

INSPECTION REPORT

RYDENS SCHOOL

Walton on Thames

Surrey

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number:125262

Headteacher: Mr Ian Wilson

Reporting inspector: Mr David Cox
10297

Dates of inspection: 22 – 25 January 2001

Inspection number: 187575

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 - 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Rydens School Hersham Road Walton on Thames Surrey
Postcode:	KT12 5PY
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Margaret Hicks
Date of previous inspection:	25 March 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
10297	David Cox	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?
				How high are standards?
				How well are students taught?
				How well is the school led and managed?
9086	Rosalie Watkins	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development
				How well does the school care for its students?
				How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
19905	Ian Kirby	Team inspector	Music	Assessment
22411	Ann Axon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
4145	Christine Harrison	Team Inspector	Science	
11933	David Driscoll	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
2597	Cheryl Jackson	Team inspector	Equal opportunities Special educational needs Vocational education Sixth form	
19596	Bernard Treacy	Team Inspector	English English as an additional language	
20124	Jo Peach	Team Inspector	Modern foreign languages	
15462	Cliff Blakemore	Team Inspector	Geography	Staffing
22590	Robert Castle	Team Inspector	Physical education	Resources

4411	Tim Wright	Team Inspector	Art and design	
15832	John Vanstone	Team inspector	History	Accommodation
30427	Felicity Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	Religious education	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Rydens School is bigger than other secondary schools, and is a mixed 11 to 18 comprehensive school, situated in Elmbridge, which is a residential area to the Southwest of London within the M25. Since the last inspection, the number of students on roll has risen significantly and the school is over-subscribed. There are 1146 students on roll with 125 students in the sixth form. The school takes students mainly from Hersham, Molesey and Walton. Although there is a fairly large spread of social backgrounds, the 'catchment' area includes the particularly deprived area of North Walton. However, the overall social-economic circumstances of the students are broadly average in national terms.

The school has a lower than average number of students from ethnic minorities; although there are 41 (3.6 per cent) students with English as an additional language, which is above average. Whilst the school attracts students from a wide spread of abilities the ability of students on entry is generally below average, although the school does have an improving intake with the majority of students in Years 7 and 8 being broadly average. There are 417 students on the register of special educational needs, this is 36 per cent per cent of the school population and is above the national average and is significantly higher than at the time of the last inspection. A higher proportion of students on the register has behavioural difficulties than is found normally. There are 18 (1.6 per cent) students with statements of special educational need, which is slightly below the national average. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals currently is broadly average in national terms at 16.3 per cent although this is high compared to other schools in Surrey.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school that is continuing to improve. The very good leadership and management provided since the previous inspection report has been successful in bringing about a commitment to ensuring that students achieve well. The good quality teaching in Years 10 and 11 ensures that students' levels of attainment are improved whilst they are at the school. The school is providing satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Students achieve well at the school.
- The quality of teaching is good in Years 10 and 11.
- The provision for students' moral and social development is good.
- There is good educational and personal support for students.
- The headteacher and senior management team provide very good leadership and management.
- The standards that students attain in information and communication technology (ICT) are well above average.

What could be improved

- The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9.
- The quality of the curriculum particularly in relation to religious education, design and technology, modern foreign languages and personal and social education (PSE).

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 very good progress since the last inspection in March 1996. Results at GCSE and GCE A-level have improved significantly, particularly those of the boys, whose underachievement was a key issue previously. The overall quality of teaching has improved. During the previous inspection teaching was sound or better in only seven out of ten lessons, it is now at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons. The behaviour of students is now better managed. The school's management systems have been restructured and there is now a much more coherent line-management system. Recent changes to the systems for assessing students are now resulting in a

more accurate picture of an individual student's performance. The school's response to the key issues identified in the previous report has been very good although statutory requirements for religious education and collective worship are still not met.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	C	B	C	A
A-levels/AS-levels	D	E	C	

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

Results in the national tests in 2000 for students aged 14 were above the national average in English, average in science but below average in mathematics when compared to all schools. In comparison with schools with a similar number of students eligible for free school meals, results were well above average in English and science and average in mathematics. Overall, boys perform slightly better than the girls do. The trend in the school's results is below the national trend.

Results in the 2000 GCSE examinations were close to the national average when compared with all schools. When compared with schools with a similar number of students eligible for free school meals, results were well above average. Results have improved significantly since the previous inspection report and the trend is above the national trend. Boys' results were above the national average, which is a significant improvement on the underachievement noted in the previous report. Girls' results were slightly below the national average. The proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at GCSE grades A* to G was very high when compared with schools with a similar number of students eligible for free school meals and places the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally in this category. The school sets challenging targets for the proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at grades A* to C and A* to G. The school fell short of its A* to C target but achieved its A* to G figure. Students' best results were in English, English literature and information technology. Their worst results were in music and history.

Results in the 2000 GCE A-level examinations were close to the national average. There has been a significant improvement in results since the previous inspection report. In the General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ), results were well above national standards in health and social care..

Standards of literacy and numeracy are broadly in line with the standard expected nationally.

Evidence gathered during the inspection, indicates that the standards that students attain at the age of 14 are below the level expected of students of the same age nationally. However, by the age of 16 students attain standards close to the level expected. The standards that students attain in Years 12 and 13 are in line with course expectations.

The majority of students achieve well overall at the school. Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9 and Years 12 to 13. Students with special educational needs make good progress overall.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Students of all ages and backgrounds show an overall satisfactory response to teachers' expectations.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of students is satisfactory overall. Around the site students are good-natured. Younger boys are occasionally over-rough, but this generally arises from boisterousness rather than animosity.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Students take responsibility for their learning. Older students recognise the benefits of living in an orderly community. For the most part students are polite and respectful both to each other and to staff.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, it has varied around the average for secondary schools.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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.

During the week of the inspection, Year 12 and 13 students were involved in examinations and so only a limited sample of lessons was observed.

The quality of teaching, and of the learning that such teaching promotes, is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 12 to 13. It is good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons; good or better in 54 per cent of lessons and very good or better in 14 per cent of lessons. Teaching of the very highest standard was seen in 3 per cent of lessons. However, teaching was less than satisfactory in 4 per cent of lessons and poor in 0.5 per cent of lessons. Overall, these figures represent a significant improvement on those noted in the previous inspection report.

The proportion of teaching that is satisfactory or better does vary between year groups, particularly between Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. All the teaching that was judged to be less than satisfactory occurred in Years 7 to 9 which resulted in 90 per cent of lessons being at least satisfactory or better. In Years 10 and 11 there were no unsatisfactory lessons and 58 per cent of lessons were at least good or better. The good quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 leads to good learning and to students achieving well whereas the achievement of students in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory.

The single most important factor for the difference between the year groups is that a small minority of teachers have not adapted their teaching to meet the demands of the different nature of the ability and needs of students in Years 7 to 9 compared to students in Years 10 and 11.

In Years 7 to 9, teaching is very good in ICT; good in English, science and art and design and satisfactory in all other subjects. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good in ICT and vocational education; good in English, art and design and geography and satisfactory in all other subjects. In Years 12 to 13, where there is sufficient evidence to make a judgement the quality of teaching is very good in ICT and vocational education; good in mathematics, science, art and design, geography and physical education and satisfactory in all other subjects.

Teachers have a good command of their subject. Satisfactory attention is paid to developing literacy and numeracy skills although there are inconsistencies in the way in which the teachers support literacy and numeracy within their subjects. Teachers' expectations vary between the different year groups.

Expectations are high in Years 10 and 11 and result in students achieving well. The planning of lessons and the effectiveness of methods used are satisfactory overall.

The management of students is good overall. Teachers generally make good use of the 50-minute lessons. Most lessons are well paced. They make good use of the available resources. One of the most significant strengths in the teaching of ICT is the way that the school's computer network has been set up with all the required tasks and resources for every ICT lesson. Homework is set on a regular basis and extends the learning process.

Teachers of students with special educational needs have good subject knowledge of the teaching of basic skills.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is unsatisfactory overall; the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 does not fully meet National Curriculum requirements. Also statutory requirements for religious education are not met.
Provision for students with special educational needs	There is satisfactory curriculum provision for students with special educational needs overall and it is good in Years 10 and 11.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Students make progress at the same rate as other students. When they arrive in the school, good individual support is provided.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall. Good provision is made for students' moral and social development, there is satisfactory provision for cultural development but spiritual development is unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its students	Standards of care are good. This is a caring school where staff know the students well.

The school has good and effective links with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good; the headteacher and the senior team are very good. The quality of middle management is satisfactory.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. A very good governing body. Governors do not meet fully all of their statutory duties.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The governors and senior management team have a good understanding of the school's work.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Resources are very carefully deployed to those areas where they will provide the greatest benefit. The school applies very well the principles of best value.

The adequacy of accommodation and learning resources is unsatisfactory. The adequacy of staffing 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"> • Their child is making good progress in school. • The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. • The school expects their child to work hard and achieve his or her best. • The school is well led and managed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents being kept better informed about how their child is progressing. • The school setting a more appropriate amount of work to be done at home. • The school working more closely with parents. • The behaviour of students.

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views. The majority of students achieve well at the school. The school does provide a good range of extra-curricular activities. The school does expect students to work hard, particularly in Years 10 and 11. The school is well led.

The inspection team found that the annual reports give parents a good picture of the student's learning and of targets for further progress. Homework is used well to support and extend students. The school does work closely with parents; it is approachable and welcoming. The behaviour of students is generally satisfactory.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. The majority of students entered the school with levels of attainment that, overall, were below the level expected nationally, although those students currently in Years 7 and 8 entered the school with levels of attainment closer to the level expected nationally. By the age of 14, the standards that students attain are below the level expected nationally. By the ages of 16 and 18 the standards that students attain are at the level expected nationally. The majority of students achieve well at the school.
2. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests at the age of 14, the proportion of students reaching Level 5 and above was above the national average in English, close to the national average in science and below the national average in mathematics. The proportion of students reaching Level 6 and above was close to the national average in English and science but below average in mathematics. The average National Curriculum points score was above the national average in English, average in science but below average in mathematics when compared to all schools. In comparison with schools with a similar number of students eligible for free school meals, students' average National Curriculum points score was well above average in English and science and average in mathematics. Taking all three subjects together, students' average National Curriculum points score was close to the national average for all schools and well above average when compared with schools with a similar number of students eligible for free school meals. Overall, boys performed slightly better than the girls did. The trend in the school's average National Curriculum points score for all core subjects is below the national trend.
3. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, the proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at grades A* to C was below the national average but was significantly higher than at the time of the last inspection report. The underachievement of boys was a key issue noted at that time. The boys' results have improved and are now double the figure achieved at the time of the previous report.
4. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, results at A* to C were well above the national average in information technology and business studies; close to the national average in English; below the national average in mathematics, design and technology, geography and art and well below the national average in all other subjects with the exception of history where they were far below the national average.
5. The proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at grades A* to G in the 2000 GCSE examinations was well above the national average for all schools and this represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection report. When compared with schools with a similar number of students eligible for free school meals these results are very high and place the school in the top 5 per cent of schools nationally. In 2000, results at A* to G were well above average in information technology and business studies; above average in English, English literature, mathematics and design and technology; close to the national average in science, geography, art and French and Spanish; below average in history and religious education and well below average in music.
6. The proportion of students obtaining one or more passes at grades A* to G in 2000 was also well above the national average. The total GCSE points score per student was close to the national average when compared with all schools. When compared with schools with a similar number of students eligible for free school meals, results were well above average. Based on the figures for the last five years, the average total GCSE / GNVQ point score per student showed a trend that was above the national trend. Based on the latest year, the boys' results were above the national average, which is a significant improvement on the underachievement noted in the previous inspection report. The girls' results were slightly below the national average.

7. Students' best results were in English, English literature and information technology. Their worst results were in music and history.
8. The school sets challenging targets for the proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at grades A* to C and A* to G. The school fell short of its A* to C target but achieved its A* to G target.
9. In the 2000 GCE A-level examinations, the average A/AS level point score of candidates entered for two or more GCE A-levels or AS equivalent was close to the national average. Based on the last three years the average A/AS level points score was below the national average. However, there has been a significant improvement in results since the previous inspection report.
10. In the 2000 GCE A-level examinations, results were well above the national average in physics, chemistry and psychology; above average in biology, information technology, business and art; average in mathematics and geography and below average in English. There were too few candidates entered to make a statistically valid judgement in other subjects.
11. In the results of students studying General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ), students at the age of 17 attain standards well above national standards on the health and social care course. Particular examples worthy of mention are the fifty per cent of Intermediate health and social care students who have achieved at distinction level over the past three years.
12. Overall, examination results at GCSE and GCE A-level have improved significantly since the previous inspection report. Much of this improvement has been brought about by the significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection report, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
13. Evidence gathered during the inspection in English, indicates that the standards that students attain at the age of 14 are above the level expected of students of the same age nationally. Standards are at the level expected at the age of 16 and below course expectations in Years 12 and 13. Students' skills in speaking and listening are a relative strength at all levels in the school. By the age of 14 students read a good selection of novels, plays and poems suitable for their age. Most students read with fluency and satisfactory expression. By the ages of 16 and 18 students go on to read more complex and demanding texts. By the age of 14 most students are able to write in a variety of different styles, including narrative, description and reportage. By the age of 16 and 18 students go on to increase their range to include, for example, good quality work on the media and on a wide range of literary topics.
14. Standards of literacy are in line with the national expectation. Students are provided with good opportunities to read widely in English, history, religious education and ICT. In these subjects students read textbooks, novels, plays, material from the Internet, journals and technical reports. Some opportunities are provided for students to read aloud. However, such opportunities are fewer than might be expected. In some subjects writing skills are well taught and students achieve standards which are above the national expectation.
15. Evidence gathered during the inspection in mathematics, indicates that the standards that students attain at ages 14 and 16 are below the level expected of students of the same ages nationally. Students have a sound understanding of number and use calculators appropriately. They have a secure understanding of data handling at this level. By the age of 16, when completing coursework, higher attaining students are beginning to develop good skills in investigations by carrying out substantial problems. Students in Years 12 and 13 are achieving standards that are in line with course expectations. In pure mathematics, students use the compound angle formula to solve trigonometric problems and they solve trigonometric equations, applying Pythagoras theorem appropriately.
16. Levels of numeracy across the curriculum are broadly in line with the standard expected nationally. In science standards of numeracy are satisfactory. Teachers often introduce numerical techniques well and give students opportunities to practise new calculations with plenty of examples. Students' measuring and calculating skills are practised well in geography. In design and technology students measure and mark out materials. In ICT, students use

formulae in spreadsheets at a good level and in later years a significant level of data analysis in evaluations.

17. Evidence gathered during the inspection in science, indicates that the standards that students attain at the age of 14 are at the level expected of students of the same age nationally. At the age of 16, students' standards of attainment are below those expected nationally. Students in Years 12 and 13 attain standards above course expectations but some students in Year 12, who entered the courses with relatively low attainment in GCSE science, are achieving standards that are below those expected in the GCE AS courses, particularly in physics. Most students have satisfactory knowledge of the basic facts associated with topics they have studied recently. Students' investigative skills match their attainment in other aspects of their work in science. Higher attaining students demonstrate better understanding than expected for their age. Middle and lower attainers find it difficult to recall the details of earlier topics; their spoken and written answers often lack precision.
18. Evidence gathered during the inspection, indicates that the standards that students attain at the age of 14 are above the level expected of students of the same age in ICT, English, art and design; at the level expected in science, geography, history and below the level expected in all other subjects. Students attain standards below the level expected in the Locally Agreed Syllabus in religious education.
19. Evidence gathered during the inspection, indicates that the standards that students attain at the age of 16 are well above the level expected of students of the same age nationally in ICT, above the level expected in vocationally based subjects; at the level expected in English, art and design, geography, history and physical education and below the level expected in all other subjects. Students attain standards below the level expected in the Locally Agreed Syllabus in religious education.
20. Evidence gathered during the inspection, indicates that the standards that students attain in Years 12 and 13, and where there is sufficient evidence to form a judgement, are above course expectations in science, art and design and vocationally based subjects, in line with course expectations in all other subjects with the exception of English where they are below.
21. The majority of students achieve well overall at the school. Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9 and Years 12 to 13. The good relationships that exist in Years 10 and 11 between students and teachers promote an eagerness to learn and to achieve well. The good quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 has a positive impact on students' achievement. Students achieve better in Years 10 and 11 than they do in Years 7 to 9 because much of the work is more structured and often more challenging. In Years 7 to 9, in a small minority of lessons, teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of higher attaining students and on these occasions students do not achieve well. The single most important factor for the difference in achievement between the year groups is that a small minority of teachers have not adapted their teaching to meet the demands of the different nature of the intake of students in Years 7 to 9 compared to students in Years 10 and 11.
22. Boys are now achieving slightly better than girls by the age of 16. Since the previous inspection many initiatives to raise boys' attainment have been introduced successfully. For example, the English department has made a particular effort to select literature intended to arouse the interest of boys and in this they have been successful.
23. Students with special educational needs make good progress overall. These students make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9 and Years 12 to 13 and good progress in Years 10 and 11. Teachers are much more attuned to the needs of students in Years 10 and 11 than they are of students in Years 7 to 9. Good support is provided by subject departments to meet the needs of students in Years 10 and 11. Students with special educational needs following vocational courses in Years 10 to 13 make good progress.
24. There is no significant difference in the progress of students from different ethnic backgrounds. Students for whom English is an additional language make progress at the same rate as other students. When they arrive in the school, individual support is provided.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

25. Students' attitudes, personal development, behaviour and attendance are all satisfactory. The school is an orderly community. Tensions previously evident around the school have disappeared because of the good routines for supervising and managing students. The way students are helped by the school to become more sensible and responsible in their behaviour is reflected in the growing maturity of the older ones.
26. In lessons, students of all ages and backgrounds, and including those with special educational needs, show an overall satisfactory response to teachers' expectations regarding behaviour and attention to work. They usually arrive on time for lessons. In more than half the lessons, and especially where teaching is good, their response is good. When this happens they readily settle down to learn, listen attentively and work calmly and constructively. In English lessons, students of all ages usually show a good level of interest. Elsewhere there are variations between subjects and between age groups. Throughout the school, students' concentration and effort is very dependent on the level of teachers' skills. Older students are on average better motivated than others. For instance, those on vocational courses display very good attitudes to their work in Years 10 to 13. In Years 7 to 9 attitudes and behaviour are unsatisfactory in around one in every ten lessons. Because of the increasing number of students on the special educational needs register, particularly in Years 7 to 9, with needs related to behaviour and not to ability, a small minority of teachers do not manage students well, students' attitudes can deteriorate and learning suffers and there are times when very little is achieved in the lesson. When teaching is less motivating, students are compliant rather than keen to learn. If the teacher is slow to settle students at the start of the lesson, or if their planned activity is inappropriate, this tends to lead to unsatisfactory behaviour, with students becoming absorbed in pointless chatter, or, if they try to answer questions, calling out inappropriately. Occasionally they ignore the teacher or even deliberately set out to be annoying, as Year 9 students sometimes do in modern foreign languages. In such circumstances, there is little progress with learning.
27. The behaviour of students is satisfactory overall. Around the site students are good-natured and sometimes show consideration for others, for instance by opening doors. Younger boys are occasionally over-rough, but this generally arises from boisterousness rather than animosity. During wet weather the open nature of the site leads to increased liveliness as students move between lessons. A small minority of both boys and girls are involved occasionally in incidents of really poor behaviour, leading to rates of fixed term exclusion rather higher than the average seen in secondary schools.
28. Relationships are satisfactory overall. The relationship between students of differing ethnic backgrounds is satisfactory. There are examples of good relationships between teachers and students, particularly in Years 10 and 11. For the most part students are polite and respectful both to each other and to staff. They help each other, working productively in groups when this is part of the lesson. For instance in a 'thinking science' lesson Year 8 students worked together sharing ideas and successfully developing their understanding of how the animal kingdom can be classified. In English, there is often a good co-operative atmosphere, as when Year 10 discussed dramatic tension in one of Shakespeare's plays. In various subjects, when occasionally expectations are not made clear, a lack of respect contributes to inattention and unsatisfactory learning. Bullying, both by name-calling and by more physical means, causes occasional problems, but these are limited because students know they can turn to staff for help to resolve such issues.
29. Other aspects of personal development are also satisfactory. Students take responsibility for their learning when this is expected, for instance by completing coursework. They show capacity to use initiative when they have opportunity, as in a Year 11 ICT lesson both boys and girls worked independently, asking appropriately for support when they needed it. Older ones recognise the benefits of living in an orderly community and make use of the opportunities they are given to help with its functioning. Students in Years 12 and 13 confidently take responsibility, organising the Sixth Form Council and on occasion taking the initiative in the school's charity fundraising efforts. Year 7 students appreciate the support available to them from the Year 10 mentors as they settle into their new school. The students who take part

speak with enthusiasm of the annual dramatic productions and the extra-curricular sports activities. Students generally know they should respect others' beliefs including the beliefs of students from different ethnic backgrounds. However, occasionally students fail to put this understanding into action. In one religious education lesson, for instance, Year 9 students showed open disrespect for religious values. Even the oldest students show little inclination to deepen their own understanding of such non-material values and ideas.

30. Attendance is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, it has varied around the average for secondary schools. In the most recent year, it was rather lower than the average, and at present it is continuing at similar levels. Most students, including those in Years 12 and 13, come to school regularly but a few, especially in Years 10 and 11, are erratic in their attendance. The average attendance for Year 11 was unacceptably low at 89 per cent in the term before the inspection. During the inspection a seasonal infection was affecting up to one in ten students throughout the school. Because of this, attendance was much lower than earlier in the school year, despite a promising new initiative to telephone students' homes if no explanation is received on the first day of absence. The school has not had access to an Education Welfare Officer of late to follow up individuals showing persistent absenteeism; this was an additional factor in absence levels in the weeks before the inspection. Students do not always make up properly for lost time when they return to school, so that gaps in work due to absence are sometimes apparent, for instance in modern foreign languages. When this happens it slows students' progress and limits their attainment to an extent. However, despite absences the vast majority of students achieve some level of success in their GCSE examinations.
31. The school has made good progress with these aspects. Behaviour was a concern at the time of the last inspection; it is now satisfactory.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

32. During the week of the inspection, Year 12 and 13 students were involved in examinations and so only a limited sample of lessons was observed.
33. The quality of teaching, and of the learning that such teaching promotes, is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 12 to 13. Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons; good or better in 54 per cent of lessons and very good or better in 14 per cent of lessons. Teaching of the very highest standard was seen in 3 per cent of lessons. However, teaching was less than satisfactory in 4 per cent; it was poor in 0.5 per cent of lessons. Overall, these figures represent a significant improvement on those noted in the previous inspection report. During the previous inspection teaching was sound or better in only seven out of ten lessons.
34. The quality of teaching has improved, particularly in Years 10 and 11, because of the high priority it has been given by the senior management team and the more effective systems for managing students' behaviour that now exist.
35. The proportion of teaching that is satisfactory or better does vary between year groups, particularly between Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. All the teaching that was judged to be less than satisfactory occurred in Years 7 to 9 which resulted in 90 per cent of lessons being at least satisfactory or better. In Years 10 and 11 there were no unsatisfactory lessons and 58 per cent of lessons were at least good or better. The good quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 leads to good learning and to students achieving well whereas the achievement of students in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. The single most important factor for the difference between the year groups is that a small minority of teachers have not adapted their teaching to meet the demands of the different nature of the ability and needs of students in Years 7 to 9 compared to students in Years 10 and 11.
36. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is very good in ICT; good in English, science and art and design and satisfactory in all other subjects. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good in ICT and vocational education; good in English, art and design and geography and satisfactory in all other subjects. In Years 12 to 13, where there is sufficient evidence to make a judgement, the

quality of teaching is very good in vocational education; good in mathematics, science, art and design, geography and physical education and satisfactory in all other subjects.

37. Teachers have a good command of their subject in Years 10 and 11 and in Years 12 to 13 whereas it is only satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. For example, in a Year 10 English class, the teacher used her excellent knowledge of Shakespeare's play Macbeth to good effect to enable students to develop their understanding of dramatic irony. In a Year 11 ICT class the teacher used his excellent knowledge and understanding of communications technology to get students to understand the ethical issues associated with new technologies. However, in a Year 9 religious education lesson, the teacher displayed a weak subject knowledge of 'minority religions' and failed to gain the interest of the class which led to the group becoming disruptive and very little learning taking place.
38. Satisfactory attention is paid to developing literacy and numeracy skills although there are inconsistencies in the way in which the teachers support literacy and numeracy within their subjects. Subjects such as English, history and ICT provide students with good opportunities to develop their reading and writing skills whilst other subjects do not place sufficient emphasis on developing areas such as subject-specific vocabulary to the extent that might be expected.
39. Teachers' expectations vary between the different year groups. The differences between year groups is a key factor in why students achieve well in Years 10 and 11 and only satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9. Expectations are high in Years 10 and 11 and result in students achieving well. For example, in a Year 10 business class, the teacher set challenging tasks linked to the topic of a 'multi-skilled workforce'. Students were made to work hard to complete tasks, resulting in students having a good knowledge and understanding of the topic by the end of the lesson and therefore achieving well. In this lesson, students learnt about many new ideas related to the changing nature of the national workforce. However, in Years 7 to 9, teachers' expectations are only broadly satisfactory. There are examples of very high expectations as seen in a Year 9 English class where the teacher set about developing students' creative writing which resulted in a high level of reflective writing by the students. However, in Years 7 to 9 a small minority of teachers are setting tasks that are not sufficiently demanding. For example, in a Year 9 art and design class, the teacher set low-level tasks related to perspective. Many of the students in this group had special educational needs related to behaviour and not ability. The result of setting tasks that were too easy was that the class became bored and attitudes deteriorated and there was very little achieved during the lesson. Students learnt very little in this lesson.
40. The planning of lessons and the effectiveness of methods used are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and Years 12 to 13 and are good in Years 10 and 11. The differences between year groups is a key factor in why students achieve well in Years 10 and 11 and only satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9. Whilst teachers' planning is broadly satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, a minority of teachers have still not adapted their planning to take account of the better overall ability of students in these years compared to Years 10 and 11. Teachers have not yet modified their plans to suit the needs of the higher attainers, which are to be found in many of the teaching groups in these years and this does lead to students not making sufficient gains in their learning. Teachers in Years 10 and 11 provide good support for lower attaining students including those with special educational needs and this results in students in these years achieving well overall. For example, in a Year 11 art and design class, clear learning objectives were stated and there was an effective structure to the lesson which led to students being clear about their work and what was required of them and subsequently to achieve well. In the better lessons there is good effort and concentration by students and a good pace of working and amount of work achieved in lessons. This has a positive effect on their acquisition and consolidation of skills and understanding.
41. The management of students is yet another area where there are differences between the year groups. In Years 10 and 11 and Years 12 to 13, teachers manage students well. In Years 10 to 13, there is a good deal of trust and relationships are good between teachers and students. This was evident in a Year 10 history class where the teacher used praise effectively to encourage students to do well, and effective classroom management resulted in students achieving well. However, in a Year 8 physical education class, the teacher reprimanded the students with limited effectiveness as students continued to misbehave. Because of the

increasing number of students on the special educational needs register, particularly in Years 7 to 9, with needs related to behaviour and not to ability, a small minority of teachers do not manage students well. Students' attitudes can deteriorate and learning suffers; there are times when very little is achieved in the lesson.

42. Teachers generally make good use of the 50-minute lessons. Most lessons are well paced. For example, in a Year 12 sociology class, the teacher used a range of tasks to focus students' attention and to sustain interest throughout the lesson. Support staff are used effectively to support and guide students. Teachers make good use of the available resources. One of the most significant strengths in the teaching is the way that the school's computer network has been set up with all the required tasks and resources for every ICT lesson. This enables higher attaining students to work rapidly through the tasks without waiting for either further instructions or for other students to catch up and lower attainers to receive all the support that they need.
43. Teachers make satisfactory use of ongoing assessment although it does vary across the curriculum. In English, marking of the very highest order was seen which led to students having a very clear understanding of how to improve their work. On the other hand, marking is not always frequent or informative in physics.
44. Teachers make good use of homework. Homework is set on a regular basis and extends the learning process.
45. Teachers of students with special educational needs have good subject knowledge of the teaching of basic skills, using the special training course in Years 7 to 9. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are in place for all students at Stages 2 to 5 of the Code of Practice. However, not all the targets on the IEPs are sufficiently practical for teachers to implement. Students with English as an additional language get satisfactory individual support.

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

46. The curriculum is unsatisfactory overall because of the poor curriculum in Years 10 and 11.
47. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory overall; it is appropriately broad and balanced. The curriculum contains all the required subjects of the National Curriculum as well as drama. All students may study two languages. Religious education is taught to all students, but there is insufficient time allowed to teach the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus and so statutory requirements are not met.
48. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is poor. Not all students study a modern foreign language or design and technology, despite this being part of their statutory entitlement. Some students study two technology based subjects, which leads to a lack of balance for the individual. In science, some students study for three separate sciences. Whilst this provides additional opportunities for the higher attaining students, the course is not suitable for lower attainers because they would have more chance of achieving high grades on the less demanding double award course.
49. The curriculum in Years 12 and 13 is good; it offers students a wide range of opportunities, but fails to meet the statutory requirements for religious education. The school provides a good range of GCE A-level and vocational courses to meet the students' varied needs. The curriculum is planned in such a way that students can choose to study subjects in which they have achieved success at GCSE to a higher level whilst also allowing them to develop their interests in other areas.
50. There is satisfactory curriculum provision for students with special educational needs overall; it is good in Years 10 and 11. In Years 10 and 11, teachers work hard to match the work to meet the needs of students. Limited withdrawal takes place for students in Years 7 and 8 who have reading ages below 9 years and these students benefit from the special training course. Students are not withdrawn from the same subject on a regular basis. The special educational needs department supports students with statements by providing in-class support. Arrangements for using IEPs are generally effective in ensuring that individual needs are met.

51. Throughout the school there are satisfactory arrangements for teaching literacy and numeracy. Planning for the promotion of students' literacy and numeracy skills in subjects is at an early stage of development and not significantly contributing to raising standards. However, the provision is satisfactory because of the good part played by the English and mathematics departments in developing basic skills. In addition to English and mathematics, good practice is evident in subjects such as design and technology, where there is careful correction of spelling, and ICT where students are regularly encouraged to read articles from reports and journals of a technical nature.
52. The arrangements for teaching personal, social and health education are unsatisfactory although arrangements are considerably better in Years 7 to 9 than they are in other years. The work in Years 7 to 9 is planned well and includes all the required aspects of health education, sex education and drugs awareness. The range of topics is particularly wide in these years. However, there is no specific course in other years, although aspects are taught in religious education and within the careers programme. The main weakness of these arrangements is the lack of extension to the work in earlier years, so that students do not receive guidance at the appropriate stage in their development. There are no arrangements for personal, social and health education in Years 12 and 13.
53. The overall arrangements for careers education, vocational education and work experience are satisfactory, but there are considerable differences in the quality of each of the aspects. Careers lessons begin in Year 9 for all students and continue throughout the rest of a student's school life. The topics studied are broad, but the teaching is satisfactory as the subject tends to be taught by teachers with little or no training in this area. The provision for Year 12 and 13 students is good; there are dedicated lessons and an extensive careers library. The arrangements for vocational education are satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, where there is one course, and good in Years 12 and 13. The school already offers several subjects in Years 12 and 13 and has plans to extend the provision in Years 10 and 11. Arrangements for work experience are unsatisfactory; there were insufficient places for all students last year and the school is still awaiting reports for a quarter of all students. Monitoring of students on work placements was unable to be carried out, as the school was not provided with details of placements until the last day of work experience. The external arrangements for work experience were carried out by an outside agency. The school has now taken good actions to improve the quality of the provision.
54. The school has well-established links with the local community and this makes a good contribution to students' learning opportunities. Links with local businesses are particularly good. Links have enabled students on GNVQ courses to be successful in their studies. Significant levels of sponsorship exist that have enabled, for example, Year 10 students to be trained as mentors for Year 7 students and resources to be improved in music.
55. Links with partner institutions are satisfactory overall. The school has good relationships with its partner primary schools and arrangements are well-established and effective in ensuring students settle quickly in their new environment. Links between subjects, on the other hand, are rare, although some students visit primary schools to read to younger students or perform plays. Good links are maintained with local centres for further education and these have proved successful in providing more appropriate courses for those students with a particularly poor record of attendance.
56. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities. The most significant part of the extra-curricular provision is that made by the subjects in order to raise standards in examinations. Each year there is a full timetable of revision classes for all subjects in the run up to examinations. Throughout the year the school operates a homework club which is open to all students who require help with their homework. However, the best feature of the homework club is the way that attendance is compulsory for students whose homework fails to reach a satisfactory standard. This use of an extra-curricular activity as a sanction has been most effective in improving the standard of homework across the school and the use of homework is now good in Years 10 and 11. There are many trips on offer to students, both in this country, other European countries, such as Italy and the Netherlands, and further afield such as Thailand and the Himalayas. The range of other extra-curricular activities is generally

satisfactory, particularly in music and ICT. Nine members of staff provide sporting activities and these are attended by around one in five students.

57. The curriculum is of a lower standard than at the time of the previous inspection, when all statutory requirements were met in Years 7 to 11. Religious education is still not provided in Years 12 and 13.
58. Overall the school makes satisfactory provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
59. The school makes unsatisfactory provision for the spiritual development of its students. Few departments identify opportunities for students to reflect upon their experiences and, as a result, opportunities for spiritual growth are missed. Good examples of opportunities for spiritual development are found in art and design where students in several year groups undertake projects that require them to reflect upon their own identities, moods and relationships. The English department makes good use of reflection and pause, in particular when studying poetry that considers such themes as 'Death'. Religious education provides the basis for spiritual development in the study of the belief in the existence of a deity, and beliefs in life after death, but the limited time available means that time allowed for reflection is short. The school does not meet the legal requirements for a daily act of worship. Assemblies are used well to re-enforce positive attitudes and to applaud success. Tutor time, that replaces assemblies, is not used as an opportunity for spiritual development or consideration of a 'Thought for the day'.
60. The school makes good provision for the moral development of the students. The school has a clear code of conduct that is well known to the students, supported by a system of rewards and sanctions. The personal, social and religious education course in Years 7 to 9, enables students to consider such issues as prejudice, bullying and the abuse of drugs. The school works with the police to develop in the students a moral framework and an understanding of their responsibility to help those less fortunate than themselves. Students raise funds for various causes, for example a local children's hospice, and the students in Years 12 and 13 run an entire week of charity fund raising. Several departments in school enable students to investigate moral issues, such as environmental issues and poverty which are studied in geography, religious education, personal and social education and science. Art and design encourages students to develop projects that provide opportunities to consider the effects of such issues as conflict, upon mankind. The World Challenge Group provides an excellent example of social responsibility in its work on community projects in the Himalayas and in Thailand.
61. The school makes good provision for the social development of its students. The week-ends at the Osmington Bay Activity Centre enable a large number of students in Years 7 to 9 to develop social skills. The PSE course in Years 7 to 9 and the religious education course in Years 10 and 11 provide good opportunities for students to consider relationships and the effect of individuals on one another. Whole-school events such as the annual school production and the Year 8 'bridge building day', involve large numbers of students working together for the success of all. Links across the year groups are made when Year 10 students act as mentors for Year 7 classes, and biannually when the group of Walton schools meet together to put on a well supported, joint production.
62. The school's provision for the cultural development of students is satisfactory. Some visits to galleries and theatres take place and the history department is developing a good range of visits to widen the experience of students of their own culture. The visiting sculptor provides students with new experiences and opportunities to develop their own skills and talents. There are opportunities for students to take part in extra-curricular music, and students are encouraged to develop their own musical talents independently. The school's overseas visits provide for good cultural development. The annual visit to the Netherlands involves a substantial number of students; other visits provide opportunities to experience life in France and Spain. In geography students contrast their way of life with that of the Amazonian Indians in Year 8, and with Japanese culture in Year 9. Opportunities for the students to appreciate the richness of living in a multi-cultural Britain are not sufficiently developed. There is no celebration of the festivals of other cultures and apart from the recognition of the customs associated with the

various faiths studied by Years 7 to 9 in religious education and there is little teaching about Britain as a multi-cultural country.

63. The school has made good progress with this aspect since the last inspection report. The provision for the moral and social development of students has improved, the result of which can be seen in the improvement in students' attitudes and behaviour.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

64. There is good educational and personal support for students; this helps to raise students' self-esteem and in doing so has raised students' aspirations and the standards that students achieve. Teachers monitor their achievements, take account of their individual needs for guidance and support their progress with learning. Good caring arrangements are generally in place to ensure their welfare, as at the time of the previous inspection, but there are a few instances where matters related to health and safety procedures need attention.
65. Induction procedures are good, allowing newly joined Year 7 students to settle happily into school routines. All students benefit from the good systems for educational guidance. Initiatives for this, seen at the time of the previous inspection, have been consolidated and extended, so that they make a good contribution to learning. Individual target setting and review of personal progress is well established for all age groups. There are regular review days, for students to meet individually with tutors. They are helped to understand their own achievements and capabilities and to know how to improve. There is suitable guidance for them at important times such as when Year 9 consider their GCSE option choices. At the time of the inspection, steps were in hand to make up for delays in the programme of Year 11 careers guidance interviews, that had resulted from recent staff changes in the careers service. Younger students appreciate the merit system by which they are rewarded for effort and good work. A good recording system for merits and sanctions has recently been introduced and this allows a regular flow of information to parents about how their child is responding to teachers' expectations.
66. Support for students with special educational needs meets the requirements of the Code of Practice. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are in place where required, and there is advice for teachers about how to support students within particular subject areas. However, links between the special educational needs co-ordinator and departments, to provide specific support for individual students at higher stages of the Code of Practice register, are not sufficiently developed.
67. Personal support is good. Students know that a good number of staff, including their tutor, the head of year or head of sixth form and the school counsellor, are available to help them with any problem or concern. Satisfactory use is generally made of tutor periods to support students, though there are times when there is little useful activity in terms either of students' learning or of their personal development. The PSE programme in Years 7 to 9 helps students develop relevant understanding and skills to adopt a healthy and safe lifestyle, for instance to cope with any bullying situation that arises. This is developed only to a limited extent for older students because of lack of specific curriculum time.
68. Management of behaviour has improved significantly since the previous inspection and is now good. There are useful guidelines for staff; expectations about behaviour are now well established, so that students understand what is required. Staff are usually active in reminding students how to behave, both in lessons and around the site. For instance, routines for supervising students as they enter buildings help to bring about an orderly start to most lessons. Occasionally, however, behaviour management in a lesson falls short of the school's guidelines and interruptions to learning are not effectively checked. There are good referral routines in place to follow if individual behaviour is unacceptable. Appropriate liaison with outside agencies such as the education psychology service contributes to the good support for students with recognised emotional or behavioural difficulties. An identified member of staff ensures that Pastoral Support Plans are constructed and followed to help individuals with particular personal or social needs. There is appropriate use of exclusion when behaviour becomes really poor. Arrangements for responding to child protection concerns are

satisfactory. Good procedures are in place within the school regarding such issues, and appropriate liaison with social services is achieved over any major concerns.

69. Monitoring and recording of attendance are satisfactory. Teachers take registers regularly in lessons and occasional checks for truancy discourage students from avoiding particular classes. The school recognises that although attendance is overall satisfactory, there is room for improvement. Recently routines have been introduced for quickly contacting home by telephone in the morning if a student fails to arrive. Pastoral staff make efforts, when time allows, to contact parents where there is an ongoing problem with their child's attendance. In the weeks before the inspection the lack of an Education Welfare Officer seriously delayed more strenuous efforts to take action about persistent absentees, but an officer has recently been appointed to support the school. A good plan has been produced to liaise with feeder schools to identify students with truancy problems, or in danger of becoming disaffected, and to monitor and support them appropriately as soon as they join the school. This is calculated to improve attendance significantly in the long term.
70. Appropriate and generally effective procedures are in place to maintain the school as a safe working environment, for instance efforts are being made to prevent health and safety problems arising from deficiencies in the drainage of the site. However a few other matters cause concern. These include: hazards arising from deterioration of the fencing to the hard courts; the fact that unsupervised students can gain access to equipment and resources in the science laboratories at break time and the need to ensure that information about emergency evacuation routines is always readily available to students, staff and visitors and is relevant to where they are on the site.
71. The school's procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are now good. Significant improvements to the systems used by the school have been made in the last 6 months and now enable subjects to produce accurate Teacher Assessments whereas before subjects such as geography and mathematics over-estimated a student's performance. A substantial amount of data on students' attainment is collected and recorded when they enter the school, including National Curriculum test results at age 11 and the results from cognitive ability tests; this information is then communicated to heads of department for their guidance. As students progress up the school, information gathered on their attainment is stored centrally and within departments, updated during the year, and available to every class teacher. The system is complemented by information on students' effort, homework and progress, and this is also made available to every member of staff.
72. The use made of assessment and the data gathered, in planning the curriculum is now good. However, in the most recent past there have been difficulties in gaining an accurate picture on students' levels of attainment at age 14 and these has resulted in inaccurate Teacher Assessments in subjects such as physical education. The school uses information on students' attainment from National Curriculum test results at age 14 and in GCSE examinations to predict their attainment at ages 16 and 18. Students are given target grades for their performance in GCSE, GCE AS and A-level examinations and also for the vocational courses offered by the school. Students who are identified as underachieving are offered support. Whilst the system is relatively new there is good evidence to suggest that the system is very effective in making teachers aware of the capabilities of their students and allowing them to set targets in the classroom.
73. The school's arrangements for identifying students with special educational needs has due regard to the procedures recommended in the Code of Practice. The school does care for students known to need particular attention by ensuring that it meets the statutory requirements as outlined in the students' statements of special educational needs. The school fulfils its duty to ensure that the provision outlined in the statements is implemented. Assessment, recording and reporting for all statemented students meet statutory requirements. Individual Educational Plans are in place for all students at Stages 2 to 5 of the Code of Practice register and they are readily available to all staff. As yet however, there are no secure departmental link arrangements and therefore most subjects do not have formalised links with the special educational needs department.

74. The school has made good progress with its assessment systems since the previous inspection report. Concerns were expressed then about assessment procedures and were a key issue in the previous report.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

75. Parents are generally appreciative of the school. They find staff approachable and helpful. They are interested in their children's learning and are pleased with the progress their child makes, and with the way students are encouraged to work hard and to do their best.
76. The school has good, effective links with parents and carers. Teachers make good successful efforts to encourage parents' involvement, and this helps students' learning, as at the previous inspection. Good foundations for partnership are laid at the pre-joining interview arranged for each family with a member of senior staff. Every term teachers give parents either written or spoken information about the student's progress and achievement. All students are provided with individual targets for improvement. Very good numbers of parents attend the annual consultation meetings with staff. There are appropriate additional events to inform parents at key times such as when Year 9 students make their options choices. Where students choose to follow GNVQ courses their parents are told about the nature and content, enabling them to give full support at home. Annual reports give parents a good picture of the student's learning and of targets for further progress. In most subjects there is a very good level of detail about the student's attainment and progress, though in mathematics, modern foreign languages and religious education, comments tend to be too vague and general. The school has plans in hand to improve further on the way attainment is graded in reports, to give parents information that links more clearly to National Curriculum expectations. Sixth form reviews issued to parents are very full and helpful and contain targets for students. Planners are in regular use, giving parents ready access to information about homework. Parents are informed by letter of any particular success. There are generally good efforts to work in partnership with parents to resolve any problems, for instance with behaviour. However, the involvement of parents is not sufficiently valued and developed with regard to students with special educational needs. Parents do attend annual reviews for students with statements of special educational need but they are not involved enough in reviewing progress and contributing to learning when students are on other stages of the Code of Practice register.
77. Well-presented newsletters keep parents up to date with school events. The prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are in most respects very informative but there are a few areas with too little detail. For instance while the annual report is particularly clear in some parts, such as its evaluation of the provision for religious education, there is not specific enough detail about progress with the action plan that followed from the previous inspection. Information in the prospectus about provision for students with special educational needs and about the admission criteria is too limited.
78. Account is taken of parents' views, for example when awards and sanctions were revised. They are further involved through the well-supported parent teacher association, which conducts successful fundraising and social events and adds significantly to resources, for instance for ICT and for physical education.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

79. The quality of leadership and management of the school is good overall.
80. Since the previous inspection report very good leadership and management has enabled the school to make very good progress. The school now provides an effective education for its students. The headteacher is providing very clear educational direction for the school. Central to the school's work is a commitment to continuous improvement and to ensuring that all students achieve well. The result of this approach can be seen in the significant improvements in examination results, the quality of teaching and the behaviour of students, all of which were areas of concern in the previous report.

81. The headteacher has the confidence of the staff and is fully supported by a well-informed and experienced senior management team. There is a shared commitment to improvement and a good capacity to succeed. The school has been successfully steered through a period of major change, which has resulted in more parents wanting to send their children to the school than there are places currently available.
82. The school's aims are relevant to the needs of the students and are embedded well in all aspects of the school's work.
83. At the last inspection, the management structure was still being developed and there was a need to ensure clearer accountability. Many new systems and structures have been introduced and provide a good framework for the work of the school. A new 'strategy board' has been established which links pastoral and academic aspects of the school. Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes to the structure of management and this has resulted in good systems for monitoring the work of the school. There are good, effective systems in place, which ensure that the school campus operates smoothly and efficiently.
84. The leadership and management provided by many middle managers is satisfactory. However, there is a wide variation in the quality of leadership and management at this level from excellent through to broadly satisfactory. For example, the subject leader for ICT provides excellent leadership and management, which has resulted in many innovative schemes being introduced and well above average results at GCSE being attained.
85. The governors have a very good understanding of the school's work and they have identified many of the strengths and weaknesses noted in this report. Since the previous inspection report the governing body has taken a number of difficult strategic decisions. These have included the decision not to teach certain aspects of the National Curriculum and to focus on areas that would lead to the improvement in the standards attained by students. Whilst this approach does not enable students to have their full National Curriculum entitlement it has improved students' standards of attainment overall. The governing body along with the senior management team is currently undertaking a curriculum review and the school development plan shows that the full National Curriculum will be in place from September 2001. Committee structures are very good and there is a very good and effective working partnership with the senior management team in shaping the direction of the school.
86. The governing body does not fulfil its statutory duties in ensuring that the entitlement for all students in religious education in Years 7 to 9; design and technology and modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11; religious education for all students in Years 12 to 13 and the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students are fulfilled.
87. A new system and cycle of school development planning has been introduced and this has resulted in a school development plan which is of good quality, focuses on raising achievement and sets a clear agenda for improvement. All areas of the plan are linked to raising standards. Subject development plans are linked to the school development plan. The school's priorities are appropriate and many of the issues noted in this report are highlighted in the school development plan.
88. The school applies the principles of best value very well. The headteacher has set challenging targets for improvement. The school compares its performance with similar attaining schools in the authority and nationally.
89. The school makes satisfactory use of new technology. A new system of registering students' attendance electronically has been introduced although some difficulties are being experienced with this system. The school has not received any specific grants.
90. The financial planning in the school is good. The school has taken the decision to increase the number of students in Years 12 and 13 although this has been at the expense of Years 7 to 9. The school has clearly defined systems for tendering and ordering. The last Auditor's report highlighted very few areas for improvement and the school has responded positively to the report's recommendations. The school receives a basic budget that is below the national average. Until recently, the school had been running a deficit budget which, was agreed by the governing body and the local education authority. A tight rein is kept on spending by the

administrative staff and the senior management team. Through careful and prudent management of the budget, the school now has a small surplus budget. The school is providing satisfactory value for money.

91. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is satisfactory overall. The provision is good in many subjects such as in English, science and ICT, but unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages. Significant changes to staffing in modern foreign languages have had a detrimental effect on students' attainment and achievement. The arrangements for the induction of staff new to the school are good with a well-planned programme of support that helps ensure that teachers settle quickly into the life of the school. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching is well-established and includes observation of lessons by senior staff with arrangements for the regular review of performance. The school has undertaken a carefully prepared programme of consultation with staff in preparation for the introduction of the performance management regulations, and is now well poised to implement this across the school. The in-service training of teachers is planned well and linked to the school and subject development plans and this is having a positive effect on the quality of teaching and the morale of staff. The work of the education support staff is well organised, monitored and supported by the senior management team and this helps ensure that they are fully integrated into the life of the school.
92. The school's work is hampered by unsatisfactory accommodation, many of the features of which were reported on in the previous inspection. There is sufficient space for the numbers currently on roll, and satisfactory use is made of the buildings. A number of features, however, have a negative effect upon educational standards. Major drainage deficiencies result, within a few hours of steady rain, in extensive pools of water on the walkways between blocks. This detracts from the school's efforts to provide a welcoming and supportive learning environment. In extreme conditions flooding leads to the closure of the school. During the autumn term of 2000, for example, three and a half school days were lost. The school has chosen to recoup two days, at the expense of important planned student and staff development days. Inadequate accommodation has a detrimental impact upon the range and quality of curricular provision in some subjects. In art and design it is not possible to offer suitable facilities for 3-dimensional work. Since the previous inspection there has been an improvement in the accommodation for science; there has been some refurbishment of laboratories and two new additional laboratories are to be built. Similarly, the renovation of showers has improved the facilities in physical education. The best efforts, however, of the headteacher, bursar and many staff, who work hard to improve the school's accommodation, are hindered by the drab appearance of corridors, rooms and toilets in the older buildings. Progress is unsatisfactory since the last inspection, and there is urgent need for refurbishment and re-decoration in areas that have not had attention for many years.
93. Overall, learning resources are unsatisfactory and do not offer effective support for the whole school curriculum. The level of computer provision has improved since the previous inspection report. However, the school's success in teaching ICT has led to a situation where there is more demand for computers than are available. As a consequence there is lack of access to computers in subjects such as English, science, art and design and geography, which constrains investigative and research skills. The networked software and access to the Intranet make a significant impact on the standards in the ICT department. Improvements have been made in the sixth form library and general school library since the last inspection. The level of book stock is in line with national recommendations; however, many of the books in the school library are out of date and are in need of replacement. There is a limited range of religious education books; very few books about the different world religions.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

To raise further the standards of work and the quality of education provided, the governors and senior management team should:

Improve the quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 by:

- ensuring all teachers adapt their work and teaching methods to suit the changing pupil intake (para 26, 35, 39, 40, 41, 135, 143, 151, 160);
- ensuring all teachers have high expectations of all students (para 21, 39, 40, 41)

Improve the quality of the curriculum by:

- *ensuring there is sufficient time provided to teach the full Locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education (para 46, 47, 197, 198, 202);
- *ensuring that students in Years 12 to 13 have their statutory entitlement to religious education (para 49, 202);
- *ensuring that all students have their full entitlement to design and technology and modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11 (para 48, 145, 173, 174, 49);
- providing a more comprehensive PSE programme in Years 10 to 13 (para 52).

Items marked with an * are already included in the school's development plan.

Minor weaknesses

There is insufficient use of ICT across the curriculum (para 101, 130, 137, 154).

The provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory (para 59, 197).

The governing body does not fulfil all its statutory duties (para 86).

The level of learning resources and the adequacy of the accommodation are unsatisfactory (para 92, 93, 118, 130, 154).

There are a number of health and safety issues raised in the report (para 70).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	188
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	65

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	11	40	42	3.5	0.5	0

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

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	1021	125
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	166	N/a

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	18	0
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	417	0

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	41

Student mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	20
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	55

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.7
National comparative data	8.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.9
National comparative data	1.0

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	84	106	190

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	53	44	55
	Girls	90	59	57
	Total	143	103	112
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	75(59)	55(51)	59(50)
	National	63(63)	65(62)	59(55)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	24(25)	30(25)	22(15)
	National	28(28)	42(38)	30(23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	59	55	52
	Girls	85	72	63
	Total	144	127	115
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	76(59)	67(46)	61(55)
	National	64(64)	66(64)	62(60)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	24(25)	34(26)	31(17)
	National	31(31)	39(37)	29(28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	69	66	135

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	24	69	69
	Girls	27	64	64
	Total	51	133	133
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	38(47)	98.5(94)	98.5(97)
	National	47.7(46.6)	90.6(90.9)	95.6(95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	School	37(40)
	National	38.4(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 students who achieved all those they studied	School	0
	National	N/a

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	24	31	55

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	15.6	16	15.8(10.9)	1.3	2.4	2.0(5.3)
National	17.7	18.6	18.2(17.9)	2.6	2.9	2.7(2.8)

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 students who achieved all those they studied	School	14
	National	82.5

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	9
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	17
Chinese	4
White	1096
Any other minority ethnic group	16

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	54	4
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	67.9
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	368

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.1
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	27.6
Key Stage 4	22.9

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	2640711
Total expenditure	2628958
Expenditure per student	2380
Balance brought forward from previous year	-30892
Balance carried forward to next year	-19139

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1146
Number of questionnaires returned	110

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	40	53	5	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	26	60	7	1	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	11	56	19	4	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	15	56	25	3	2
The teaching is good.	22	57	9	1	11
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	17	46	26	5	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	38	7	3	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	39	51	5	0	5
The school works closely with parents.	17	49	24	4	6
The school is well led and managed.	25	53	8	2	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	34	51	8	1	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	59	0	3	8

Other issues raised by parents

Parents expressed concern over the support and challenge for able students.

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

ENGLISH

94. The majority of students entered the school with levels of attainment in English that, overall, were below the level expected nationally, although those students currently in Years 7 and 8 entered the school with levels of attainment closer to the level expected nationally.
95. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds the proportion of students attaining Level 5 and above was above the national average and the proportion attaining Level 6 and above was close to the national average. Teacher assessments were broadly consistent with test results. The average National Curriculum points score was above the national average for all schools and was well above the national average in comparison with the average for schools with a similar number of students eligible for free school meals. Boys' results were better than those of the girls. There has been an upward trend in results over the past three years. Results in English in 2000 were better than those attained in mathematics and science.
96. In 2000 the proportion of students attaining GCSE grades A* to C in English was close to the national average and for English literature it was below the national average. The proportion of students attaining grades A* to G was above the national average in both subjects. Results have been broadly consistent over the past three years. Students achieve significantly better results in English than in most other subjects. Whilst girls achieve results close to the national average, boys' results are above average.
97. Results at GCE A-level in 2000 were below the national average and were consistent with results attained in the past three years.
98. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards that students attain at the age of 14 are above the level expected of students of the same age nationally. Standards are at the level expected at the age of 16 and below course expectations in Years 12 and 13. When students' prior attainment is taken into account, their achievement is good by the ages of 14 and 16 and is satisfactory in Years 12 and 13. Students achieve particularly well in Years 7 to 11 because of the good quality teaching they receive.
99. Students' skills in speaking and listening are a relative strength at all levels in the school. Most students enjoy taking part in oral work and do so confidently. Higher attainers possess a sound vocabulary and can use language flexibly. As they progress through the school, students learn how to take part effectively in group discussion. This was seen, for example, when a group of Year 10 students discussed the different interpretations of a soliloquy from "Macbeth" in two contrasting productions of the play. In a Year 12 class students recounted their early memories of teachers in a fresh and lively way when preparing to explore Carol Ann Duffy's "The Good Teachers". Achievement is enhanced by participation in drama lessons, where students are able to explore new social roles through improvisation and are able to improve their powers of non-verbal communication, such as mime.
100. By the age of 14 students read a good selection of novels, plays and poems suitable for their age. In recent years teachers have made a particular effort to select literature intended to arouse the interest of boys and in this they have been successful. Girls have continued to respond well to the works selected for them to study. Most students read with fluency and satisfactory expression. Lower attaining students respond well to the training they receive in phonological awareness (which, for example, helps them to spell and read words by drawing analogies) and are mostly able to read independently. By the ages of 16 and 18 students go on to read more complex and demanding texts. Higher attaining students understand how social issues can be presented in fiction, as was seen, for example in high quality Year 11 essays comparing how writers presented rites of passage in Harper Lee's "To Kill a Mockingbird" and Elizabeth Gaskell's "Half Brothers". However, by the ages of 16 and 18 only the highest attainers, who are in a minority, have developed the capacity to analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of language.

101. By the age of 14 most students are able to write in a variety of different styles, including narrative, description and reportage. By the age of 16 and 18 students go on to increase their range to include, for example, good quality work on the media and on a wide range of literary topics. A notable, and highly creditable, feature of students' approach to writing is that they are willing to redraft their work, under the guidance of their teachers, so as to improve its quality. Many students seek to communicate their ideas as clearly as possible and often produce lengthy, carefully considered essays. Whilst the work of some students, particularly lower attaining students, is marred by poor spelling and punctuation, the majority of students are aware of the need to check through their work carefully and this results in many errors being corrected.
102. Students' make insufficient use of ICT within English.
103. The quality of both teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 11 and is satisfactory in Years 12 and 13. Examples of excellent and very good teaching were seen in Years 9 and 10. When teaching is most effective, a number of features are in evidence. Teachers have high expectations of students. This is seen in the way in which most teachers mark students' first drafts of their written work with close attention to detail, often offering advice on how the work could be re-structured so as to improve its impact. Students are then expected to re-write their work, obviously improving its appearance, but more especially doing their best to ensure that it is accurate and well expressed. Students respond well to this level of interest in their work and the challenge it offers them. They work hard, take a pride in what they do and will often produce lengthy essays and assignments. Lessons are well prepared, both individually and as sequences, which in turn results in students having a clear sense of purpose. This was seen, for example, in a Year 10 lesson on the technique of writing stories for young children. Each aspect of the technique, including features of the plot and the type of language to be used, was carefully studied and summarised, over a number of lessons, before students began writing their own stories. Learning is also well consolidated, as was seen in a Year 9 lesson on David Almond's "Kit's Wilderness", where the teacher's skilful integration of reading, discussion and writing exercises ensured that students were led to understand and appreciate the author's approach. Additionally, the efficient use of time, the introduction of a variety of tasks and maintaining a good momentum, all contribute to effective teaching and to ensuring that students behave well and concentrate appropriately. When teaching is less effective, the teacher is insecure in his/her subject knowledge and lessons lack appropriate challenge, particularly in some post 16 lessons. When lessons lack variety, students become restless. When students are set written tasks without sufficient preparation, they do not achieve at the level that might be expected of them. There is a range in the quality of marking: whilst much of it is very good or excellent, some of it lacks depth. Relationships between students and teachers are good and contribute to the quality of learning.
104. The leadership of the department is very good. The head of department provides clear educational direction and she and her colleagues share a commitment to raising standards yet further. Departmental documents, particularly schemes of work, are of high quality. The head of department is aware of some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and has strategies in place to address them.
105. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Students' standards of achievement and the quality of teaching and learning in the Years 7 to 11 have markedly improved. In Years 12 and 13 they have remained the same. Boys are now achieving higher standards than they previously were.
106. Results at GCE A-level in media studies were below the national expectations. However, on the basis of students' prior attainment and other evidence considered, teaching and learning are satisfactory and students' achievement is satisfactory. However, there is no permanent base for teaching the subject and access to suitable equipment, such as video-players, is limited. This in turn curtails the scope of the work that can be undertaken and so affects standards.
107. Results in GCSE drama in 2000 were below the national average and in the two previous years they were in line with it. GCE A-level results in 2000 were close to the national average. In the two previous years numbers entered were too small to be statistically significant.

Literacy across the school

108. Standards of literacy are in line with the national expectation. However, there are inconsistencies in the way in which the school teaches literacy across the whole curriculum.
109. Students are provided with good opportunities to read widely in English, history, religious education and ICT. In these subjects students read textbooks, novels, plays, material from the Internet, journals and technical reports. Some opportunities are provided for students to read aloud. However, such opportunities are fewer than might be expected.
110. In some subjects writing skills are well taught and students achieve standards which are above the national expectation. In English, for example, students re-draft their work as a matter of routine and this helps them to be self-critical. In history, too, emphasis is placed upon the value of re-drafting work and this leads to students expressing themselves well and becoming more fluent. Impressive work was seen on life in Nazi Germany, written by Year 10 students. In ICT very good emphasis is placed upon the need to adapt writing for particular audiences and so students have the chance to produce discursive and descriptive writing. They are also introduced to writing different kinds of reports, including, for example, the newsletter for a local chamber of commerce. Students use the spelling-check as a matter of firmly established routine. Science provides some imaginative opportunities for students to extend their skills in writing as was seen, for example, when a Year 9 class gave an account of a grain of cereal being eaten. However, the opportunities that exist in other subjects to improve basic skills are not being fully exploited. There is, for example, less extended writing in modern foreign languages, geography and religious education than might be expected. There is also inconsistency as to the extent to which teachers correct inaccuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
111. Students for whom English is an additional language make progress at the same rate as other students. When they arrive in the school, individual support is provided. The extent to which subjects provide support across the curriculum is inconsistent.

MATHEMATICS

112. The majority of students entered the school with levels of attainment in mathematics that, overall, were below the level expected nationally, although those students currently in Years 7 and 8 entered the school with levels of attainment closer to the level expected nationally.
113. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests at age 14, the proportions of students attaining Level 5 and above and Level 6 and above were below the national average for all schools. Teacher Assessments were over estimated in 2000. The average National Curriculum points score in 2000 was below the national average for all schools. Overall, test results were average for schools with a similar number of students eligible for free school meals. The attainment of girls was broadly in line with that of boys and the results in mathematics were well below those in English and below those in science. Results have improved since 1998.
114. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, the proportion of students achieving grades A* to C was below the national average. However, the proportion of students attaining grades A* to G was above the national average. The average point score for GCSE was below the national average. When compared with similar schools, the proportion of A* to C grades achieved was average. Students' results in mathematics were not significantly different from most other subjects. There was no significant difference between boys and girls. There was a decline in results in 2000. The department recognises this and has put in place strategies to change the trend. Results attained in mathematics at GCE A-level in 2000 were close to the national average.
115. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards that students attain at age 14 are below the level expected of 14 year olds nationally and this represents satisfactory achievement given the students' prior levels of attainment. When investigating the specific problems, higher attaining students specify a hypothesis and design appropriate methods to prove it. They give reasons for their choice and extend their mathematics by using their understanding of graphs to find the maximum volume the trough will hold. Students have a sound understanding of negative numbers. This ranges from ordering directed numbers in

context to manipulating directed numbers. Middle attaining students calculate areas of compound rectangular shapes while the higher attaining students progress to calculating the areas of circles. They use this understanding to calculate volumes of cylinders. Lower attaining students have a good understanding of line symmetry. Students have a secure understanding of data handling at this level. The higher attaining students use probability space diagrams to calculate the probability of combined events and construct tree diagram to help them.

116. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards that students are attaining at age 16 are below the level expected of students of the same age nationally but this represents satisfactory achievement. In completing coursework, higher attaining students are beginning to develop good skills in investigations by carrying out substantial problems. They introduce new and alternative methods in EMMA's Dilemma investigation and extend the problem so that it becomes a substantial task. They use mathematical language well and use mathematical terms and equations to find a solution. In shape, space and measures, students acquire a range of skills. The low attaining students can enlarge shapes by positive numbers, but accuracy of drawings is weak. Middle attaining students use Pythagoras in basic right angles triangles and have a basic understanding of the use of trigonometric ratios. However, higher attaining students use both Pythagoras theorem and the trigonometrical ratios effectively to solve more complex problems in two dimensions. Students construct and interpret simple histograms and calculate standard deviation. They interpret cumulative frequency graphs. The lower attaining students understand that probability ranges from 0 to 1 and use appropriate language to describe the probability of an event occurring.
117. From the evidence gathered during the inspection, students in Years 12 and 13 are achieving standards that are in line with course expectations. In Year 12, students had difficulty in recalling the sum and product laws of probability. However, after a clear explanation by their teacher and effective question and answer techniques, they were able to apply the rules to problems. In pure mathematics, students use the compound angle formula to solve trigonometric problems and they solve trigonometric equations, applying Pythagoras theorem appropriately. They sketch graphs of linear and quadratic functions to find maximum and minimum points and the areas bounded by the functions. In mechanics, students have a good understanding of the uniform acceleration formulae and apply them appropriately to problems in involving projectiles. Students with special educational needs achieve in line with other students in Years 7 to 9 but better in years 10 and 11 where they are taught in smaller groups. Students generally concentrate well in lessons and overall behaviour is satisfactory.
118. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11 and this leads to satisfactory learning in those years. Teaching is good in Years 12 and 13 resulting in good learning in these years. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and it is good in a considerable number of lessons.
119. There are many good features of the teaching and teachers demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of mathematics in all years. Very clear explanation of tasks and confident and appropriate use of mathematical terms illustrate this. The teachers' secure knowledge leads to confident teaching and promotes respect of the students. Teachers generally plan lessons well. There are clear learning objectives and effective structures to lessons. In the better lessons there is good effort and concentration by students and a good pace of working and amount of work achieved in lessons. This has a positive effect on their acquisition and consolidation of skills and understanding. The majority of students work quietly and at a brisk pace, but there is a small minority who stray off task and do not achieve their potential. These students tend to call out answers to questions and interrupt when others are talking. On these occasions, teachers compensate for this by effective management of the students and there is no adverse impact on learning. Management of students is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 to 13 and students respond accordingly. There is generally a positive atmosphere for learning in the classrooms. In the majority of lessons teachers assess students' understanding effectively by careful questioning that encourages students to explain what they are doing and to monitor their understanding. However, there are occasions when the opportunity to assess and deepen students' understanding by questions and answers is overlooked. Teaching methods are generally good and the more effective lessons proceed at a brisk pace. Teachers use an effective combination of explanation, discussion, and individual work that maintains the

interest and motivation of students. Teachers work well with educational support assistants to ensure that students with special educational needs make effective progress. Teachers plan homework well so that it consolidates and extends learning. Day-to-day assessment in lessons is good. Marking is thorough and the majority of teachers write constructive comments that help students to see where they have made mistakes and how they can improve. However, this is not consistently applied. The half-termly tests and written comments from teachers give students a sound indication of how they are progressing.

120. The staff work very well together and the whole department places a high emphasis on raising achievement in mathematics. They are a dedicated and committed team. The subject is efficiently led and managed. There are good procedures for assessing students' performance as they progress through the school. Teaching techniques to improve students' thinking skills have been introduced well in Years 7 and 8 and these need to be supplemented with good practice in delivering the National Numeracy Strategy. The overall level of resources is unsatisfactory. There are insufficient textbooks to allow students to have a book each, or take a book home to support their homework.
121. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. Students' standards of achievement in Years 7 to 11 have been maintained. The quality of teaching and learning has improved in Years 7 to 9; it is now satisfactory whereas previously it was barely satisfactory in half the lessons observed. This is the effect of better planning and management of students.

Numeracy across the school

122. Levels of numeracy across the curriculum are broadly in line with the standard expected nationally. There is a whole-school strategy in place for improving standards by developing and co-ordinating numeracy across the whole school. However, the quality of the reference to numeracy in department schemes of work is inconsistent across all subjects. In science standards of numeracy are satisfactory. Teachers generally introduce numerical techniques well and give students opportunities to practise new calculations with plenty of examples. However, there are occasions when there are insufficient examples for students to practise the skills they have on problems. A proportion of physics students in Year 12 lack competence in manipulating formulae. Students' measuring and calculating skills are practised well in geography. Students calculate distances on maps and use algebraic formulae for work in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 and 8, they calculate rainfall and temperature and create graphs. In schemes of work for Years 7 to 9, the geography department identifies topics that address aspects of numeracy and it recognises the contribution that geography can make to numeracy. In design and technology students measure and mark out materials. For example, they use their understanding of how to calculate the circumference of a circle when marking out fabrics. In Year 10, they can only measure and mark out wood when following a pattern. There is appropriate use of data handling at a basic level for evaluation in Years 10 and 11. In ICT, students use formulae in spreadsheets at a good level and in later years a significant level of data analysis in evaluations.

SCIENCE

123. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests for students at the age of 14, the proportions of students achieving Level 5 and above and Level 6 and above were close to the national average. Teacher Assessments were broadly consistent with test results. The average National Curriculum points score per student was close to the national average for all schools and well above average when compared to schools with a similar number of students eligible for free school meals. The test results in science were better than results in mathematics but not as good as those in English. Boys gained slightly better results than girls in 2000 and on average over the years 1996 to 2000. The test results have been broadly average since 1996.
124. The proportion of students gaining grades A* to C in the 2000 GCSE double award science examinations was well below the national average but average compared with similar schools. The proportion of students gaining grades A* to G and the average points score per student were both average. Girls and boys gained similar results in GCSE science but neither boys nor girls did as well in science as they did on average in their other subjects. Science results were not as good in 2000 as they were in 1999. The 2000 GCE A-level results in physics and chemistry were well above the national average and those in biology were above average.
125. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards that students attain at the age of 14 are at the level expected of students of the same age nationally. These students entered the school with levels of attainment that were below average and so their achievement at the age of 14 is good. However, at the age of 16, students' standards of attainment are below those expected nationally. The overall achievement of these students is satisfactory in relation to their earlier attainment but there is some under-achievement among middle attaining students. With this exception, all other groups of students, including those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented, achieve well by the age of 14 and satisfactorily by the age of 16. Students in Years 12 and 13 attain standards above course expectations and generally achieve well in the three science GCE A-level subjects but some students in Year 12, who entered the courses with relatively low attainment in GCSE science, are achieving standards that are below those expected in the GCE AS courses, particularly in physics.
126. Most students have satisfactory knowledge of the basic facts associated with topics they have studied recently. Students' investigative skills match their attainment in other aspects of their work in science. Higher attaining students demonstrate better understanding than expected for their age. For example, in Year 9, some students used their knowledge of rusting to make and justify deductions about the various conditions in which iron nails had been maintained. Similarly in Year 11, higher attaining students' work shows their success in calculations associated with the velocity and acceleration of moving objects. Middle and lower attainers find it difficult to recall the details of earlier topics; their spoken and written answers often lack precision.
127. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 12 to 13 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan their lessons carefully. In Years 7 to 9, students' exercise books show a particularly good range of imaginative learning activities to maintain students' interest.
128. There are some lessons in which teaching and learning are very good. For example, in a lesson for Year 8, the teacher's enthusiasm was shared by students who hugely enjoyed a brisk and lively study of the organs in the digestive system and their functions. Students were fully involved by acting as models, helping to compose the notes and then by working individually on an extended piece of imaginative writing. Each activity reinforced their learning about the same topic but in a quite different and interesting way.
129. Although all lessons are at least satisfactory, there are nevertheless weaknesses in satisfactory lessons that have a cumulative effect on students' achievement over time and their eventual achievement in examinations. The most common weakness, particularly in lessons in Years 10 and 11 for middle and lower attaining students, occurs when students are required to take part in extended practical or written work. In some lessons the instructions for the activity are not given clearly enough, students are not entirely sure what they should be doing and the

teacher then has to give much individual assistance. Even when the instructions are clear, students often relax when left to work through an activity; they remain broadly on task and maintain satisfactory behaviour but they work slowly and often with little genuine effort or thought. This slightly slow pace of learning is more significant for middle attainers than it is for lower attainers for whom the pace is more appropriate. The underlying weakness is that teachers' planning does not place enough emphasis on exactly what students are going to learn in the lesson but is more concerned with providing appropriate and interesting activities.

130. Students speak confidently and are keen to answer questions and take part in discussion. While this is well used by teachers to develop extended, spoken answers, it also has disadvantages. Students are often more willing to speak than they are to listen or think. Their answers are sometimes hasty and incorrect and not beneficial to the progress of the class. Low-key chatter can limit their achievement when working in small groups. Teachers usually handle these weaknesses well but there are times when students would learn more if they spoke less, both to the class as a whole and to each other.
131. The department has introduced a 'thinking science' course to supplement the National Curriculum Programmes of Study in Years 7 and 8. The teaching in these lessons is very good, students maintain very high levels of concentration and quickly improve their skills in reasoning and drawing conclusions. In Years 10 and 11, students can choose to study for the three separate science GCSE examinations. While this is a valuable opportunity for higher attaining students, these examinations are not the most appropriate for all students currently following the courses. The lower attaining students in the group would be more likely to achieve well if entered for the less demanding double award examination.
132. The department is aware that it does not make sufficient use of ICT to support learning in science. Students in Years 12 and 13 use spreadsheets to process the results of their experiments and students in Years 10 and 11 make good use of word processing when presenting their investigation reports. There are opportunities to obtain and use information from the Internet and CD ROMs, both in lessons and for homework. However, students in Years 7 to 11 indicate that they rarely use computers in their science lessons. There is a shortage of suitable equipment in the department and access to the whole school computer facilities is limited. Nevertheless, the department could make more use of its existing equipment, particularly for data-logging experiments.
133. The head of department provides good and effective leadership. There is a firm commitment to raising attainment and teachers and technicians work well together as a team. The department has responded positively to the disappointing GCSE results in 2000 and several sensible initiatives, including mentoring for students in Year 11 and more systematic monitoring of teaching and learning, have been introduced in order to raise students' attainment.
134. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. Attainment at the age of 14 has improved. Teaching has improved significantly, particularly in Years 7 to 9. The department has adjusted the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 so that double award science is the basic course followed by all students, with separate sciences available as an option.

ART AND DESIGN

135. In 2000 the proportion of students achieving GCSE grades A* to C was below the national average compared to all schools, and close to the national average for A* to G grades. Girls generally attain higher grades than boys do. Students' results in art were significantly worse than those achieved in most other subjects. The pattern of results over recent years has been uneven, with results in 1999 being just above the national average. Results at GCE A-level in 2000 were above the national average. The recent fall in the proportion of students attaining the higher GCSE grades has resulted from several factors, not least the lack of continuity in teaching due to long term staff absence which has now been addressed.
136. In the work seen during the inspection the standards attained by students at the age of 14 are above the level expected of students of the same age nationally and this represents good achievement. In the work seen during the inspection the standards attained by students at the

age of 16 are at the level expected of students of the same age nationally and this also represents good achievement given the students' prior level of attainment. Many students in Years 10 and 11 entered the school with levels of attainment below the level expected nationally. In the work seen during the inspection the standards attained by students in Years 12 and 13 are above course expectations and this represents good achievement. Students develop good skills in a range of media resulting from effective teaching that ensures students build successfully on their prior learning. Teachers' careful planning of tasks and projects, and the range of methods they use, enable students to develop competence and confidence in difficult or challenging work such as drawing from direct observation. A very good example was seen in a Year 9 lesson where figurative drawing was based on direct observation of a 'staged' café scene. Sensitive and supportive teaching allowed all students to find success within this challenging task and the outcomes were well above those expected at this stage.

137. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all year groups. The support and guidance that teachers provide for individuals and their sensitivity to the different needs within the mixed ability groups, helps students to achieve well overall. As a result lower attaining students and those with special educational needs often make better progress than expected. Occasionally, teachers are setting tasks that are not sufficiently demanding of higher attaining students. Throughout Years 7 to 9 and continuing in Years 10 and 11 students develop good skills in developing and evaluating ideas and many lessons encourage students' independence in learning. For example in a Year 8 lesson the teacher provided structured yet demanding work on the depiction of movement. The teacher constantly encouraged the group to offer their ideas and skilfully built their confidence with positive and encouraging comment, confirming the students as the most important people in the room. There is no planned use of ICT as part of the curriculum in art and design.
138. In Years 10 and 11, teachers ensure through carefully structured projects that students gain a sound understanding of the process through which their work develops. This process of gathering visual information on a given theme and developing ideas for a painting, print or sculpture provides a secure framework for the lower attaining and less motivated students. However, whilst supportive for some students the process often limits the achievement of others who make drawings or colour studies of many similar objects, rather than explore and experiment in depth with the qualities of one or two objects. Subsequently depth of study is missing from many students' work in Year 11. In contrast, and resulting from recent changes in teachers' planning, Year 10 students often demonstrate a greater confidence and are beginning to show more experiment and exploration of media in their developmental work. As a result of changes in approach the difference in performance between girls and boys in Year 10 is less marked than in Year 11. Teaching about the methods and styles of other artists is well integrated into projects at all levels and students have a sound grasp of historical contexts for some of their work. Many projects, however, focus on Western cultures and there are too few opportunities to study and understand the contemporary influences in our multicultural society. Teachers often engage students in discussion about their own and others' work and this is often well supported by written work or research set as homework. As a result, workbooks are effectively used from Year 7 and they provide an excellent source for research, trial sketches and designs, enabling students to maintain a visual diary of their ideas and progress.

139. Teaching in art and design therefore is good and successful in promoting good levels of practical skill and the success of the majority of students. Teachers' methods successfully address the range of abilities within groups and they use their knowledge of the subject to enhance learning through demonstrations and the interaction with individuals. As a result students respond well to their teachers and demonstrate good attitudes to their learning. Assessment, however, does not always play a significant part of teaching and learning; it is not used sufficiently to enable all students to see their work in the context of the assessment objectives by which it will be judged.
140. The subject is well managed and the head of department provides care and support to both staff and students. The ethos created is secure and encouraging to students. Subject documentation and planning is clear and appropriate, providing very useful guidance to subject teachers and new entrants to the department and profession. However, a curriculum 'map' showing how each project covers the main strands and assessment objectives will enable the subject manager more effectively to ensure students cover all the Programmes of Study. This, along with more detailed management and analysis of assessment data will provide a sound basis for future planning and identify trends and patterns in attainment.
141. The subject has made good progress since the last inspection. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is now good and students achieve well; teaching was sound at the time of the last inspection report. The standards that students attain have improved in Years 7 to 9 and the above average GCE A-level results have been maintained.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

142. The proportion of students achieving grades A* to C was below the national average in both short and full course GCSE examinations in 2000. Results have fluctuated between well below average, in 1998 and average, in 1999. The proportion of students achieving grades A* to G was above the national average in both short and full course GCSE examinations in 2000. Students tend to achieve similar results in design and technology to those in the other subjects that they study. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. There have been very few students studying for GCE A-level over the last three years; there are too few students to make statistical comparisons with the national averages valid. There was insufficient evidence on which to base a judgement on standards or the quality of education in Years 12 and 13 as mock examinations were taking place during the week of the inspection.
143. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards that students attain at the age of 14 are below the level expected of students of the same age nationally; this represents a satisfactory level of achievement for these students. The Teacher Assessments were accurate and confirm these standards of attainment. Practical skills are broadly average; students use tools with an appropriate degree of accuracy. Some practical skills, such as measuring and marking materials in textiles are above average but students tend to be clumsy and uncoordinated when carrying out tasks that require a degree of delicacy, such as weighing flour. Students are also poor at choosing the correct method for some tasks, trying to "rub in" a sponge mix for example or hitting a wooden dowel with a hammer when trying to tap it into a hole. Students are also poor at evaluating their work against criteria because they do not understand fully what a design specification is.
144. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards that students attain at the age of 16 are below the level expected of students of the same age nationally. This level of attainment is reflected in the examination results and represents a satisfactory level of achievement given the earlier work of the students concerned. Some students produce work of a very high standard in graphics that demonstrates a great deal of flair and attention to accuracy. In one piece of work for example, a student had produced a T-shirt that was the result of a detailed analysis of promotional materials. The final product was of sufficient quality to grace the shelves of any commercial outlet. Students also demonstrate above average skills in the use of ICT to enhance their work in all material areas. However, the weaknesses identified in evaluation skills at age 14 still persist. Students are still weak at evaluating their

products in a precise manner, tending to use terms such as “I liked it” rather than identifying what worked well, what went wrong and how improvements could be made. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress because they receive good individual support from the teacher and because the assessment system shows them exactly what they need to do to improve.

145. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11. Lessons are consistently well planned to provide an opportunity to review the previous lesson and a summary of the key points at the end of the current one. This helps students to consolidate their knowledge and gives them some impression of how well they are achieving. This last factor is considerably enhanced by the marking of work, which not only carefully corrects errors in written work but also provides good feedback to students so that they are aware of exactly what they need to do in their next topic in order to improve. In Years 10 and 11, all teachers match their work and marking closely to the GCSE syllabus. Whilst there are other strengths in individual lessons, they are not consistent across the department. For example, the teaching of numeracy skills was included in a Year 9 textiles lesson where students had to measure the radius of an opening and calculate the circumference so that they could measure their material. In another Year 9 lesson, on the other hand, students had not even written measurements on their design for a mechanical toy and guessed at the lengths of wood that were needed. Occasionally, teachers are setting tasks that are not sufficiently demanding of higher attaining students, particularly in Years 7 to 9. The homework set in a Year 11 graphics lesson was exceptionally good; all students had to detail what they were going to do to improve their examination coursework and this was checked by the teacher. In another lesson however, students were simply told to finish the task, despite the fact that some had already completed it.
146. The leadership and management of the department is satisfactory. The monitoring of teaching is good, but is not leading to a consistently high standard of teaching across the department. The school has sufficient accommodation and staff to teach the National Curriculum to all students, but this is not happening in Years 10 and 11 so resources are not being used to the best effect.
147. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection in terms of maintaining standards. However, the curriculum no longer meets statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11. There were no clear judgements on teaching in the previous report.

GEOGRAPHY

148. The proportion of students achieving grades A* to C in the GCSE examination in 2000 was below the national average. The proportion gaining grades A* to G was close to the national average. Girls achieved more higher grades than boys, but both girls and boys did less well compared to their respective national average. Students did less well in geography than in most other subjects they studied and the results are not as good as those of recent years. GCE A-level students in 2000 all achieved a pass grade, one at the higher level A/B and results overall were broadly in line with the national average.
149. Evidence gathered during the inspection shows that the standards students attain at the ages of 14 and 16 are at the level expected of students of the same ages nationally. This represents a satisfactory level of achievement for students in Years 7 to 9 and a good level of achievement for students in Years 10 and 11 given their prior attainment. The Teacher Assessments for students aged 14 over-estimated standards of attainment in 2000. The majority of students in Years 7 to 9 are achieving appropriate standards though weaknesses in literacy, particularly spelling, reduces the attainment of the minority. Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11, particularly in studies of physical geography. Students in Years 12 to 13 attain standards that are in line with course expectations and this represents a good level of achievement.

150. By the age of 14, students acquire map skills, use compass points and grid references to locate places and gain knowledge of a wide range of technical language such as 'migration' in studies about world population. Most students locate the continents and oceans but a minority show weakness in the use of the atlas to find places and for other information. Students know about the different agricultural systems in the developed and developing world, such as commercial agriculture in Britain compared with the growing of basic food crops in India. Whereas higher attaining students in Year 9, particularly girls, write well reasoned answers on topics, weaknesses in grammar, particularly expression and poor spelling reduces the attainment of the minority.
151. By the age of 16, students continue to consolidate geographical skills gained in earlier years and acquire knowledge of a range of topics studied. They know about volcanic activity, for example, and draw and label diagrams to support written work about their formation. The minority however, show weakness in their depth of knowledge and do not make full use of real examples in explanations. Most students show satisfactory numerical understanding in work on river flooding when reading and interpreting graphs about rainfall and river discharge, but the recall of earlier learning about the features and processes of river valley formation is a weakness for a few students.
152. Students in Years 12 to 13 gain skills in independently researching topics and write well structured notes. They use technical terminology in context with higher attainers developing theoretical study through real examples. In some instances however, there is insufficient use of data, sketch maps and place study knowledge in essays.
153. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Lessons are well planned with regular reinforcement of learning from previous lessons. Teachers have strategies to meet the learning needs of students of different attainment and these are successful. The learning of lower attaining Year 8 students for example, was met through worksheets that supported their writing. Students with special educational needs benefit from the assistance of adult learning support and make sound progress. Learning is well supported through the teaching of basic skills. Understanding and spelling of key words are highlighted in lessons and this leads to the improvement in written work. Many of the lessons observed are very teacher directed with insufficient opportunities to develop students' thinking skills through research and enquiry-based learning. Occasionally, teachers are setting tasks that are not sufficiently demanding of higher attaining students, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Teachers provide helpful, summary comments in marking but there is inconsistent correction of grammatical weakness and in setting targets for improvement.
154. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is good. Teachers are appropriately qualified and consistently reinforce learning through questioning and class tests. This has a good impact on learning, particularly in understanding and response to exam questions. Students with special educational needs made good progress in a Year 10 lesson on earthquakes as a result of excellent guidance from adult learning support and through group work co-operation. In some lessons, however, learning is less effective when teachers talk for lengthy periods, students are passively involved and experience insufficient challenges to progress their learning.
155. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 12 to 13 is good. Lessons are well planned with a range of strategies to promote students' engagement in their learning. However this is not fully successful due to a lack of students' self-confidence. Work is supportively marked with evaluative comment and this enables students to recognise how to improve.
156. Students' work is regularly marked but procedures to assess attainment against the National Curriculum levels have not been developed and this limits the effectiveness of monitoring students' progress. The use of ICT to support learning is unsatisfactory due to difficulties of access to computer rooms. The leadership and management of the subject is good. The recently appointed head of department has made substantial progress in writing the schemes of work, setting standards for improvement and promoting initiatives such as developing student self-evaluation.

157. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. GCSE results at grades A* to C continue to be below the national average and attainment in lessons is similar to that previously reported. Teachers continue to show a high level of commitment to student welfare and progress, and under the new leadership the capacity to improve is good.

HISTORY

158. The proportion of students achieving grades A* to C in the GCSE examinations in 2000 was far below the national average whilst the proportion achieving grades A* to G was below average. Boys achieved better results than girls, which is different from the situation nationally. Students did less well in history than they did in most other subjects that they studied. The results in 2000 were very much lower than in recent years and they reversed an upward trend that saw students achieving results in 1999 that were above average against both measures. The department has analysed the 2000 results carefully and taken appropriate steps to remedy the situation. In the 2000 GCE A-level examinations all the students achieved a grade in the range A to E, a higher proportion than the national average. The results were better than in recent years. The number of students entered was small, making the use of statistical comparisons unreliable, but the proportion of higher grades achieved was low.
159. In work seen during the inspection students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are at the level expected for students of the same age nationally and this represents a satisfactory level of achievement. The Teacher Assessments for students aged 14 were accurate and confirm these standards of attainment in 2000. They gain a sound knowledge of the main events and people involved in the topics that they study and show their understanding of them well when making oral contributions in class. For instance, they display awareness of the need to evaluate critically the commonly accepted versions of well-known events. In lessons on the Gunpowder Plot students appreciated that the powerful position of Robert Cecil, as James I's chief minister, was likely to have influenced the incriminating evidence that was used against the plotters during their trial. Higher attaining students explain that very well in writing, but the answers of lower attaining students lack the depth of detail to be convincing on that point. That example typifies the sample of students' written work scrutinised. Students of lower prior attainment are less successful in identifying evidence that is relevant to the most challenging questions they answer, and using it extensively and effectively in support of their opinions in writing.
160. The standards of attainment of those students who choose to continue with the study of history to the age of 16 are at the level expected for students of the same age nationally and this represents a satisfactory level of achievement. They continue to acquire good knowledge and understanding of the topics studied, as they show when responding to teacher questions in class and in short written answers to questions based upon sources of historical information. For example, in lessons on life in Germany under the Nazis, all students appreciated the extent of state control over education and the level of indoctrination that that implied. Higher attaining students reflect such depth of understanding in impressive extended pieces of writing. In contrast, the answers of lower attaining students to questions such as those on the New Deal in the USA during the 1930s, often fail to include sufficient reference to relevant information selected from the sources provided. They describe events satisfactorily but lack the literary skills to demonstrate effective analysis of the causes of them and the motives of the leading politicians and leaders involved.
161. The standards that students attain in Years 12 and 13 are in line with course expectations and this represents a satisfactory level of achievement. Students analyse information in a satisfactory way, as in the lesson concerning a conference called by Hitler in 1937 to discuss the future direction of his foreign policy with high-ranking politicians and military leaders. The use of relevant evidence to support their conclusions carries through to essays such as the one in which they evaluated Hitler's policy towards Jewish people during the 1930s. When the opportunity is provided for group discussion, students deal with complex issues very effectively in class. The lesson in which they were required to evaluate Mussolini's motives and actions in the wake of the murder of Matteotti in 1924 demonstrated a very good grasp of the topic and mature speaking and listening skills.

162. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Students benefit from teachers who know and understand the subject well. Strategies designed to strengthen the literacy skills of students, such as writing frames, feature in some teaching but the good practice is not consistently used by all teachers. The best lessons are carefully structured to meet the needs of students of all levels of attainment, the aims are made clear so that students know what is to be done and what is expected of them, and a good range of learning activities engages their interest and involvement. In a small number of lessons such good provision is not evident. Occasionally, teachers are setting tasks that are not sufficiently demanding of higher attaining students, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Students with special educational needs make sound progress because teachers know them well and provide them with the support and work suited to their needs. The great majority of students respond positively to their teachers, behave well, and display interest in, and enjoyment of, history. Teachers generally mark students' work regularly but the frequency of longer, more analytical comments in pupils' books, aimed at informing students how to improve, varies between teachers.
163. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is at least satisfactory. There are lessons in which the teaching, and the consequent learning, is very good. This was evident, for example, in a lesson on the opinions and attitudes of ordinary Germans in Nazi Germany. The teacher had high expectations of the quality of students' contributions to the class discussion and, over a number of weeks, had set clear objectives for the research undertaken by students. Consequently the students, taking roles representing a wide cross-section of society, spoke with impressive conviction and detail based on their thorough preparation. In this way they gained a good foundation for their attempts to deal with the challenging question posed by the teacher about why most German citizens did not oppose Hitler's rule during the 1930s. The marking of students' work is sound, with good examples of full teachers' comments that analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the work and offer good advice on how to improve. A good programme of educational visits, building on that in Years 7 to 9, enhances the variety of learning opportunities provided. The access students have to ICT resources, and the use they make of them in research and in the presentation of their work, is improving. Students with special educational needs make sound progress. Teaching and learning in Years 12 and 13 continue to be at least satisfactory. The best lessons provide effectively for the further development of students' analytical and discursive skills. For instance, the discussion on Mussolini's intentions and motives demonstrated that students had a detailed knowledge of the topic that they used to contribute and support lively and convincing opinions.
164. The leadership and management of history are satisfactory. The recently appointed head of history works hard and with great enthusiasm to further develop important initiatives for raising standards. She has a clear view of what constitutes good provision for education in history and a very evident commitment to the welfare and progress of students. There has not been sufficient time since her appointment for the full impact of her leadership to take effect.
165. The department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Teaching continues to be sound and examples of good teaching are not now confined largely to the sixth form, as the case was then. A greater variety of learning activities is provided and better use is made of resources and accommodation. The numbers of students who choose to continue to study history beyond the compulsory age are increasing.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

166. The proportions of students achieving grades A* to C and A* to G in the short course GCSE examination in 2000 were well above the national average. Almost the entire cohort of students was entered for the examination. Students achieved significantly better in information technology than they did in the other subjects they studied. There was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Results have improved steadily over the past three years. GCE A-level results were above the national average in 2000. Results were also above average in 1998, but only one candidate studied the subject to GCE A-level in 1999. There was insufficient evidence to reach judgements on either the standards achieved by students currently in Year 13, or the quality of education that they receive, as they were sitting their mock examinations during the week of inspection.
167. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards that students attain at the age of 14 are above the level expected of students of the same age nationally. This represents very good achievement. The Teacher Assessments for students aged 14 were accurate and confirm these standards of attainment in 2000. Standards are above average in most aspects of the subject, especially in terms of students' practical skills, although students use spreadsheets particularly well to develop models of different situations. The rapid development of students' skills leads to them becoming exceptionally confident users of ICT by the age of 14. This level of confidence is a significant factor in ensuring that students with special educational needs can make the same very good progress as their peers, indeed many students with special educational needs are high attainers in the subject. One relative weakness in students' knowledge is their understanding of how computers affect our lives. The school has recognised this weakness and has already put modules of work into Year 9 to improve this area of students' understanding. Students have an above average knowledge and understanding of systems and control.
168. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards that students attain at the age of 16 are well above the level expected of students of the same age nationally. This represents very good achievement for the students currently in Year 11 and is reflected in the GCSE examination results. The standard of students' practical skills is very high. They are adept at using a wide range of software and can transfer their skills easily from one application to another. Students have a very good understanding of how to match the outcomes of a particular project to the requirements of a target audience. For example, students used appropriate images and colours when producing an interactive software presentation for young children and were able to redesign the package for an older audience. Students have an above average knowledge and understanding of systems and control. Much of the written coursework for GCSE is also well above the standard expected nationally, with detailed analyses of tasks that lead to several high quality designs. As in Years 7 to 9, students with special educational needs are often among the higher attaining students as their difficulties, especially with behaviour, are overcome by their interest in using the computers.
169. Overall, students are achieving outstandingly well at the school.
170. Students make use of their skills in several subjects and this has a significant impact on the standards that they achieve. In graphics, for example, the quality of coursework is significantly enhanced and the use of computer aided design work contrasts well with the quality of the work produced by hand. In history, students produce moving accounts of the Holocaust, which are beautifully illustrated and in business education the use of ICT provides a suitably professional image to the work. However, these opportunities tend to be the exception rather than the norm. The school's computers are very heavily used and there are no longer enough of them to meet the demands of subjects such as art and design, geography and science.
171. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in Years 7 to 11. One of the most significant strengths in the teaching is the way that the school's computer network has been set up with all the required tasks and resources for every lesson. This enables higher attaining students to work rapidly through the tasks without waiting for either further instructions or for other students to catch up and lower attainers to receive all the support that they need. Students are often

given tasks that require them to read articles from journals or technical reports that have been edited and placed on the network. This makes them keen to read, as they need the results of their research for their classwork. Teachers have very high expectations of all their students; students are made to work hard to complete tasks. Very often the pace of learning is such that students produce large amounts of work. In one lesson, for example, students started the lesson knowing a little about how to use a publishing software package and by the end of the lesson had produced a double sided, three fold leaflet suitable for the local Chamber of Commerce. Students are managed very well. Students often arrive at lessons in a boisterous mood, but teachers have work ready for them to start on immediately, which settles the class and makes maximum use of the available time. Strategies such as making students turn off the monitors when the teacher is addressing the whole class ensures that all are listening and concentrating on the task in hand. The only real weakness in the teaching is the lack of homework in Years 7 to 9, owing to having no time identified on the school homework timetable.

172. The department is exceptionally well led by the newly appointed head of department. All of the software that is having such a dramatic impact in terms of supporting teachers in all years has been produced since his arrival in September 2000. There is a singular lack of complacency in the department, despite the well above average standards. Results and standards are monitored and analysed well. The head of department is already planning to introduce full GCSE accreditation for higher attainers in half the time that is normally allowed and to introduce GNVQ courses. The staff share the head of department's enthusiasm for the subject and are keen to maintain the department's status as the best in the school.
173. Excellent progress has been made since the previous inspection. Standards of attainment have risen from below average to well above average. Teaching, which was previously satisfactory, is now very good.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

174. Only an extremely small proportion of students took a full GCSE in French or Spanish and only approximately half the students were entered for the short course GCSE so that comparisons with national data are difficult to make. In 2000 the proportions of students achieving grades A* to C at GCSE in French and Spanish for the full course were well below the national averages and for the short course was very low indeed. The proportion of students achieving grades A* to G was close to the national average. Over the past three years results have been similar to those in 2000. There is no significant difference between girls' and boys' results. Students' results in both French and Spanish are significantly worse than those achieved in most other subjects. Only one student took GCE A-level French in 2000 and they achieved a pass.
175. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards that students attain at the age of 14 are below the level expected of students of the same age nationally. The Teacher Assessments for students aged 14 over-estimated standards of attainment in 2000. Until most recently, students have not achieved well during Years 7 to 9 because they have had significantly reduced curriculum time studying any one language. In addition, the large number of changes in staff has meant that some students, especially the higher achieving students, have not done as well as they might. By the age of 14, students improve their reading and listening skills but make less progress in their ability to speak with good pronunciation or write at any length from memory. Students understand a range of topics such as school life and buying food; the majority understands at least two tenses although they are not always able to use these accurately themselves. Students' achievement is better in Spanish than in French. Most students with special educational needs make similar progress to other students. Teachers, however, find it difficult to meet the needs of all the students in the large mixed ability classes, especially in Year 9. In particular, the needs of a few students who have specific difficulties in writing are not always clearly identified and met; higher attaining students are not always given more demanding work.
176. In the work seen during the inspection students are attaining below the standard expected nationally for French and Spanish by the age of 16. A significant number did not achieve as

much as they should have done during Years 7 to 9 as they had significantly reduced time studying any one language. In addition, the instability in staffing has meant that some students, especially the higher achieving students, have not done as well as they might. Students often have weak pronunciation, especially in French. The writing and speaking of the highest achieving students is not always accurate and does not often include complex language and vocabulary although gifted students are encouraged to take the GCSE early. Students work on a limited range of topics, and occasionally write at length for coursework purposes, but generally their writing skills are underdeveloped. Writing is better developed in Spanish than it is in French. Speaking skills are particularly weak, however, the change to the timing of coursework is allowing teachers to spend more time on speaking in the months leading up to the examination and is beginning to improve the standards that students achieve in this area. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in both languages because of the good individual support, which is provided by teachers.

177. In the work seen during the inspection, students in Years 12 and 13 are attaining standards in line with course expectations. They write essays with some degree of accuracy on topics such as alcoholism and literature and hold conversations with reasonable fluency and accuracy on the effects of smoking on health.
178. The quality of the teaching is currently satisfactory in all year groups and this brings about satisfactory learning despite the poor results at GCSE last year. Most of the teachers in the department are new to the school and have not yet had the opportunity to have a positive influence on the results. Teachers now have good strategies to manage the behaviour of students and good use is made of the reward system, consequently relationships between staff and students have improved markedly since the last inspection. Students work well and generally listen carefully to the teacher and to each other. Teachers plan lessons well so that there is a variety of activities and work hard to incorporate games which interest the students. In the best lessons the higher attainers are encouraged to work from memory and to produce work unaided. Students enjoy and respond very well to lessons involving ICT and lessons where they use the video camera to record themselves, such as the café dialogue observed in a Year 8 Spanish class. Much of the teaching concentrates on developing listening and reading skills; consequently students are stronger in these areas. Homework is often in the form of learning but students in Years 7 to 9 do not always complete this well as they do not all have a text book to take home. Sometimes they are unable to find out the answer to a question because they have not filed their work carefully. Marking in books is inconsistent across the department, sometimes it tells students where they have gone wrong but it rarely identifies how they might improve in terms of length or style. Assessment of students' performance, especially at age 14 is not always accurate. However, the department is now using the recently introduced whole-school system of assessment. Students are given much more helpful feedback about their performance during tasks in lessons.
179. The overall leadership and management of the department is satisfactory. The current head of department is following a well-designed programme of improvements, the most significant of which has been the drive to raise the standards of behaviour and the quality of the teaching. The abolition of the GCSE short course for all current students means that students in Years 10 and 11 are now much more committed and have an appropriate amount of time per week to study a language. Statutory requirements are, however, still not being met as almost half of the students in Years 10 and 11 do not study a language. All staff are committed to working hard to improve still further and the joint initiatives such as the rewriting of the schemes of work are beginning to focus on raising achievement.
180. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The poor standards of behaviour have been overcome. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is now satisfactory whereas previously it was only at least sound in two thirds of lessons.

MUSIC

181. In the year 2000 GCSE examinations, the proportions of students gaining grades A* to C and A* to G were well below the national average. There was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Students' results in music were significantly worse than in most other subjects. There were no candidates taking music examinations in Years 12 and 13.
182. In work seen during the inspection, standards of attainment at age 14 are below the level expected of students of the same age nationally. This represents a satisfactory level of achievement given students' attainment in music when they join the school. Higher attainers perform with confidence on both electric keyboards and tuned and untuned percussion, playing with an awareness of pulse and rhythm and fitting their part in with others. However, the majority of students perform only simple, single melodic and accompaniment patterns on these instruments, concentrating on their own part with only a limited awareness of the other performers. Students compose and arrange using various sounds and record their ideas by using a range of symbols and notation. However, at present these compositions are created within a limited structure and there is not a wide use made of extended forms and structures. They recognise how sounds can be organised and describe music they have listened to using appropriate descriptive, but limited musical, language. Students with special education needs are well integrated and make similar progress to other students.
183. Attainment at age 16, from work seen during the inspection, is below that expected nationally. This shows an improvement compared with examination results over the last three years. This is because the ability of those students opting to study music at GCSE has improved as a result of the new management of the subject and newly established teaching provision, the recently introduced schemes of work and a more rigorous selection and advisory service operated by the department. Also there is an improved access to a range of resources to support and encourage students. The attainment of the current GCSE students is also enhanced by access to a co-ordinated peripatetic teaching provision. In analysis and listening work students recognise geographic sources for music from other cultures. They can describe and discriminate well in this work, whilst placing it in an historical context, using a range of appropriate vocabulary. They compose in various styles and timbres and textures and use computers appropriately to research, refine, modify, score and record their ideas. They perform with confidence and control and are developing a sense of style and phrasing.
184. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment in Years 12 and 13 are in line with course expectations. Students are studying for GCE AS and A-level music or GCE A-level music technology. Students compose and arrange by adding bass and harmony in both major and minor keys. These pieces are recorded using an appropriate notation with an accompanying commentary. In their historical studies, students display a knowledge and understanding of music from various periods of time. Music technology students use an appropriate technical language and work in appropriate styles and techniques. They make full use of computers and technology in their studies.
185. Throughout the school, the attainment of some students is supported well by the range of peripatetic teaching and extra-curricular opportunities offered by the department.
186. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in all year groups. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which leads to confident teaching with clear and lively expositions and demonstrations. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, the confident explanation and use of question and answer created very constructive relationships and so students felt confident and able to challenge themselves further. Teachers make good use of targets, both for effort and behaviour. This results in high expectations, as was seen in a Year 7 lesson. By the end of the lesson, all students were able to perform short rhythmic and melodic patterns, composed to portray scenes from Alice in Wonderland. Lessons are planned effectively with a variety of inter-related tasks, with clear objectives that the students understand and this leads to good pace and progress. This was clearly seen in a Year 12 lesson where the students' understanding and the clear guidelines from the teacher, enabled them to develop greater independence. They were able to persevere and concentrate very well and finish their work to the required standard. Lessons end with a good review of the work covered, as in a Year 8 lesson where it led to

targets for the next week. However, in some group work in Years 7 to 9, time spent working without close supervision allows a minority of students to be off task and indulging in some minor disruption to the learning of other students. Teachers use homework to effectively consolidate and extend learning.

187. There is satisfactory leadership of the subject and this is providing a clear educational direction for the department. A good curriculum for all year groups has been introduced and there are sound arrangements for assessing students' attainment and progress that will allow the department to make appropriate changes to the curriculum. There is a commitment to strive continually for improvement and success across the department. The department has been very active in sourcing funding and resources and this includes a private keyboard school being based in the department, thereby providing joint use of electric keyboards.
188. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has been maintained.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

189. In the 2000 GCSE examination, the number of boys achieving A* to C grades was well below the national average although the proportion achieving grades A* to G was above the national average. Only boys chose to study physical education as a GCSE option. Students' results in physical education were significantly worse than those achieved in most other subjects. A very small cohort of students in 1999 and 2000 studied GCE A-level; all students achieved A to E grades. However, the small cohort entered makes statistical comparisons against national figures invalid.
190. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards that students attain at the age of 14 are below the level expected for students of the same age nationally and represents a satisfactory level of achievement. These standards are not confirmed by the Teacher Assessments, which shows both boys and girls being close to the national averages. However, a more accurate and more frequent whole-school system of assessment has been introduced recently which the subject is now using to judge attainment levels.
191. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards that students attain at the age of 16 are broadly in line with the level expected for students of the same age nationally. This judgment does not reflect with the GCSE examination results, which are below national averages. Students' literacy levels depress the examination results; however, students' involvement in extra-curricular clubs and teams shows standards to be in line with national expectations. This represents a satisfactory level of achievement.
192. By the age of 14, students, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, show competence in a range of games, for instance, netball, basketball, rugby, football. In games activities students have a sound knowledge of the rules and appropriate skills to enable them to play successfully. Students apply the rules fairly. Students in Year 7 combine the skills of dribbling the ball with the effective use of the chest pass when playing basketball in order to gain shooting opportunities. In rugby, Year 9 students successfully pass the ball along a line of players; however, the concepts of the game are only developing slowly. Low attaining students understand the need to keep close when passing and receiving the ball in order to be successful and not drop the ball. In small-sided game situations students ensure they draw an opponent in order to create an opportunity for a colleague to score. Students know the effect of exercise on the body and understand some of the simple physiological changes that occur during warm-up. High attaining students know the purpose of stretching is to minimise injury and maximise performance and the purpose of warm-down is to reduce stiffness. Both boys and girls are fully involved in lessons. Planning and performing skills develop satisfactorily in the majority of lessons; however, students' skills of observation, analysis and evaluation are less well developed. The development and reinforcement of students' literacy is not sufficiently developed through the use of key words and technical language. All students in Years 7 to 9 make satisfactory progress learning the basic skills of different aspects of physical education.

193. In Year 11 students, when playing badminton successfully, play a rally of six or more shots. Students know two different types of serve and the techniques to effect them, however, incorrect use of the wrist, at times, constrains execution. Ineffective footwork prevents many low attaining students making longer rallies; whereas high attaining students with more agility move about smoothly, executing a range of attacking and defensive shots. High attaining students consider strategies to use in order to outwit an opponent. Skills and games concepts start to develop; they begin to be applied, for instance, Year 11 badminton and Year 10 volleyball students start to use depth of shot and angles. Students studying the GCSE theory show a basic knowledge of sports injuries and the principles of treatment. They develop their understanding and expertise in both theory and practical aspect, however, at times, the theory and practice are not always successfully linked, for instance, the impact that physical exercise has on the cardio-vascular systems.
194. During the inspection, Year 13 students were involved in internal examinations; no Year 13 lessons were observed. There is no recreational physical education in Years 12 and 13. The written coursework seen during the inspection indicates a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects. The standards achieved in Years 12 and 13 are broadly in line with the level expected of students of the same age nationally and this is confirmed by the recent examination results. In a Year 12 lesson, students demonstrated a good understanding of some of the processes that the body has of retaining energy and converting this when taking physical exercise. They show secure knowledge of the foods that readily produce energy, for example, the carbohydrate foods like pasta, bread and potatoes. Students show awareness of how an athlete uses different energy stores. The small cohorts of students in Years 12 and 13 achieve well.
195. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11 and good in Years 12 to 13. Teachers show good knowledge and understanding and, at times, very good knowledge of physical education. They apply this very successfully, which has a positive impact upon students' learning. For example, in a Year 11 GCSE theory lesson, very good knowledge of badminton challenges students and as a consequence extends students' understanding. Teachers usually have high expectations of both effort and behaviour of students, as illustrated in a Year 12 lesson on energy supplies. The majority of students work hard and maintain their efforts and concentration and persevere in order to produce their best results. However, on occasions, low expectations and insufficient demands constrain achievement, for example, in Year 10 volleyball and Year 8 gymnastics. Teachers make effective use of questions and answer to reinforce students' knowledge and understanding at the start of most lessons. Planning and organisation are good; they ensure students move effectively from year to year. All lesson plans show clear learning objectives. Good subject knowledge and effective planning assists all students, including those with learning difficulties and those for whom English is an additional language, to make satisfactory progress in their learning. Teachers make use of the information from individual educational plans in order to adapt their teaching strategies to meet individual students' needs. In all lessons throughout the age range, students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are well integrated and make progress in line with their peers. Teaching strategies do not always involve students sufficiently in their learning as observed during a Year 10 lesson on the circulatory system. At times, there is an insufficient range of tasks and activities in order to cater for the whole range of students within a class.

196. The head of department shows satisfactory leadership and management of the subject; he shows good, clear educational direction. The curriculum is evolving to embrace the changes made by curriculum 2000; however, further updating is needed to bring them in line with the recent curriculum 2000 update. The curriculum is games-dominated and needs to include more balance through the aesthetic areas of gymnastics and dance. Literacy and number are insufficiently developed. ICT is not sufficiently used within the examination courses. There are no opportunities for physical recreation during curriculum time for Year 12 and 13. The department offers a varied range of seasonal extra-curricular activities for all students; about one fifth of the students participate and this 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 outcomes for students.
197. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection; many of the issues identified in the last inspection report have been addressed. Significant improvements have been made to the resourcing of examination courses and in upgrading equipment. Changing facilities have been upgraded. The standards that students attain and the quality of teaching are similar to that noted in the previous report. The department works successfully as a team and is committed to raising standards.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

198. Results in the GCSE short course for Religious Education in 2000 were well below the national averages at grades A* to C, and are affected by the limited time for study of religious education in Years 7 to 11. The numbers of students who are entered for the examination has risen over the last three years. In 2000 the majority of the year group were entered for the examination, although the proportion of students achieving GCSE grades A* to G was below the national average. Students did less well in religious education than they did in most other subjects that they studied. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. There were no candidates taking religious education examinations in Years 12 and 13.
199. In work seen during the inspection, the attainment of students by the age of 14 is below the standard expected in the Locally Agreed Syllabus and this represents an unsatisfactory level of achievement. The very limited opportunities for the study of religious education in Year 8 interrupt the development of understanding and the opportunities to consolidate previous learning. By Year 9, much knowledge gained in Year 7 has been lost. Students learn about the key features of the religions studied and they can select and extract information from textbooks in response to questions. Higher attaining students demonstrate evidence of understanding of some of the practices they study, for example the value of fasting at Ramadan, and that there may be several reasons behind it. Students of lower ability simply record the facts in response to questions. Students recognise the main features of the Christian Church and the functions that they serve, and in Year 7 students investigate the symbols that express belief in the major world faiths. Little independent learning or research is undertaken and students' skills of selection and evaluation are restricted by close reference to individual text books. Some work is carried out that recognises the effect of faith on a believer, such as a study of the life and work of Gandhi, but students do not generally consider the value and effects of religious faith to the ordinary believer. Students with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers due to the nature of the lessons which follow a pattern of short written response closely linked to the text.
200. In work seen during the inspection, the attainment of students by the age of 16 is below national expectations and this represents an unsatisfactory level of achievement. Limited time in Years 7 to 9 results in the need to introduce information that should have been embedded earlier in the school. The restricted time allowance reduces opportunities for students to reflect upon and analyse the links between faith and values, which in turn affect the response to contemporary moral issues. Students identify the main religious Muslim and Christian teachings on the concepts of the sanctity of life, responsibility for others, and the significance of marriage, and they relate these teachings to such contemporary issues as abortion,

euthanasia and world poverty. They respond well in lessons and demonstrate an understanding of the issues and recognise that there may be more than one valid opinion. Written responses are more limited and do not reflect independent thought or analysis. Students do not readily discuss issues relating to the value of religious response to the present day, although their discussion of contemporary issues in a secular frame can be thoughtful and sensitive.

201. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in all year groups. Most lessons were satisfactory and some were good. Students' achievements are unsatisfactory because of the insufficient curriculum time for the subject and not because of the quality of teaching. Lessons were usually well planned with clear objectives that were shared with the class. Expectations in Years 10 and 11 are high, and students are encouraged to work at a good pace and to concentrate on the task in hand. Occasionally, teachers are setting tasks that are not sufficiently demanding of higher attaining students, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Teachers have a good relationship with their students and treat their responses and opinions with respect. The majority of students behave well in lessons and complete the tasks set, however too often they work with little sense of enquiry or urgency and as a result responses lack development and thought. Girls are more reluctant to take part in the oral work of the class or to contribute actively. In a small minority of lessons students in Years 7 to 9 appeared hostile to ideas different to their own, and openly hostile to anything that they considered to be 'religious'. As a consequence other students are reluctant to show interest or involvement. Where students' attitudes are positive they are mutually supportive and work well with the teacher. Behaviour is generally good where teaching encourages interest and active participation. Marking is regular and supportive and students are encouraged to take pride in their work. Over-dependence on the textbook and a lack of specialist teachers however, results in a narrow range of teaching strategies that limits opportunities for independent learning and individual research and discovery. The need to deliver the Agreed Syllabus in an inadequate time frame in Years 7 to 11, results in students being moved on to the next objective before the existing objective has been achieved. Emphasis is placed on the acquisition of facts rather than the development of understanding of belief.
202. There is no designated subject area and as a result no focus for the wide range of teachers who deliver the subject in rooms clearly identified with other teaching areas. There is no use of display to extend learning and to raise the profile of religious education around the school. The head of department has clear aims for the subject. He has reviewed the syllabus in Years 10 and 11 in order to make it more relevant to the students and the introduction of the short GCSE course provides incentive for students to apply themselves to their work. The department is developing the use of ICT in Year 9, and is considering assessment tasks that will enable teachers to monitor the progress of students in the key elements of religious education. The progress of these developments is reduced however, by the absence from department meetings of staff with many other responsibilities and the lack of specialist training in the delivery of religious education.
203. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last report. Religious education is now included in the Year 10 to 11 curriculum, although the inadequate time allowance is further reduced by the need to deliver careers. The introduction of the GCSE course and the choice of syllabus provide a relevant and worthwhile course for students in Years 10 and 11. The quality of teaching and learning is now satisfactory whereas there were serious weaknesses noted in the previous inspection report. Standards of attainment have improved from poor to below average.
204. The school still does not comply with the legal requirement to deliver the Locally Agreed Syllabus to students in Years 7 to 11 as there is insufficient time for this to take place, and students in Years 12 to 13 do not have their entitlement to religious education.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

205. In 2000, in the results of students following General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) programmes of study, students at the age of 17 attained standards well above national standards on the Intermediate health and social care course. Particular examples worthy of mention are the fifty per cent of intermediate health and social care students who have achieved at distinction level over the past three years. This represents very good levels of achievement and the constant drive towards higher level accreditation is to the credit of the school. There were no differences in achievement between students of different gender or ethnic origin.
206. In business studies, the proportions of students obtaining grades A* to C and A* to G were well above the national average for students aged 16. In GCE A-level business, results were above the national average.
207. In work seen during the inspection, students are attaining standards that are above the level expected of both 16 and 18 year-olds nationally. Students have a good knowledge of the topics that they are studying and they all have a better understanding than is expected for their age. This applies to students following Part One, and students following Intermediate and Advanced level courses. Students acquire very good knowledge and understanding in each of the GNVQ programmes of study.
208. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 and in Years 12 to 13 is very good. Students benefit from well-informed, well-organised teaching with skilful teachers. Teachers bring their wealth of commercial experience into the classroom and this leads on to confident teaching and the respect of students. Students develop skills of enquiry, analysis and presentation to a good level. Because of the student-centred approach adopted by the majority of teachers, students become increasingly self reliant in the organisation of their work. They show initiative in the acquisition of evidence and they take appropriate responsibility for their own evidence. Students behave very well in lessons. They have positive attitudes and are courteous and respectful to peers and staff. They form constructive working relationships with each other and respect each other's feelings, values and beliefs. Students are self-motivated; they enjoy their work and have a clear awareness of their performance and potential. The assessment of their work by teachers is thorough and accurate. Assessors provide feedback to students about grading criteria and they carry out assessment of grades in accordance with the grading criteria specifications and requirements of the awarding body. Internal verification systems are secure and consistent and meet all GNVQ specifications.
209. There was no vocational report at the time of the last inspection but since that time there has been a growth in vocational courses. Vocational education is now very well led and managed by a head of department who provides clear educational direction for all the vocational subjects. Staff within the department are very able teachers and all have a shared commitment to improvement. Part One business has been very successfully introduced for students in Years 10 and 11 and business studies is now offered at both Intermediate and Advanced level for students in Years 12 and 13. The GNVQ co-ordinator is working hard to raise the profile of vocational education in the school and realises that in the future, students will need to complete their evidence in the prescribed time as laid down by the awarding body. Vocational courses are very popular with students; they are now a very important part of school provision and provide a very good standard of education.

Sixth form provision

210. There are 67 students in Year 12 and 58 in Year 13 making a total of 125 students in Years 12 and 13. Numbers have grown considerably in recent years and the projected intake for the forthcoming year indicates further significant expansion. There is open access to the sixth form. Year 13 students have a choice of 21 GCE A-level courses and Year 12 have a choice of 19 AS level courses plus a distance learning course in A/AS law. All students in Year 12 are studying for the key skills qualification in communication, ICT and application of number. Time allocations for all sixth form provision are in line with national requirements. There is however, no religious education in Years 12 and 13, nor an enrichment programme and opportunities to develop citizenship are very few.
211. Student progress reviews were introduced last year and are well received by students, parents and staff. They provide an effective means of monitoring students' progress on a regular basis and tie in with academic tutoring. All grades from the reviews are stored on the network so that subject staff and tutors can have access to them on a daily basis. If a student's progress review raises serious concerns, the head of sixth form contacts home and a meeting is arranged with the student and parents and appropriate strategies are put in place.
212. Students in Years 12 and 13 have formed their own Council. The Council meets once a month to discuss issues that each year group has raised and also to arrange charity and social events, these include a Freshers' Ball, a sixth form and staff dinner dance and a leavers' barbecue and disco. All events are well attended by staff and students alike.
213. The sixth form is well led and managed. The head of sixth form provides clear educational direction for the students. Teaching is well monitored and the ethos of the sixth form is very good.
214. Accommodation is adequate to meet the social requirements of students in Years 12 and 13. However, in respect of study facilities there is a lack of seminar rooms and no silent study area apart from the sixth form library.
215. Fifty eight per cent of Year 13 students who left in July 2000 went on to study in higher education. Thirteen percent went into full-time employment; eight per cent have taken a 'gap' year and ten per cent have stayed on to complete the final module of their GNVQ course.