectations. The raising of standards for students with special educational needs is addressed very effectively by the well-established literacy schemes for improving attainment. Most importantly, the Curriculum Support Unit plans strategies for identifying pupils with difficulties, sets targets and monitors progress. Small groups of students are withdrawn from some classes for intensive learning programmes but the majority are supported within lessons by the four learning support assistants. The attention given to the raising of standards in reading and writing is very good.
101. Many students enter school with under-developed literacy skills but most make good progress at Key Stage 3. There is a lively response to the opportunities offered in English lessons and students progress well through the many good strategies employed for enhancing teaching. Students explore a range of texts and written material as they move through Years 7 and 8. For example, students in Year 7 are intrigued by Sherlock Holmes investigating the mystery of 'The Red Headed League'. Students in Year 8 learn to express thoughts, feelings and emotions through a study of an unsuccessful skiing trip that goes 'Downhill all the Way'. Year 9 students make good progress with non-fiction material selecting information, recording evidence and suggesting solutions to problems. For example, a Year 9 class shared the reading of an article about 'Eating Disorders', discussing the key issues raised and recording points arising that were of especial relevance to them as teenagers.
102. Good progress is sustained at Key Stage 4. As students move through Years 10 and 11 they extend the range of texts they read and analyse. For example, students in Year 10 explore the genre of 'kitchen sink' realism using a Stan Barstow story to contrast the dream vision of a character with real life existence. Progress in understanding was accelerated by sound recording of students' own work which made the genre accessible for students who may otherwise have found it difficult to grasp the concept. Students in Year 11 make good progress by exploring plays and

poems in greater depth, writing increasingly in different styles for different purposes. For example, a Year 11 group researched the background of the conflict in Northern Ireland developing an informed response to the poem 'Belfast Confetti'. They focused on the poet's style of writing and use of language to communicate the confusion and changing emotions of ordinary people trapped in the nightmare of sudden bombings and unprovoked attacks. This steady progression over key stages ensures that knowledge and skills are consolidated through to performance in the GCSE examinations. Significant improvement is being made upon the results achieved at the time of the previous inspection.

103. Both girls and boys progress well but girls out-perform boys in the national examinations for 16-year-olds. Students with special educational needs make very good progress as a result of the well planned schemes for literacy development and the skilful support they receive. Students' attitudes to learning are good at both key stages. The majority work conscientiously remaining focused on tasks and responding readily to teachers' questions. Students are keen to show what they know. They work together constructively, sharing ideas and opinions co-operatively to enhance their learning. There are serious effort and steady application to the tasks set in basic literacy groups so that students with special educational needs are equally involved in programmes of study.
104. Teaching is good at both key stages and very good in several lessons. In the Sixth Form teaching is good throughout which results in good responses from students, especially in the creative writing from Year 13. Overall, there are a variety of teaching approaches implemented by skilful strategies to elicit a lively response from the students. A brisk pace is sustained so that students are challenged but not stressed and there are appropriate tasks for both higher and lower achieving students. For example, students in Year 9 research the difficulties of a journey made by stagecoach. Drama methods are used as students sit facing each other in groups of six. The students respond imaginatively to the cramped conditions and hardships of the long journey which is controlled by teacher-in-role techniques. Enjoyment runs high when the teacher/highwayman commands 'stand and deliver'. But only the learning is accelerated! The teaching of spelling, grammar and the structures of formal English are interwoven skilfully into the web of literature to enhance students' skills in the use of the English language for a range of purposes. For example, students write their accounts of the stagecoach journey contrasting their imaginative response with an objective response. Each response is to be contained within a single sentence demonstrating the use of the semi-colon. Lessons are planned well and teachers have a good knowledge of the range of poems, plays, fiction and non-fiction that students encounter. This is supported by a wealth of background information and interesting material to stimulate students to continued efforts. Teachers acknowledge the contributions of all groups of students offering advice and encouragement which spur students on to improve their performance and strive towards the highest goals they can achieve.
105. A particular strength of the teaching is the very good rapport between teachers and students in the Sixth Form. This is enlivened by a sparkle of humour that involves the students encouraging them to think actively and write creatively. Some of the results can be seen in the anthology of poems compiled for the Fanthorpe Poetry Prize.
106. The English curriculum is broadly based across all year groups ensuring good progression at each stage of learning. There is a good balance of learning programmes that caters for students of all abilities including those with special educational needs. The cross-curricular Literacy Hour, the Literacy Blitz, the Curriculum Support Unit all combine to raise the levels of literacy throughout the

school. The success of these curricular schemes is reflected in the improved results in national examinations. Higher attaining learners are offered opportunities to extend and enhance their work through the Carnegie Medal Shadowing scheme for advanced readers. The Norfolk Children's Book Centre visits twice a year. There are many outside speakers, at the time of the inspection a lecture on Chaucer was scheduled. The paired reading sessions, weekly library lessons and the facilities of the Learning Resource Centre all provide opportunities for students to enlarge their experiences and enrich their understanding. Extra-curricular opportunities reinforce curriculum provision, most particularly the 'Flying Start' summer school which allows students to develop their skills in many areas. The marking policy is used by all teachers in the department so there is a conformity to standards that students can understand. Students' work is assessed regularly and records are kept of the progress of each student. Students and their parents are invited to discuss individual progress with teachers on open evenings. Most teachers use homework effectively to continue and extend the work covered in class.

107. The head of department provides clear educational direction for his team of six specialist teachers. There is a positive ethos and a shared commitment to sustain the standards of attainment and raise these for Year 2001.

## **DRAMA**

108. Attainment of 16-year-olds in the GCSE examinations was above the national average. From observation of the Year 11 class seen it is reasonable to expect that standards will be maintained in Year 2001. Students' attitudes to drama are enthusiastic at all three Key Stages. At Key Stage 4 students were seen working in groups discussing and trying out ideas based on the experiences of the central character who has lost her memory. Students explore the changing relationships and the way that any unusual human condition is perceived in our society. Students learn how to develop the scene through language, movement and space, to meaningful action. However more concentrated focus and positive commitment of every member of the group are needed.
109. At Key Stage 3, a Year 9 class was enjoying improvising on events in the play 'Two Weeks with the Queen'. More commitment to character and control of movement are needed if students are to achieve a convincing outcome. At Key Stage 5 students in Year 13 are preparing their practical performance for Advanced Level Drama and Theatre Studies. Students are working on the theme of 'Disabilities', developing a sensitive concern for the less fortunate in our society. Students recognise that although we provide physical care we do not always attend to the emotional needs of others. These drama studies provide opportunities for students to develop an awareness of the spiritual and moral responsibilities that we have for others in our society.

110. Extra-curricular activity provides valuable opportunities for students in all year groups to develop communication skills which were realised in the recent school production of 'The Canterbury Tales'. The department is led by a specialist teacher with some lively, innovative ideas about developing drama activities within the local community.

## **MATHEMATICS**

111. Students' results in the most recent National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were close to the national average of all schools and above the average of similar schools. There was no significant difference between the results obtained by boys and the results obtained by girls. GCSE results in 2000 for A\* - C and A\* - G grades were approximately equal to the national average. They are a slight improvement over the two previous years. Relative to national averages results for the same students were similar to their results in science and better than their results in English. There was no difference between the results for boys and the results for girls. A level results for A - E grades and A - B grades are in line with national averages. An above average proportion of students obtained an A grade. More students were entered for the examination than in previous years.
112. In lessons and in other work the overall attainment of students in mathematics is in line with the national average. By the end of Key Stage 3 the majority of students understand and use fractions, decimals and percentages. They measure lengths, areas and volumes using metric units. They simplify algebraic expressions and solve equations. They understand and calculate probabilities. Good graphical skills enable them to construct and interpret data using line graphs, bar charts and pie charts. Verbal reasoning and mental arithmetic skills are generally sound. In lower ability groups students have more limited skills. They are unsure of their tables, but most can use the number rules to solve simple problems. By the end of Key Stage 4 almost all students have secure basic number, measurement and graphical skills. They plan investigations, organise activities and analyse outcomes. Higher ability students make general statements, testing and justifying their conclusions. They also reach high standards in algebra, trigonometry and shape. Overall, standards in A level classes are average, although there are wide variations in attainment between students. Most students have good number skills and cope well with algebra, trigonometry and statistics. The most able students achieve very high standards across all areas of the curriculum.
113. Students make good or very good progress in about three-quarters of lessons. In other lessons it is satisfactory. Evidence from their earlier work indicates that students are making good progress over time with respect to their earlier attainment. The progress of students with special educational needs is good in lessons where classes are small and support is given. However, the lack of a whole-school numeracy policy limits the overall progress of these students. Progress in A level lessons is good. Progress at all levels is enhanced by the very positive attitudes of almost all students. They show interest in their studies and work diligently in most lessons. They collaborate well in many lessons and help each other to overcome difficulties. They are attentive during class teaching and respond willingly to questions. This assists them to think logically and resolve problems. Relationships within classes and with teachers are good and this contributes to a positive working atmosphere in lessons.

114. The quality of teaching and learning is good in about three-quarters of lessons, and occasionally it is very good. Teachers understand their subject well. Lessons are well planned with respect to pupils' earlier attainment. There is an appropriate mixture of class teaching and students learning independently. For example, in a Year 8 lesson the teacher showed low attaining students how to add fractions with common denominators. By individually supporting and encouraging these students she enabled them to apply the techniques correctly. Frequent changes of activity sustained their interest and good learning took place. In other lessons teachers use appropriate diagrams to illustrate methods. For example, in a Year 11 lesson students learnt to understand the circle theorems by examining large clear diagrams drawn on the board. By means of class discussions and questioning, students were encouraged to find the missing angles and justify their answers. Effective learning took place which enabled students to tackle more difficult problems later. In other lessons teachers use carefully selected examples to demonstrate methods. For example, Year 9 students developed their algebraic skills by means of appropriate examples. These were clearly explained with good student participation. Students were thus able to solve more complex linear equations and simplify algebraic expressions. Teachers have good class management skills and control their classes effectively. They use assessment effectively to monitor learning and plan subsequent lessons. Homework is set regularly and reinforces the work completed in lessons. It is usually well marked with comments which help students to understand and correct their mistakes.
115. The department is well led. Relationships are good and all staff are committed to raising standards. Teachers are well monitored and supported. The curriculum is broad and balanced and covers all areas of the National Curriculum. There are sufficient good quality textbooks and resources for all lessons.
116. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. The quality of teaching and learning has improved. Students have more opportunities for mental arithmetic with a corresponding rise in standards. Collaborative learning is now practised in more lessons and pupils organise and present their work more effectively. Split classes are no longer a problem, although accommodation difficulties persist. Assessment and recording procedures have improved and computerised records of students' attainment and progress since primary school are readily available to staff.

## **SCIENCE**

117. Students enter the school with levels of attainment below the national average. The results of the National Curriculum Test taken in 2000 by students at the end of Year 9 are in line with the national average and above those of pupils from similar schools. These results are broadly similar to results in English and mathematics. There is no difference in the performance of boys and girls at this key stage. GCSE results for 2000 are above the national average and above the results for similar schools. The rising trend since the last inspection follows the national pattern in both key stages. There is no difference in the results for boys and girls except for the A\* grade where boys perform better than girls. The A- and A/S-level results are in line with the national average, with more able students attaining higher grades.

118. Evidence from lessons and from scrutiny of students' work matches the standard indicated by national tests; attainment is in line with expectations at the end of Key Stage 3. The understanding of basic ideas is sound but there are occasional weaknesses. For example, Year 9 students understand the difference between physical and chemical changes and they are able to use word equations. However, their understanding of the properties of liquids and gases under pressure is less secure. Low attaining students and students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. They understand word equations showing how salts are formed and can explain that hydrogen is given off when a metal reacts with an acid. Learning Support Assistants are used effectively. Practical work is carefully carried out, results recorded and, where appropriate, graphs drawn and conclusions set out. For example, students in Year 7 investigate the change in length of an elastic band with added weight. Students in Year 11 are able to explain how ionic and covalent bonds are formed. They use electrical and conductivity measurements to identify the bond type. Elements of science investigation are taught in Key Stage 3. This forms a sound basis for the assessed investigations in the GCSE examinations. There is evidence that the application of science is not neglected. The advantages and disadvantages of selective breeding of animals and plants are explored and in another group the use of fibre optic materials is discussed following practical work into critical angle and total internal reflection. Relatively complex ideas are handled well in the Sixth Form. Year 13 students are able to show how the binding energy per nuclear particle can be used to predict nuclear stability. Year 12 students studying the A/S course find that partial pressure is a useful indicator of the oxygen content of blood.
119. The overall standard of teaching is good with no unsatisfactory teaching observed. In Key Stage 3, five-sixths of the lessons were good or better and at Key Stage 4 a similar proportion were very good. Half of the lessons seen in the Sixth Form were very good. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of their subject. They plan their lessons well and lead them at a brisk pace using a variety of teaching techniques. They manage their classes well using material pitched at a level appropriate to the ability of their students. As a result, students behave well which in turn leads to effective learning. Homework is set and assessed regularly. The results of frequent tests are recorded centrally and used to plot the progress of individual students. An effective system of target setting is now in place.
120. The majority of students are entered for double science award with a small minority taking single science. The National Curriculum requirements are met in full. A comprehensive review of the schemes of work for Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is nearly complete. The modified schemes of work form a very good basis for lesson plans, which will help to raise standards further. The schemes of work identify occasions when the use of ICT would assist in the learning process and contribute to the students' ICT capability. There is little evidence of the use of ICT following the complete systems failure.
121. The groups in the Sixth Form interact well with the teacher, discussing ideas in a mature manner. The students work well individually and in small groups. They show respect for the teacher and for each other.

122. The department is very well led and managed. Aims and objectives are clearly defined and this contributes significantly to overall student achievement. The staff work well together, sharing ideas, requesting and offering support where necessary. The departmental development plan, part of the school development plan, provides a sound structure to move the department forward.
123. Accommodation is satisfactory within the limits imposed by the layout of the laboratories. This causes inevitable interruption to lessons. There is a satisfactory range of reference books in the science section in the library, particularly for space and the study of nature topics. The number of books available for general reading is less satisfactory.
124. The department has progressed well since the last inspection. Achievement has remained high. There is a greater range of teaching techniques in the Sixth Form resulting in a greater interaction by the students. The schemes of work for Key Stages 3 and 4 are well defined and form a very good basis for lesson plans. The standard of teaching has improved and underachievement has been reduced.

### **ART AND DESIGN**

125. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards of attainment are above the national expectation. The department makes its own assessments at the end of Year 9 but there is no formal procedure for reporting on progress.
126. Art is also an improving subject at GCSE. Results have risen since the last inspection and A\* - C grades in 2000 are now in line with the national average. This position is matched by results in the two GCSE courses taught in Year 12, photography and critical studies. Boys obtained 11 per cent more in their art GCSE A\* to C grades in 2000 than boys achieved nationally.
127. Standards of achievement at A level have been well above national figures for two years. This represents an improvement on the last inspection when results were below national figures. Sixty per cent of students achieved A and B grades in 2000, placing art amongst the highest achieving subjects in the school. Taking the standard of entry at Year 12 into account, art adds the most value of any subject by the time students take the examination at the end of Year 13.
128. Standards of work seen in Year 7 to 9 lessons are good. Students are able to investigate, combine and manipulate materials with increasing confidence. Drawing and painting skills are well developed and subject specific language is utilised for discussions and reflections on progress. Opportunities to create work in a variety of groupings mean students move smoothly from devising two-dimensional images to constructing three-dimensional models. They are stimulated by the possibilities which arise from such collaborations and produce imaginative work of high quality. A good example was seen in a Year 8 class. Students were working successfully in pairs on art work based on an aboriginal story 'The Sun Woman and Moon Man'. Making marks on paper, they experimented with style, techniques and symbolic shapes linked to aboriginal imagery and explored ways to extend and enlarge their work onto fabric.

129. At Key Stages 4, and in the Sixth Form, the standards of work seen are above average. Students in art, textiles and photography make significant gains in knowledge and understanding across both key stages. They work independently making personal responses to a range of primary and secondary sources. Technical skills are well developed, particularly in sculpture and ceramics, and the standard of sketchbook work is very good. A Year 10 class studying a unit of work entitled 'A Gift For An Artist' were shown maquettes (sculptors' small preliminary three-dimensional models) produced by other students as a stimulus. This followed preliminary drawing and painting based on the work of six European artists. Students showed great interpretative and manipulative skills as they sought to exploit the characteristics of three different types of clay in realising their intentions. Students in Years 12 and 13 are able to make effective representations in different genres and traditions.
130. Teaching is of a consistently high standard across all key stages. Lessons are well planned as parts of units of work. Learning intentions are communicated clearly to students who mostly respond well and are eager to learn. A small number of Year 7 students found it difficult to remain on task for the entire lesson. The range of methods employed by staff with groups and individuals leads to gains in knowledge and understanding and enables all students to make progress. Skilful, differentiated questioning allied with praise and encouragement shows students that staff have high expectations of them. The pace of lessons is good. All staff create effective working relationships with students and provide regular feedback to reinforce learning. Boys' confidence is particularly noticeable as a result of these interactions.
131. Assessment is effective at Key Stages 4 and in the Sixth Form; it is used to check progress. Students have a good knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses and what they need to do to improve. Homework is used effectively to extend work undertaken in lessons. There is insufficiently clear use of assessment at Key Stage 3 to inform future planning. Students need to understand the new curriculum levels and be helped to set targets for improvement.
132. The department is well led. Curriculum provision is very good with a balance of elements in art and design. It is enhanced by the addition of GCSE photography as an enrichment course in Year 12 and by the introduction of textiles at Key Stage 3 and as an additional GCSE in Key Stage 4. The GCSE course in critical studies, in Year 12, enhances A-level provision. The curriculum provides a range of extremely worthwhile learning opportunities to meet all students' needs including those with special educational needs. Students with special educational needs make very good progress and are well supported. Extra-curricular clubs and visits to museums and galleries extend learning. Strategies for teaching literacy are an integral part of the work of the department and have a positive effect on standards.
133. Progress made by the department since the last inspection is good. A-level and GCSE results have improved and the pace of lessons is good. There is an increased allocation of time devoted to art at Key Stages 3 and 4 and the department is moving towards total mixed ability teaching at Key Stage 3. However, insufficient use of information technology remains an issue. The department has been partially re-furnished and provides a stimulating environment. Students' work using a variety of scales is well presented and displayed in the art rooms and around the school.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

134. At the end of Year 9, standards are broadly in line with national expectations. Teachers' assessments indicate standards above the national average at level 6 and above; however, classroom observation and scrutiny of work indicate lower levels of attainment. Students standards are limited by the failure to meet full curriculum entitlement, for example insufficient experience of textiles, coupled with restrictions imposed by cramped accommodation. While students can think analytically when responding to a design brief, communication standards during the generation of a range of ideas are weak. Standards in food technology and electronics are improved by more consistent use of ICT.
135. Standards at GCSE level are broadly in line with the national average for resistant materials, graphic products and electronics, and close to the average for similar schools. Course folders are developed systematically, although students are not provided with experience in textiles. In food technology, standards are well below the national average. The overall attainment of both girls and boys is in line with national averages. No boys were entered for GCSE Food Technology. Design thinking is sound, although students develop designs from a limited range of inadequately annotated plans. Evaluation of design ideas is carried out as solutions are developed. Students have limited opportunities to develop creative graphical communication skills as a result of limitations imposed by accommodation. Technical knowledge and understanding of both materials and processes are good. Lack of practical teaching space restricts student progress in Food Technology. Limited use is made of feedback to students through regular formative assessment and target setting in order to improve their performance. Students with special educational needs make good progress, particularly in practical work, including ICT. Standards in AS- and A-level courses are in line with the national average. Design thinking is of a good quality, although students lack confidence when required to generate and analyse in detail a range of potential solutions.
136. The design and technology curriculum fails to produce broad material experiences in both key stages. Time and resources, although constrained, are effectively used in lessons. Students' grasp of technical terms is good, and whole-school literacy initiatives have enhanced progress in written skills. Oral responses are confident and full, although less confident students will benefit from visual reinforcement of technical terms. Numeracy skills in technology are underdeveloped. Computer use, although planned in schemes of work, is inconsistently used in lessons. There is some good use of ICT in electronics for example, in designing and testing circuits. Computer Aided Design (CAD) and Computer Aided Manufacture (CAM) require urgent development.
137. Overall, the quality of teaching is good and never less than satisfactory; it is consistently good in electronics. Lesson planning is concise and good subject knowledge and understanding are strengths in all material areas. Better use could be made of exemplar work in design and communication to improve attainment levels, for example in the sketching and annotation of a range of appropriate design ideas from which a solution can be selected. Limited use of probing questions, coupled with a narrow range of teaching styles, slows learning. In workshop activity, inadequate emphasis is placed on the production of a dimensioned working drawing to enable accurate manufacture of products. Inconsistent use is made of assessment to improve students' ability to learn independently and undertake self-assessment.
138. Students' attitudes to work, behaviour, personal and social development are good.

Students express ideas freely and confidently; they work effectively, both individually and in groups. They are consistently supportive and helpful towards each other, particularly when working in mixed ability teams.

139. Leadership and management are satisfactory; increasingly responsibilities are shared. Priorities for development are identified. Students' attainment gains could be improved through a more vigorous application of learning priorities. A sharper analytical focus of test and examination results could be used to better inform curriculum development and staff development. Schemes of work are in place but do not include literacy and numeracy initiatives. The effective use of ICT needs to be consolidated. Risk assessments are carried out; preventative maintenance and good practice by committed and skilled technical support staff aid the reduction of risk and operational difficulties. However, cramped conditions present staff with difficulty complying with National Curriculum demands and Health and Safety requirements. The previous inspection raised concerns about accommodation and restricted design and communication skills; both remain as issues to be effectively addressed.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

140. Students at the age of 14 achieve standards which are broadly in line with the national average for students of this age. At the end of Year 11 students achieve standards below national expectations, which is confirmed by the GCSE examination results. The proportion of students achieving grades A\* to C in GCSE examinations in 2000 were well below the national average. Students' results were lower than those they achieved in most other subjects. However, the results for grades A\* to G have improved to become closer to the national expectation. Boys achieve significantly better results than girls in the GCSE examination. In the GCE A-Level examination all students entered for the examination passed; however, attainment at the higher grades was well below national averages.
141. At the end of Year 9, attainment in lessons is in line with the standard expected. In Year 7 students have a basic understanding of earthquakes and volcanoes. They understand some of the advantages of living near volcanoes, such as fertile land for farming and that a good income can be made from visiting tourists. Many students make good progress and research this topic further through the Internet. In Year 9, students show a good understanding of deforestation and start to understand different ways in which these areas under threat could be conserved; the moral issues of conservation are developed. Students show good knowledge about environmental issues and preservation of endangered species of animals. They locate areas of the world where there are Savannah regions in South America, Central Africa and Northern Australia. Most students know that the climate of the Savannah is hot with dry and wet seasons. High attaining students show a good understanding of convectional rainfall of hot regions. Students understand shifting cultivation and subsistence farming; higher attaining students compare subsistence and commercial farming. Numeracy skills are evident in the work seen. For example, students successfully use data to draw graphs and bar charts representing temperature and rainfall of the town of Kano in the African Savannah region. All students, including those with special educational needs, successfully use ICT in order to make a booklet on Africa; they incorporate their own text and pictures. Students start to show a good understanding of the difference between our culture and that of Africa. Overall, students, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in map work, use of keys and scales and observational skills. Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9.

142. In lessons the standard of attainment of 16-year-olds is below the national expectation; boys continue to outperform girls. Most students have a secure knowledge of primary and secondary industries. They know that these industries are associated with raw materials and their processing; that their location is usually dependent upon location of the raw material, the work force required and requirements of transportation; that tertiary industries provide services for people and occur in most parts of the country. High attaining students understand that the siting of quaternary industries, the Hi Tec industries, can be located almost anywhere and are not so reliant upon transport systems and large work forces. They understand the differences between weather and climate. Number supports students' work in geography; they make use of rainfall and temperature data to successfully plot graphs about Norwich's weather. High attaining students evaluate and explain their graphs and compare and contrast the differences between Fort William and Aberdeen, Penzance and Margate. Recent coursework for GCSE is of good quality; the best is often enhanced through good use of the computer; writing has been shaded and features inserted on maps. However, the linking of different aspects of geography are insufficiently developed in Years 10 and 11. Students make satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment as they build on the basic geographical skills learned in Years 7 to 9. All students, including those with special educational needs, are well integrated into lessons and receive good support from teachers, classroom support assistants and their peers.
143. At the age of 18 students standards are broadly in line with the standards expected for students of the same age nationally. Students show a good understanding of primary and secondary resources; high attaining students understand that human knowledge and initiative is a very important resource in present day society. They understand how resources like fossil fuels are being exhausted and can never be replaced and that new sources, like wind and wave power, have to be used more effectively. Students show a secure knowledge of ecosystems, and show a clear understanding of the energy flow that occurs within an ecosystem. They undertake case studies into environmental management of sand dunes and the china clay industry. They evaluate evidence and attempt to come up with ecological solutions. However, investigative and analytical skills are a weakness as students rely heavily on their teachers for learning.
144. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and in the Sixth Form; it is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teachers show good subject knowledge enabling appropriate challenges to be provided and in consequence students' horizons are extended. Students are encouraged to ask and answer geographical questions in some detail. Teachers show good expectations of students' work. This was observed when students study volcanoes in Year 7 and the Savannah in Year 9, as students respond well to challenging questions and give responses of high quality. Students successfully learn the basic geographical skills, which are supported successfully by literacy skills, number and ICT. For example, simple well-drawn diagrams and sketch maps are appropriately labelled and spider diagrams are well laid out in order to categorise brain-storming ideas; sketches and diagrams are appropriately labelled and maps show scale, direction and symbols. Students illustrate their work effectively with charts and pie graphs to represent simple data. Overall, students' behaviour and attitudes are good and at times, they are very good; relationships are also good. All these features underpin teaching and enhance the learning environment. At times, however, there are insufficient strategies of a practical nature to involve students in their learning and in order to enhance their understanding. The range of tasks, at times, is insufficient to meet the needs of the range of abilities in a class. Teachers are sufficiently flexible in their teaching to meet the needs of

students with special educational needs; this support is a good aspect of teaching.

145. The department is well led. The curriculum has appropriate breadth, balance and relevance. Assessment and policy documents are good; the department makes good use of selective data and statistics in order to track students' progress. The monitoring of teaching needs to be more systematic. Good progress has been made since the last inspection; all the issues of the last report have been successfully addressed. Teaching strategies have recently been put in place to address the underachievement of girls.

## **HISTORY**

146. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with national expectations. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. In recent GCSE examinations, results in both the A\* to C and A\* to G range have been at or above national averages. In 2000, all students who were entered the examination achieved an A\* to G grade. Results at A level have been below national averages but numbers studying the subject at this level are very small.
147. As soon as they enter the school students begin to develop their knowledge and understanding of the subject rapidly. They are also encouraged to develop subject skills, such as a sense of chronology and the critical use of source material. In particular, they are able to tease out historical information from a variety of sources in order to produce extended writing. In this context, some very good essays on the Tudor monarchs were seen from Year 8 students. They also move freely between descriptive, empathetic and analytical writing and there is a commendable emphasis on raising standards of literacy. As a result of these advances, students in higher sets achieve standards above the national norm by the age of 14. Students in other sets perform less well but most achieve standards in line with the national picture.
148. In Years 10 and 11, these high standards are maintained, so that, by the age of 16, students have developed a detailed knowledge of the subject and can analyse historical issues in depth. This was illustrated in some very detailed and skilled Year 10 work on the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations using cartoon source material.
149. In the Sixth Form, students are developing their historical skills well and show considerable maturity in their written and oral work. There is a commendable emphasis on student-led presentations and some particularly impressive and detailed essays were seen on the Weimar Republic from sixth-form history students.

150. The quality of teaching in the subject is good and sometimes very good. Teachers have a secure grasp of subject knowledge and this is used well to give students confidence to regard themselves as historians. High expectations are maintained throughout and all students are encouraged to develop their critical reasoning powers to the full. This was demonstrated very well in a Year 11 lesson during which they examined the complex issues surrounding the Wall Street Crash using cartoon sources, class discussion and a video extract. Lessons are planned well and aims and objectives are shared with students at the start of lessons. In this context, they would benefit from more time to reflect on their progress at the end of each session. Lessons are conducted with pace and vigour and classroom management is strong. A variety of techniques are used to enhance students' learning skills, and, as a result, all students make good progress. Above all, a sense of purpose and enjoyment pervades history lessons. Higher attaining students develop their independent learning skills well and have ample opportunities to make good progress through extended essay writing. Lower attaining students, and those with special educational needs, also make good progress through effective teacher support and the development of materials to meet their needs.
151. The attitudes and behaviour of the students are always very positive. They show a keen interest in the subject and clearly enjoy history lessons. A very purposeful classroom atmosphere is maintained at all times and students respond very well to the challenges set by teachers. This was seen to very good effect in a Year 8 lesson on the Gunpowder Plot. Students in this lower attaining set worked very hard throughout the lesson to examine traditional views of the event and to assess the possibilities of alternative explanations. Students are confident in classroom debate and this has addressed an issue arising from the previous report, when they were deemed to be too passive on occasions. During the present inspection, students were always keen to air their views and were eager participants in class discussions. They would, however, benefit from more opportunities to engage in group work activities.
152. The department has many strengths, all of which make a strong contribution to its success in raising standards. It is managed well and there is a strong sense of teamwork. The monitoring of students' work is thorough and the issue raised in the previous report about the need for more detailed marking has been addressed successfully. Students are now given clear indications as to how to improve their written work. The new accommodation provides an excellent learning environment and there is a plentiful supply of resources to enhance students' progress. The use of ICT is playing an increasing part in the work of the department; for example in the use of databases on the Newcastle cholera epidemic in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and on the casualties during World War 1 from the school's locality. There are, however, few visits to historical sites to enrich the taught curriculum. This area of the department's work needs to be developed more fully.
153. Overall, the history department has made good progress since the previous inspection and is now a strength in the school. The number of students who take the subject beyond the age of 14 is, however, small; the organisation of option choices has been a factor in this decline in recent years. The key challenge now for this very able teaching team is to build upon its successes and to increase the uptake of history for GCSE and in the Sixth Form.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

154. In the 2000 National Curriculum teachers' assessments, students at the end of Year 9 attained below the national average at levels 5 and above; no students reached level 7. However, the relatively large entry of students taking GCSE examination courses reached standards broadly in line with national averages for the higher grades A\* - C and were above average for grades A\* - G. The trend in recent years is upward; standards in Year 9 tests and in Year 11 examinations have improved significantly. Attainment at A-level has remained broadly in line with the national average.
155. Students' work in lessons confirms that standards are improving and are generally about average in years 7 to 9. The regular, timetabled lessons for ICT in years 7 and 8 are making a strong impact on students' levels of knowledge, skills and understanding. All have experience of using LOGO and control software to investigate and problem-solve with computer controlled devices. Students are confident in using databases and spreadsheets. They learn to use spreadsheet graphs and consider the visual potential of ICT using desktop publishing and presentational software, often related to applications relevant to other subjects, such as history and geography, for example. They use ICT to structure, refine and present information from a range of sources and in different forms, and explore the effects of variables. Achievement by students overall is satisfactory. Progress by the able students is good in Year 8 and satisfactory for those students with special educational needs, reflecting the quality of planning with its logical course development, the quality of the schemes of work, and the students' good attitudes to learning.
156. Following on in Year 9, where ICT is not regularly timetabled, there are limited and sporadic opportunities for students to apply skills learned earlier, or to consolidate them. For example, some students undertake trial and improvement investigations using spreadsheets in mathematics. Others have opportunities to use desktop publishing, CD-ROM based information sources and clipart to produce poster and brochures on life in the Savannah as part of a geography study. Students adapt well their knowledge and skills to these opportunities which add relevance and purpose to the use of ICT as a study skills tool. Progress of students, including those with special educational needs, in the Year 9 lessons is satisfactory. However, due to the lack of serviceability of the newly-installed computer systems, currently being investigated, students of this age are not able to have knowledge and skills development in the use of the Internet and e-mail, there being just one station currently in the sixth-form centre.
157. Achievement in the GCSE information technology lessons is average and reflects the school's recent improved examination results in this subject. In the lessons observed, students in Year 10 were planning how to use 'PowerPoint' to structure, refine and present information based on an assignment on tourism in the local area. Many were giving careful consideration to their assignments and the nature of the work enabled them to develop well their literacy skills of reading and writing. Others were designing a profit and loss account for a hotel by analysing data and by developing a spreadsheet, and in doing so were developing their application of number skills appropriately. They successfully predicted outcomes and modelled the effects of changing the variables.

158. In the A-level courses, most students are competent users of ICT, with about half having achieved good grades at GCSE. Although evidence from lesson observations is limited, the principles of handling and manipulating data were well understood in an AS lesson and students could talk knowledgeably and enthusiastically about their projects. As an example of the high calibre of the work, one student was designing a student assessment tracking system for use in school. Students are making good progress..
159. The quality of teaching in the cross-curricular and ICT lessons ranges from very good to satisfactory and is good overall. The quality of teaching in the Year 8 ICT lessons and the examination courses is mostly good or very good. There is effective practice when teachers provide brief, but thorough, recaps of previous lessons and learning, stressing the key points to students. This helps students to recall knowledge and facts and to overcome any discontinuity where access to cross-curricular ICT lessons is irregular. A good balance between whole class exposition, individual student activity, and one-to-one sessions between teachers and students exemplifies further effective practice. The latter are conscientiously undertaken by learning support assistants working with students with learning difficulties, and by teachers conducting mentoring and study skill sessions with senior students on examination courses. All teachers demonstrate a consistent approach to lesson planning, with clear learning intentions based closely on the schemes of work and well matched to students' different levels of learning. In the regular, timetabled ICT lessons, students' current and prior attainments are carefully recorded and used appropriately to inform planning, teaching and students' predicted examination grades.
160. Less effective practice occurs from time to time when teachers talk excessively, taking answers to questions hurriedly rather than allowing more students to reflect and contribute their ideas. Increasing the opportunities for paired discussions between students and groups would improve this. Other less effective practice occurs when teachers do not sufficiently share their learning intentions with students and then review these afterwards at the end of the lesson. All in all, more attention could be given to end of lesson reviews such as in the good example seen at the conclusion of a Year 9 geography lesson in which ICT had been used. The teacher took care to elicit directly from several students what they had achieved and was able to offer some constructive feedback about their progress.
161. The specialist ICT teachers' knowledge and expertise with ICT are good, though non-specialists using ICT to support teaching in their subjects tend to be less confident, relying heavily on the technical expertise and support provided by specialists who are sometimes able to work alongside them. The quality of learning in these paired teaching arrangements is good overall; the methods teachers use enable students to benefit from close support, and to acquire skills, knowledge and understanding, but allow for individual rates of pace, productivity and progress through the scope for extended work within the assignments. Pupils' positive personal development and relationships and their consistently good behaviour also contribute strongly to the good quality of learning.
162. Across the curriculum, in Key Stages 3 and 4, there is evidence of the limited use of ICT in all subjects, though there is little application currently in art and music at Key Stage 3. Year 11 design and technology students made effective use of a program to design, prototype and test electronic circuits to be incorporated in their design projects. They worked independently in a room also being used to teach ICT within a Year 9 geography lesson, thus making efficient use of the available resources. The intention is that all subjects will have access to their own machines or will be able to

use portables with an Internet link which will reduce the problems of limited access to the bookable rooms. Due to the current difficulty with the new computer network, there is only restricted availability of ICT within the library learning resources centre. However, many students use their own computers at home to produce high quality project frontsheets and reports. In the sixth-form building, where there is some computer provision, including an Internet link, students can use ICT within the key skills course, and in the GNVQ courses, such as leisure and tourism and health and social care. Though covered well by the key skills and vocational courses, other cross-curricular assessment of students' ICT capability needs further development to ensure that the progress of students is regularly assessed and their future learning goals are addressed.

163. There was a positive report on ICT in the previous inspection and satisfactory improvement has been made in the last five years. The school has made a significant improvement to both provision and standards by investing in new accommodation and hardware for ICT during the last two years, using finance from the National Grid for Learning and other funds. A whole-school network has been installed. More than 75 new machines have been installed with two new networks, together with 20 laptops with wireless links. Each room in the recently opened new teaching block is intended to have at least one computer with a colour inkjet printer. Unfortunately, during the last 18 months the school has been beset with numerous teething problems resulting in system unreliability, particularly with regard to students logging on and printing. One suite is currently not in use, putting a heavy strain on the rooms which are available and limiting curriculum access.
164. A committed and experienced head of department who has energetically managed the expansion of ICT in the school and supported staff at a personal level leads the ICT team. There is also part-time technician support. In the previous inspection ICT was not an integral part of subject schemes of work. Since then, subject departments have carefully considered the place of ICT in their curriculum and development plans, and staff confidence has continued to increase but there remains an ongoing training need. There is a need now for a broader, strategic and more systematic management role with ICT which emphasises the importance of monitoring, evaluating and further developing the quality of teaching of ICT across the curriculum. Although some staff have developed their skills, overall there has been limited progress made in ensuring that all staff have training in the competent use of ICT and in assessing students' progress as they use ICT across the school. This is clearly an area for development now, as is a review of the strategic management and oversight of ICT, incorporating clear, formalised systems for monitoring and evaluating the development and use of this important curriculum area. This will enable student access to be more carefully managed and assessed, thus ensuring that ICT is soon used more widely to encourage independent learning.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

165. At the end of Key Stage 3, in 2000, attainment in both French and German is broadly in line with national expectations. At Key Stage 4, the proportion of students gaining A\* to C grades, in French, were close to the national average in the full GCSE course, but below average in both the short and the combined course with business studies. In German, results were below average in the full course and well above in the short and the combined course. This uneven picture is partly caused by the instability in staffing the recent past with many changes of teachers, including supply teaching, which affected results. Over the last three years there has been a sustained improvement in results in both languages. At A level, the majority of students had pass grades but none gained A or B grades.
166. Evidence from the inspection shows that standards are in line with national expectations in all key stages. In Key Stages 3 and 4, improvements are due to the stability and current quality of staff recruited in the last 18 months and the quality of leadership in both departments. Standards in German are slightly better than in French.
167. By the end of Year 9, the majority of students understand a range of classroom language and passages made up of familiar language. Higher attaining students demonstrate a good grasp of conversations conducted in the target language with the teacher and a range of grammatical features. In speaking, students take part in exchanges with the teacher, demonstrate knowledge of language and adapt their responses by substituting single words and phrases. Good models of pronunciation by teachers enable students to develop accuracy. When reading, students identify main points but because reading is not systematically planned, a significant number studying French do not read fluently and independently, use context to deduce meaning or tackle authentic material. Opportunities for reading in German are better developed and enable students to apply these skills when tackling new words. High attaining students write in paragraphs and use a range of structures and tenses correctly. Lower attainers write in two or three sentences drawing on familiar language. However, opportunities for writing for different purposes is not frequent enough and is sometimes limited to self-contained exercises.
168. Attainment by the end of Year 11 is in line with the national average in both French and German. More able students in Year 10 make presentations to the rest of the class, using notes to describe their bedrooms. However, in Year 11, French speaking is weak. This is because in previous years students have not been provided with sufficient opportunities to rehearse and practice language orally and also because of the prevailing instability in staffing. Teachers have identified this area as a weakness from analysis of work, and strategies being put in place are beginning to show improvement. In listening and responding, students in Year 10 show understanding when listening to passages and dialogues on tape. In writing, high attaining students demonstrate good knowledge of vocabulary and a grasp of past tenses. However, there are few examples of extended writing. The majority of students, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress over time. This is due to the very positive attitudes they have to learning and the quality of teaching, which enables them to build on their previous knowledge and consolidate their learning.
169. AS-level students demonstrate a good grasp of spoken German as they listen to tapes and a well-developed vocabulary. They show competence in speaking, for instance when they discuss their eating habits, using prepared notes. They achieve well against their prior attainment as they consolidate skills in using an increasing

stock of vocabulary and idiomatic expressions. Other factors contributing to progress are students' positive working habits and the quality of teaching.

170. The overall quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory and is often good. Where teaching is good, planning is focused on enabling students to practise the language to develop fluency and the right methodology to suit the students' abilities. This was well exemplified in a lower ability set in a Year 8 French lesson where the teacher used mime, action and gestures and enabled the students to rehearse the language. The students responded with enthusiasm, using the flashcards and the accompanying action of the teacher to fix the phrases in their heads and reproduce them as they took turns in using the action themselves in pair work. The teacher only made appropriate demands when he was confident that the students had sufficient time to practise the items needed before introducing additional material. The teacher also managed to conduct the whole lesson in the target language because he relied on communicating the meaning effectively without resorting unnecessarily to translation. Other strong features in the teaching are the good models of pronunciation presented by the German teachers and the effective explanations of grammatical rules. In these cases, students used the language accurately. Where sometimes teaching has less impact on learning, too much of the teaching is determined by the content of textbook tasks and less on the development of communicative skills. This results often in the activity becoming a routine exercise because it is not adapted to engage students' interest and draw on their own experience. Teaching in the Sixth Form is challenging and harnesses students' study skills and motivation to good effect. This is often reflected in students' perseverance in textual work and their response in discussions.
171. The languages curriculum is enhanced through the organisation of a German exchange and trips to France which increase students' motivation for the subject. The process of self-review is enabling staff to increasingly focus on strategies for improving standards. A careful analysis of test results has led to changes of methodology, for instance in French, with more emphasis being put on developing speaking skills. Evaluation by the two departments of course provision in Key Stage 4 has led to the identification of weaknesses; for instance, the inadequate time allocated to the second language and the need to discontinue the short course. In order to raise standards further, staff need to develop the use of target setting and a more proactive use of levels of attainment to set clear expectations for students' progress in all aspects of the subject. The accommodation of the departments, which is in mobile huts, is inadequate because it is not always heated effectively and suffers from noise from adjoining classrooms. Although resources are adequate for work in the classroom, there is a shortage of textbooks to enable students to use them at home for study and homework.

## MUSIC

172. Standards in lessons and work seen at the end Year 9 are broadly in line with the national average. There is no significant difference between the standards of boys and girls. Standards in the CGSE examination have fluctuated since the previous inspection. Entry numbers are too small to provide valid national comparisons. In 2000, 40 per cent of entries gained A\* to C grades and 75 per cent of students gained A\* to G; two students did not complete the course. There is no significant difference between the grades of boys and girls. In 1999 one student gained grade B in the A-level examination. There were no students entered for A level in 2000.
173. By the end of Year 9, a significant minority of students achieve grades at the higher levels. The majority of these students are supported in their learning by additional instrumental lessons and extra-curricular performing opportunities provided by the school. Standards at the end of Year 11 and Year 13 are average overall in performance, composition and listening.
174. Students' attainment in Years 7 to 9 is in line with expectations. Many students do not have the range of knowledge and skills expected of their age group when they enter the school, and many are not familiar with the elements of music. Students who enter the school in Year 8 are at appropriate standards for their age and ability. There is good progress throughout Years 7, 8 and 9 in all areas of the music curriculum. In Year 7, students learn the basic skills for playing the keyboard and reading the notes of the treble clef. In Year 9, most students can play on their own and in groups using a programmed backing and one-note chords. Higher attaining pupils can add full or broken chords with the left hand.
175. Achievement is good in Years 10 and 11. In class and instrumental lessons, and in work seen, students make good progress. The quality and range of extra-curricular activities raise the standard of performance for those involved and make a valuable contribution to the life of the school. Those students working at below average levels in Year 11 are hard working, enthusiastic and show a willingness to learn. Year 10 composition/ensemble playing in one Year 10 lesson seen, demonstrated students' ability to create a piece of music based on the idea of a sunset after a storm. Students used a variety of instruments to play. They showed maturity in discussion about ideas for the composition. Standards of playing, composing and performing were good in this lesson.
176. Teaching in all years is never less than good. The strengths in teaching are: subject knowledge and skills in playing and performing; good classroom management which leads to very good behaviour of students, and the quality of ongoing assessment. The good quality of teaching has a positive effect on students' learning. The content and activities of most lessons are chosen with careful regard as to what appeals to young people. As a result students respond with enthusiasm. At the same time their response to classical and baroque music is equally as good. In one Year 9 lesson seen, where two-thirds of students had special educational needs, all students listened attentively to the music of Mozart and went on to illustrate sonata form. In discussion many students were able to describe the structure of the music. Teachers' very good skills in playing and performing lead to both teacher and students working as a team. In one A-level lesson seen, the student successfully harmonised a Schubert song whilst the teacher played the melody. They then compared the students' results with Schubert's original harmony.
177. The department offers students a wide range of opportunities to perform in school and in the community. The most important event recently was the visit of Her Majesty

the Queen to the school. The school band played on the Queen's arrival at the school and at the reception afterwards. The school hosts the annual Hunstanton and District Festival of Arts. Many students are entered in a variety of classes and successes are numerous. Staff are involved in the organisation and accompaniment during the festival.

178. The department is well managed and staff have a good balance of skills, which they share with students. Ongoing assessment and marking of students' work are good. However, the department fails to use the results to inform curriculum planning. Students are not involved in target setting and reports to parents do not give enough information. Accommodation remains poor. The two teaching rooms are a distance apart which makes it difficult to share resources. One teaching room is too small and, therefore, keyboards cannot be left in place. Two practice rooms are in another building, which makes it difficult to monitor instrumental lessons. Key Stage 3 students have limited access to ICT because the department only has one computer. Additional equipment belongs to music staff. In the absence of a recording studio, staff work hard to recreate a similar environment. For example, in one Year 9 lesson seen where the teaching was very good, students used microphones, amplifiers, electric guitar and keyboard to perform their original compositions wearing their own clothes.
179. Since the previous inspection, the department has made good progress in all areas that were considered unsatisfactory in the previous report. For further development the department needs to improve the accommodation for students and staff, increase the provision for ICT and use assessment to inform planning.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

180. Standards achieved at the age of 14 are in line with national expectations. Inspection evidence indicates that the standards students attain at age 16 are also broadly in line with expectations. Although GCSE results in 2000 for grades A\* to C were below the national average, all students gained a grade in the A\* to G range. Students' involvement in extra-curricular activities and at representative levels show that standards are in line with national expectations. A small cohort of students in 2000 studied GCE A level. The proportion of students achieving A to B grades is above the national average; all students entered for GCE A-level examination gained a pass grade. The small cohort entered makes statistical comparisons against national averages invalid. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Small groups of students in Year 10 and Year 12 successfully follow certificated Sports Leader courses.
181. Students aged 14, including those with special educational needs, show competence in gymnastics, trampolining, dance and a range of games; for instance, football, netball, basketball and hockey. In games, students apply the rules fairly and accept decisions gracefully. They understand some of the simple physiological changes that occur when they warm up; they understand that the reason for stretching is to minimise injury and maximise performance. Many students know the anatomical names of the different muscles they use when taking exercise. In dance, Year 7 students warm up to a musical beat; they share their motif with a partner and link different motifs successfully. Students, including those with special educational needs, enjoy dance; they begin to show quality in their work through facial expressions conveying emotions like fear. High attaining students add gesture to their movements. In Year 8 basketball, students know dribbling violations; for example, double dribbling and travelling illegally with the ball. Year 9 students make effective

use of their hands in order to gain height when trampolining enabling a range of simple rebounding movements, such as seat and front drops. However, the quality of movements and routines is constrained by their inability to lift their hips both into and out of rebounds. All students, regardless of their ability level, are fully integrated and make good progress.

182. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards achieved by students aged 16 are broadly at the level expected of the same age nationally. Skills and games concepts are well developed; they are successfully applied within a game, such as Year 11 football. In football, individual skills of dribbling, passing and moving off the ball are well developed. For instance, individual skills like one touch passing, and use of width are employed effectively within a small game situation in order to outwit an opponent. All students, including those with special educational needs, are well integrated into lessons and receive good support by teachers and their peers. Students studying GCSE develop their understanding and expertise in both theoretical and practical aspects. Students show a basic knowledge of muscles, joints and the cardiovascular system; they use the correct technical words associated with the anatomy. However, at times theory and practice are not always successfully combined, which constrains their theoretical examination results. Students make good progress in Years 10 and 11. Skills established in Years 7, 8 and 9 are developed further and are applied successfully to a range of game situations. In all lessons throughout the age range, students with special educational needs are well integrated and make progress in line with their peers.
183. Students in Years 12 and 13 choose to participate in physical recreation during curriculum time; they show a good standard in a range of individual and team games. A small cohort of Year 12 and 13 students make good progress in their GSE A-level examination course. Investigative work includes the effect of a performer's run-up on performance in long jump, triple jump and javelin throwing. Student studies are of a good standard and above the level expected for students nationally.
184. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. However, there are instances where teaching has some shortcomings. Teachers show good knowledge and understanding of the aspects of physical education; they apply this knowledge very successfully in their teaching. This has a positive effect upon students' learning. For example, in football lessons in Year 9, very good knowledge of football linked with good diagnosis and fault correction challenges students, extending their skills and understanding of the game. Teachers usually have high expectations of both the effort and the behaviour of students. Students work hard and produce good results in a range of activities. Good questioning by teachers reinforce students' knowledge and understanding. For instance, during a Year 11 theory lesson the teacher probes and challenges students' knowledge of movements made by muscles and joints.

185. However, the theory aspects of the examination courses do not sufficiently involve pupils in their learning; this constrains their understanding. In a very small minority of lessons, there is insufficient challenge and pace. Long-term planning and organisation are good; they ensure progression and continuity from year to year. In some lessons planning does not always state clearly what students are to learn. Teaching methods within the GCSE theory element do not always sufficiently involve students in their learning. In general, good relationships, good subject knowledge and good evaluation of students' work ensure all students, including those with learning difficulties, make progress in their learning. Teachers make good use of information from individual educational plans in order to adapt their teaching strategies to meet individual student's needs. Overall, teaching is supported by students' good and often very good behaviour and their strong and positive attitudes to the subject.
186. The leadership of the department is good. The head of the department has very clear educational direction for the subject; the department is well organised and successfully managed. Teachers are well deployed and good use is made of the range of facilities so that students receive a good broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. The curriculum is evolving to embrace the changes made by Curriculum 2000; however, further development is needed in order to bring assessment into line with this change. The curriculum is games dominated, although dance and gymnastics are taught in the programme; the outdoor and adventurous areas are underdeveloped. Team representations and displays give opportunities for students to be suitably challenged and extended. Literacy and number support the physical education programme. However, there is insufficient access to ICT, which constrains its use within the examination courses. Opportunities are given for physical recreation during curriculum time for Year 12 and 13. The department offers a good and varied range of seasonal extra-curricular activities for all students; about one third of the students participate and this greatly enhances the curriculum. The monitoring of teaching is undertaken within the department by the head of department. Further development of regular and systematic monitoring of teaching and learning is needed in order to share good practice and focus on improved students' outcomes.
187. The department has made good progress on the issues raised in the last inspection. The standards of teaching have improved; as a consequence learning has also improved. All students taking GCSE achieve A\* to G grades; however, students do not achieve sufficient numbers of A\* to C grades. There has been improvement in both the curriculum and assessment, although further development is now needed in order to meet requirements of Curriculum 2000. Teachers work hard and effectively as a team and are very committed to the raising of standards in physical education.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

188. Since 1998 the school has entered all students in Year 11, except those who opt out of the subject, for the GCSE short course examination in religious education. In the first two years the results were just below the national average, but in 2000 they improved significantly and were above the national norm, although a fifth of the year group was not entered. The subject is offered at A/S level in the Sixth Form but only attracts a few students. Four sat the examination in 2000 and they all achieved pass grades.
189. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is in line with national expectations. Over the key stage, students build up a good knowledge of the basic beliefs of six major faiths through spending a term's systematic study on each of them. Whilst there is slightly more emphasis on the Judaeo-Christian traditions than on other faiths, it does not amount to the weighting recommended for Christianity and one other faith by the

locally Agreed Syllabus. Students have a good understanding of religious symbolism and terminology. In one Year 8 lesson, students gained insight to the importance of religious tokens by comparing their own ideas about the five symbols of the Khalsa with the religious significance they have for Sikhs. Year 9 students studying anti-Semitism understood the meaning of ideas such as 'scapegoat' to explain the prejudice that Jews have suffered down the centuries. A number of higher attaining students in Year 9 did not have sufficient background knowledge on the life of Jesus to be able to trace the roots of anti-Semitism to the Crucifixion. Apart from the Year 9 assessed work on the life of Buddha, there are few opportunities for students to write at length and find out information for themselves. Homework is not being used to develop ideas further, so written work lacks sufficient detail and reflection. Progress in lessons is satisfactory and work is suitably adapted for the different ability groups, using textbooks at three levels.

190. At the end of Year 11, attainment is in line with standards expected nationally. This is evident in the amount of effort that most students put into their coursework on each of the five modules, which show good understanding of Christian teachings on the moral issues being studied. Where they find difficulty is in applying such teachings as the final judgement to how Christians live their lives, then evaluating different ideas about what happens when we die. Many students tend to describe beliefs rather than argue points for and against the proposition in the question set. In lessons, Year 11 higher attaining students were quick to assimilate the pro-life and pro-choice arguments in the abortion debate and apply Christian teaching on the sanctity of life. Lower attaining students were able to begin to understand the controversy once the lesson focused on the question of when life begins. For some of the work, students of differing attainment are using the same worksheets, expecting all to comprehend difficult religious concepts such as comparing human relationships with those between Christ and the church. In general, the structure of the course is a strength, raising standards for all students. However, it can stifle creativity for able students at times, when they are held to the same pace of working, or for lower attaining pupils, when too much time is spent on comprehension exercises. When given the opportunity to discuss, students express their views clearly and sensibly, taking account of different points of view. Progress over the course is good and the regular assignments serve to consolidate students' understanding of each module.
191. Attainment in the Sixth Form is below the expectation of course requirements. Four students are following the A/S course in Year 12 on half the time allocated to similar courses, which makes it difficult for them to reach the required standard, as their essay work indicates. The school is still not providing all sixth-form students with their entitlement to some general religious education, as required by statute.
192. Attitudes towards the subject are generally positive, except for the comparatively large number of pupils who opt out of the subject in Key Stage 4, mainly because of the amount of work expected from them on the short course. In Years 7 to 9 students are interested in their work, contributing to class discussion and asking questions themselves. When given the opportunity, they work well together and show respect for other faiths. Students in Years 10 and 11 adopt a serious attitude to referencing Bible passages on the topics they are studying and apply themselves diligently to their work. Throughout the school the standard of behaviour in lessons is very good.
193. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. All the teachers manage their students well and promote good working relationships. Non-specialists are well supported with lesson notes and appropriate resources, but not all are confident about teaching world religions. One Year 9 lesson was barely

satisfactory, because of its heavy reliance on worksheets and insufficient explanation of the subject matter. The teaching was more effective in the few lessons that moved along at a good pace, engaging the students in a variety of activities. For example, a Year 7 lesson on Hindu gods captured pupils' interest by starting with their observations from a picture of Ganesha, then matching their descriptions to the god's attributes. At Key Stage 3, homework is not being set on a regular basis and there is some unsatisfactory marking, where books have either not been marked for some time, or just checked, without proper comment. Where it is assessed, teachers are using different grading systems.

194. The strength of the teaching in Years 10 and 11 is the well-planned structure of the course and its central focus around Christian teaching on moral issues, giving students a basis from which to discuss different views. The teaching is very thorough, based on booklets they have produced and a range of stimulating textbooks. There are good opportunities for discussion and reflection, using poetry in one Year 10 lesson to consider the possible effects of environmental pollution as sending creation into reverse. Sometimes the pace of lessons is laboured and there is not enough variety of tasks to increase the tempo and the level of students' involvement in learning. The department has collected and developed software that will enable students to learn by using ICT, when the computers are functioning.
195. Management of the subject is difficult because of the number of non-specialists involved, whose priorities lie in other subject areas. For example, new assessment procedures have just been introduced to monitor students' progress against the learning objectives of the Agreed Syllabus more closely, but their use is not uniform across the department. The teachers do justice to the subject, but the different calls upon their time and energies make it difficult for them to contribute to the development of teaching and learning resources in the subject. Continuity of teaching has been achieved at Key Stage 4 but not at Key Stage 3. There is enough teaching to warrant another specialist teacher.
196. Since the last inspection, the time allocated to religious education has almost doubled, allowing the subject to meet the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus, except at sixth-form level where statutory requirements are still not being met. Good progress has been made in raising the academic status of religious education in the school through success at GCSE. The subject has transferred from a mobile hut to a new classroom with all the resources to do it justice. There is still scope for developing the teaching to improve the pace and range of learning activities in lessons. The staffing issue needs to be resolved so that further development can take place.

## **SOCIAL SCIENCES**

197. The school offers AS and A-level courses in economics, psychology and sociology, allowing them to run even though the number of students has been small. Last year's results in psychology were above the national average, maintaining the high standard achieved over the last three years. Sociology recorded its best results in 2000, rising above the national average for the first time. Economics results dropped below average in 2000, following two years when they were above. The small number of students involved means that one student's success or failure can have a disproportionate effect on the averages. In lessons, students are working in line with national expectations in all three subjects. They have a good grasp of theory in each subject area and show ability in applying it to the analysis of actual case studies. Their general knowledge of current affairs needs developing, so that they can refer to topical examples that support or challenge social and economic theory. Social science magazines help to keep them up to date with developments, but they do not have access to the Internet at school, which is a big disadvantage. More students have chosen psychology at A/S level, which means there is a greater exchange of ideas in group discussions.
198. Overall, the quality of teaching in social sciences is good. Courses are well planned to a common format and lessons contain a good balance between instruction and discussion. Teachers usually pose key questions for students to consider and discuss, before directing them to research findings. Theory is grounded in practical work, such as simulating an experiment with bouncy balls and cuddly toys in a psychology lesson, to show how children learn aggressive behaviour. Sometimes the discussion is side tracked, at the expense of lesson objectives, but more often the pace is brisk and the teaching has a sharp focus.
199. The social sciences department is well organised, with common procedures in all three subject areas. There is close collaboration between the teachers involved and regular analysis of their work, in accordance with the school's procedures for monitoring and developing teaching. The department has maintained high standards since the last inspection and has developed new courses to meet demand. They have built up good resources for teaching their subjects, but lack Internet access which offers great potential for students' learning in the social sciences.