

INSPECTION REPORT

THE GEORGE WARD SCHOOL

Melksham

LEA area: Wiltshire

Unique reference number: 126448

Headteacher: Dr Pam Stoate

Reporting inspector: Michael Owen
22926

Dates of inspection: 12-16 November 2001

Inspection number: 188339

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11-18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Shurnhold
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Wiltshire

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Gail Chilcott

Date of previous inspection: 13 May 1996

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16548	Don Gwinnett	Team inspector	Art and design	How good is the curriculum?
25748	Roger Moyle	Team inspector	Physical education	
10807	Paul Quest	Team inspector	Religious education Sociology	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The George Ward School is a comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11-18, serving the small industrial town of Melksham and its surrounding villages. The roll has grown from 1194 pupils in 1996 to 1431, which makes it a comparatively large secondary school. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is below average. They come from below average social and economic circumstances. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The number from ethnic minorities and speaking English as an additional language is low. Nearly a quarter of the pupils has special educational needs, which is above the national average but the proportion with Statements of Special Educational Need is below average. The school achieved Technology College status in 1997. It was awarded the Chartermark in 1996 and 1999, Investors in People in 1998 and the Healthy Schools award in 1999. It has been difficult to fill some vacancies in technology in the last year. The present headteacher was appointed in September 2000.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

After a period of considerable difficulty, the school has responded well to the challenges it faces and is clearly on the road to recovery. Standards of attainment are average and achievement is satisfactory but good teaching is beginning to improve both. Behaviour is getting much better although it is not yet satisfactory. Sixth form provision is effective. The recently appointed headteacher is providing very good leadership. With the support of governors, staff and the local education authority she is bringing about good improvements. As a result, the effectiveness of the school is satisfactory, as is the value for money it provides.

What the school does well

- The quality of teaching is good overall
- Because of the inspiring leadership of the headteacher and the commitment of all staff, the school is addressing with great determination the weaknesses in its provision
- The Learning Zone is an effective strategy to meet the needs of those pupils who are not coping well with school
- Standards are above average in art and design, drama and music in Years 10 and 11, reflecting good achievement.
- Relationships in the sixth form are very good and support students' learning.
- Good enrichment activities are provided through drama, music and overseas links.

What could be improved

- Pupils' behaviour, by ensuring that the new behaviour policy is consistently implemented
- The use of data at all levels to analyse and to help pupils to set their sights higher and raise their attainment and achievement
- School self-evaluation processes, so that the good teaching and learning evident in many areas of the school is extended and strengthened
- The quality of the learning environment, along with pupils' self-esteem and sense of responsibility, so that pupils have a more mature attitude to learning
- Relations with parents to improve their involvement in their children's education.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Standards of attainment in the main school and the sixth form have declined after a period of improvement, although achievement is satisfactory. Behaviour has become a serious issue because of changes in the school's intake that have not been well managed until recently. Progress on the issues raised in the previous inspection is satisfactory. Although the school is now improving again, it has not yet reached the level it was at in the last inspection.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	C	C	D	C
A-levels/AS-levels	D	C	D	

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

Overall standards are average. In the Year 9 standard assessment tests in 2001, the proportions of pupils achieving level 5 or better and level 6 or better are below average in English but in line with the average in mathematics and science. The trend has been lower than the national trend. Compared with similar schools these results are average, but below average at the higher levels. In GCSE examinations, the proportion gaining 5 or more A*-C grades has declined to below average but the proportion gaining 5 or more A*-G grades is above the average; the proportion gaining at least one grade is average. The average point scores are close to average. By comparison with similar schools results are average. The school has set itself unrealistic targets that it has not met. The average point score at A-level is below the national average. However, in most subjects at all levels pupils' results are in line with predictions based on prior attainment.

Standards of work seen during the inspection are average in most subjects. However, in Year 9 they are above average in mathematics, and below average in art and design and history. In Year 11 they are well above average in art and design and above average in drama and music. Standards are depressed by the poor literacy skills of some pupils and by the effects of poor behaviour. Overall standards in literacy, numeracy and ICT are average. Standards in the sixth form are average overall but they are high in geography and sociology.

Achievement is satisfactory. It is good in ICT, music and mathematics in Years 7 to 9, very good in art and design and drama in Years 10 and 11, but unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 in history. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. While most pupils have a positive approach to school, there are many who have a poor attitude to learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Unsatisfactory but improving. There is much immature and aggressive behaviour by a minority but the more responsible majority is winning the day.
Personal development and relationships	Unsatisfactory. Not enough pupils have a sense of responsibility about their own educational progress and their obligations to the community.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Unauthorised absence is above average.

The number of exclusions has halved in the last year. Many pupils are loyal to the school and a credit to their families and teachers. They co-operate and get on with their work. Others show a very immature attitude and lack self-control. Unauthorised absence is high because some parents do not inform the school about absence.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

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

Teaching in English is satisfactory. In good lessons teachers plan interesting and varied activities and insist on good behaviour, but overall, expectations are not high enough. Mathematics teaching is good because of good planning and high expectations, but pupils are not given enough opportunity for personal development. Assessment and marking are unsatisfactory in both subjects. Science teaching is good, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Teachers' enthusiasm motivates pupils to learn and interesting and varied activities maintain concentration. Management of behaviour is not consistent and sometimes a minority disrupts learning.

Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good in all other subjects except art and design and drama, which are satisfactory. In Years 7 and 8 aspects of teaching in many subjects are less effective. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is very good in geography and good in all other subjects other than modern foreign languages, where it is satisfactory. When there is good teaching, pupils are actively involved in well-planned lessons that take account of their learning needs. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are not taught with enough emphasis and consistency and not enough use is made of ICT. Use of support assistants, assessment and marking and homework could all be improved. Broadly, teaching meets the needs of all pupils, except for a minority of pupils who come to school with very poor attitudes.

Learning follows a similar pattern, except that because of poor attitudes by some pupils learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 rather than good. Most pupils are keen to learn and work well but there are too many pupils who have an immature attitude to school. Teachers have to work very hard to gain the interest of this difficult minority whose concentration is easily deflected into disruptive behaviour.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum is broad, balanced and tailored to meet the needs of the pupils, although there are some unsatisfactory features of the timetable.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Support is good for pupils through appropriate alternative courses and groupings, but provision across the curriculum is inconsistent.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. There are good systems in place for the identification and assessment of the very few pupils concerned. Their progress is carefully monitored and they are soon able to participate fully in all areas of the curriculum
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Spiritual awareness is satisfactory, as is teaching about right and wrong. Provision for developing students' sense of social responsibility is adequate but not enough account is taken of the cultural diversity of our world and therefore this aspect is unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory. Pastoral support is being strengthened and tutors are beginning to monitor both personal and academic progress more closely. There are health and safety concerns, particularly the toilets. Teachers' use of assessment information is inconsistent.

There is good curriculum provision for disaffected pupils but statutory requirements are not met for an act of worship and, in Year 11, for religious education. However, the provision of the GCSE short course in Year 10 is good. The behaviour policy is good but is not implemented consistently throughout the school. Assessment procedures are not effective enough in identifying and addressing under-achievement. The school is making a good effort to develop its partnership with parents but it remains unsatisfactory.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher's very good leadership has restored staff confidence and clarified expectations. The new leadership team is working well, though new procedures are yet to be embedded in practice. Monitoring roles are being strengthened to improve the consistent implementation of good practice.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governors have faced up to weaknesses in the school and taken effective action. They are improving their monitoring procedures.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school is broadly aware of its strengths and weaknesses and self-evaluation procedures are being strengthened. The school recognises the need to extend the use of assessment information to raise achievement.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Resources are directed to achieve strategic aims and targeted funds are used for appropriate purposes.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are adequate. The leadership of middle managers is being developed. Finances are now managed with greater efficiency and the governors apply the principles of best value well.

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 children like school and make good progress • The teaching is good • They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem • The school expects pupils to work hard and achieve their best 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour • Homework • The quality of information about how their children are getting on • The extent to which the school works closely with parents

The inspection team agrees with all these points. The school too recognises the need to work more closely with parents to improve all areas of provision. A significant minority of parents does not co-operate with some school initiatives. This adversely affects their children's achievements.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form has 146 students, which is smaller than the average. It has grown from 119 students in 1999. The sixth form provides a wide range of courses, mostly AS/A-levels. Between a third and a quarter of Year 11 pupils continue into the sixth form, which is a small proportion. Very few students come from other schools. There is no significant difference between the staying on rates of males and females. There are two colleges of further education within reach as well as other school sixth forms. Most students stay for two-year AS/A level courses or the Advanced Certificate of Vocational Education (AVCE). The entry requirement for undertaking two or more A levels is a minimum of four A*-C grades at GCSE, which is a modest demand.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Overall the sixth form provision is effective and provides satisfactory value for money. Standards are average. Although results have declined since the previous inspection, achievement is satisfactory overall and attainment is in line with predictions based on students' GCSE results. Teaching and learning are good and sound leadership is characterised by the promotion of good relationships and equality of opportunity. In consequence, the sixth form meets the needs of its students.

Strengths

- There is very good provision in geography and sociology.
- Teaching is good overall.
- Very good relationships underpin students' learning.
- The school has improved the learning environment by providing high quality ICT facilities.

What could be improved

- The vision of how the sixth form can meet the needs of a greater number of students in the future.
- The extent to which assessment, marking and use of performance data are used to challenge students to exceed their expectations.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning, to identify and disseminate good practice in all areas, for example in the use of ICT.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good. Students achieve their target grades and work with confidence. Teaching is good; teachers know their subject and plan stimulating lessons. Only small numbers achieve grades A*-C in the GCSE re-take course.
Biology	Good. Students achieve in line with predictions based on their GCSE results. Practical work is good but more use could be made of ICT. The good teaching produces challenging discussions that deepen knowledge and understanding.
Product Design	Good. Standards are above average and students achieve well, though use of ICT is limited. Good teaching motivates students to improve their work.
Economics and business education	Good. Results have been good, especially in GNVQ business education. However, currently standards are mixed, from below average in Year 12 to well above average in Year 13 A-level economics. Teaching is good and is improving achievement and attainment.
Art	Satisfactory. A-level results are improving and are now average, while advanced GNVQ results are above average. Teaching is satisfactory and well planned but feedback does not encourage enough self-criticism by students.
Drama	Satisfactory. Results are above average and performance is a particular strength. In the absence on maternity leave of the head of department during the inspection, teaching and learning were satisfactory and standards were average.
Geography	Very good. Results are consistently high and add value to predictions based on students' GCSE results. Very good teaching and good leadership results in high levels of motivation and achievement.
Sociology	Very good. Results reflect good achievement from earlier GCSE levels. Very good teaching and learning follow from well planned, engaging assignments.
English	Good. Results have been average or below average but currently standards are above average and students are achieving well. Good teaching involves varied strategies to engage students' interest.

In other subjects, work was sampled. Teaching and learning was at least satisfactory and often good, with some very good lessons seen in chemistry, physics, history and French.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Satisfactory. Students are given good advice and personal support as they decide about their future. There are good assessment procedures in place to inform students about their progress and prospects. However, because their use by departments is inconsistent, students are not always clear about how they can improve or challenged enough to exceed their expectations.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Satisfactory. Leadership and management create a positive climate and relationships are good. The school recognises the need to clarify the way forward and increase the appeal of the sixth form for main school students.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The choice of courses allows them to follow a programme suited to their talents and career aspirations They are taught well and challenged to do their best Teachers are accessible to help them if they have difficulties with their work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quality of advice on what they should do in the sixth form Information about their progress towards the qualifications they hope to get Advice about what they should do after they leave school The support and help they could rely on if they had personal problems

These views are derived from the students' questionnaire but only one third of sixth form students returned completed questionnaires. The inspection team agreed with the positive points, though they considered that the amount of challenge could be higher. In their discussions with students inspectors found that most thought the quality of advice and support they are given is good. However, inspectors do agree that students are not given enough information about their progress.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Inspectors make judgements about provision in subjects and courses, and about leadership and management, in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement "outstanding" in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to "very weak".

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils' attainments on entry have been broadly average until recently. In 2000 they were below average and in 2001 they were well below average, with standards of boys being lower than those of girls. Similarly the social and economic circumstances of pupils have declined and are now below average. There are pockets of significant deprivation in Melksham from which the school draws around a quarter of its intake and this impacts adversely upon pupils' attainment and progress. There are a small number of pupils from ethnic minorities in the school. They are well included and their attainment and achievement is no different from other pupils. Pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve well.
2. Results in Years 7 to 9 are average and achievement is satisfactory. In 2001, in the standard assessment tests taken at the end of Year 9, results in English are below those in mathematics and science. Boys did worse than girls in reaching the expected level in English but they did better in mathematics and science. However, girls did less well than girls nationally at the higher levels in English and science. The trend in results is below the national trend and reflects the changes in the school's intake. When compared with pupils from similar schools, based on the number of pupils eligible for free school meals, results are average, though they are below average at the highest levels.
3. Results in Year 10 and 11 are also average and achievement is satisfactory. In the GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2001, the proportion of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades is below the national average, with boys closer to the national average for boys than girls are to the national average for girls. However, the proportion gaining 5 or more A*-G grades is above and gaining 1 or more A*-G grades is in line with the national average, with girls doing better than boys. The average points scores of both boys and girls are close to the national average. The trend in pupils gaining 5 A*-C grades is below the national trend, declining from 49.2 per cent in 1996 to 41 per cent in 2001. By comparison with similar schools results are average for 5 A*-C grades, for one or more A*-G grades and for average point scores. They are above average for 5 A*-G grades. The school has tended not to meet the targets it sets in conjunction with the local education authority, but results have been broadly in line with predictions based on pupils' earlier levels of attainment. This suggests that the targets have been too challenging, particularly given the difficulties the school has experienced, until recently, in coping with its changing intake. Results are well above average in art and design and above average in drama and music.
4. Inspection evidence confirms that overall standards are average. In English pupils listen carefully when required to do so and speak confidently, though not fluently. Reading standards are adequate, though few pupils read widely. The writing of higher attaining pupils is good and they produce well-structured essays in Years 10 and 11. However, handwriting, spelling and punctuation are spoilt by carelessness, particularly in average to lower attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9. In mathematics standards are above average in Years 7 to 9, particularly of the highest attaining pupils who, for example, know well how to use the rules of algebra when solving equations. Standards are average in Years 10 and 11. In science they are average throughout. In Years 7 to 9 poor literacy skills have an adverse affect on standards and pupils often do not understand why things in science happen as they do. In Year 11 pupils are good at carrying out and recording investigations for themselves.
5. Standards are average in all other subjects in Year 9, except that they are below average in art and design, because of insufficient time, and in history. In design and technology, practical skills are better than design skills. By Year 11 standards are well above average in art and design and above average in drama and music; they are average in all other subjects. Standards are often depressed by the poor literacy skills of many pupils.
6. Overall achievement is satisfactory. The single most consistent factor that prevents achievement from being higher is the attitude to learning of a minority of pupils, especially in Year 7 and 8. In

English, changes of teacher and timetabling arrangements have also had an adverse effect on progress. Achievement would be better if teachers had higher and more consistent expectations of work and behaviour. In mathematics the National Numeracy Strategy has had a positive effect on the good achievement in Years 7 to 9. By Year 11 pupils have made satisfactory progress, improving their grasp of the rules of algebra and of shape, space, measurement and data handling. They are less secure in appreciating the power of estimation. In science progress in Years 7 to 9 in investigation skills is slow, but pupils catch up in Years 10 to 11, when they begin to have a better understanding of the process of forming and testing a hypothesis.

7. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good in ICT and music, it is satisfactory in all other subjects except history, where the poor behaviour of some pupils in Years 7 and 8 holds up progress for themselves and others. In Years 10 and 11 achievement is very good in art and design and drama, it is good in music, it is satisfactory in all other subjects, though not for lower attaining pupils in religious education. The inspection did not find any significant variations in the achievements of boys or girls.

Basic skills

8. The standard of literacy in most years is satisfactory and enables pupils to make progress with their work in different subjects. Pupils can listen carefully when teachers insist on them doing so. They contribute to class discussions, although they usually give short answers to questions and do not have much opportunity to discuss in mathematics, for example. Some pupils in Years 7 and 8 have poor reading and writing skills that constrain their learning at times. They struggle to read source material in history and teachers sometimes ask them to complete written tasks that are too difficult for them. Some take little pride in the presentation of their written work but this improves by Year 9 in most subjects.
9. The standard of numeracy in some subjects is satisfactory. In other subjects there is no evidence of numeracy being applied to support pupils' learning. All pupils in Year 7 use a computerised learning system to improve their numeracy skills. Individual targets are established and pupil performance is tracked. Pupils in Year 7 with special educational needs follow a published numeracy course. In modern foreign languages, the Year 7 pupils who participated in the Pencilcase Project 2000 presented their findings on a survey of pets using ICT. In ICT, pupils identify and use formulae on spreadsheets well. They can vary the data and recognise the change in outcomes. In mathematics, pupils in Year 7 make use of the National Numeracy Strategy and assessment data is analysed to identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses. In history, numeracy is unsatisfactory and the pace of lessons and learning suffers because many low attaining Year 9 pupils are unable to divide a page in their exercise books and draw a table accurately. They are unable to perform the calculations involved. Pupils in Year 10 studying geography can analyse birth and death rates in a population survey, using the appropriate representative values correctly. In science, Year 11 pupils make good use of the rules of algebra when solving velocity and resistance problems. In physical education, Year 11 pupils make good use of numeracy in fitness testing and training programmes.
10. Pupils' ICT skills are generally satisfactory in terms of word processing but their skill in presenting information to a broad range of audiences is under-developed. Most pupils have good skills in relation to control technology, data logging and measurement and most can use a spreadsheet to carry out basic mathematical calculations. Almost all pupils have good practical skills, competently and confidently logging on to the network system, effectively loading and executing the required software and using the keyboard and the mouse to successfully negotiate the menus and functions.

Special educational needs

11. Pupils with special educational needs enter the school with well below average levels of literacy. They make good progress particularly in reading and spelling. By the end of Year 7 all pupils are able to read independently with developing fluency and comprehension. By the end of Year 11 all pupils attain D, E or F grades in GCSE English and English literature. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress in the development of their self-confidence and self-esteem at both key stages. There are good examples of pupils attaining well in drama and physical education, for example, and in appropriately designed courses such as the Year 10 work related course. Achievement and progress are less satisfactory where there is no specialised support provided, for example in some mathematics lessons. It is unsatisfactory in religious education because of a lack of appropriate resources.

Sixth form

12. In the A-level and Advanced GNVQ examinations in 2001, results are below the national average; the average points score of students is 12.9 against the provisional national average for all comprehensive schools of 16.3. The results reflect the school's modest entry requirements for students embarking upon advanced level studies. The proportion of pupils staying in 2001 from Year 11 into the sixth form is low, at around 30 per cent. In previous years it has been around 40 per cent. Generally students complete their courses. The trend in results has been downwards; in 1999 the average points score was above all schools nationally and in 2000 they were close to average. The average points score of males is higher than females. Results in geography and sociology are particularly good, but with small numbers in most subjects, performance is better judged against the prior attainment of those students who are taking each course.
13. In this respect, achievement in examinations based on prior attainment is satisfactory and students generally achieve at least in line with predictions based on their GCSE results. There was some underachievement at the higher levels in 2000 but in 2001 the school added value to expectations. However, the school is only now beginning to use more sophisticated analysis of earlier attainment in order to pinpoint achievement more precisely and set more challenging but achievable targets. Although there is no specific provision for all pupils in the key skills of communication, application of number and ICT, there is the opportunity to re-take GCSE English and mathematics in Year 12 and some ICT accreditation is available. The results of those students who take re-take GCSE examinations in the sixth form are poor, although in English they tend to improve their grades. However, overall students have at least average standards in all three key skills, sufficient to support their work in the various subjects they take and to meet the demands of further education or employment. The good teaching observed during the inspection is resulting in better achievement by the majority of students currently studying in the sixth form.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. The majority of the pupils have satisfactory attitudes to school and their work; this is not as high as reported at the last inspection. There are a significant number of pupils who have a negative view of the school, particularly in Years 7 to 9. This is reflected in the way they conduct themselves around the site and in lessons. Throughout the school relationships are satisfactory overall and teachers are using a variety of strategies to foster more positive attitudes in all of the pupils. In a Year 10 religious education lesson the teacher used praise well to ensure that all of the pupils felt their contributions were valued. In physical education lessons there is good interaction between students and teachers that creates a positive learning environment. The geography department has produced an excellent GCSE coursework guide that is helping pupils to take more pride and care in their work. There are good attitudes to learning and good behaviour where pupils with special educational needs are taught in small groups and where there is appropriate help from education support assistants or specialist teachers. This occurs in Year 7 and 8 English classes, Year 9 study skills classes, Year 10 work related classes and in the Learning Zone. Where there is no specialist learning support offered there are examples of uncontrolled behaviour.
15. Most of the pupils who were interviewed during the inspection expressed satisfactory views of the school but they were concerned about the standard of behaviour in some lessons and around the

school. All said that there is some bullying and that the toilets are unpleasant to use. A number of them would like to brighten up the classrooms. Although the canteen has improved it is still too small and lunchtimes too short, so at times it is difficult to get anything to eat.

16. Half the parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire do not feel that behaviour in the school is good. The inspection team agrees with these views and judges behaviour to be unsatisfactory overall. This is much lower than reported at the last inspection and it is clear that the school has been through a period in which it virtually lost control of behaviour. Many pupils do not move around the school sensibly, others shout and push in corridors and when queuing outside classrooms. Too often this results in pupils who are not in the right frame of mind for learning when they enter a classroom. Behaviour in lessons ranges between excellent and poor and is often dependent upon the expectations of the teacher. In lessons where teachers have high expectations of behaviour, the pupils learn well. For example in an excellent Year 9 history lesson on the transport revolution in Britain, the teachers' very good planning of a challenging task ensured that the pupils were quiet and attentive and their behaviour was very good. As a result of the good management of a Year 8 physical education lesson a lively class was kept on task during the development of a game situation in volleyball. In other lessons when tasks are not well planned or teachers have low expectations of the class, pupils' behaviour varies between satisfactory and poor. For example, in a Year 7 history lesson when the teacher opened the lesson with a negative comment, 'the problem with history is you have to write about it', pupils soon added to the problem. At times the unsatisfactory behaviour of a significant minority of the pupils is oppressive and affects the learning that is taking place despite the best efforts of the teachers.
17. However, significant improvements have been made in behaviour throughout the school since the headteacher took up her post in September 2000. Almost everyone spoken to – staff, pupils and parents – was very clear that a major change for the better had happened and all felt very positive that the school was on course to resolve the difficulties.
18. The number of fixed period and permanent exclusions has decreased since 1999, owing to procedures that the school has put in place. For example, the Learning Zone, which includes a facility to exclude pupils on site. The school works hard to support pupils before exclusion but uses the sanction of both internal withdrawal and external exclusion as part of its disciplinary procedures. Given the care taken to provide for some very challenging pupils the present figures are reasonable.
19. The personal development of the pupils is unsatisfactory. A significant minority of pupils is lacking in self-control and is not willing to take personal responsibility. In some lessons, pupils are not always well prepared and organised, they enter classrooms late and take too long before they are ready for learning. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson when considering the use of presentational devices and visual influences pupils showed a clear lack of a learning ethos despite the best attempts of the teacher. Some pupils are able to work successfully in groups. This was evident in a Year 11 personal and social education lesson when the pupils were discussing photographs during a health topic. However, in other lessons pupils find it difficult to work co-operatively with their peers without constant adult supervision. Too few opportunities are provided for pupils to take responsibility in the life of the school. There are exceptions, for example Year 9 pupils act as receptionists and also in Year 9 there are trained peer mentors who support pupils in Year 7. There is a school council, which is made up of representatives from every year group. The council meets to discuss issues they feel are important, for example bike sheds, lunchtime arrangements and a design for the swimming pool area. Many pupils complete their homework and they are able to develop their independent learning skills through the use of the library before and after school and during lunchtimes. There are, however, too few opportunities to use ICT across the curriculum to further promote independent research skills.

20. At 92.2 per cent this term, attendance is in line with the national average but unauthorised absences are higher than national averages. In the main this is due to parents not always informing the school of the reason for their child's absence. A number of pupils are regularly late to lessons but the new procedures that the headteacher has put in place of senior staff patrolling the site during lesson changeovers is reducing these numbers.

Sixth form

21. Students have satisfactory attitudes to school and their work. For example, in a Year 12 biology lesson the students showed excellent levels of concentration when studying cell division. Most students are well motivated in their learning and prepared to work hard and think for themselves. This was clearly seen in a successful Year 13 lesson, when students engaged in a challenging discussion of mathematical principles. They co-operate well with the head of sixth form and their tutors, with whom they enjoy good relationships, as with their fellow students; there is good atmosphere of mutual respect, which is enabling them to make satisfactory progress in their learning.
22. Behaviour is good. Students know what is expected of them and respond accordingly. Attendance rates are satisfactory; students sign in and out of school for study periods and tutors regularly check on their whereabouts to ensure that they are in school when they should be. The extent to which students develop good independent study habits varies. While many are persistent and capable, there are some that continue to need close supervision.
23. The personal development of students is satisfactory. They take up with enthusiasm opportunities to participate in sporting, musical and dramatic activities. They contribute to the life of the school through such activities as the school council and the leadership they provide on the Year 7 residential trip to Wick.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS AND STUDENTS TAUGHT?

24. Many of the pupils entering the school do not have a positive attitude to learning and increasingly they are arriving with well below average levels of attainment and a range of special needs, including emotional and behavioural difficulties. This has presented a major challenge, which did not exist to the same extent at the last inspection. It is evident that the school did not respond effectively to these changes until recently, when the arrival of a new headteacher, determined support from the local education authority to address the difficulties and major changes in staffing have enabled the school to begin to meet the challenge. It is to the credit of all concerned that from a largely demoralised staff two years ago the school now has a complement of well motivated teachers, many of whom are new. They are largely teaching effectively and beginning to make a good impact on standards of attainment, on achievement and on behaviour.
25. Overall, teaching is good. Over nine out of ten lessons observed were satisfactory or better and two out of every three were good or better. Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11, where the proportion of lessons where teaching was good or better is higher than in Years 7 to 9. Four lessons were judged excellent. In Years 7 and 8, where a larger proportion of challenging pupils is to be found, there are more – albeit still only a small number - unsatisfactory, poor or very poor lessons. This reflects the fact that teaching is less consistently good in these years and learning is satisfactory. In almost every case in the few lessons that are not successful, the problem centres on pupils' behaviour. This was seen disrupting even well prepared and taught lessons, through little fault of the teacher. However, in some instances temporary teachers or those teaching outside their specialism are unfamiliar with the pupils and find it very difficult to control the lesson.
26. In English there is good teaching by English specialists; however, some lessons taught by temporary or non-specialist teachers are unsatisfactory. In good lessons teachers plan interesting and varied activities and insist on good behaviour and concentration. In unsatisfactory lessons the teachers allow the pupils' poor attitudes to get in the way of effective learning. Mathematics teaching is good in all years and while learning is good overall, timetable constraints, large classes

and unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour interfere with learning. Planning is good and expectations high, but pupils are not given enough opportunity for personal development; assessment and marking are unsatisfactory. Science teaching is good in all years, but particularly in Years 10 and 11 when teachers teach to their science specialisms. Teachers' enthusiasm motivates pupils to learn and the interesting and varied activities planned maintain concentration – though low-attaining pupils can fail to understand what is going on. Management of behaviour is not consistent and sometimes a noisy minority disrupts learning. In all three subjects, ICT is not used enough to support learning.

27. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good in design and technology, geography, history, ICT, modern foreign languages, music, physical education, religious education; it is satisfactory in art and design and drama. There are aspects of teaching in Years 7 and 8 that are less effective. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is very good in geography; good in art and design, design and technology, drama, history, ICT, music, physical education and religious education; it is satisfactory in modern foreign languages. Learning follows a similar pattern, except that the instances of unsatisfactory learning across all subjects in Years 7 and 8 in particular make learning satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 rather than good.
28. Teachers' knowledge and expertise is generally good. In a Year 7 lesson in design and technology, the teacher's expertise, good planning and good preparation of resources resulted in pupils showing interest and learning well how to produce a CD ROM. This lesson demonstrated one of the features of effective teaching, particularly in Years 7 to 9: pupils were actively engaged in the learning process, having had their interest aroused. Another very good example was a Year 7 science lesson taken by a newly qualified teacher. She gained the attention of the class by splitting them into two and making one group face her while the other faced the back of the room. She then gave verbal instructions and at the same time demonstrated how to make an object out of a piece of paper. All the pupils were then given a piece of paper and told to make the same object. It became clear to all the pupils that the group who had been able both to watch and listen achieved the task with the greatest success. She had made the point and in consequence pupils understood that they must both watch and listen carefully when being given instructions and shown how to carry out practical work in science. In a very good Year 9 French lesson, pupils had to come to the front and label in French the parts of the body displayed on the board with an overhead projector. They responded with enthusiasm and all were engaged in good learning because they had to check the spelling as each volunteer added a label.
29. In each of these lessons the teachers had taken into account the learning needs of the pupils in the class and ensured that the well-planned activities would fulfil their high expectations of participation and achievement. Because the pupils were actively involved in the learning process and it was made interesting and enjoyable, they responded well and there were no behaviour problems. In some cases where teachers struggle to control by simply flexing their authority, they offer too easy a target to poorly motivated pupils looking for an opportunity to show off in front of their peers. When pupils are involved, they have plenty of active learning broken down into a sequence of activities and where they are clear about what they are doing and why, lessons are successful. In a good Year 7 lesson in physical education, the pupils understood the importance of warming up before physical activity. Because the teacher gave them the opportunity to devise their own warm-up routine they were fully involved in thinking about, devising and carrying out their exercises. In consequence learning was good.
30. The principles of good teaching that apply to Years 7 to 9 are also appropriate to Years 10 and 11, though at this level there is a greater degree of maturity and a stronger focus on examination grades. Here too the best lessons provide challenge and opportunities for pupils to take some responsibility for their learning. In an excellent Year 10 drama lesson pupils were learning very well because the teacher had given them very good, clear instructions and ensured they understood what they needed to do to succeed. They worked very well together, showing respect for each other's work and making thoughtful observations and evaluations of both individual and group performance. The teacher constantly challenged them to think how they might improve and they responded very well to her high expectations. Similarly in a very good Year 11 art and design lesson, pupils were clear about expectations because they had been given clear guidance about

the assessment criteria and they had a good knowledge and understanding of their own learning. They used their creative talents well and behaviour was exemplary – because such a good climate for learning had been established.

31. This good use of assessment is not found consistently in all subject areas and is an important area for improvement. Assessment data is not yet used extensively enough to ensure that pupils - and their parents - are clear about their learning targets and have a sense of ownership and responsibility in relation to learning and achievement. In the same vein, marking is not consistently good and too often does not raise expectations and make clear what is needed to achieve improvements. Poor work is allowed to pass unchallenged. Parents were concerned about homework. The inspection team found that while the setting of homework is satisfactory, there is room for improvement. Along with improving such opportunities for independent learning, teachers should make much more use of ICT to add interest to their teaching and encourage more self-motivated learning.
32. ICT is well taught in discrete ICT lessons, but in other subjects teaching depends almost entirely upon the competence and inclination of the teacher, which is not satisfactory. Training has been made available to all teachers as part of a national provision, in which the school, as a technology college, has been a regional provider. While there are problems in recruiting teachers qualified to teach ICT, all teachers are now expected to use ICT as part of their teaching repertoire. There are good examples where this happens: in design and technology teachers show pupils how to use powerful design software to model ideas. In geography teachers help pupils to make good use of digital cameras and imaging software to record and present their fieldwork findings. Teachers encourage pupils to use ICT for research purposes in a number of subjects, for example physical education. The Year 7 'Pencilcase Project' demonstrates the benefits of science, mathematics and design and technology teachers working well together to support learning through ICT.
33. The teaching of other basic skills also requires consistent and planned attention, particularly in Years 7 to 9. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory but is not planned in a coherent manner. In music, art, religious education and mathematics key terminology is constantly used and reinforced. In geography and science lessons teachers correct pupils' use of key terms when necessary but little emphasis is placed on the use of technical vocabulary in ICT. Pupils are rarely asked to read aloud, except in modern languages. Science teachers stress the importance of skimming and scanning when pupils read for information but this rarely happens in other subjects. Teachers place more emphasis on the development of pupils' writing skills. They help pupils to structure their writing by providing frameworks for them to follow and complete. In geography, for example, pupils made more meaningful notes when watching a video because the teacher gave them key questions to answer. In French, Year 11 pupils wrote about their holiday plans more correctly because of the clear advice they were given about how to structure their ideas.
34. The teaching of numeracy is not well planned, though teachers include aspects of number in the course of their teaching. Examples can be found in most subjects but number tends to feature more in science, design and technology, information and communication technology, geography, music and physical education. Teachers generally support numeracy needs as they arise, but there is no co-ordination of what goes on, through an audit and subsequent action plan.
35. Teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good where pupils are taught in small groups and where there are education support assistants. Teaching is supportive and structured. All pupils have and understand individual targets for improvement, both academic and behavioural. Their learning is organised into small steps so that they can achieve and recognise their own achievement. There is good specialist teaching to meet particular needs, for example pupils with specific learning difficulties and dyslexia. All teachers are aware of pupils with special educational needs and their individual education programmes. Many plan their lessons accordingly, but some teachers feel inadequately trained to support pupils with more severe learning or emotional and behavioural difficulties.
36. Specialist teaching is provided for any pupils who occasionally join the school who are in the early stages of learning English. The two pupils for whom English is an additional language are well

integrated into the normal teaching of the school as are the few pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. This was commented upon favourably at the parents' meeting.

37. The timetable for this year has not helped a number of subjects because the distribution of lessons over a fortnight is not satisfactory and there are too many double lessons that lack pace and variety. There is virtue in reducing movement around the school by having double lessons, but many pupils cannot maintain concentration for nearly two hours at a time, and these lessons require very careful planning to maintain pace and variety. The school buildings sprawl over quite a large area, which makes movement between lessons an issue – both in terms of time and behaviour management. But too often pupils arrive to lessons late – and in the wrong frame of mind. There is not enough supervision of movement between lessons. A great deal of time is also wasted during form time and registrations and how this time is spent should be reviewed.

Sixth form

38. Overall, teaching in the sixth form is good. The very good relationships that characterise teaching at this level underpin effective learning. Teachers are enthusiastic and their good rapport with students enables them to challenge them intellectually without discouraging those who may be struggling. Their knowledge of their subjects is good and their lessons are well prepared, seeking to engage students actively in learning. For example, in a Year 13 biology lesson on the kidney, the teacher had skilfully grouped the students in mutually supportive pairs and directed them to appropriate textbooks. They were given the task of producing a revision chart summarising all that they had learned about the physiology of the kidney. They were guided by a well-designed worksheet. The teacher moved around the class discussing the work with each group and ensuring that each student made progress and attained at the appropriate level. In economics teachers make good use of diagrams to demonstrate the impact of the market on business. There is a weakness in the consistency of marking across subjects. Usually major assignments are assessed and annotated thoroughly, but sometimes other work is not carefully monitored, for example in biology. In art, teachers' comments are not always incisive enough and do not encourage students to adopt a rigour in the evaluation of their own work. While all students are given minimum target grades, the detailed use of assessment to drive performance in each subject is not yet developed consistently. This is not the case on GNVQ courses, where students have a clear idea of how well they are doing and what they need to do reach higher levels of attainment.
39. Learning is also good overall. Students read and research well, making use of library resources and the Internet. However, despite the very good ICT facilities in the sixth form, not enough students are exploiting the potential of ICT to extend and support their learning. For example, there is little use of graphing software in science and product design. By contrast, in science, art, geography and sociology students make good use of the Internet for research, as a result of direction and encouragement by their teachers. In geography they capitalise on ICT to store and present information gathered from research. For example, students used digital cameras during fieldwork and processed the images along with text to create posters demonstrating coastal management. Students of both sexes discuss well in class and enjoy the stimulus of intellectual debate. In art they bounce ideas off each other and so develop their critical awareness. Some students are better at taking notes and organising their written work than others whose study skills are unsatisfactory. For example in English and sociology, students use their notebooks well and develop good research skills to support their essay writing. However, some students in the early stages of advanced courses have not come into the sixth form with the attitudes and study skills needed to work independently. This was particularly seen in Year 12 business studies students. Students enjoy practical work in science and learn well from what they do. In art, students learnt a great deal by working on improvements to the design and décor of the school's reception area.

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

40. As at the previous inspection, the quality of the curriculum is satisfactory overall but with some weaknesses. Whilst the school offers a wide curriculum, with an effective balance between vocational and academic courses, there are anomalies in the amount of time allocated between subjects and some unsatisfactory timetabling arrangements that have an adverse impact on learning. However, the school provides some notable innovations, including some special arrangements for disaffected pupils and exciting links with schools abroad. The length of the taught week is above the national average, allowing greater flexibility in timetabling options and helpful use is made of twilight teaching sessions for some vocational courses that cannot be timetabled into the school day.
41. Whilst the school offers a broad curriculum, with a good choice of academic and vocational studies, the amount of time allocated to some subjects is below the national average. Examples are music, art and design in Years 7 to 11 and English, modern foreign languages and religious education in Years 10 and 11. On the other hand some subjects have well above the average amount of time allocated, for instance physical education and design technology at both key stages and religious education in Years 7 to 9. The amount of time allocated to physical education in Years 10 and 11 is nearly double the national average, whilst art and design and music have 25 per cent less time in Years 7 to 9 than is recommended. There is no overriding policy or rationale for this imbalance between subjects. Whilst there is not an exact match between the time allocated and standards, there is sufficient correlation for concern. For instance, the below average standards in art and design at the end of Year 9 are a result of the lack of time, whereas standards are above average in Year 11 where there is sufficient time.
42. The school has satisfactory links with the nine primary schools whose pupils mainly transfer to the school, though there is room for greater curriculum continuity and co-operation, for example in mathematics. A recently formed 'family of schools', comprising this school, two primary and one special school, provides further improved links with the schools in the immediate vicinity.
43. In Years 7 to 9, all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are taught. At the time of the last inspection, insufficient time was allowed for ICT and this continues to be the case. Tracking of pupils' progress across subjects is not fully effective and pupils are not assured a consistent entitlement that will enable them to reach expected standards. On a more positive note, flexible timetabling allows pupils to study French or German or Spanish; there is regular discrete provision for drama and useful exploration of a subject-linked expressive arts programme in Year 8. This complements the discrete provision in each of the arts subjects. Another innovation is the GCSE short course in religious education provided for all pupils in Years 9 and 10, with pupils sitting the GCSE examination a year before pupils in most other schools.
44. With the exception of mathematics, subjects in Years 7 to 9 are mostly taught in mixed ability groupings. There is some setting in science and modern foreign languages in Years 8 and 9 and some setting in English in Year 9 only. Overall, however, there is little use of setting. This means that pupils at the extremes of the ability spectrum do not always receive the support they need in class. The decision over whether there should be setting is left to individual departments. The lack of a whole school strategy for setting leads to fragmentation in pupils' experiences across the different subjects of the curriculum. Counter-balancing this lack of strategic oversight is some innovative provision for pupils who struggle with academic work. A reading recovery programme provides additional support for literacy and another scheme provides similar support in numeracy skills. In Years 7 and 8, small withdrawal groups provide valuable study support that helps pupils to integrate more successfully in mainstream classes. In Year 9, provision of study skills is available instead of a foreign language, with some pupils being dis-applied from the normal curriculum. However, whilst this support helps pupils to cope more satisfactorily in other subjects, it has an adverse impact on their competence in the language lessons from which they are withdrawn. The additional support has less impact than if it were offered to younger pupils in the key stage before disaffected patterns of learning become embedded. Provision for higher attainers is not as well developed as that for lower attainers, and so opportunities are sometimes missed within the mixed

ability classes to provide a suitable level of challenge for these pupils. This is evident, for instance, in some lessons in art and design, geography and religious education.

45. There is a broad curriculum in Years 10 and 11 that includes a full range of GCSE options as well as vocational courses in art and design, manufacturing and ICT, that each count as two GCSE's. Pupils studying vocational courses are required to study two evenings a week after school. This flexible use of time is helpful in ensuring pupils meet coursework expectations. For pupils who have difficulties with the academic curriculum, there is provision of non-GCSE courses in some subjects and a recently established work related learning course. This is an innovative departure that might result in some pupils spending up to four days a week in a college of further education. The school is carefully monitoring the provision for these pupils to ensure that their needs are fully met. Religious education is not taught separately in Year 11, and this is a breach of statutory requirements. At the time of the last inspection, there was insufficient time and this continues to be the case. There was also a lack of continuity in mathematics from Years 7 to 11. This is no longer the case. The early entry to the GCSE examination in religious education also occurs in languages and this provides good challenge to higher attaining pupils. These pupils can also take three sciences during the time allocated for double science.
46. There are some inconsistencies in the construction of the timetable. Some pupils in Years 7 to 9, for instance, have double lessons in English, mathematics and history. Whilst this has been introduced to minimise movement between lessons and is time effective, these sessions are too long and some pupils lose concentration. Some pupils have two lessons in some subjects on the same day, again for instance in mathematics and history. Not only does this mean that there is too much in one day, which adversely affects pupils' ability to concentrate, but also results in long gaps between lessons, owing to the two week timetable. In Year 9, some pupils have two lessons of mathematics one week and four in the next week. This lack of consistency is replicated in some other subjects, where there is unequal provision from one day or one week to the next, leading to a fragmentation in pupils' learning experiences. In physical education, insufficient account has been taken of the numbers of pupils receiving lessons at certain times of the week and not enough staff are available. One GCSE design and technology group is taught by three separate teachers, leading to some discontinuity that impairs learning. In ICT some pupils, but not all, can opt for discrete lessons leading to GNVQ accreditation. Arrangements to compensate for this through the design and technology curriculum are helpful but do not entirely meet the pupils' needs.

Literacy and Numeracy

47. The school is developing a literacy policy, as yet unpublished. However, all departments are aware of the need to improve pupils' literacy skills in their subjects and are beginning to make an effective contribution to their development.
48. There is no whole school policy on numeracy. No audit has been conducted across the curriculum to identify when and where numeracy skills are needed to support learning. There are no formal links with partner primary schools to establish how numerate pupils are when joining the school. The school has conducted half a day of in-service training to raise staff awareness; for several years it has operated a summer school. Library books to support coursework or sustain pupils' interest, learning and curiosity are limited and used infrequently.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) and careers education

49. The provision is good and has improved since the last inspection when there was too much overlap between the various components of the course. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 receive one lesson a week. This is managed as a separate subject by a specialist team of teachers. There is also provision for one weekly lesson in Year 11. Staff and pupils evaluate individual units in the programme, with improvements being made as a consequence. Opportunities for pupils to develop their initiative and responsibility extend beyond the formal curriculum. All Year 9 pupils, for instance, do reception duty and there is an established programme of community service. An innovative anti-bullying campaign successfully encourages peer mentoring by pupils and each tutor group has a representative on the school council. In Year 11, all pupils are taught the various cross-

curricular themes identified within the national curriculum. Sex education and education about harmful substances is successfully incorporated into the scheme.

50. Careers guidance is satisfactory. Year 9 PSHE tutors successfully teach careers education during the spring term using an attractively presented booklet that encourages interactive styles of learning. A qualified careers counsellor supports this by providing a one-lesson introduction to the careers library and careers options. More intensive careers guidance is provided for Year 11 by tutors through the PSHE course. A planned seven-week programme successfully teaches pupils about different career options and how to apply for jobs. Year 11 pupils are successfully taught about educational options beyond the age of 16 and encouraged to complete action plans that consider factors such as course levels, and preferred teaching and learning styles. There are effective links with higher education and further education institutions. Tutors benefit from a recently updated pack that contains specialist information such as a useful list of relevant web sites. This provision is further supported by regular input by specialist staff and provision of suitable resources in the school library. There are work experience placements for all Year 10 pupils as well as the work-related curriculum designed to meet the needs of a particular group. A recently piloted short course in careers education for Year 10 took place in June and July following pupils' religious education GCSE examination. This was a good use of available time, providing a useful bridge between the Year 10 work experience placements and the more intensive careers counselling provision in Year 11.

Equal opportunities

51. The equal opportunity policy is an integral part of the school's ethos and culture. Provision is made to include pupils with Aspergers syndrome, autism and those in wheel chairs, although there are problems of physical access for the latter. Pupils from ethnic minorities are fully integrated into the school's provision. Any pupils arriving at the school whose first language is not English are given good support. For the lowest attaining pupils the school has introduced structured developmental reading recovery programmes to help with literacy problems. Individual literacy and numeracy support is provided for all pupils in Year 7 through a computer-based integrated learning program. In Year 7 the lowest attaining pupils also follow a specially designed programme in mathematics to raise their levels of attainment. Study skills are offered to lowest attaining pupils in Year 9 instead of modern foreign languages and Year 10 pupils are dis-applied from taking science and modern foreign languages at GCSE level for a more practical and engaging curriculum. The Learning Zone supports disaffected and vulnerable pupils. It has resulted in an improvement in school attendance and a reduction in exclusions. Pastoral support programmes for pupils with individual timetables and one-to-one reviews for disaffected and vulnerable pupils are being developed to assist pupils to access the curriculum. The school does not have anyone specifically designated to monitor equal opportunities.

Special educational needs

52. Provision for special educational needs is broadly satisfactory. Provision by specialists in the department is good but that by all teachers in lessons across the curriculum is inconsistent, though teachers have good access to individual education plans. Fifty-one pupils are dis-applied from the National Curriculum, which is high. However, this brings benefits to pupils who can access other subjects because they are given extra support in literacy. Courses and experiences are provided which are relevant to their needs, for example study skills, work-related learning, extended work experience. These ensure improved motivation and inclusion. Alternative qualifications are provided such as the National Skills Profile, at a pace pupils can manage. The Learning Zone encourages pupils to attend who are school phobics, who have suffered great distress and disturbance in their emotional lives, or who would otherwise have been excluded for extreme behaviour. By concentrating on areas of the curriculum where they can succeed, the Learning Zone helps to develop pupils' self-esteem.
53. A group has been set up to consider a policy for gifted and talented pupils. It is too early to judge any impact from this. At present high attaining pupils taking modern foreign languages are entered

for GCSE in Year 10. There is also a Russian club held after school for pupils with particular interest in languages.

Extra-curricular activities

54. A good range of extra-curricular activities extends the mainstream curriculum. These include the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, outdoor pursuits, public speaking, school productions, some sports activities, Young Musician of the Year, and the Lower School Drama Festival. The school has been successful in its bid for lottery funding to support out-of-school hours learning (the only school to be praised by the Lottery Commission for undertaking community consultation), and there are regular revision sessions and homework opportunities.
55. The school has a number of good links with the local and wider community, in keeping with its technology college status. They include work experience links and visits to and from a large number of local industrial concerns that are active in the local economy. Local clergy visit assemblies and there are good links with the local police, health service and youth workers. The school has participated enthusiastically in local events such as Melksham 2000. Through the *Hochtief* Project staff are successfully training teachers from other schools to develop a variety of learning styles linking mathematics, science, design and technology and ICT.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

56. The overall provision for pupils' spiritual moral social and cultural development is satisfactory, although there are weaknesses in the provision made for pupils to understand the cultural diversity of our society. The school has not carefully audited or planned for this aspect and as a result opportunities are missed to improve the attitudes and values of pupils by putting greater emphasis on these aspects.
57. Several subjects do include good opportunities for pupils to explore the spiritual dimension of life. In physical education pupils are encouraged to express their inner feelings through planning and performing in dance and movement. In religious education there are several units of work, which encourage pupils to reflect upon their own and other peoples beliefs. Assemblies take place twice a week. During the visit these varied considerably. Not all of them contained an act of worship. The school is in breach of statutory regulations in this respect. Likewise the use of tutor time varied considerably. Some tutors used the time profitably, setting the scene for the day, whilst others did nothing. This lack of consistency and planning means that the on balance provision for spiritual development is satisfactory.
58. The provision for moral development is satisfactory. The school aims place a strong emphasis on moral development. Respect for others is a key aspect of the school mission statement. Strong emphasis is placed on fostering values of honesty, fairness and respect for truth and justice. A key aspect of this is the provision made for personal social and health education. This is a well-organized programme that explores important issues such as racism and bullying. The quality of delivery of this programme varies considerably. Experienced and well-trained teachers handle the subject well, but for a significant number of teachers this was not the case. Lessons lack clear aims and are poorly taught. This is reinforced in several subject areas. For example in science pupils discuss the moral implications of genetic engineering, whilst in religious education several topics examine contemporary moral issues.
59. Most staff provide good role models and classroom management is generally positive, setting out clear guidance on behaviour. However there is a lack of consistency, with some subject areas such as mathematics failing to reinforce the high standards that are upheld in other subject areas.
60. The provision for social development is satisfactory. Opportunities for pupils to work together in groups or pairs occur throughout the school. In physical education pupils cooperate in small groups and are encouraged to evaluate each other's performance. Group work is used extensively in geography and drama. The work of the Kandu project supplements this with groups presenting plays on themes such as bullying. There are some opportunities for pupils to take responsibilities in the day to day life of the school. The school is involved in working in the community in such things

as work experience and organizing Christmas parties for old people but this is not a strength of the school. A number of pupils are involved in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

61. A shortage of opportunities to examine the cultural diversity of our society means that the overall provision for cultural development is unsatisfactory. However, the good extra-curricular opportunities offered in music and drama involve a large number of pupils. History covers several topics that help pupils understand the importance of our cultural heritage and English explores aspects of our literary heritage. In modern foreign languages classroom work is supported by several trips to near European cultures. A narrow syllabus in religious education and an absence of coverage in other subjects such as English means that pupils have limited awareness of the wide cultural diversity in our society.

Sixth form

62. Curriculum arrangements in the sixth form are satisfactory, with a broad range of learning opportunities on offer. There is a satisfactory range of AS/A-level courses, complemented by a limited number of vocational options. The number of AS/A-levels available has been enhanced by the provision of psychology via a video link. Though this development potentially represents an enlightened use of new technology to improve the curriculum, the students following this course are critical of the arrangements. The statutory curriculum is unsatisfactory because the arrangements for religious education, an issue raised in the previous inspection report, still have not been satisfactorily addressed. No religious education is taught in the sixth form and no audit of the provision for spiritual, moral, social or cultural education has been undertaken. The absence of these aspects undermines the breadth and depth of pupils' personal development.
63. The school is committed to including students and this is evidenced by the flexible entrance requirements for courses and the quality of advice that students are offered in preparation for the sixth form when in Year 11. They are offered a satisfactory choice in their subject options and the flexible use of entry qualifications enhances the level of choice. Paradoxically, however, this flexibility can be the source of later problems. Some students are recruited onto AS/A-level courses having achieved only modestly at GCSE. They then find work at this higher level challenging and struggle to achieve an acceptable standard. The comparative lack of alternative courses makes it difficult to offer such students alternative pathways.
64. Though the school has technology college status, it has not developed as many strong curriculum partnerships with local businesses and commercial enterprises as might be expected. Indeed, the school's partnership with the community has recently been partially curtailed as the options for work experience in the sixth form have been reduced. The school contends that the pressures of Curriculum 2000 have necessitated a reduction in options. At present, given the limited number and impact of partnerships with the local community, this aspect of its provision is unsatisfactory. Careers education is well tailored to meet the needs of both those students who wish to proceed to higher education and those who wish to leave for employment or to take a year out. Tutors provide good advice and support for higher education applications and the school has good information available. Appropriate use is made of the careers service to enhance the advice given to those proposing to enter employment.
65. Provision for enrichment opportunities is satisfactory. Year 12 students follow a course in complementary studies. This offers some key skills tuition as well as opportunities for activities as diverse as sport and first aid. Year 12 students can also participate in an ICT course, from which they can gain accreditation. Fewer enrichment opportunities are available for Year 13 students. Their involvement with the complementary studies course is voluntary, but all students, in both Years 12 and 13, have benefited from the recent introduction of the Young Enterprise scheme. This has proved to be a popular addition to the curriculum, enabling students to involve themselves in the operation of a business. There are also limited opportunities for students to accept responsibility by working with lower school classes, or by doing community service. Charitable work is undertaken, with students involved in fund raising for a school in Nepal, which some of them have visited. Enrichment is also offered through music and drama activities, for example, though there are few cases of events being run, and organised, solely by the students.

66. Though the curriculum satisfactorily provides for needs, some contradictions exist. Over the two-week timetable cycle, most sixth formers, especially those in Year 12, will spend up to eight periods involved with tutorial work and complementary studies. Though these activities offer some benefit, other opportunities are restricted. There are, for example, few opportunities for students to undertake good quality work placements. A better use of time would enable partnerships with local industry and commerce to be forged, enabling the school to raise the aspirations of all students.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS AND STUDENTS?

67. The school's procedures to ensure the pupils' welfare, health and safety are satisfactory. The headteacher and senior finance officer have carried out health and safety checks but there are some areas of the school that concerned the inspection team. The toilets were judged to be unsatisfactory during the previous inspection and are only now being remedied, though at the time of this inspection unsatisfactory temporary arrangements were in place. Paving slabs are uneven in some areas and slippery when wet and the science labs are small for the numbers using them. The school has adequate numbers of qualified first-aid staff and satisfactory arrangements are in place for the management and reporting of injuries. Child protection procedures are good. One of the deputy headteachers is the named responsible person and has been trained for this role; two other senior members of staff have also been trained. Together with social services, the deputy headteacher has produced a very good induction programme in child protection issues for all staff.
68. There was a very high turnover of staff at the end of last year and as a consequence the headteacher has allocated more non-teaching time to heads of year to develop year teams. At present the pastoral support for the pupils is satisfactory but there is some good practice throughout the school. Through tutorials and the personal and social education programme the tutors and heads of year are gathering good information about the pupils' individual circumstances and the challenges they face which may affect their learning.
69. There are satisfactory procedures for monitoring attendance. Education welfare officers visit the school and meet with one of the deputy headteachers to discuss issues and track patterns of low attendance. Registers are taken at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions and at the start of every lesson. A number of lessons do not start on time because the pupils do not move purposefully between lessons, however the headteacher has put new procedures in place to combat this.
70. The procedures for monitoring and promoting positive behaviour and eliminating oppressive are satisfactory, but the implementation of them is inconsistent. A system of rewards and sanctions is in place, but it is not applied consistently throughout the school. The school is committed to a policy of inclusion and this allows some pupils to remain in school despite significant behavioural problems. The Learning Zone is well managed and supporting a number of pupils in school and keeping them motivated in their learning. Parents and pupils are in agreement that there is bullying in the school and they are not confident that all teachers tackle problems effectively. The school needs to address these concerns as a matter of urgency. The school's good programme for personal and social education makes an effective contribution to the overall provision for ensuring pupils' welfare. However, one in four parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire are not happy that the school is encouraging their children to become mature and responsible young people and this affects the learning and achievement of many.
71. The school has an assessment policy that sets out the purpose of the system and gives guidelines but does not detail the mechanism by which the process should be carried out. All departments do not carry out the guideline concerning marking. Only physical education and geography have consistent marking across the department. In many areas, work of a very low standard is accepted and teachers do not require that it is repeated properly; incomplete work is not always followed up. Positive comment on how the pupil could improve the standard of work is rare. In only about half their subjects are pupils in Years 7 to 9 kept aware of their National Curriculum levels. In Years 10 and 11 this improves, however, with most subjects ensuring that pupils are aware of GCSE grades and of their progress. This situation has changed little since the last inspection. Target setting is a

stated purpose of the policy document, but reportedly, only music, modern foreign languages, history, art and design, science and mathematics set and review targets. The use of assessment data to guide teachers' planning is still to be embryonic, being used regularly only in mathematics, science, religious education and modern foreign languages. A few other subjects are beginning the process. Both target setting and the forward planning were commented upon adversely in the last report.

72. The monitoring of pupils' progress by subject teachers and heads of department is carried out by all departments but the monitoring of pupils' progress across all subjects is still in the planning stage. The school continues to analyse examination data, Year 6 and Year 9 National Curriculum tests and predictions and value-added data produced by a national system. Staff are provided with the resulting data. There is, however, no central computerized record for the main school, no formal monitoring of each individual pupil's performance across all subjects, and no use of data to produce value-added results by comparing past and present performance in national tests. Because of this, the school is not yet sharp enough in its identification of those meeting, exceeding, or falling below nationally expected levels. This impacts upon how effectively teaching and learning can lead to higher achievement.
73. The progress of all pupils on the special educational needs register is monitored regularly. All pupils who are supported by education support assistants have their progress recorded every lesson. Since September 2000 the school has compiled Pastoral Care Profiles which set identified pupils behaviour and other social targets. All pupils on the early stages of the special educational needs register have appropriate individual education programmes which are shared with the pupils. They are detailed and specific, indicating priority areas, strategies for improvement and monitoring procedures. Class tutors and year tutors give encouragement and praise where possible to build the confidence of pupils with special education needs.

Sixth form

Assessment

74. A recently revised assessment policy provides for a regular and on-going programme of assessment and academic review which aims to keep students and those responsible for them informed about their attendance, attainment, effort and progress. In each subject, students are set a 'minimum target grade' based on previous attainment, and these targets are reviewed regularly during the process of the academic reviews. It has not yet begun in Year 12 however, as the last assessment data have not yet been returned to the school by the processing authority.
75. Each student's progress is monitored by the subject teacher, the student's form tutor and by a senior member of the sixth form staff. Those students giving cause for concern are interviewed and parents informed, after which additional support is given where needed and performance is closely monitored. Information is sent to parents by report twice year and parents' evenings are held to follow up the reports. Data from Year 9 tests onwards is kept on a central computer record that enables a senior staff member to monitor long-term progress and attainment.
76. Students were positive that the system keeps them and their parents well informed. They consider it supports their progress and helps them to improve their personal standards. A weakness, however, is that it is not universally used by all departments and is not used to identify successful teaching standards and to guide forward planning.

Advice, support and guidance

77. There was a low return of the Students' Questionnaire used for the inspection and it revealed negative responses to a number of aspects of the school. Students indicated they are not given helpful and constructive advice on what to do in the sixth form. They feel that work is not thoroughly

assessed so that they can see how to improve it and they are not kept well informed about progress in relation to the qualifications they hope to get. However, the students who were interviewed during the inspection expressed enthusiasm for the sixth form and did not entirely agree with these negative views. They felt that they were given good advice on what to study in the sixth form through assemblies, careers interviews, open evenings and representatives from further education colleges also gave impartial information to them. Year 13 students are well supported through the university application process, they have one to one interviews with their tutors and their parents are also invited to an information evening. Nevertheless, the inspection supports the view that marking is not as consistently helpful and assessment information could be used in a more sophisticated and consistent manner to enhance achievement.

78. The school's procedures to ensure the sixth form students' welfare, health and safety are satisfactory. The students have good relationships with their tutors and with the head of the sixth form and they feel well supported on a personal level. The sixth form tutors meet students for one-to-one tutoring to discuss progress and target setting. The students are encouraged to reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses.
79. There are effective procedures for monitoring attendance in the sixth form, which includes registers being taken at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions and at the start of every lesson. Procedures for monitoring and promoting positive behaviour are good. An ethos of mutual respect has successfully been created between staff, students and their peers.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

80. Overall, the school has an unsatisfactory partnership with parents, which is lower than that reported at the last inspection. There was a low response to both the pre-inspection questionnaire and to the parents' meeting but parents and carers expressed far less satisfaction with the school than they did at the time of the last inspection. However, nearly all agree that the school expects their children to work hard and that their children are making good progress. The inspection team does not support the view of a significant number of parents that the school does not provide an interesting range of activities outside of lessons. The school offers opportunities to take part in sporting, music and drama activities but the take up by pupils is not high.
81. A high percentage of parents do not feel they are well informed about how their children are getting on. The inspection team supports this view as information about progress provided for parents in reports is unsatisfactory. Annual reports need to be more focused on what pupils have achieved and sharper targets set to improve future performance. Meetings between parents and teachers are generally well attended and help to keep parents aware of the progress their children are making.
82. The pupils' planners are not well used as a regular means of communication between teachers and parents and this reduces the potential for parents to become involved in supporting their children's learning. One in three parents who returned questionnaires indicated that their children do not get the right amount of work to do at home. At the parents' meeting, some parents thought that the quality and quantity of what is set is dependent upon individual teachers. While homework was judged by the inspection to be satisfactory, it is clear that there are inconsistencies in provision.
83. There is satisfactory information provided for parents through the newsletters. Since the headteacher took up her post in September 2000 she has kept parents very well informed of the changes taking place in the school and the work that there is still to do. The prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents meet statutory requirements. Meetings are held for parents including for those transferring from primary schools, work experience for the parents of Year 10 pupils and open evenings for prospective sixth form entrants. The school has produced the required home/school agreement but recognises that it could be built on and strengthened. There are some opportunities for parents to be directly involved with the life of the school, for example by supporting sporting activities. The school also benefits from parents and friends of the school who raise money through events organised by the George Ward School Association.

84. The parents of all pupils with statements of special educational need are invited to attend annual reviews. Parents are involved in the provision of the pastoral care profiles. They are notified about entry into the Learning Zone and most are very supportive and in agreement. For example, they bring non-attending pupils and school phobics to school each day. A number of parents have gained additional support from the school's intervention on their behalf with other agencies such as medical or social services.
85. Parents are concerned that the school could be more pro-active in dis-applying pupils from the National Curriculum. This is partly true. But there has been only one complaint and the pupil concerned is now benefiting from dis-application. There is little evidence that he suffered before the dis-application. The original complaint occurred at the time between the previous special educational needs coordinator leaving and the appointment of the current one.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

86. The leadership and management of the school is good overall. Since the previous inspection the school's intake started to change and because of failures in management the school virtually lost control of a large number of difficult and challenging pupils who disrupted the life of the whole school community. The governors, with the help of the local education authority, appointed the present headteacher in September 2000. Her highly effective leadership has turned the school around. She has a very clear idea of how the school can improve and has not been afraid to take radical action. Almost a quarter of the staff left along with a group of pupils whose behaviour was completely unacceptable. She has now succeeded in winning the support and loyalty of those who stayed and the school has made some good new appointments. There has been a notable improvement in staff morale and the will to get on top of the problems. A new senior leadership group is working well as a team and is committed to tackling the major weaknesses that existed two years ago. The new management structure is well placed to raise standards in all areas.
87. A small team, consisting of the headteacher, deputy heads, governors and local education authority officers, drew up a very good action plan in consultation with the staff and governors. It focuses on appropriate priorities and these are planned to a manageable timetable. The school is now making good progress in bringing about improvements. Delegation of responsibility is good and every member of staff is involved in working groups engaged in moving the plan forward. The school now has a good team of middle managers who are developing their leadership skills further to increase their effectiveness. For example, they are taking part in school-self evaluation training, in order to increase the rigour and consistency with which teaching and learning are monitored and evaluated at every level, with a view to securing further improvements. The school also recognises that the analysis of test and examination results has been insufficient to enable it to identify more sharply where there is underachievement. Best practice is not yet embedded and inconsistencies remain.
88. Clearly there is some way to go. It is not possible to transform the attitudes and behaviour of pupils overnight. Many come from situations of significant disadvantage and do not arrive well equipped with basic skills or with a positive attitude to school. The well thought-out creation of a "Learning Zone" has enabled the school to reduce the very high number of exclusions and to provide specialist and appropriate support to those pupils who are not coping at the moment with the normal curriculum. Other measures have been put in place to deal with disaffection. Although behaviour is still unsatisfactory, by all accounts it has come a long way in twelve months. The many good and very good lessons seen in the inspection reflect the capacity of the staff to transform the learning environment. The school is well aware that having re-gained control, all staff must now continue to work together to apply policies consistently and to develop the self-worth of pupils so that they can all become responsible members of the community, committed to life-long learning. As a technology college there are opportunities to network with highly successful specialist schools and to develop a whole-school ethos that better reflects its status than is the case at present.
89. The governors are well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have done well to act decisively to bring the school out of the crisis it was facing and to see it back on course. Their committee structure is appropriate and they recognise the need now to sharpen the way in

which new and developing policies are monitored, ensuring that nobody takes their eye off the ball. There has been good use of local education authority and other consultants to review aspects of the school and to monitor progress in addressing the action plan.

90. Despite a significant injection of additional funds because of its technology college status, the school ran up a deficit before the appointment of the present headteacher. This is now being reduced in a sensibly planned and controlled manner that will not undermine her need to deploy staff to take the school forward. Inevitably though, money is tight and there are departments that are short of teaching resources. The carry-forward is reasonable because funds for the previous financial year were posted too late to spend, some funds are committed to capital expenditure and others are held against contingent liabilities. Governors are rightly ensuring that the principles of best value are well applied to expenditure, although there is a need to sharpen the way in which costs and educational outcomes are compared with other schools. The school is improving the efficiency with which it manages its resources and it makes good use of ICT for this purpose. Despite this the bureaucratic requirements of different agencies asking for information in different formats causes frustration, along with the expectation that important national documents should be accessed from the Internet, using up valuable time. The senior finance officer brings good financial expertise from the commercial world and is well supported by the administration staff. Targeted funds coming into the school are all applied to the areas for which they are intended and the budget supports the priorities in the school's action plan. Although its costs are higher than average, the social and economic circumstances of the pupils are below average and the school's effectiveness is satisfactory. It is therefore providing satisfactory value for money.

Special educational needs

91. There is good leadership by the assistant headteacher who has responsibility for whole school learning and is special educational needs co-ordinator. Teachers are given clear guidance in the educational support policy on how to support differing needs. The procedures for pupils' referral for educational support are clear. There is a good action plan with appropriate priorities. This recognises the need to give more support for numeracy, to appoint more educational support assistants to enable increased support in other areas of the curriculum, to give more advisory support across the curriculum and to develop a wider repertoire of learning styles across the school. There is very good liaison with other agencies such as the educational psychologist, medical services and a local centre for autism.
92. There is a named governor for special educational needs and two other governors take an interest in provision. There is a clear annual report to parents. The budget for special educational needs is spent almost entirely on staffing. Named pupil allowances are used to provide appropriate support for pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need. The school has struggled because of relatively low support from the local education authority for statement applications.

Resources

93. Resources are adequate overall. Provision is good in geography where there is a good selection of textbooks, in religious education where a range of artefacts is available and in special educational needs. Resources are adequate in history, design and technology, modern foreign languages, music, physical education, drama and ICT. However, there are some significant shortcomings in some areas. In mathematics, teachers cannot project graphic calculators because there are no blinds in the rooms and the lack of overhead projectors means they cannot be used as a teaching aid. There are no artefacts to develop pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts. In art and design, there is an over-use of two-dimensional resources because three-dimensional resources are more expensive. There are also not enough computers: this restricts the development of skills required by the technology intensive nature of contemporary art industries. In science, apparatus is getting old and needs updating and ICT provision is minimal. Class sets of 10 textbooks are insufficient to share in classes of 30 pupils. All these shortcomings have an adverse effect on teaching and learning. Overall, the money delegated to departments does not permit the replacement of major items or the enlargement of existing resources. At the time of the inspection, heads of departments did not know their capitation for the current financial year because of

difficulties with the local education authority in closing down the previous years' budget. The school has addressed the shortcomings identified in modern foreign languages and in music during the last inspection.

94. The library continues to make a good contribution to standards. It contributes to the school's literacy objectives. For example, the librarian has run training sessions for staff on the use of writing frames. As a member of the literacy group, she is developing note-making methods. The librarian is using a range of strategies to promote reading for pleasure and for information. She and her assistant teach an induction programme to all new pupils. Since her appointment four years ago, she has improved the selection of fiction books: she has brought the stock up-to-date and she has bought boy-friendly fiction in order to motivate reluctant boy readers. It is difficult to quantify the success of these new approaches as the new software bought two years ago prevents comparisons any further back. Every year, the librarian involves a group of higher attaining Year 9 pupils in shadowing the Carnegie Book Award, and this develops their critical skills. The quiet fiction room with its comfortable armchairs and its displays promotes quiet reading. The library is well staffed and this ensures that pupils have access to the facility before and after school, as well as through the lunch hour. All pupils in Years 7 to 10 have timetabled English lessons in the library and this encourages wider reading. However, the fortnightly timetable has led to the library being double-booked by groups. In addition, non-specialists are teaching some library lessons. Consequently, issues of books for the period September - October 2001 have seen a significant drop, especially in Years 8 and 10 compared to the same time last year. The librarian is working with her line manager to address the issue. The library is well stocked to support pupils' work in art and design, science, religious education, music and sociology. Provision is satisfactory in geography. There are insufficient resources in mathematics and modern foreign languages. Pupils make good use of the two ICT rooms next to the library and of the computers in the library itself. Most pupils observed using the library during the week of the inspection were making good use of the facility and working well as independent learners.

Staffing

95. The number of teachers and technicians matches the school's needs well. Most teachers are appropriately qualified for the subjects they teach. Exceptions are where teachers are involved in more than one department, being qualified for only one of those subjects. An area of great difficulty is English, where 18 teachers are involved, many of whom teach only a few lessons, and there are several split classes. These arrangements are affecting standards. The large turnover of staffing at the end of 2000-2001 was for many different reasons, including retirements and promotions. However, the influx of new teachers has had a beneficial effect in many departments, notably mathematics, where half the staff are new. Insufficient design and technology teachers could be appointed for September, and this is causing problems in that area, but it has helped in science where an extra teacher was appointed instead. Many subject areas previously had staffing problems, often due to ill-health, such as physical education and modern foreign languages, but these are now resolved, with good levels and quality of staff.
96. There is a good induction programme for the seven newly qualified teachers, and they feel well supported and are progressing well. However, induction procedures are less successful for those at middle or senior management levels; some new heads of department have had a difficult first term. A good programme of staff development is being implemented at whole school level, in training days, and for individual staff where their needs match the school development plan. Previously funds for staff development were devolved to departments, and frequently used for extra resources as mentioned in the last inspection report. A central fund is now available for whole school training and relevant courses for individuals or groups. Involvement in initial teacher training with the Bath Institute of Higher Education has led to extra opportunities for staff development in the departments where students have been placed. Performance management is now in place and monitoring and evaluation of teaching is in progress. An action plan has been devised and is being implemented to address issues arising from the Investors in People assessment in May 2001, with a view to improving consistency in the application of policies and staff development.

97. Currently support teachers are well qualified and cover a range of needs, as do the educational support assistants, whose number has been recently increased to match needs more closely. There is good induction and in-service training for all the education support team, for example in understanding the needs of pupils with autism. However, the deployment of support assistants and teachers is unsatisfactory. There are a number of subjects where there is not enough additional support for pupils with special educational needs, for example in science. There are also timetable difficulties, such as a small withdrawal group provided for mathematics in one half Year 8 but not the other because no staff is available. All these weaknesses have an adverse effect on standards and achievement.

Accommodation

98. Accommodation is suitable for the curriculum in all subjects except art and design and science. Teaching areas in art and design are in an unsatisfactory state. Some science laboratories are too small for groups and need refurbishment. Both these weaknesses undermine the effectiveness of teaching and learning. There is an imaginative programme of improvements in place, both to develop and re-furbish learning areas. The lack of carpeting and blinds in some teaching areas has a negative effect on the learning environment. Pupils' learning is enhanced by specialist accommodation that includes a 'computers in manufacturing' laboratory; a video conferencing centre and recording studio. Organisation in most departments is helped by the close grouping of subject classrooms.
99. Accommodation for pupils with special educational needs is good and supports their learning well. There is an attractive and recently refurbished suite of rooms in the educational support area. The Learning Zone is conveniently situated next to the co-ordinator's office and forms part of a self-contained suite of rooms that include small rooms for individual pupil interviews and counselling, and toilets. The Learning Zone is well equipped with reference books and a bank of resources although there is a need for laptop computers for pupils. The school site is not suitable for pupils with physical disabilities. Although the school has tried to be flexible a pupil who sometimes uses a wheelchair is confined to having all her lessons on the ground floor, which limits her learning opportunities.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

100. Satisfactory leadership has supported sixth form students in fulfilling their aspirations but the school has recognised there is a need for a fresh vision for sixth form development. At the moment a team of three staff work well together and maintain a positive learning environment which has contributed to satisfactory and often good standards. At the moment teaching and learning are not closely monitored to ensure consistency and to develop best practice. While achievement is monitored through the analysis of GCSE results and target-setting, there are inconsistencies in the extent to which this filters down to individual subjects. In consequence, students are not always clearly focused on what they should be doing to fulfil their potential. There is a commendable awareness of the need for change and recent external reviews have identified areas for improvement. The headteacher has included in the new management structure of the school a 14-19 learning manager who will be able to bring new ideas to delivering appropriate courses to meet the needs of a wider range of students.
101. The governing body takes a keen interest in the sixth form but there is some lack of clarity by all about the way forward. Until recently there has been some complacency about standards, and insufficient use of data to highlight how well the school is doing by comparison with similar schools. The monitoring of performance has not been sharp enough and there has been little close evaluation by middle managers of sixth form teaching and learning. Nevertheless governors have accepted the need for changes to sustain future expansion and to meet the needs of a different clientele coming up through the main school.

Resources

102. Overall, resources and accommodation are adequate to meet the needs of those students who stay on into the sixth form. There are very good ICT facilities to support learning. Resources in geography, design and technology and sociology are good; they are adequate in English, history, modern foreign languages, music, physical education, economics and business studies. However, there are some significant shortcomings in mathematics, science and art and these have an adverse affect on learning. The library makes a good contribution to the development of study skills and provides good opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own leaning, especially in English. However, in some curriculum areas such as geography, library resources have insufficient depth to support learning at this level. Staffing in the sixth form is very good; there is a good match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum and teachers are well-qualified, enthusiastic and committed. Staff development is satisfactory.
103. The school's sixth form funding is well used to provide a satisfactory range of courses for all students, though some of the teaching groups are very small and are not cost-effective. But the school compares the provision in its sixth form with other providers of post-16 education and concentrates its resources on those areas it is best placed to deliver. In this way it minimises inefficiencies of provision. While there is a small subsidy to the sixth form from the main school, it is not significant and the sixth form makes an important contribution to the ethos and standing of the school in the community.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

104. In order to maintain the drive to raise standards and achievement in all areas of the school, the governors, headteacher and staff should continue to work with the existing action plan and pay particular attention to the following:

- (1) Continue to improve pupils' behaviour by ensuring consistent and determined implementation of the behaviour policy in all areas of the school*;
- (2) Analyse and use data at all levels in a more extensive and effective manner to help pupils to set their sights higher and to raise their attainment and achievement*;
- (3) Continue to develop school self-evaluation processes so that the good teaching and learning evident in many areas of the school is extended and strengthened throughout*;
- (4) Continue to improve the quality of the learning environment and work at increasing pupils' self-esteem and sense of responsibility, so that they develop a more mature attitude to learning*.
- (5) Improve relations with parents in order to increase their involvement in their children's education*.

Sixth form

- (1) Complete the review of the sixth form to develop a vision of how teaching and learning can meet the needs of a greater number of students as part of a whole school approach to provision from ages 14 to 19*.
- (2) Refine and extend the use of assessment and assessment data to provide a more complete analysis of attainment and achievement that can be used to challenge students to exceed their expectations.
- (3) Use the developing expertise in school-self evaluation to monitor teaching and learning at sixth form level to identify and disseminate good practice, such as the effective use of ICT.

Items marked with an asterisk () reflect existing priorities in the school's action plan.*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	161
	Sixth form	48
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		74

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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Years 7 – 11

Number	4	29	68	47	7	4	2
Percentage	2.5	18.0	42.2	29.2	4.3	2.5	1.2

Sixth form

Number	2	17	20	9	0	0	0
Percentage	4.2	35.4	41.7	18.8	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1276	158
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	128	0

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	19	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	379	0

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	8

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	25
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	44

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.8
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.6
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	133	121	254

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	60	89	87
	Girls	90	78	77
	Total	150	167	164
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	58.8 (59)	65.8 (60)	64.6 (55)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	17.8 (22)	35.8 (36)	22.6 (22)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	58	99	84
	Girls	70	89	78
	Total	128	188	162
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	51 (57)	74 (58)	63.8 (51)
	National	66 (64)	69 (66)	65 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	20 (16)	29.9 (37)	26.8 (18)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	123	108	231

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	45	107	116
	Girls	50	100	105
	Total	95	207	221
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	41 (46)	90 (94)	96 (97)
	National	49.8 (47.4)	88.8 (90.6)	94.5 (95.6)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	35.7 (37)
	National	38.2 (38.4)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	25 100
	National	N/a

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	23	33	56

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	18.6	15.6	16.7 (15.4)	3.0	0.7	2.3
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or	School	4 75

units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	National	N/a	76.5
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Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	9
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	7
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	6
Chinese	2
White	1390
Any other minority ethnic group	14

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	2	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	82	3
Other minority ethnic groups	2	0

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	79.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.1

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	373.2

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.8
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Average teaching group size: Y7– Y11

Years 7 to 9	26.1
Years 10 and 11	25.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	37
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	48
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0

Financial information

Financial year	2000-01
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	£
Total income	3668401
Total expenditure	3498347
Expenditure per pupil	2349
Balance brought forward from previous year	50392
Balance carried forward to next year	22185

Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	3.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1331
Number of questionnaires returned	232

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	18	63	12	5	2
My child is making good progress in school.	23	54	12	4	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	5	36	31	20	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	9	55	21	12	3
The teaching is good.	8	63	14	5	10
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	7	43	35	9	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	24	55	13	6	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	31	51	9	5	4
The school works closely with parents.	6	47	34	8	6
The school is well led and managed.	8	53	13	7	19
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	12	55	19	7	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	14	51	12	8	14

The rate of return of questionnaires was low and only 41 parents attended the parents' evening. This reflects the unsatisfactory level of involvement of parents in their children's education. Most of the issues raised at the parents' evening centred on consistency of provision by the school and communication. The inspection team agrees that there is a need for improvement. However, parents acknowledged that the school is now tackling the problems.

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- There is some very good teaching by specialist teachers.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and enables them to make good progress.

Areas for improvement

- There is some unsatisfactory teaching by non-specialist and temporary teachers.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunity to study literature from other cultures and traditions.
- The monitoring of pupils' academic performance
- The management of the department.

105. Pupils' attainment in Year 9 national tests in 2001 was close to the national average and the average for similar schools. However, relatively few pupils attained the higher levels of 6 and above. Results vary from year to year, but are usually close to, or just below, the national average. In GCSE English, the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades in 2001 was below the national average but in line with the average for similar schools. This represents a fall in attainment from previous years, when they were always close to the national average. However, results in English literature were close to the national average. In all years girls attain higher levels than boys, in line with the difference found nationally.

106. Inspection evidence confirms that standards of work in Years 9 and 11 are in line with national averages. Year 9 pupils can listen attentively, but only when the teacher insists on this. They speak confidently but usually give short responses to questions and rarely attempt to make more extended contributions to class discussion. Standards of reading are satisfactory. Pupils are encouraged to read through regular library lessons but few read widely. Low and middle attaining pupils read fluently at their own level but restrict their choice of books mainly to horror or adventure stories. Many high attaining pupils are beginning to analyse what they read. For example, they were able to identify the ways in which Graham Greene creates effective openings and builds up dramatic tension in the short stories *I Spy* and *The Case for the Defence*. High attaining pupils make effective use of imaginative vocabulary. Some plan their writing precisely and re-draft their work carefully to improve its accuracy, but not all do this consistently. Some average and low attaining pupils take insufficient care with their handwriting, spelling or punctuation and teachers do not insist on them correcting their work.

107. In Year 11, some pupils express their ideas clearly and confidently. Most continue to give short answers to questions unless teachers insist on longer responses. For example, a class of lower attaining pupils contributed little to discussion until they were required to give a formal presentation to the class in pairs. They then spoke confidently about the way Lady Macbeth's character develops in the Shakespeare play and made good reference to the text to back up their ideas. Most pupils are familiar with the texts they are reading and understand the plot and relationships between characters. High attaining pupils read extracts from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with understanding before attempting to produce a modern day version of one scene. Most pupils can write well structured essays with accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar most of the time, although girls write more accurately and neatly than boys. Pupils' descriptive writing is readable but they seldom use very imaginative vocabulary.

108. Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 entered the school with average attainment and have made satisfactory progress, continuing to achieve average standards in most years. Those in Years 7 and 8 entered with below and well below attainment and are also making

satisfactory progress. Many pupils do not achieve as well as they should in their writing because teachers do not ask them to write enough for different audiences and purposes. Some Year 9 pupils have completed very little written work during the first half term. Although most pupils' achievement is satisfactory during Years 10 and 11, a few have become disaffected because of frequent changes of teacher. As a result, few pupils in one Year 11 class had much understanding of the plot or significance of the characters in Orwell's *Animal Farm* and had completed little of their GCSE coursework. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress over time. In Years 7 and 8, pupils who have difficulties with reading and writing improve their literacy skills in small classes where they are well taught by learning support teachers. In Years 9,10 and 11, subject and support teachers plan and teach lessons together. They provide effective support for these pupils so that nearly all achieve a GCSE pass in English.

109. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is some good and occasionally very good teaching. However, a few lessons, taught by temporary or non-specialist teachers, are unsatisfactory. Many pupils have little natural enthusiasm for learning English but respond very well when teachers insist on them listening to instructions and completing work within precise time limits. In other lessons teachers allow pupils to talk out of turn, which slows the pace of learning. In the best lessons, teachers manage the class very well. Most teachers plan their lessons well and share their objectives with pupils so that they know what is expected of them. Teachers use a range of teaching methods to interest and motivate pupils. For example, Year 9 pupils increased their understanding of persuasive advertising techniques when the teacher played the role of an advertising executive in class. Pupils learn better when they are actively taking part in the lesson. For example in a Year 7 lesson pupils developed a better understanding of the central characters in Dickens's *Oliver Twist* through a "hot-seating" activity in which they asked and answered questions in role. In some lessons, teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils can achieve. For example, they do not always encourage pupils to broaden the range of literature that they choose during reading lessons. They miss opportunities to listen to them read and to improve their reading skills. In one lesson the teacher wanted pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills by summarising information from different texts. She did not insist on this and most pupils simply read out the original text. Teachers make little use of ICT. The standard of teachers' marking varies considerably. Overall, they do not mark pupils' work often enough and do not ask pupils to correct mistakes. There are several long double lessons in Years 10 and 11. Although teachers plan a variety of activities, pupils find it difficult to sustain concentration and teachers allow the pace of the lesson to drop.
110. A new head of department has been appointed this term and has identified some important areas for development. For example, the re-writing of schemes of work in Year 7, although at an early stage, is beginning to have a positive effect on lesson planning. However, problems of staffing make immediate improvement difficult. Many English teachers have other responsibilities outside the English department. Even the head of department teaches other subjects, which takes away vital time from teaching and management responsibilities in English. The resignation of a recently appointed second in department has made effective management even more difficult. Many classes are taught by more than one teacher and this affects the continuity of lessons. The large number of part time teachers of English results in lack of consistency in the implementation of the assessment policy. Policies in the departmental handbook need updating so that all teachers are aware of procedures. For example, pupils' progress is not monitored accurately in Years 7, 8 and 9 and pupils are not set clear targets for improvement. Resources in the department are inadequate. Many sets of readers are incomplete and there is insufficient literature from other cultures to enable teachers to raise pupils' awareness of life in a multi-ethnic society. Opportunities for teaching ICT through the English curriculum are not identified in schemes of work, with the result that pupils do not practise these skills regularly enough.
111. Provision for English is not as good as it was at the time of the last inspection. Standards at GCSE remain average but in Year 9 they are now average, rather than above average. Teaching was good in 1996 but is now satisfactory. The management of the department is now less effective than it was.

Literacy across the curriculum:

112. Standards of literacy are average in most years and enable pupils to make progress with the work that they are asked to do in different subjects. Pupils can listen carefully when teachers insist on them doing so. They contribute to class discussions, although they usually give short answers to questions and do not have much opportunity to discuss in mathematics, for example. Some pupils in Years 7 and 8 have poor reading and writing skills that constrain their learning at times. They struggle to read source material in history and teachers sometimes ask them to complete written tasks that are too difficult for them. Some take little pride in the presentation of their written work but this improves by Year 9 in most subjects.

113. The school is developing a literacy policy but it has not yet been published. However, all departments are aware of the need to improve pupils' literacy skills in their subjects and are beginning to make an effective contribution to their development. For example, key terminology is constantly used and reinforced in music, art, religious education and mathematics. Geography and science teachers correct pupils' use of key terms when necessary but little emphasis is placed on the use of technical vocabulary in information technology. Pupils are rarely asked to read aloud, apart from in modern languages. Science teachers stress the importance of skimming and scanning when pupils read for information but this rarely happens in other subjects. Teachers place more emphasis on the development of pupils' writing skills. They help pupils to structure their writing by providing frameworks for them to follow and complete. In geography, for example, pupils made more meaningful notes when watching a video because the teacher gave them key questions to answer. In French, Year 11 pupils wrote about their holiday plans more correctly because of the clear advice they were given about how to structure their ideas.

114. The English department is at an early stage in the development of schemes of work to take account of the national literacy strategy. However, education support assistants have been trained to teach literacy strategy progress units to selected pupils in Years 7 and 8. As a result, several of these pupils are beginning to make good progress with basic literacy skills.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good overall.
- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject is good.
- Analysis of assessment data is good.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.

Areas for improvement

- The quality and range of learning opportunities is insufficient.
- Teaching of basic skills is not good enough
- A numeracy policy for the school has not been developed.
- Marking does not give enough feedback on what pupils need to do to improve.
- There is not enough challenge for higher attaining pupils.
- Teaching resources are inadequate to support effective learning.

115. In 2001, the proportions of pupils in Year 9 achieving level 5 or above and level 6 or above are broadly in line with the national average and the average for similar schools, with no significant difference between boys and girls. The average point score is close to the national average for all schools and the average for similar schools. The average point score is better than in English and science.

116. In 2001, the proportion of Year 11 pupils achieving GCSE grades A* to C is below the national average, based on preliminary publication of national data. Girls perform better than boys. The proportion of pupils achieving GCSE grades A* to G is close to the national average and again girls perform better than boys. The average point score is not as good as in science and English. Over the last three years there has been a greater rate of improvement in the proportion of pupils achieving GCSE grades A* to C than nationally.
117. The standard of Year 9 work seen during the inspection is above average, particularly of the highest attaining pupils. The quality of written work by the highest attaining pupils is good with clear examples and complete exercises. The quality of written work by the lowest attaining pupils is variable, with unsatisfactory work often going unchallenged. Year 11 work is average overall. Pupils cover a range of topics in line with the GCSE scheme of work. Recorded work by the highest attaining pupils is above average, illustrating a concern for accuracy, layout and neatness. Work by the average and lower attaining pupils is average with some good aspects. Pupils make good use of previously taught skills such as the rules of algebra when solving equations. Work is legible and of a higher standard than work completed previously. However, pupils make limited use of the various ways of recording and conveying information and inaccurate and incomplete work is sometimes overlooked. Pupils make very little use of ICT.
118. The standard of literacy in mathematics is below average. Key statements and hypotheses are uncommon in exercise books. Investigative teaching approaches in lessons, involving pupils developing speaking and listening skills through discussion and group work are more evident in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are comfortable with the demands of the teacher and respond well to challenging questions, supporting the pace of lessons. Plenary sessions conducted at the end of lessons are unsatisfactory.
119. Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory throughout for all pupils, including those with special educational needs. The commitment of specialist mathematics teachers and the quality of teaching is improving pupils' achievement, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Schemes of work and teachers lesson plans do not take account of gifted and talented pupils and their achievement could improve. The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy into the scheme of work has had a positive impact, but the inconsistent use of 'mental starters' to lessons limits the opportunity for pupils to refine and improve their numerical skills. Pupils make only limited use of ICT to support their learning, owing to difficulties of access to the school's computer facilities. High attaining pupils' numerical skills are good by the time they reach Year 11, but they lack an appreciation of the power of estimation and establishing hypotheses. Pupils develop a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the rules of algebra, which they can apply to a variety of topics. They develop a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of shape, space and measurement and progress in handling data and probability is good. For example, Year 9 pupils have learnt to distinguish between discrete and continuous data and can appreciate the impact of changing the range of group sizes. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers.
120. Teaching overall is good in all years. Learning is good overall but the acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding is undermined by large classes, which are not catered for in some teachers' lesson plans. The unsatisfactory attitude and behaviour of a small minority of pupils also undermines learning in Year 10 and 11 classes, as does the lack of educational support assistants in classes where there is a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. However, many pupils persevere with difficult tasks until complete. For example, Year 11 pupils investigated thoroughly the initial coursework task involving square tiles and spacers in two dimensions before embarking on three-dimensional work and tiles of a different shape. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject is good. Teachers' planning is effective and aims are almost always shared with pupils at the start of lessons. Teachers' expectations are high and good use is made of challenging questions to promote intellectual effort and deepen understanding. Where lessons are very good, teachers' use time and original resources very effectively to promote learning and good behaviour.

121. Teaching methodologies that reflect pupils' capacity to concentrate and draw on previously taught skills are not well thought through for average and lower attaining pupils. Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for small group work, independent learning and work at the blackboard to enhance pupils' personal development. The scheme of work covers all four attainment targets and pupils are encouraged to use a variety of means of recording and conveying information. Many lesson activities focus on the acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding, although there are few opportunities for pupils' personal development through group work and investigations outside those planned for in the scheme of work. Key words are evident in most classrooms but reading and writing skills are not strongly reinforced and ICT is not used enough to support learning. Homework of an appropriate standard is set regularly. Because of an over-reliance on published worksheets involving copying, many exercises require answers only and marking is inconsistent. Most pupils in Years 7 to 11 are unaware of the level of attainment at which they are working or what to do to improve. Target setting that addresses pupils' weaknesses is at an early stage of development.
122. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The proportion of pupils achieving GCSE grades A* to C is rising at a greater rate than that nationally. The department has worked hard to overcome considerable difficulties caused by problems of recruitment and retention of teachers. Subject specialists work well together and there is a clear commitment to raising standards and sharing good practice. However, learning is affected by a lower than average proportion of curriculum time in Years 9-11, by an unsatisfactory timetable and by insufficient capitation leading to inadequate resources. The absence of overhead projectors and the inability to demonstrate the graphic calculator has an adverse affect on learning. There is no literacy policy in the department handbook and no formal strategies for providing opportunities for developing literacy skills in lessons other than through the planned coursework included in the scheme of work. Opportunities to enrich pupils' learning, such as the celebration of pupils' achievement through extensive displays of their work, the use of the library and ICT are not yet in place. The suite of rooms available for teaching mathematics is good but in need of refurbishment.
123. The department has made good progress since the last inspection because teaching and learning have improved and standards have risen. The analysis of data is now very good, based on good assessment procedures, but this does not feed through consistently to effective target-setting.

Numeracy across the curriculum

124. The standard of numeracy in some subjects is satisfactory. In others there is no evidence of numeracy being applied to support pupils' learning. All pupils in Year 7 use a computerised learning system to improve their numeracy skills. Individual targets are established and pupils' performance is tracked. Pupils in Year 7 with special educational needs follow a published numeracy course. In ICT, pupils identify and use formulae on spreadsheets well. They can vary the data and recognise the change in outcomes. In mathematics, pupils in Year 7 make use of the National Numeracy Strategy and assessment data is analysed to identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses. In history, numeracy is unsatisfactory and the pace of lessons and learning suffers because many low attaining Year 9 pupils are unable to divide a page in their exercise books and draw a table accurately because the pupils were unable to perform the calculations involved. Pupils in Year 10 studying geography can analyse birth and death rates in a population survey, using the appropriate representative values correctly. In science, Year 11 pupils make good use of the rules of algebra when solving velocity and resistance problems. In physical education, Year 11 pupils make good use of numeracy in fitness testing and training programmes.
125. However, there is no whole school policy on numeracy, its implementation, monitoring and evaluation. No audit has been conducted across the curriculum to identify when and where numeracy skills are needed to support learning. There are no formal links with feeder primary schools to establish how numerate pupils are when joining the school. The school has conducted a half-day in-service training day to raise staff awareness and for several years has operated a Summer School for pupils. Library books to support coursework or sustain pupils' interest, learning and curiosity are limited and used infrequently. The consequence of this lack of coherent and planned provision is that standards in numeracy are not as high as they should be.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Staff knowledge and expertise is good.
- Procedures are good for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress and for target setting.

Areas for development:

- There is a safety risk caused by large teaching groups in small and poorly laid out laboratories.
- Resources are inadequate and this depresses standards.
- There is not enough in-class support for low-attaining pupils.
- There is not enough ICT content in lessons.
- Badly behaved pupils are allowed to disrupt the work of the majority.

126. National tests results in 2001 at the end of Year 9 were in line with the national average, and progress through their first three years has accordingly been satisfactory, since their attainment on entry was average. In general, boys out-perform girls. The trend over the last few years has been upwards. When compared with similar schools results are above average for level 5 and above, but below the average for level 6 and above.

127. GCSE results for 2001 in double award science match the national average at grades A*-G but are slightly below average at grades A*- C. In single award science, A*-C grades are well above national levels, and grades A*-G are above them also. There was little difference in the performance of boys and girls in these examinations, except that girls gained more A*-C grades in the single award examinations. GCSE results vary widely from year to year, and there is no clear pattern to them. Compared to schools of a similar nature, the 2001 results are above average. Geological science and agricultural science were also examined in 2001, but no national comparisons are available. Both these courses, together with the single award examination course have been discontinued since September this year.

128. The standard of work seen in Year 9 is also average overall. Pupils are taught in mixed-ability groups in Year 7, but grouped according to earlier attainment from Year 8 onwards. The presence of pupils with poor literacy skills also affects the standard of work and progress of the lower-attaining groups despite support from the class teacher, and occasionally from classroom support workers as well. Pupils' knowledge is sound. For example, pupils know that levers can be used to magnify a force. However, they do not always understand the reasons for phenomena that they observe. They know that rubbing a piece of plastic with a cloth will charge up the plastic, which will then pick up piece of paper, but they do not understand why this happens.

129. Standards in Year 11 are average overall. Sometimes interest is particularly aroused, and performance rises above what might normally be expected. An example was a Year 11 group revising a geological topic when enthusiasm and interest produced a level of recall of technical vocabulary and of rock-forming processes beyond that expected by the teacher. Pupils can plan, carry out and evaluate an investigation producing sensibly argued theory to back their conclusions. Some pupils show an impressive level of ICT competence in presenting the results of their investigations. However, diagrams drawn by hand are poorly presented.

130. Achievement is satisfactory. In practical work pupils progress from hesitant use of unfamiliar equipment in Year 7 to confident work on a given task, working competently and safely and recording their results in a clear and logical fashion with their teacher's guidance. While they follow and observe processes in Years 7 to 9, they do not develop their understanding enough. They do not make as much progress in forming and testing hypotheses as might be expected, because they do not carry out enough investigative, practical work. In Years 10 and 11 they develop these skills better and can carry out whole investigations well.

131. Across all five years, pupils with special educational needs match their peers in oral and practical work, and cannot be easily identified. When they have extra non-teaching support to help them with literacy and concentration, their written work also matches that of their classmates. Without this support the written records are often poorly done or incomplete. Such support was only seen in one lesson during the week, but the improvement it produced was clear. Apart from the written aspect of their work, these pupils make similar progress to the rest of the group.
132. The standard of teaching is good across all five years, but is slightly better in Years 10 and 11 when teachers are teaching their own specialisms. Staff know their subjects well and their enthusiasm and commitment is communicated to pupils and raise interest and motivation. They also display considerable patience and empathy with low-attaining pupils, enabling them to make slower but steady progress. Lessons are well planned and use the available resources to the full, presenting plenty of challenges which pupils do their best to meet. Changes of activity and variations of the pace of the lesson are effective ways of maintaining concentration and of retrieving wandering attention, especially in low-attaining classes. However the pace of the lesson can sometimes leave low-attaining pupils behind and although they are seen to complete the task they have been given, they do so mechanically without really understanding what they are doing, and this can easily be overlooked by the teacher. Longer-established staff know the pupils well, but over half the science staff are new to the school and do not have the benefit of this background knowledge. They are, however, rapidly assimilating knowledge of which pupils need extra support, of who can be relied on for ideas and recall that will move the lesson forward, and of the few who lack self control and are potentially disruptive. Sometimes a small minority of disruptive pupils – both boys and girls – takes a new member of staff by surprise. Consequently there is not yet a consistent approach to the problem by all staff and this noisy minority has a disproportionate effect on the rest of the class who are working normally. Practical work is frequent, planned to suit the level of attainment of the class and is another strong motivating factor. Use of ICT to support learning is far less frequent.
133. Learning is good overall. Most pupils apply themselves well, answer questions readily and are happy to explain what they are doing and to offer their own explanations of how an experiment works. Most pupils come to lessons expecting to enjoy their science, and however noisy they may have been outside the laboratories, they settle quickly. They are interested and well motivated and look forward to practical work and are disappointed if it does not form part of the lesson. Mutual help over minor problems is common, and pupils co-operate well when working in pairs or in small groups. Laboratory discipline is good and they are aware of the safety measures that their teachers set out and of the difficulties of working safely in crowded conditions. The responsibility for organizing their own practical work is accepted willingly. They are welcoming to visitors and answer questions cheerfully and honestly. The application and effort shown by higher attaining pupils is good, encouraged by activities which require good recall of past work and clear thinking about the present. Pupils' interest is raised whenever a teacher relates theory to everyday applications of science and pupils are often quick to see an unexpected connection between their science and an event they know of in everyday life. For some low attainers, the use of simple equipment is an essential supplement to diagrams on a work sheet (for instance a pair of scissors or simple see-saw in a lesson on levers) and keeps the everyday use of science at the front of their minds and improves learning. Disruptive boys tend to be noisy and disturb others when the teacher is occupied with other pupils, while noisy girls maintain an undercurrent of quiet chatter even after being told to stop. This spoils concentration and causes another pause in progress when the teacher has to stop to check the noise. Pupils are generally aware of their progress and attainment and know their current targets. In Years 7 to 9 they know their National Curriculum levels from tests at the end of each section of work. In Years 10 and 11 they have their examination board tests results to inform them of likely GCSE grades.
134. Leadership is good and the department is well managed. Colleagues share the commitment of producing the best results for each pupil and support each other well. Assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress is regular and targets are set and reviewed after each unit of work.
135. Working conditions are depressing in all but the three refurbished labs, but staff and pupils remain cheerful despite this, and considerable effort has gone into improving the environment with displays

of pupils' work, reference material and posters. The old-fashioned design of some labs with fixed service 'islands' and the small size of others, present a safety risk when there is insufficient space to move with apparatus and when working space is restricted with little elbow room. In some of these labs, practical work must necessarily be done with pupils' backs to the teacher. With teaching groups of the present size of 26 – 31, only sensible behaviour by pupils and increasing vigilance by teachers ensure safety. Crowded conditions also restrict the range of work that a teacher is prepared to attempt safely, and this further affects standards. The department is aware of these problems and is now in a position to plan to reduce group sizes, since no improvement to the labs seems likely in the immediate future.

136. The level of resources is unsatisfactory and cannot be improved on the present departmental allowance. As equipment wears out, breaks, or is subject to damage by pupils, group sizes in practical work rise from the ideal of paired working to twos and threes or more, in which not all pupils are actively involved. This further restricts the range of activities that can be planned and ultimately results in teacher demonstration rather than pupils' experimentation. This situation particularly affects Years 10 and 11, and has an effect on both teaching and learning. The laboratories are widely dispersed on two floors with a variety of storerooms and preparation spaces which are barely adequate to serve the eleven labs. Despite these drawbacks, the technician team maintains a first-class service of maintenance, deployment and retrieval of equipment, and this is an enormous support to good teaching.

137. Of the items mentioned in the last report, only three are outstanding. Two depend on further finance and the third – that of disruptive behaviour – is an ongoing problem. Examination results, national test results and the quality of teaching have all risen and the improvement since the last inspection has been good.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The above average standards of work in Years 10 and 11.
- The provision of vocational and academic courses in Years 10 and 11.
- The good quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11.
- The mature attitudes to work shown by pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- The leadership shown by the head of department.

Areas for improvement

- The unsatisfactory behaviour and dismissive attitudes shown to their work of a significant minority of boys in Years 7 to 9.
- The inadequate time allowed for art in Years 7 to 9.
- The provision and use of computers throughout all years.
- The depressing state of the accommodation and low levels of resources.

138. By the end of Year 9 pupils do not attain the standards of which they are capable. There are good examples of work using two and three-dimensional media, for instance some good quality pen and wash drawings of feathers and some high quality ceramics work. However, the lack of time for art and the unsatisfactory attitudes of a minority of boys means that pupils do not reach average standards.

139. Despite this, in the Year 2001 GCSE the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades was well above the national average. This was the case for both boys and girls, with all girls attaining A*-C grades and nearly a half attaining A* or A grades. This is an excellent result. These results continue to build well on those of the previous two years, which were also well above the national average. The standards attained by pupils in art are well above the standards they gain in their other subjects. All pupils undertaking GNVQ courses in Years 10 and 11 attained a merit or distinction in 2001.

140. In the work seen during the inspection, standards show the same pattern: by the end of Year 9 are below average, whilst by the end of Year 11 are above average. There is a difference between the two key stages because up to Year 9 pupils have less time for art than in most other schools. A completely different picture emerges in Year 11. The quality of pupils' work in GCSE and GNVQ groups is overall above average. Examples of strikingly good work include large-scale sculptures of reptiles with realistic skin effects and convincing poses that catch the unique character of the particular animals. Pupils have completed carefully crafted batik and have backed up their practical artwork with good quality background research and analysis. Pupils take pride in their sketchbooks and have got into the useful habit of annotating their preliminary sketches and designs so that they have a detailed history of their completed practical projects.
141. Standards on entry to the school are below average. Despite some animated teaching, by the end of Year 9 they are still below average and achievement is therefore no better than satisfactory. Pupils have some understanding of how different artists use different techniques to achieve particular effects, but do not have an appreciation of the more subtle aspects of different artists styles. Pupils' work in sketchbooks is often incomplete and lacks a sense of pride. If pupils in Years 7 to 9 had more time for art, they would also achieve very well. Besides the shortage of time, learning and achievement is also affected by the unsatisfactory attitudes of some boys. Girls are more highly motivated, enjoying the practical aspects of the subject and taking pride in what they do.
142. The above average standards by Year 11 represents a very good level of achievement from the below average standards of Year 9. By contrast, boys in Years 10 and 11 adopt a more mature attitude and the quality of their work and their standards of learning are good. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily in Years 7 to 11 and well in Years 10 and 11. Teachers are clear about what these pupils should achieve during art projects, although lack of support from staff means that some pupils do not receive the level of help they need, particularly those with behaviour problems. The achievement of higher attaining pupils is also satisfactory in Years 7 to 11 and good in Years 10 to 11. There is not always enough consideration of the additional challenge these pupils need in some large mixed ability classes in Years 7 to 11 and the lack of time results in some pupils not having enough time to produce work of quality. However, teachers now provide more time for pupils to reflect on the work of established artists than at the last inspection. Pupils' ability to use computer art applications is unsatisfactory because there are no computers for pupils to use in the art rooms.
143. Whilst the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, with regular examples of good and very good teaching, the quality of teaching is predominantly satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, whereas it is good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils on the GCSE and GNVQ courses are more eager to learn, which in turn encourages teachers to become more animated and engaging in the way they convey key skills and concepts. In Years 7 to 9 some staff set tasks that are not very absorbing, and they make too much use of praise that is not deserved. These tendencies are less evident in Years 10 and 11, where teachers are sharper in their analysis and sharing of what is good and what needs improvement. Planning of lessons is good throughout, and there is successful use of homework to support work done in class that encourages pupils to become independent learners. In general, teachers handle well the minority of badly behaved boys in Years 7 to 9, managing to avoid confrontation.
144. The quality of pupils' learning mirrors the quality of teaching and is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers' communicate their clear subject knowledge authoritatively and, as a result, most pupils treat teachers with respect. A minority of discourteous boys in Years 7 to 9 has an adverse impact on learning that is disproportionate to their numbers. Most pupils resent the disturbance these pupils create. Nevertheless, in lessons observed in Years 7 to 9, this immature minority regularly displayed an irritating rudeness and lack of respect that was at times embarrassing to pupils, staff and visitors. This unsatisfactory behaviour impedes successful learning and is the main contributory factor causing below average standards.
145. Whilst the head of department provides good leadership, some aspects of routine management require improvement. Subject specific development planning lacks detail and has a minimal impact

on standards, and the partially established use of data analysis is not fully effective in providing staged targets for pupils to work to. The accommodation is drab, with old-fashioned furniture of uneven height, worn and potentially unsafe flooring and a poor state of decoration. The result is an unappealing learning environment that contributes to the unsatisfactory attitudes noted amongst younger boys in particular. There is insufficient blackout for projection and a lack of technical equipment to bring teaching and learning alive. The department does not have a technician and so valuable teacher time is spent in the humdrum preparation and processing of materials.

146. The issues for improvement identified in the last inspection have been satisfactorily resolved. The good use of artists from outside the school and regular visits to places of artistic interest for those in Years 10 and 11 has a positive impact on standards.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths:

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and expertise.
- Teachers work hard to make up for problems of recruiting qualified teachers.
- They make very good use of technology to raise standards.

Areas for improvement:

- Standards achieved in Year 11 are below average, and vary across specialisms within the department.
- The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is not challenging enough.
- Monitoring and assessment does not result in good target setting.
- Teachers do ensure pupils in Years 7 to 9 know what level they are working at.
- Links with outside agencies are limited.
- Not enough use is made of ICT

147. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 show nearly four out of five pupils at level 5 and above. This is significantly above the national average, but is not supported by inspection evidence. Since the last inspection the proportion of A*-C grades in GCSE has steadily risen to slightly above the national average for all maintained schools in 2000, but fell in 2001 to below. However the average point score remains much the same as last year and the proportion gaining an A*-G grade is in line with the national average. In 2000 pupils did better in design and technology subjects than in their other subjects. Comparative data for 2001 is not yet available. The proportion of A*-C grades varies between the contributory specialisms. Results for graphics, where separate boy and girl groups have been taught, are better than average. Those in resistant materials remain significantly lower. Results in child care and textiles fell most significantly this year. Interruptions in teaching and specialist teacher supply have been factors, and the child care group attracted only lower attaining pupils. GNVQ results are encouraging, with 67 per cent of pupils gaining a pass grade. Pupils with special educational needs do well in design and technology. Girls' performance overall was better than boys, but roughly in line with national figures.

148. At the end of Year 9 standards of work seen vary across subjects, but are roughly in line with national expectations overall. Pupils work safely in a wide range of materials, and develop skills with a range of tools and processes. They can develop simple automata, utilize a wide range of different decorative and joining techniques when developing textile products such as bags, and design and evaluate a variety of nutritional convenience foods. They have had access to computer aided design and manufacturing facilities to enhance the quality of their products in some materials but not in others. Skills learnt in graphics are not readily transferred to other units and pupils' designing is sometimes superficial when expectations are low. Pupils are starting to understand the requirements of the design process but much of the work done is skills based and expectations of the design element vary across the department. In general, pupils' making skills are better than their designing, and a high proportion of evaluations are underdeveloped.

149. By the end of Year 11 overall standards are average and vary between specialisms. Graphic skills are again not consistently developed or applied and some pupils do not know how to sketch, develop, and fully explain or evaluate their different design ideas. Most pupils understand the design process and many pupils organise their project folders well, but standards vary. Pupils are starting to use ICT facilities, but are not yet applying what they have learnt consistently to their folder work. They can use powerful design software to model ideas for their designs, but do not always go on to make these with CAM facilities. For example, excellent 3D perfume bottle design ideas are modelled by hand and not on the lathe. The CAM embroidery machine and the vinyl cutter are not commonly utilised to enhance product quality. Pupils make good use of key word lists where provided but evaluations are generally underdeveloped and not related back to the specification for the product. They are generally good at research and analysis of the results and use cultural stimuli to influence their design work, particularly in textiles and food. Pupils measure accurately and deal well with graphic representations of survey results.
150. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Designing skills are generally better developed in Years 10 and 11 than earlier. In Year 7 pupils can make excellent use of a music studio to produce a CD ROM based instruction leaflet in an imaginative control module, but little use is made of computer control software and interface boxes. In Year 8 pupils use a simple electronic circuit and plastics to make a fuse tester, the finish of which they enhance with computer facilities. They model the circuit with specialist electronics software, but do not design or manufacture a printed circuit board layout. In Year 8 textiles work, pupils can design and make imaginative cushions with some skill, but produce modified T-shirts showing little further development or quality in Year 9. Pupils' work in food shows a clear progression from planning a healthy snack and the preparation of simple production plans, to product analysis using star diagrams. By Year 9 pupils understand the advantages and disadvantages of convenience foods, designing and making a range of their own products. In graphics, pupils can design vacuum packaging for simple products that they model.
151. In Year 10 pupils in graphics can design folded boxes for Easter eggs, but do not utilise design software. In resistant materials modules, pupils focus on a progression of materials and develop satisfactory making skills. They are given few opportunities to develop alternative designs that are other than largely cosmetic, for example there were few alternative mechanisms in the Year 9 mechanical toys made. By Year 10, however, pupils can make good use of CAD CAM facilities to enhance the finish of different design wooden boxes. The department has started to use data to monitor added value, but is not yet using this to target pupils on a regular basis. Gifted and talented pupils are not yet clearly identified, and value added for lower attaining pupils is significantly better than for higher attaining pupils, and better for girls than boys in general.
152. The quality of teaching overall is good. Teaching is generally well structured and uses a variety of teaching styles and resources, but ICT is used less often to enhance attainment and the quality of work. Although the department has a good provision of ICT facilities there is not yet a culture of open access and everyday use, for instance of the Internet and research software. In the best teaching, use is made of context examples to help pupils to focus on their own ideas. Teachers' subject knowledge and expertise is good and contributes strongly to pupil's learning. Schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 are mapped against the National Curriculum but have not yet been reviewed against the available National Scheme of Work expectations. Some available teaching resources are not being fully exploited. Currently some teaching is carried out by non-specialists, who are being well supported. This is not having a significantly detrimental effect on learning in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11, however, it does have an adverse effect. Some teachers provide pupils with good guidance about what is required in Year 10 and 11 project work, and this is helping pupils to structure and pace their design folders. Target setting is not consistent across the department. Teaching is best where the use of exemplar resources and products draws out questioning and interest from pupils, for instance when food products and packaging are discussed. On occasions, teachers miss opportunities to develop deeper intellectual debate but they make good use of industrial examples in Years 10 and 11 work.
153. Learning is good. When there is good use of ICT facilities lessons make greater impact, for instance when modelling of products is carried out using electronics or design software, or when presentation software and digital camera images are used to project a teacher's own photographs

of The Gambia and create pupils' own family images. Pupils learn well because of the good relationships developed with teachers and the way they cooperate together. Learning is enhanced when they are given the opportunity to take the lead in group activities, to observe other pupils' progress and to provide constructive feedback. Learning is better when pupils make prototypes, and consider the needs of clients for their products.

154. GNVQ courses are well structured to the needs of the pupils participating, and relate well to the world of work, for example, mini-enterprise activities. Relevant homework is set regularly. Assessment and marking varies, but the department is currently developing a consistent approach to monitoring and target setting to reflect good practice. There is often insufficient support for pupils with special educational needs, but the department make efforts to support the learning of all pupils, especially lower attaining pupils. Particularly good use is made of the technician support when available, and the pace of lessons and learning are improved when teachers can concentrate on teaching.
155. Leadership and management are good. The new head of department has a clear vision and sense of direction. She has started to monitor teaching and learning and to make use of available data. She has had to focus upon needs arising from the current shortage of teachers. The specialist teachers in the department have considerable strengths and expertise. They work well together and some are increasing their teaching time to ensure appropriate learning experiences. Resources are generally well matched to curriculum needs, but whilst some funding has gone into new technologies, there has been less focus on maintenance and training for some existing equipment, to the detriment of curriculum enrichment and learning. Accommodation is generally adequate, but with some limitations. The open-plan food room is short of worktop space and cookers, and there is currently no specialist electronics workshop. Attention to health and safety is a feature of teaching and management, although risk assessments are not fully built into schemes of work. There is no centrally ducted dust extraction unit servicing the department. The recent enrichment project with British Aerospace for Years 10 and 11 was based firmly upon collaboration with other schools and additionally supported by Neighbourhood Engineers to produce a product of high quality. Lessons have been learnt from this project which are being applied to work done through video link facilities with partner schools.
156. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades has increased, although they are still below average. Pupils still do not always evaluate their products against the initial brief and specification. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 still have little knowledge of their working levels. There are many more opportunities for applying ICT to pupils' work, but this is still in the process of development. There is more time for technicians to provide support but it is still insufficient.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- Drama contributes well to pupils' personal, social and cultural development
- Clear schemes of work ensure the curriculum is coherent through Years 7 to 9
- Attainment and achievement in GCSE drama is very good.

Areas for improvement

- The behaviour of a small minority of pupils in Years 7 to 9 gets in the way of the learning of the majority.
- Teaching by non-specialists or unqualified teachers is not supported sufficiently.

157. Standards in GCSE drama are very good. Results at GCSE in the last three years have been above the national average, although fewer pupils attain the highest grades. There are no marked differences between the attainment of boys and girls.

158. From work seen standards in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory. The majority of pupils perform in a controlled manner and they collaborate well, including pupils with special educational needs. Some mime is inventive and expressive and most pupils focus well during warm-up and concentration exercises. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 are good with examples of some very good work by all pupils. Movement is disciplined, controlled and expressive. Pupils are very supportive of each other. They respond well to direction, both from the teacher and other pupils. They make thoughtful and perceptive contributions to discussion, evaluating each other's performance, critically and sensitively.

159. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. However, it is hindered by the lack of self-control of three or four, mainly boys, in several classes. These few do not always sustain concentration. They are slow to respond to instructions and sometimes frustrate the efforts of their peers who wish to achieve. In Years 10 and 11 pupils' achievement is very good, successfully applying the drama techniques introduced at the start of a lesson.

160. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Lessons are well planned and structured and a variety of teaching methods and groupings are used. There are high expectations that all pupils will participate, which they do with enthusiasm. Where teaching is less effective there is insufficient discussion of how pupils might improve their performances. Sometimes time is not well managed so that there is no space for pupils to evaluate and reflect on their learning. In some lessons a theatre group specialising in personal and social development through drama has been commissioned to work with pupils. This allows three adults to work with a class and the improved pupil-teacher ratio clearly has benefits. Some of the objectives of lessons are that pupils will take responsibility and that they will improve their focus and concentration as individuals and within groups. This is beginning to happen, but progress is slow in some classes and better-motivated pupils are losing patience.

161. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is always good and often very good or excellent. Lessons are stimulating, purposeful and well paced. There are high expectations of all pupils. Teachers have a very clear idea of individual attainment levels and pupils are given very clear targets for improvement. For example, in a Year 11 lesson the teacher had identified the need to challenge higher attaining pupils to develop their directing skills. She had also identified the need for all pupils to work together on whole class performance employing a greater degree of sophistication in their application of dramatic techniques. By the end of the lesson the four pupil directors had perceptively modified the positions, facial expressions and body language of the actors. The whole class had contributed to an excellent freeze-frame of a road accident where all pupils were totally focused. All pupils were also able to critically evaluate their performance and their contribution to the whole. Use of ICT is limited to explaining how to operate lighting controls.

162. The subject is well managed and there is good contingency provision while the head of drama is on leave of absence. Schemes of work are clear and detailed so that specialist and non-specialist teachers can deliver a coherent course. There is a need for closer specialist monitoring of non-qualified teachers. There is good provision in the subject. It is taught in two well-equipped drama studios but there were no opportunities for pupils to use lighting or other technical equipment during the inspection. The subject makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal, social and cultural development. For example, all lower school pupils participate in a drama competition judged by sixth form students. There is a drama club supervised by a teacher but run by Year 10 pupils. All examination students take part in celebration evenings where they perform from plays they are studying. There are major musical productions each year such as *My Fair Lady* or *Bugsy Malone* and regular theatre visits. Since the subject was not reported on in the previous inspection, it is not possible to make a judgement about improvement.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good overall.
- Leadership and management are strong.
- Resources are good and a variety of texts and videos is used well.
- There is a good commitment to fieldwork.
- New schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 are developing well

Areas for improvement

- Some pupils' attitudes and behaviour are poor, especially in some classes in Years 7 to 9.
- Assessment in Years 7 to 9 is not developed in line with National Curriculum levels.
- Higher attaining pupils in all classes are insufficiently challenged and stretched.
- More attention to numeracy and ICT is needed.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good.

163. In 2001 standards at the end of Year 9 are in line with national averages for the percentage of pupils reaching level 5 or higher in the National Curriculum teachers' assessments, but they are below the level 6 plus average. Since the last inspection a slight decline for several years ended in 2000, when teachers' assessments were slightly above the national average. Girls' standards are better than boys, but the difference is the same as nationally.

164. The GCSE results have varied over time. Not all pupils in each year take geography and prior attainment as well as numbers vary. In 2000 GCSE results were in line with national averages, yet in 2001 the percentage of Year 11 pupils with A*-C grades is well below the national average, although only slightly below predictions based on prior attainment. A*-G grades are at the national average in 2001, and this reflects the pattern for most years. Boys' and girls' standards reflected the national differences.

165. By the end of Year 9 standards of work seen during the inspection were average. Year 9 pupils are roughly grouped in half years according to attainment level, and standards vary greatly with the quality of teaching and the attitudes and behaviour of each particular class. A low group in one half year showed good knowledge of land use in Japan by their answers to the teachers' questions and by discussion in pairs to prepare their presentation of rural features in Japan. Pupils with special educational needs developed greater understanding of the topic by being paired with higher attaining pupils, and made good progress. Learning of a different low group was unsatisfactory due to poor attitudes and bad behaviour of too many pupils, some of whom arrived very late for the lesson. The well planned lesson on Japan, using video extracts, discussion and note-taking on a writing framework was disrupted by pupils' immature fidgeting, chatting and shouting. They were further disadvantaged by being in a science room with pupils perched on high stools, and no assistants for the large number of pupils with special educational needs. Year 7 and 8 pupils are taught Geography in mixed ability classes, and here also attainment varied according to the critical mass

of unco-operative and poorly behaved pupils. In good lessons boys and girls were seated together, co-operated well, with teacher-led discussion, clear instructions, using well-prepared worksheets structured for a variety of timed activities, and followed by relevant and interesting homework activities.

166. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are also average overall. Two groups of Year 11 pupils were working on their GCSE coursework, based on pupils' own research and fieldwork. Those based in a computer room adjacent to the library made good progress, word-processing the different text sections and using a spreadsheet well to form tables of figures and draw graphs, with the teacher acting as facilitator and guide, helping each to attain their personal best. The other group, based in a geography classroom, found the double lesson too long to maintain concentration on one task, and needed frequent teacher intervention. The excellent coursework guide produced by the department gave suggestions for each stage of the process, which helped pupils know and fulfil the criteria to obtain good grades. Another Year 11 class learnt about the problems of overpopulation in Cairo, showing by their discussion of the excellent video, and the notes they produced, their gains in knowledge and understanding, and the empathy felt for the people of Cairo. However the first part of the double lesson demonstrated lack of skills in extracting information about Egypt from atlas distribution maps, tables and graphs.
167. Achievement was satisfactory overall for pupils by the end of both key stages, although there is variation in any year, depending on the characteristics of individual pupils, the degree of low-level disruption, and the quality of teaching. All Year 10 and 11 option groups had specialist teachers, and many pupils achieved well. The provision of classroom assistants for pupils with special educational needs helps them to achieve well, as seen in one Year 10 and two Year 7 classes. Other pupils in the same classes did not have help with literacy or behaviour control problems and they did not progress so well. Two pupils with English as an additional language achieved very well. Those pupils with higher attainment in each group were rarely stretched or challenged to achieve more, although there was some extension work planned for them. Boys and girls progressed equally well in most classes.
168. Teaching and learning are good overall. Very good features include lesson planning, with brief review of previous learning followed by a variety of timed activities involving pupils in 'doing' at an early stage of the lesson. Frequent discussion during the lesson, in pairs or with the teacher, help pupils develop a depth of understanding, and consolidate learning, as in the Year 8 lesson on location factors in the car industry. Use of pupils' existing knowledge, gained from other subjects, or from world news, helps pupils see geography as relevant and useful, as in the Year 10 lesson on the hydrological cycle, building on previous science topics. Time management does not always allow sufficient space for quality reviews of learning, which tend to be rushed at the end of lessons, but when well conducted they are very effective, with pupils revealing the quality of their learning. The four full-time specialist teachers have very good subject knowledge and a good understanding of teaching methods that develop learning. Their techniques of classroom management are good, although not always totally effective with particular groups or pupils. Relationships between teachers and pupils are generally good, and teachers know their classes well.
169. Teachers mark pupils' work well, with constructive comments and sometimes targets set for whole classes or individuals on how to improve. Assessment in Years 7 to 9 has not yet developed sufficiently and National Curriculum levels and descriptors are not used until the end of Year 9. Strategies to improve literacy are being employed, such as key words defined, explained and used well by teachers and pupils, and some writing frames for notes, but literacy levels are still too low. Numeracy is not the focus it should be, although pupils can draw most graphs required and climate graphs and population pyramids are covered well. The use of computers is limited by lack of access, especially in Years 7 to 9, but Year 11 use ICT well, and teachers are competent, an improvement since the last inspection.
170. Leadership of the department is good, and management effective, although not enough attention is given to the needs of non-specialist teachers and those who only teach geography for part of their timetable, teaching in rooms outside the department. Resources are good, with a variety of

textbooks, good supplies of maps and videos, and some excellent ICT produced worksheets. Display is very good within the department, with plentiful examples of pupils' work.

171. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Although standards have declined, the quality of teaching is now good, the department continues to be well led and use of ICT is good.

HISTORY

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

Strengths:

- The quality of teaching by specialist history staff is good.
- Teachers give good attention to literacy to help pupils achieve better.
- The leadership and management of the history department are very good.

Areas for Improvement:

- More classroom support is needed for pupils who have special educational needs.
- A more consistent approach to the development of numeracy is needed.
- A more consistent approach to the assessment and marking of pupils' work in Years 7 to 9 is needed.

172. The standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2000 and 2001 based on National Curriculum teachers' assessments were below average when compared with national standards, though results in 2001 show a significant improvement. Staffing problems have meant that some pupils have not experienced consistency in the teaching of their history lessons and this has affected standards. The proportion of GCSE grades A* to C in both 2000 and 2001 were below average; girls did better than boys. The percentage of candidates gaining higher grades in 2001 fell, reflecting the lower prior attainment of pupils, many of whom possessed low literacy skills and struggled with the level of reading and writing expected. In both years every pupil achieved a GCSE grade, which is above the national average. Indeed, the results in 2001 were achieved with a year group of pupils with lower prior attainment, indicating the success of the department's drive to improve literacy standards.

173. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Years 7 to 9 are below average, though the range of ability is wide, with some pupils regularly achieving a well above average standard. For the majority, three distinct reasons can be cited that serve to depress standards. Firstly, many pupils possess poor literacy skills. Secondly, though most pupils make progress in most lessons, the lack of classroom support for pupils with special educational needs, of which there are many in some lessons, depresses the pace of learning and places extra pressures on teaching staff. Thirdly, in a minority of lessons, usually taught by non-specialist staff, poor strategies for behaviour management, adversely affect the progress of all pupils.

174. During the inspection it was only possible to see a small selection of lessons in Years 10 and 11 but standards were in line with the national average. At this level, pupils benefit from specialist teaching and the emphasis that is placed on developing literacy skills and the use of very good assessment techniques, are both helping to improve standards.

175. Achievement is good overall. The exception to this is in Years 7 and 8, where the poor behaviour of some pupils impedes the progress for all. Pupils with special educational needs tend to make similar progress to all other pupils, but all pupils would benefit if more classroom help was available, especially in Years 7 to 9. The progress is helped by the strong emphasis on developing literacy skills. It is helping pupils to develop their historical understanding. The use of writing frames and the emphasis on extended writing is helping pupils to communicate their knowledge and understanding more effectively.

176. The quality of teaching is good overall, though it is more consistent in Years 10 and 11. In all years, where the teaching is good, or better, learning benefits. Many strengths of teaching can be identified. In the better lessons teachers plan thoroughly. There is a strong emphasis on literacy,

challenging tasks are set and expectations are high, but realistic. In such circumstances pupils learn well and work with enthusiasm and interest. For example in Year 9 lessons on the development of canals, pupils learnt well because of the challenges set and the stimulating teaching strategies employed. As a result pupils were able to identify the advantages that canals offered over packhorses. Pupils identified the transportation of heavy goods and made strong links to the development of the factory system of production. Some pupils could also highlight problems such as a reduction in speed because of locks and could even develop their analysis to forecast the impact that this had on costs. In a Year 10 lesson on the Battle of Jutland, learning was very good, with pupils offering a variety of answers about who 'won' the battle. Some particularly good answers showed very good balance and one pupil observed that the loss of shipping incurred by the British suggested a German victory, but Britain's superior tactics, which resulted in the German fleet being impounded in Kiel harbour, suggested a British victory. Staff are also trying to use ICT as a tool for historical research, though access to the school's ICT equipment is difficult because of the block booking of the facilities by other departments. Numeracy is not planned as well as literacy.

177. Less effective teaching is offered by non-specialist staff especially in Years 7 and 8. They have difficulties with class control and expectations are unrealistic. As a consequence the pace of the lessons slows and pupils are unable to fulfil the set task or to make historical links and explain events. For example, a Year 8 class showed some basic knowledge about the Reformation but could not adequately explain the views of Martin Luther, or explain the personal, economic and religious reasons that motivated Henry VIII's split with Rome.
178. Leadership and management are very good. Clear objectives have been set and the monitoring of teaching is very good. Assessment procedures are very good and thorough, though they are not applied with consistency at present, especially by non-specialist staff. The planned curriculum is lively and is enhanced by visits to locations such as Northern France and Belgium. Two distinct problems, however, can be identified. Firstly, the department is not clear about its financial allowance for the current financial year and this makes planning difficult. Secondly, the present timetable is not well planned and staff are put under pressure by too many double lessons accompanied by long breaks between lessons. This affects standards as it is difficult to plan for continuity.
179. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Though there has been a decline in the number of A* to C grades, results overall have improved. This has been achieved with groups of pupils whose standards on entry, especially in literacy, have been declining. The leadership and management of the department have improved and this is evidenced by significant improvements in assessment and monitoring procedures. There is also a very good capacity for further improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Most pupils achieve well, particularly in GNVQ courses, and are interested in their work.
- Hardware and software is modern and powerful. Provision for distance learning, control technology, data logging and measurement is good.
- Excellent technical support ensures that equipment functions effectively.

Areas for improvement

- The requirement of the National Curriculum is not fully addressed by all subjects.
- Assessment in Year 9 is not rigorous enough.
- The behaviour and attitude to learning shown by a very small minority hinders learning.

180. ICT assessment is not rigorous enough to provide secure judgments on levels of attainment for all pupils at the end of Year 9. No externally accredited courses have been taken at the end of Year 11 over the past three years, therefore GCSE comparisons are not possible.

181. In work seen by Year 9, standards are average, with most pupils performing well in most strands of the National Curriculum. Whilst pupils' skills in word processing and desktop publishing are average, they show good skills in control technology, data logging and measurement. Pupils' skills in using a spreadsheet are well developed in mathematics in Year 8. Almost all pupils have good practical skills, competently and confidently logging on to the network system, effectively loading and executing the required software and using the keyboard and the mouse to successfully negotiate the required menus and functions. Higher and average attaining pupils show satisfactory word processing skills. Lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, have satisfactory skills and produce work of an appropriate standard.

182. Standards in the GNVQ course in Year 10 and the CLAIT course in Year 11 are broadly average but few pupils reach the highest levels of attainment. Gifted and talented pupils are not identified and provided with appropriate extension tasks. Pupils are developing their skills in the use of a good range of computer programmes, and are competent at word processing and in using spreadsheets. In the GNVQ 'refrigerator project' too many pupils show weak skills in selecting an appropriate image to reinforce messages.

183. Year 11 standards are below average for the remainder of the pupils. Too much depends upon staff interest and expertise and the degree of opportunity they provide for pupils to use ICT. Almost all pupils have good practical skills readily logging on to the network and they show good confidence and competence levels in loading the required software and files. Whilst many subjects provide good opportunities for pupils to use computers to help their learning, this is not yet as comprehensive as it could be.

184. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9. Pupils develop a range of skills, but do not have sufficient opportunity to develop skills of presenting information for a broad range of audiences. In Years 10 and 11 pupils taking the GNVQ course make good progress but across the curriculum progress is inconsistent because it depends on the particular competence and interest of teachers. For this reason achievement in Years 10 and 11 is only satisfactory for the great majority because the variability of the provision does not enable all pupils to experience the same amount of access to ICT.

185. Teaching in timetabled ICT lessons is good. Planning is thorough, and the tasks set are topical and interesting and well related to the subject requirements. Apart from those used in the teaching by specialist ICT staff, worksheets that are produced to guide pupils in their work support well the higher and most of the average attaining pupils. However they are not always sufficiently modified to meet the needs of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. Teachers

provide these pupils with individual support but large group sizes in cramped conditions make this difficult. Good oral assessments provide pupils with clear direction for improvement but formal assessment linked to the National Curriculum levels of attainment is less secure. Teachers are sensitive to individual needs. Work covers the requirements of the National Curriculum and includes good provision for control technology both in music and in design and technology. The innovative 'Pencilcase project' in Years 7 and 8 shows good collaboration in curriculum work between science, mathematics and design and technology. Outreach work is outstanding with teachers providing an invaluable contribution to the learning in partner institutions, in keeping with technology college obligations. Technical support staff provide an excellent contribution by keeping computers working and ensuring the efficient operation of the equipment, particularly the video conferencing equipment linked to other schools.

186. Learning is good overall in ICT lessons. Most pupils have a positive attitude and behave sensibly in lessons. They show respect for equipment and work co-operatively. However a small minority of pupils in some classes has not developed appropriate learning skills and too often disrupts the learning of others. These pupils have a poor attitude to learning but do in most instances respond to teachers' intervention and direction.

187. Leadership and management are good. The strategic manager for ICT provides clear educational direction and ensures within the limits of timetabling and resources that pupil' entitlement is met as fully as possible. Assessment and recording of pupils' progress is satisfactory in ICT lessons and enables pupils to progress effectively, since they know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. However, the assessment of pupils' ICT capability across all subjects of the curriculum is not rigorous and comprehensive. Outside of timetabled lessons, the use of ICT depends upon the interest, expertise, experience and enthusiasm of subject teachers.

188. Improvements overall in the subject are satisfactory. Since the last inspection standards have improved in Years 7 to 9 and the subject now meets National Curriculum requirements. Teaching has improved, although there remain some aspects of the subject where non-specialist teaching affects outcomes. Whilst the computer to pupil ratio is below the average the quality and range of the resources provided have been greatly improved. Accredited ICT courses have been introduced in Years 10 and 11, although for a limited number of pupils. Greater use of ICT is evident in many subjects in the school.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good overall.
- Assessment procedures are good.
- Provision for able linguists is good.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- The contribution to the cultural development of pupils is very good.

Areas for development

- Low expectations of work and behaviour are evident in a minority of lessons.
- Departmental policies, all aimed at raising standards, are not consistently applied.

189. At the end of Year 9, the results of teacher assessment in 2001 were lower than the national average whereas in 2000 they had been in line. Girls achieved higher levels than boys did but the difference was less than nationally. At the end of Year 11, French GCSE results in 2001 were slightly below the national average and this showed an improvement on the results obtained in 1999 and 2000. The 2001 German GCSE results were significantly below the national average and they confirmed the downward trend in results since 1998. The girls outperformed the boys in both languages and the difference between the boys' and girls' results in German was greater than nationally. The difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers of modern languages, especially

teachers of German have had a negative impact on standards for most groups. In 2001, 28 pupils in Year 10 took GCSE German a year earlier than normal. All but one gained a grade in the A*- C range and over a third obtained an A* or A grade. Clearly this new early entry policy was a success.

190. In work seen during the inspection, attainment in Year 9 is overall in line with national expectations in both languages. Pupils who have started their GCSE studies a year early are already operating at levels 5 and 6 and will be exceeding national expectations at the end of Year 9 if current rates of progress are maintained. They can produce extended pieces of writing in which they use a variety of tenses in complex sentences as well as express and justify opinions. This was evident in the letters that the German Year 9 early entry group had written to their headteacher, making suggestions for improving the school. Their speaking skills are equally well developed; they speak with good pronunciation and intonation and with minimum support. Pupils coped well with a pair work activity requiring them to ask for, give and understand complicated directions in French to places in town. However, the spontaneous use of the target language by pupils is under developed overall, except in Year 7 lessons, where teachers are currently focusing their efforts. The standard of work in Years 10 and 11 is average but that of pupils in the Year 10 early entry French and German groups is well above average.
191. Achievement in both languages is overall satisfactory. However, there are great variations in the rate of progress made by pupils regardless of their year group, the language they study or their prior attainment. Some pupils and groups of pupils make good progress. Pupils in Year 7 have made a good start to language learning. Before half term, a Year 7 French class had recorded on video a short dialogue asking for and giving basic details about themselves. All pupils, including lower attaining pupils, operated successfully at Level 3. Higher attaining pupils in a Year 7 Spanish class are able to apply the rule of formation of plural words to the new words they encounter. The pupils who took their German GCSE in Year 10 are now studying for the Spanish GCSE short course. They have made a very good start and they are already beginning to cope with the demands of Foundation Tier GCSE tasks: this is a considerable achievement. Pupils do not make satisfactory progress when teachers have low expectations of what they can achieve and when they have difficulties in controlling the class.
192. The department makes a good contribution to the development of literacy skills, in particular through the development of note taking to support reading and writing as well as through the teaching of strategies to improve writing skills. The development of ICT skills through modern languages is planned for in detail in the schemes of work. The lack of suitable software and the limited access to the ICT suites prevent the plans from being fully realised. The department makes a very good contribution to the cultural development of pupils through the curricular and extra curricular opportunities on offer. The latter include study visits to France, Germany and Russia, video conferencing links with Germany and Year 11 work experience abroad. A Russian club that started in September is well attended by pupils of all ages and ability.
193. Overall, the quality of teaching is good: it is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. All teachers are very good linguists who have a very good knowledge of the requirements of their subjects. In the best lessons, the teachers set a very purposeful atmosphere from the outset and maintain a positive ethos for learning through the skilled application of classroom management strategies. They make the objectives of the lessons very clear to pupils, plan a sequence of activities which build on prior learning, involve the pupils actively and build on their skills, knowledge and understanding. In a Year 9 French group, lower attaining pupils responded well to an activity requiring them to write from memory. In a Year 9 German group, pupils, including those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, were keen to practise a role-play. Throughout those good lessons, the teachers use the target language very effectively, ensuring that pupils are clear about the instructions and explanations. The lessons end in a purposeful way with a review of learning and the setting of homework that reinforces and extends learning. Consequently learning in those lessons is always good or very good. At the beginning of a very good Year 11 French lesson, most pupils were able to describe holiday plans using simple sentences. By the end of the lesson, the pupils were able to describe their holiday plans in more complex sentences in which they conveyed and justified their opinions. They were challenging themselves to make their writing more

sophisticated and interesting using strategies that their teacher had taught them previously. In some lessons judged satisfactory, the pace was a bit slow at times and this affected the rate of learning. The quality of teaching was judged unsatisfactory or poor in a small number of lessons. Those lessons were characterised by poor classroom control and at times, low expectations of what pupils can achieve.

194. The quality of pupils' learning in lessons matches that of the teaching. In those lessons where teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour, pupils respond in a positive way to language learning. They are keen to show what they can do: they are eager to give answers during question and answer sessions and they want to demonstrate pair work activities in front of the whole class. They apply themselves to the tasks in hand: they take part in choral repetition in a sensible way; they concentrate during listening activities, they make good use of pair work and they work independently on their writing tasks. As result, they consolidate and extend their learning at a good pace. Because most teachers monitor their pupils' progress very rigorously, pupils know their current and predicted levels of attainment and what they need to do to improve.
195. The head of department provides very good leadership and she has set out a clear agenda for departmental improvement. There has been a high staff turnover since the last inspection but the relatively new team has the capacity to bring about the required improvements provided that the department no longer suffers from difficulties in recruitment and retention. Many of the areas for improvement listed in this inspection report already feature in her departmental action plan. The schemes of work are being updated and good classroom strategies shared. Agreed departmental policies need to be implemented more consistently.
196. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The co-ordination and management of the department is very good; the accommodation is now satisfactory overall; there is no longer a shortage of textbooks and basic equipment; video and ICT are being used, though ICT needs further development; the worksheets produced are of good and even very good quality; the arrangements to combine Years 12 and 13 are no longer in place. The department continues to focus on improving the quality of teaching and developing the pupils' spontaneous use of the target language.

MUSIC

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

Strengths.

- Good teaching and learning in the subject.
- Good support for a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including a substantial number of instrumental lessons.
- Very good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement.

- The use of ICT.
- The curriculum, which does not include a wide range of non-European music.

197. Teacher assessments of Year 9 in 2001 showed pupils to be in line with national norms. GCSE results for the past three years show a rising trend from a below average number of A*-C grades in 1999, to above average in 2001, based on preliminary data. The number of pupils attaining grades A*-G was also above national averages in 2001. Numbers of pupils opting to take GCSE music are increasing.
198. At the end of Year 9 standards in work seen during the inspection are average. Pupils know and understand what a beat is, can decode simple rhythm and pitch notation, and locate notes on keyboards. They understand simple harmony such as chords IV, V, and I in relation, for example, to the Blues pattern of chords, though they have difficulty in playing both hands together. Pupils have some knowledge of composers such as Tchaikovsky and their works, and Reggae but not

much else from other cultures. They have satisfactory knowledge of technical terms and specific musical vocabulary. Pupils sing tunefully and well.

199. A good proportion of pupils enhance and develop their musical knowledge and understanding with additional instrumental (or in some cases vocal) lessons on, for example, guitar, piano, drums or the good selection of orchestral instruments on offer. An even larger number gain valuable experience in the numerous instrumental and vocal groups.
200. At the end of Year 11 standards in work seen during the inspection are above average. Pupils have better than average knowledge and understanding of basic composing techniques, including chords, the use of devices such as ostinati (repeated rhythmic and melodic patterns), basic musical forms, word setting and developing melodies. Performing skills on instruments or vocally are good, and show developing sensitivity to the expressive qualities in the music. General music knowledge is good.
201. Average attainment by the end of Year 9 from below average when pupils enter the school represents good achievement. Similarly above average attainment by the end of Year 11 from average attainment at the end of Year 9 is evidence of good achievement albeit with a smaller selection of pupils.
202. The quality of teaching from Years 7 to 11 is good. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject and are able musical performers. They are inventive and creative in finding interesting teaching strategies, Year 8 for example using the names of London underground stations to provide varied rhythm patterns. They are good at drawing out what pupils know and observe and organising it into a coherent whole, for example Year 11 pupils' observations of Gamelan. Pupils are well managed and energy, good pace and drive are strong features of lessons. Assessment and targeting are effectively used to drive up standards. However, there is insufficient use of ICT to support learning.
203. As a result of good teaching the quality of pupils' learning in Years 7 to 11 is good. Pupils of all levels of ability acquire their musical knowledge and understanding well. Lessons such as a Year 10 study of accent and rhythm in the performance of a chant, typically show good intellectual and creative effort. Pupils, for example from Year 9, demonstrate good self-knowledge of how they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Pupils with special educational needs and talented pupils make good progress. For example, eight pupils with special needs are in the Year 10 GCSE classes, and one talented pupil is sitting GCSE at the end of Year 10. Behaviour and attitudes are generally very good in music, contributing strongly to this good overall picture of the subject.
204. Leadership of the subject is very good. A clear lead is given through, for example, good schemes of work and joint planning meetings. The department has survived a period of staff difficulties well. Much energy and commitment is put into extra curricular work and the consequent high standard public performances are much appreciated by the school, parents and the public. The allocation of funds to the subject is too low to finance replacing the large number of old and inadequate percussion and keyboard instruments. The use of these is now having a negative impact on teaching and learning.
205. Since the last inspection assessment procedures have been refined and improved and there is a better allocation of time for music. The provision for ICT is better but still insufficient.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Pupils plan and evaluate work well.
- Pupils work well together and share ideas freely.
- Leadership and management are good.

Areas for improvement

- Use of assessment information to guide planning in the subject and to help pupils improve their work.
- Some Year 7 to 9 classes taken by individual teachers are too large.
- Curricular links with partner primary schools.
- ICT provision in Years 10 and 11.

206. Overall, standards in physical education are in line with national averages at the end of Years 9 and 11. In the 2001 GCSE examination, the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades was below national averages, based on preliminary results. All pupils achieved a graded pass. No comparisons can be made with pupils' performance in their other subjects or judgements made against the national trend in results, because pupils undertook the examination for the first time, this year. Talented individuals and teams achieve well, some at regional and national levels, for example in volleyball.

207. In work seen by Year 9, attainment is average. Teaching is well adapted to meet their needs. Most pupils understand what constitutes a healthy lifestyle; they judge performance well and show satisfactory skills. Higher attainers by Year 9, use refined skills to out-manoeuvre opponents and show good planning skills. Lower attaining pupils have reasonable basic technique in games, but show below-average body management skills in gymnastics. They lack spatial awareness in game situations. Pupils' literacy skills are satisfactory. They express themselves well in planning and evaluation work, but have limited technical vocabulary, mainly due to teachers' lack of emphasis on key words. Most pupils' numeracy skills are adequate to cope with measuring and recording performance and for the use of scoring systems. Pupils' ICT skills in the subject are underdeveloped due to lack of opportunity.

208. In work seen by Year 11, standards are average. Most pupils can plan performance well and effectively apply the principles of attack and defence in game situations. Some boys and girls reach high standards. They use a variety of skills and tactics to out-manoeuvre opponents, plan sport-specific training programmes and compete at good levels. Lower attaining pupils understand fitness principles and judge performance satisfactorily. They have more difficulty in the aspects requiring spatial awareness and body management skills. Standards on the GCSE course are average and pupils use ICT well to research and summarise information. They understand the health related fitness aspects, but lack extended writing skills. Year 11 pupils, overall, show good numeracy skills and are confident in oral work.

209. Achievement is satisfactory through all years. GCSE pupils in Year 11 are making satisfactory progress. Pupils with special educational needs and the talented achieve well.

210. The quality of teaching and learning is good in both key stages. Teachers are knowledgeable and manage pupils very effectively. Well-structured schemes of work support continuity of learning from Year 7 to Year 11. Work is planned to suit all pupils and as a result those with special educational needs and the talented, make good progress. In a Year 8 volleyball lesson, lower attaining pupils progressed well because the teacher simplified rules, modified tasks and used demonstrations. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to learn independently in most lessons. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils planned, performed and judged dance routines. Their learning was enhanced by the teacher's good use of audio and visual support equipment. Pupils' progress in such tasks is good. Learning is less effective in the few lessons where teaching is more prescriptive and less challenging. The subject contributes well to pupils' moral, social and cultural development.

Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills, particularly in measuring and recording fitness testing data. The subject makes a limited contribution to improving pupils' literacy skills. Teachers provide good opportunities for GCSE pupils to develop their ICT skills, but pupils are given little opportunity in Years 7 to 11.

211. Learning is good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. In all years, the majority works hard and wants to do well. In one Year 11 lesson, learning was good because of pupils' high levels of co-operation in planning group tasks. The learning of higher attaining pupils, including the talented, is accelerated by extension tasks, grouping and extra-curricular activities.

212. The department is well led and managed by an experienced subject leader who receives good support from a dedicated team of specialist teachers. Major policies are in place and strategies are developing to monitor, evaluate and improve standards. Assessment systems are good, but data is not used sufficiently to inform curricular planning or to set targets for pupils. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and this is reflected in pupils' positive attitudes to physical education.

213. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. The GCSE examination has been introduced. The overall quality of teaching has improved from satisfactory to good. Appropriate learning activities are now provided for pupils of all abilities. Independent learning opportunities and the sharing of learning objectives with pupils are now a feature of most lessons. In order to improve further, the department needs to address the timetabling issue centering on high pupil:teacher ratios in a significant number of Year 7 to 9 classes. The use of assessment information needs to be improved and better curricular links established with partner primary schools.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The results in the short course GCSE are above the national average.
- Teaching is good.
- The management of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Meet statutory requirements to provide RE in Year 11.
- Widen the coverage of religions to include all the main religions that are found in our society.
- Increase the amount of explicitly religious material in Years 7 to 9.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs.

214. In 2001 the school entered all pupils for the short course GCSE at the end of Year 10. The results were good, well above the national average. Measuring these results against the predicted grades indicated that the added value was satisfactory.

215. The local agreed syllabus has two attainment targets. By the end of Year 9 the standard attainment in the second is good - pupils have a good understanding of the part that religion plays in providing meaning and purpose to life. They are developing good skills of empathy and explore issues such as the problem of suffering in a sensitive manner and are able to relate religious teaching to the world in which they live. Year 9 pupils were exploring the teaching of Christianity on caring for the environment.

216. The level of attainment reached in the first attainment target is lower. The curriculum focuses on three religions, Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism, with a small unit of Sikhism. This lack of breadth in the curriculum, coupled with a strong emphasis in Year 7 on work related to the second attainment target means that progress in understanding the beliefs and practices of the main religions that are found in our society is slower. Whilst pupils have a sound grasp of the key beliefs and practices of the religions covered they have a very limited understanding of other religions.

217. For example Year 9 pupils have a good understanding of the three main forms of meditation that are found in Buddhism, but do not have any real knowledge of the beliefs and practices of Islam. Year 8 pupils' work demonstrates that they can explain in detail the importance of the Hindu festival of Divali, but by the end of Year 9 they have very little knowledge and understanding of the major festivals of Judaism.
218. Levels of literacy are satisfactory, although pupils do not take a pride in the presentation of their work. Pupils use writing frames well. Pupils do use ICT when preparing work for display but they experience difficulty when using it in lessons. A Year 8 group could not effectively use ICT to produce some pie charts.
219. Achievement for most pupils at this stage is satisfactory, but achievement for the lower attaining pupils is hindered by the lack of suitable learning resources. The very large range of ability that is found in the mixed ability classes hinders the progress of the higher attainers.
220. The standard of attainment seen in the current Year 10 is good. Pupils have a good understanding of the teaching of both Christianity and Buddhism. They are able to contrast the teaching of both religions. A Year 10 group was carefully examining the difference between the Christian and Buddhist teaching on the existence of God. However, whilst the results of the short course GCSE are good, the fact that the syllabus is further narrowed down by the requirements of the short course GCSE, coupled with the absence of any religious education in Year 11, means that overall achievement is only satisfactory. Standards at the end of Year 11 are not as high as they could be. Pupils do not have a broad understanding of the cultural diversity that is found in our society.
221. The quality of teaching is good. Most teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and plan lessons well. They use a satisfactory range of teaching strategies to motivate and challenge pupils. As a result pupils are becoming more involved in lessons and standards of behaviour are improving. A Year 9 group thoroughly enjoyed playing a game that helped them recall some important facts of Buddhism. During the visit there was no evidence of colourful and stimulating resources being used, though they are available. An explanation of infant baptism lacked the colour and vitality that a short television clip would have brought. Some innovative work using ICT was being done in Year 8 but it needed better resources. A large part of the work involves group discussions. These are not always efficiently organised. Assessment is good, with most books being marked and targets set. In a few classes this was not the case. Teachers are aware of the individual educational plans of the pupils with special needs, and do give them support, but there is a shortage of suitable learning materials. Generally classroom relationships are managed well but a small minority of teachers has a somewhat confrontational style that creates tension.
222. The overall quality of learning is good in Years 7 to 10. Most pupils are interested and involved in the lessons. Sadly, a few pupils in Years 8 and 9 seemed intent on disrupting the lessons.
223. The overall management of the subject is satisfactory. The leadership of the subject is good, but the failure of the school to provide statutory religious education in both Years 11 and in the Sixth form is a weakness. The department is well organised with clear direction and a commitment to raising standards. Assessments are regularly completed, with the progress of pupils being carefully monitored. Results have been carefully analysed and a clear action plan produced. Most staff are specialist teachers but timetable constraints mean that these are often teaching other subjects whilst non-specialists are brought in to teach religious education. Budget restrictions have limited in-service training. The use of ICT is improving. Staff regularly uses it when preparing resources and are involved in the Pencilcase project.
224. Since the last inspection there has been a steady improvement. Standards of attainment have risen and there is more consistency in the quality of teaching.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001. At the time of the inspection only preliminary national data had been published. It is not therefore included below, but is referred to in subject reports.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English	18	89	N/a	17	N/a	31.1	N/a
Mathematics	17	35		18		15.9	
Biology	17	59		18		20	
Design and technology	18	100		22		39.5	
Economics/Business Studies	18	83.3		16.7		25	
Art	No certificated entries						
Drama	14	100		0		38	
Geography	25	100		60		48.4	
Sociology	10	100		21.4		34.3	

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English	22	95	N/a	13.6	N/a	4.1	N/a
Mathematics	2	100		50		6.0	
Biology	6	100		33		5.3	
Design Technology	8	87		50		5.7	
Economics/Business Studies	10	80		10		4.0	
Art	6	100		50		6.0	
Theatre Studies	6	66		0		2.3	
Geography	21	100		81		7.7	
Sociology	7	100		0		4.0	

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

225. The focus of the inspection was on mathematics and biology but Advanced Subsidiary (AS) level and A-level physics and chemistry were also sampled. Teaching was good or very good in all the lessons seen. AS level results in 2001 were generally in line with predictions based on prior attainment. Course completion rates are good. A Level results match expectations. One quarter of the grades were A or B. Males and females do equally well in the physical sciences. Take-up of courses is fairly low and this is being addressed by providing separate science courses in Years 10 and 11.

226. In all three sciences, students benefit from relatively small teaching groups and the tutorial nature of the teaching, which results in very good working relationships between students and staff. The leadership of the three separate heads of department is good. There is a clear sense of purpose and teachers are keen for their students to do well. However, resources across all three sciences are barely satisfactory to support A Level science and any increase of student numbers would make these levels unsatisfactory. Computer facilities are good and interactive programs provide a very flexible opportunity for self-study.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Because teaching and learning are good, students achieve well.
- Students and teachers work well together and ideas are shared freely.
- Marking is thorough and teacher's annotations support learning.
- Assessment data is used well to identify well focused targets.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching resources are limited.
- Lower attaining students are too passive in class discussions.

227. In 2000, insufficient numbers of students were entered for GCE A-level mathematics for valid statistical evidence to be applied. However, all students entered over the last two years have achieved their target grade or better. The proportion of students who achieved GCE AS-level grades A and B and their target grade or better was in line with teachers' expectations. National comparisons based on the average point score were not available for 2001 at the time of the inspection, but it was in line with national data for 2000. Only a very small proportion of students re-sitting their GCSE mathematics examination in 2001 after one year achieved grades A* to C.

228. Students currently studying A-level in Year 13 are achieving well in relation to predicted grades based on their GCSE results. In the lessons observed, students respond very well as a result of effective teaching, which demands much of them. Well-structured lessons focus their learning. In one lesson, students organised in small groups drew well on their previous knowledge and understanding of the Trapezium Rule when conducting presentations to the rest of the class. In another, there was a good discussion between the students and the teacher when studying areas under the curve and volumes of revolution. They were able to refer to the simultaneous invention by Leibniz and Newton of differential calculus of exponential and logarithmic functions. Written work is well presented and reflects the same confidence as their work in class. The students persevere when difficulties arise.

229. Students in Year 12 are only a short way into their courses, but are making good progress. In the statistics module of the GCE AS-level course, students focused on the application of probability when reviewing Venn diagrams and space terminology. Students drew extensively on previously taught skills and contributed confidently to classroom discussion. In GCSE mathematics, they responded well to challenging questions on money management, involving ratio and proportion, in preparation for a forthcoming modular examination. Both teachers made good use of time to maintain a brisk pace and took account of the variation of student academic background. Good learning occurred due to the thoroughness with which the teachers dealt with their respective topics.

230. Teaching is very good overall and as a result, students learn well. It is supported by the good co-operative relationship in all lessons between student and teacher over learning. Teachers' planning, explanation and exposition are good. They challenge students' thinking and provide opportunities for personal development. They have high expectations of the students and work is both intellectually stimulating and demanding. Their good subject knowledge and understanding promotes good

learning. Teachers are aware of students' strengths and weaknesses, resulting in individual needs being addressed. The quality of marking is good, with many annotations that support students' learning; on-going assessment reflects the target grades expected by the end of the course. Resources are used well but are generally paper based and limit the efficient and effective development of thinking skills.

231. Students learn well. They are attentive, co-operative, work productively and respond well to questions, contributing to the rapid pace of lessons. They support one another effectively, talking and listening, working independently and in small groups. However, the least capable students tend to be passive in class discussion, although well supported in other ways. Students' record of work is good, well managed and provides a sound basis for revision.

232. The good teaching and learning result from the subject being well led and managed. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and improving both student numbers completing the courses and standards. Good progress has been made in addressing the issues raised in the previous report. There is clear educational direction moving towards more dynamic teaching methods and strategies that engage students fully in their learning, self-assessment and target setting. There is a need to review how the key skill of application of number is supported in the sixth form. Use of resources such as ICT and the interactive whiteboard would further stimulate learning.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Teachers are well qualified and have a very good knowledge of the subject.
- The quality of teaching is good and teachers use a variety of innovative strategies to maintain interest and to ensure progress.
- Relationships are very good and students respond to the enthusiasm of teachers.

Areas for improvement

- Marking and monitoring of written work is limited to assignments and experimental accounts.
- Resources for practical work are unsatisfactory.
- There is insufficient use of ICT.

233. Six students, all female, entered the A level examination in 2001. All achieved grade E or above and two attained grade B. Attainment is broadly in line with the grades predicted by previous performance at GCSE. There was overall a good level of achievement. Results are similar to those obtained in 2000. Both the numbers entering and the level of attainment vary considerably from year to year and there is no significant trend. The grades of A/S level students in the module tests taken during the first year of their course were in line with predictions based on their prior attainment.

234. Inspection evidence shows the standard of work of students in Year 13 to be consistent with expectations based on prior attainment. Their results in the end of module tests taken in Year 12 were also broadly in line with predictions based on their prior attainment. For a small number of students, however, achievement was good. For example, two students with a predicted grade of D obtained the higher grades A and B in the three modules already taken. Students in Year 12 have settled down and are performing at levels appropriate to their previous attainment at GCSE. Although the majority of students obtained good grades in the double science examination, those who took single science and agricultural science performed less well because of a lack of understanding of some basic concepts. Many students have a good recall of previous knowledge about cell structure and the significance of chromosomes. Year 13 students demonstrated a sound knowledge of the macro structure of the kidney and went on to revise and extend their understanding of the structure and function of the kidney tubule. The same students showed that they had a good understanding of evolution and natural selection.

235. The quality of teaching is good overall and students make good gains in knowledge and understanding as a result of the teachers' enthusiasm to share their knowledge. Rapport is very good. Challenging dialogue in which students as well as teachers initiate discussion is a positive feature of lessons. Careful preparation meets the needs of students with a wide range of attainment levels as well as degrees of confidence. In a Year 13 class on natural selection the teacher introduced the lesson by reading extracts from a popular book on the origin of life. A lively discussion ensued and the teacher ensured that students were familiar with the work on genetics that they had covered in their GCSE course. Photocopies of magazine articles were used to illustrate the difference between the evolutionary development of the long neck of the giraffe and the effect of selective breeding in developing the characteristics of the dachshund. The lesson was conducted as a discussion, with plenty of challenge and counter challenge. Students were able to reflect on what they were learning and gained in both understanding and confidence.
236. A recently qualified teacher was observed introducing cell division to a Year 12 class. She skilfully combined practice in study skills with the factual content of the lesson. Students were encouraged to read in depth and make pertinent notes within a time frame. At this early stage they were successfully meeting the demands of an A level course and learning how to work independently. The lesson plan was ambitious with seven tasks to complete but students responded well and learned to benefit from one another as well as the teacher.
237. Students' written work varies in quality. Some make careful notes that are well organised and clearly reflect their reading and research. Others take less care and fail to provide evidence of a methodical approach to study. Teachers do not very often monitor student's personal notes to check for errors and offer advice on presentation. The marking of projects and practical assignments however is good and provides students with valuable feedback and advice. Some students demonstrate a very good understanding of the requirements for practical investigation. They explore a range of variables, make good evaluations and produce excellent accounts. Some students fail to acknowledge the importance of graphs to display their findings. The quality of graphical presentation is in some cases less than satisfactory. Most students' word process the written work associated with their investigations but the use of other aspects of ICT is limited.
238. The quantity and quality of apparatus for use in practical work is unsatisfactory. Laboratory technicians, who provide valuable support for teachers, work hard to ensure that any disadvantage to students is kept to a minimum. The three teachers work well together under the effective guidance of the head of department and are committed to raising standards.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

239. The focus was on product design, the only GCE A-level course currently offered to students. In total there are 34 students studying the subject, 16 in Year 12 and 18 in Year 13. Three lessons were fully observed, two were very good and one satisfactory. Another lesson was sampled and this was outstanding. In this lesson students' work using sophisticated design software was being marked and developed by the teacher. Twelve folios of design work were looked at in detail and discussed with the students.

PRODUCT DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teaching overall is good, with a well-structured range of activities.
- Very good relationships between teachers and students support achievement.
- The subject is well led and staffed by qualified specialists.

Areas for improvement

- Students are not given enough opportunities to discuss their ideas.
- Students' evaluation of their work is not sharp enough.
- There is not enough visual stimulus and use of ICT to support learning.
- Students' targets are not set with enough consistency.

240. In the 2001 GCE A-level examination results all students gained a pass grade and a good proportion gained A or B grades. There is no difference in the attainment of males and females. Students achieved well in relation to their prior attainment on entry to the course.

241. The standards of work of current students are above average, in keeping with these results. In lessons seen, through discussion with individuals and a review of their design folders, it is clear that students are achieving well in Year 13 and especially in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results and their AS results in 2001. Year 12 students show satisfactory research and planning skills. Most of Year 13 students' initial research work shows a clear understanding of product specification. They appreciate that designers need to define the balance between cost factors and practical and aesthetic considerations. They have a good understanding of materials. In one lesson students were producing a wide range of design sketches for a novelty night-light. Clearly the quality of sketching was of a high standard and especially so in the work of those also studying A-level art. Outcomes were innovative with good levels of creative flair and imagination. Many were very topical, based for example on the 'Harry Potter' theme, showing a knowledge and understanding of commercial applications and how to respond to current popular demand. Most students produce well crafted design folders showing good effort over time and clearly most students achieve the target deadlines set for each piece of coursework. Only a small minority of students uses computers to produce certain aspects of their coursework. Few students use graphing and presentation software and there is little evidence of an extended use of the computer in researching, analysing and presenting information.

242. The good achievement is attributable to the good teaching. Teachers have an effective combination of skills and personality that enables them to organise and plan well and also to motivate and encourage students. Their teaching methods and styles enable students to improve their design skills. However, the use made of targets for individual students is not consistent. Verbal assessment is good in lessons and students are well informed about the standards achieved and what they need to do to improve. Constructive comments in the marking of work by teachers also give students a clear direction about what they need to do to improve their design work. There is insufficient use of ICT in general coursework. In some lessons insufficient use is made of high standard visual stimulus to guide and support students with their tasks. In other lessons this is a feature of the teaching and shows the expectation of the high standards required from all students. In some lessons there are missed opportunities for students to discuss outcomes in small groups and to present their ideas to the group as a whole. Also students are not always encouraged to be self-critical and to focus more sharply on higher quality outcomes. In another lesson the correct use of drawing equipment was not insisted upon, leading to inaccurate outcomes by a minority of students but accepted by the teacher.

243. Students learn well. They are attentive, work productively and respond very well to the supportive teaching and learning styles they experience. There is a good degree of collaborative and cooperative work and they show good levels of maturity in responding to one another and their teachers.

244. Leadership and management are good. Large groups of students are well provided for within the limits of the resources and accommodation. The head of department provides clear educational direction and manages well the team of dedicated and committed staff. There is a sense of pride in the achievements of students and the will to raise standards further.

BUSINESS

245. Two main courses are offered. These are AS and A-level economics and AVCE (formerly GNVQ Advanced) business studies. Both were a focus for the inspection.

Economics and Business Education

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching, especially in economics, is good.
- The emphasis on literacy is helping all students to learn.
- Recent developments to the curriculum have enabled more students to develop their understanding of the business world.
- Very good completion rates ensure that standards on vocational courses are very good.

Areas for improvement

- The teaching arrangements for the Year 12 AVCE course are unsatisfactory because teaching staff are not available for all timetabled lessons.
- The timetable arrangements for Year 13 economics are unsatisfactory.
- The quality of research work undertaken by AVCE students, particularly using ICT, is below average.

246. In 2000 a small group of students studied A-level economics. Though all passed, the small size of the group means that national comparisons are not possible. In 2001, ten candidates were entered, but no national comparative data is available. One candidate gained an A grade; there were no B grades. Overall eight candidates passed. A number of candidates sat AS level economics in 2001. Again no national comparative data is available, but the results gained were most encouraging with a number of candidates being awarded either A or B grades. National comparisons for the standards achieved by Advanced GNVQ business students are also not possible either because numbers entered were so small, or relevant data does not exist. In 2000, a small group of students all gained accreditation. In 2001, eleven of the twelve students who started the course gained accreditation, with eight students gaining either merit or distinction grades. Such high success rates allied to very high completion rates, indicate that standards are above average.

247. Standards of work for present students in Year 12 on both economics and business courses are below average. Economics students are developing their basic theoretical understanding of the subject but their analytical skills lack sophistication. The work of business studies students tends to be too descriptive. Their standards are also affected by some unsatisfactory timetable arrangements, which means that for some of their lessons they have to work unsupervised. Some of the students following the course have achieved only modest GCSE results and they do not have sufficient self-discipline to work effectively unsupervised. Their standards are further depressed because their research skills are underdeveloped and there is insufficient use of ICT in their work. Present standards for Year 13 AVCE business students are in line with national averages. The group work well together and they achieve well making good progress in their studies, but their work lacks analytical detail. They can identify various functions of a business, for example; but they are less good at explaining exactly what role is fulfilled by each function. The standards of Year 13 economics students are well above average. Many have gained good or very good grades in their AS level examinations and they are successfully building on this success. Their knowledge and understanding of quite detailed economics theory is very good and they are able to apply their ideas to real life situations with confidence. This group of enthusiastic and well-motivated students has made considerable progress already this term.

248. The quality of teaching is good, especially in economics, and improves the learning of all students irrespective of which course they are following. Particular strengths of teaching are very good lesson planning and the knowledge and understanding of the staff. In economics the use made of diagrams is helping students to learn well. For example, in a Year 13 lesson on perfect competition, very good learning was achieved through the careful and thorough analysis of diagrams. The students were able to show, by using diagrams, how both losses and excess profits would be reduced by firms either leaving, or entering, the market. Such very good analysis was based on very good prior learning of theoretical concepts. Economics staff also place appropriate emphasis on students using correct language in context. In a Year 13 lesson on unemployment very good progress was made because the students were developing their levels of economic literacy. By the end of the lesson, the students were able to identify concepts such as 'demarcation' and 'delaying' and explain the impact that these features can have on employment levels. Again, good and careful teaching enabled the students to develop their knowledge and understanding and progress well in a lesson.

249. The management of business education is good, with a clear capacity to improve the department further. The head of department is newly appointed, but has already made some significant changes to the curriculum. The Young Enterprise scheme has been introduced as an enrichment activity into the post-16 curriculum. This has succeeded in offering an increased number of students an opportunity to gain an insight into the workings of a business. A review of post-16 examination courses is also being undertaken. The effectiveness of the department, however, is constrained by two factors. Firstly, no financial allocation has been made and this makes planning difficult. Secondly, the lesson timetable is cumbersome and creates problems of continuity, which are affecting standards. Despite these problems, the department is achieving good standards and has a clear idea about the way forward.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

250. The school provides an optional course in ICT key skills development. Students currently undertake a CLAIT accreditation course in Year 12. There is also a GNVQ in IT with a small group of students studying at intermediate and another studying at advanced level in Year 12. Three lessons were sampled and the use of ICT was observed across the sixth form. Standards of competence are average for the majority and a few are reaching high levels. Achievement is satisfactory. Teaching and learning on the GNVQ course are good. However across the sixth form there are missed opportunities to exploit the potential of ICT to support learning. The new sixth form ICT room is a fine learning resource.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

251. The school sensibly does not attempt to run vocational courses in areas such as catering and leisure and tourism, because there is existing good provision by other post-16 institutions in the area. Physical education was sampled during the inspection. While physical education is offered in the sixth form, it is not compulsory and less than half of all students undertake a minimum of a half-term block of physical education. There is little extra-curricular provision and few inter-school fixtures. In the one lesson seen during the inspection, the standard of work was satisfactory and teaching and learning were good.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

252. No courses are currently provided in this curriculum area.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

253. The focus was on art and drama, but music and music technology were also sampled. AS and A-level results in music typically show students attaining grades within the range B to D, though numbers are small. Two lessons were observed. Both were good. The AS group has very good prior attainment at GCSE and Associated Board instrumental examinations, and this was evident in the good response made to the teacher's skilful questioning. Students have good performance skills. They identified many features of a piece by Debussy on first hearing but revealed a surprising lack of certainty in subsequently following the score to derive further information. The quality of teaching is good. In music technology the students obtained good results at AS level in 2001. In the one lesson observed, good critical abilities were being applied to creating a backing track for a song, making use of complex recording and mixing equipment. The teacher was skilful in encouraging judgements about balance and how to adjust it. This was good teaching in a tutorial setting, leading to students acquiring a secure understanding.

Art

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

Strengths

- There is a good range of academic and vocational courses.
- Good relationships between teachers and students support learning.
- Students have mature attitudes to work.
- Teachers offer a complementary range of specialist skills.

Areas for improvement

- The use of data to set staged targets for individual improvement.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.
- Resources are inadequate.
- The provision and use of ICT is insufficient in the department.

254. The GCE A-level examination results in 2001 were average overall, with the proportion gaining A and B grades also matching the national average, though at the time of the inspection, only preliminary data was available. This is an improvement over the last two years when the proportion obtaining A and B grades was well below the national average. There were no male students in this year's group. Whilst there is no firm data showing the amount of progress made between GCSE and A level for those students who took A level in 2001, students made satisfactory progress in lessons, with a significant minority progressing well. The results in the 2001 GNVQ advanced examinations were above average with most students attaining passes with a distinction or merit. This is an improvement over the previous year. Overall, GNVQ students comply satisfactorily with coursework demands and make sound progress towards their predicted grades.

255. The standards of work seen in lessons were also average. In a Year 13 advanced GNVQ lesson, students were planning improvements to the school entrance foyer. They had considered the overall impact of various designs and were busily constructing clay relief tiles that could contribute towards their planned improvements. Sketchbooks were well used to explore preliminary ideas and to think through some of the technical possibilities arising from the planning. Whilst some ideas were predictable, lacking boldness or enterprise, students were showing signs of becoming gradually more elaborate, subtle and visually entertaining in their ideas. Some excellent work was evident from last year's A-level group. Several very large and impressive mixed media pieces showed both technical and creative ingenuity. These pieces use colour in an exciting way, have a refreshing spontaneity and originality, particularly in their use of space to create a balanced composition. They are visually dramatic and eye catching. Several less impressive pieces lacked intellectual or creative imagination and so lacked a visual intensity. This is particularly the case where students simply stick to the technical requirements without making their work personally expressive.

256. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course, but are achieving satisfactorily in relation to the predictions based on their GCSE grades. They have an improving understanding of the A-level requirements and are already making good links between their own work and that of the work of established artists that they are using for inspiration. Most students are enthusiastic about their work. Amongst the better work seen were pencil drawings, and work in a range of water colour and acrylic paintings where the subject matter goes beyond mere accurate representation and has a freedom and confidence that indicates growing assurance in the use of the various media.
257. In the lessons seen, the quality of teaching was satisfactory. Teachers' planning contains clear objectives that provide a good structure for learning. As a result, students are very clear about what they have to do and often work well unsupervised. Students spoken to enjoy their courses, have good relationships with teachers and have a clear knowledge of their own learning. For instance, they are able to say what grade they are working at and know what they have to do to improve that grade. Teachers have a firm grasp of the subject and communicate this knowledge in an engaging way. Teachers' complementary specialist skills are deployed well to ensure that students have a range of provision to suit a variety of tastes. In one GNVQ lesson seen, for instance, the teacher had a very confident command of the technical aspects of ceramics and had produced several of her own exemplar pieces that perfectly illustrated what was required. An area for improvement is the use of previous examination data to set staged targets for students; whilst teachers predict the end grade required of students, the process whereby students achieve this is less clear.
258. The quality of teachers' marking and verbal feedback is satisfactory but could be better. This does not always require students to become sufficiently self-critical, and so they are over dependent on teachers' observations and commentaries. Teachers give supportive individual help to students who respond readily to the interest shown. However, in some written work, teachers do not always demand sufficiently incisive written commentaries, although this is improving. As a result, some students do not always make sufficiently telling links between the intellectual and affective aspects of their work.
259. Students learn satisfactorily. They are attentive to teachers, are serious in their intentions and back up the work they do in college with study and practical work at home. Most students use their spare time to visit the department to do extra work. This has a positive impact on their learning, although the department does not have sufficient space or equipment for the students. This is particularly the case with A-level students who, unlike GNVQ students, do not have their own area where they can continue their studies undisturbed. Students use their time in lessons well, with little off task chatter or idle gossip. They confidently share their ideas and allow others to influence them. As a result, there is a helpful cross-fertilization of ideas that provides added impetus and excitement to the learning.
260. Leadership and management are good. There is a commitment to improvement that is evident in recent examination results. The drab accommodation and lack of resources has less impact with students at this level than with younger pupils. Nevertheless, this is a contributory reason to some of the more ambitious students choosing to study art in other institutions that are perceived to be more prestigious. It is also a factor that contributes to the average standards, whereas at Key Stage 4, standards are above or well above average. Other factors that inhibit rapid progress include the lack of ICT resources in the department and the lack of other technical resources such as digital processing equipment, reprographic equipment and design and publishing software. The lack of a technician results in teachers spending time on repetitive and routine preparation and processing of materials and this time would be better spent on teaching and learning.

Drama

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

Strengths

- Students do well in the AS-level examinations.
- Students are given good guidance in Year 12.
- Students undertake good research into all aspects of theatre.
- Opportunities to experience live theatre are good.
- Performance in lessons is good.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not make attendance at practical sessions a high enough priority.
- There is not enough attention to students' theory and written work during staff absence.

261. Results vary from year to year. In last year's A-level theatre studies examination results were above average, based on preliminary data, with two students attaining the highest grades. No male students were entered for A-level in 2001 but there are both male and female students on the current Year 12 and Year 13 courses. Attainment at AS-level in last year's Year 12 was above average. All students attained pass grades with half of them gaining B and C grades.

262. Standards of work seen are currently average. They are better in Year 13, where there is a greater degree of purposefulness and concentration. Physical performance is better than written analysis. Year 12 students are able to interpret a dramatic text through acting and to use directing skills. They are less able to use the technical vocabulary and concepts of the subject. Year 13 students who are studying Brecht's "Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui" perform with confidence and some ingenuity. They are less able to apply what they have learned about Brecht's theory of drama when analysing their performance. The writing of higher attaining students is fluent and coherently argued. These students are developing their critical awareness and ability to substantiate their judgements with detailed references to the texts studied or performances they have seen. The writing of lower attaining students is more superficial and expression at times is clumsy and imprecise. Achievement is satisfactory overall.

263. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are high expectations of independent study and students make good use of the Internet to research theatre companies, dramatic theory and the contemporary background to drama texts. Students are also given plenty of opportunities to see drama productions, locally and further afield. Teachers' questioning is probing and there is a strong emphasis on helping students to apply dramatic theory to performance. Where teaching is less effective, time is not well organised and students are diverted from the learning objectives. At times the key aspects of dramatic theory to be learned and applied during the lesson could be more clearly reinforced at the start.

264. Leadership and management of the subject has been good but is hampered this year by the absence of the head of drama on maternity leave. Students have concerns that timetable changes prevent some of them from attending group rehearsals of practical work. With changes in teachers they also have the perception that they have less opportunities for written essays and note-making than last year. Work scrutiny indicates that the expectation of written work, detailed marking and guidance were high last year and some momentum may have been lost.

HUMANITIES

265. The focus was on geography and sociology. History and religious education were sampled. In history the examination results in 2000 were above average. In the one sampled lesson the quality of teaching was very good. The students were set two challenging tasks to complete and this enabled them to extend their knowledge on the short and long term factors that contributed to the French Revolution. There are two groups taking religious studies at both AS and A-level and a lesson of each was seen. Both groups are making good progress. A Year 12 group was busy

unravelling the complex issues surrounding the philosophical teaching on the existence of good and evil, whilst a Year 13 group demonstrated a good understanding of the teaching of Zen Buddhism. Results are good, with all students passing and obtaining better grades than would be expected from their GCSE results. The teaching is very good and teachers are enthusiastic and well informed. Relationships are particularly good. Leadership of the subject is good but the school does not provide statutory religious education in the sixth form, which is a weakness.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Standards have been consistently very good, with very high A-level results in 2001.
- Teaching is very good with many excellent features, including very good relationships between teachers and students.
- Key skills of literacy and ICT are being developed well.
- Good fieldwork leads to high standards of individual coursework projects.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not take enough responsibility for their own learning.
- Teachers tend to dominate lessons and students become too teacher-dependent.
- There is not enough contact and interaction with the local community and industry.

266. The GCE A-level results for 2001 were very high, with 81 per cent A and B grades and 100 per cent passes. These grades were higher than predictions based on prior attainment. Over the last seven years results have been consistently high, apart from in 1999, when there were only four lower attaining candidates studying the subject. Individual coursework projects, based on students' own fieldwork and research, are of very high quality. Geography is offered in two option groups, and so there are two classes in both Year 12 and Year 13. AS courses were started in September 2000 and the first two written examinations indicate high grades.

267. The standards of work of current students are above average, from what was seen in lessons, teacher assessments and analysis of an essay. Male and female students achieved equally well, building on their previous results. Key skills are planned well by the geography teachers, although they are no longer essential for the AS course. Good ICT and communication skills were demonstrated by the presentations seen in Year 13 lessons, where individual students had researched very well key questions concerning population problems. The rest of the class appreciated and benefited from the extensive research and well-supported conclusions.

268. High levels of ICT skills were also seen in the Year 12 lesson in a computer room, developing the presentation of fieldwork started in recent visits to the Dorset Coast. Digital camera images were being manipulated, and annotated with word-processed descriptions and explanations of coastal features and processes, and developing a study of coastal management. These annotated images were to be placed on an AO size map of the coast, to produce a poster for future revision. These Year 12 students showed good levels of knowledge and understanding, developed in greater depth from GCSE studies the previous year. The other Year 12 option group benefited from the teachers' excellent planning of a case study of depopulation in Scotland. The students produced fact-files, working in pairs researching different aspects of the Outer Hebrides and the Shetlands using the resources supplied. Students used geographical terms correctly and show good understanding and skills extracting facts from atlas and text-book resources. The teacher helped the students reach conclusions about the quality of life in each area from their fact-files, talking around the subject, demonstrating his personal knowledge of the Scottish Isles and relating this work to other world issues.

269. Teaching is very good overall, with many excellent features. Teachers have depth and breadth of knowledge, and good qualifications that complement each other. Lesson planning is good, with a variety of activities in each double lesson and good use of discussion, research and essay writing.

Questioning techniques help the pupils contribute, although there is a tendency for teachers to talk too much at times, and students to be too teacher-dependent. Relationships between teachers and students are very good, and teachers give good guidance and advice to students. The retention rate from Year 12 to 13 is good and few students dropped AS level geography to concentrate on other subjects. Only one student with poor attendance is likely to not be entered for A-level. Students work very well and co-operate with each other, although the quality of interaction is better in the larger groups.

270. Leadership and management are good. The curriculum is appropriate for the level required, with a commendably strong commitment to fieldwork and first-hand experience. Resources are good, with one-off reference books as well as a variety of texts, maps, work sheets and videos for class lessons and students' research. The geography office has two computers that can be made available for sixth-form students. Accommodation is satisfactory, but sixth form use of large classrooms impinges on availability for other pupils. Display is very good throughout the department, with evident contribution from the sixth form.

Sociology

The overall quality of provision in sociology is **very good**.

Strengths.

- Students achieve very well.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Assessment practices are well structured and support the very good achievement.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Areas for improvement

- The allocation of resources is unsatisfactory.
- The organisation of the timetable creates difficulties.

271. The AS and A-level results for 2001 were very good. All students achieved grades that indicated good progress, those with modest GCSE results doing very well.

272. The standard of work of current Year 12 students is above average. Although they have only just commenced the course Year 12 students have a good understanding of the subjects covered. For example they were able to differentiate between various definitions of poverty and were carefully preparing presentations on aspects of poverty that they then shared with the class. Their understanding of the specialist concepts and language is good. They are developing good research and essay writing skills. Notebooks are well-structured, indicating good organisation of private study time.

273. The students maintain this progress in Year 13. They are able to draw together information from a variety of sources and focus on the subject being covered. They had recently been using the Internet to do some good research on members of parliament. When asked to analyse and evaluate a short television programme they demonstrated a very good understanding of the complex theories of crime and deviance. Their use of technical vocabulary is very good. Such terms as "legitimate opportunity theories" were well understood. They fully understood the various theoretical frameworks that underpin the subject.

274. The teaching is very good. Teachers have a very good up to date knowledge of the subject and use a variety of teaching methods to involve and motivate the students. Lessons are well planned and proceed with pace and vigour. In a Year 12 lesson pupils were encouraged to produce short presentations using overhead transparencies. Modern textbooks are well used and pupils are encouraged to use up to date information from magazines and the Internet. A Year 13 group was using information from a very recent criminal case to illustrate theories on crime and deviance. Assessments are very good. Students keep individual logs, which are efficiently used to set targets

and monitor outcomes. Key skills, including the use of ICT, are carefully structured into the course. Teachers use model answers well to encourage students to develop good examination techniques.

275. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is a strong commitment to helping students do the best that they can. The provision of resources for the subject within the history department does create problems. These are compounded by the fact that both Year 12 and 13 are timetabled together and this places considerable pressure on such things as textbooks. However, the department is well placed to continue achieving good results.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

276. English courses were observed and reported on in detail. Modern foreign language lessons were sampled. No students were entered for the 2001 A-level examinations in French and only one in German. Current standards are good. Two lessons, a Year 12 French class and a Year 13 German class, were observed. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers establish a positive atmosphere for learning so that students develop confidence and rise to the challenges that they are set.

English

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and helps students to make good progress.
- Students enjoy the subject and take responsibility for their own learning.

Area for improvement

- The consistent analysis of results so that the department can identify students' levels of achievement.

277. The school offers GCE A and AS level courses in English language and literature. The first English language examinations were taken in 2001. Prior to that, the school offered only the literature course. The GCE A-level examination results in English literature were in line with the national average in 2000 but, based on preliminary national data, they were below average in 2001. English language results were also below average in 2001, but all students gained pass grades. AS results in 2001 showed that students were achieving well.

278. The standard of work of current students is above average. The school has not analysed the achievement of students in previous years. However, current Year 13 students are achieving well in both courses, in relation to their previous GCSE results. In literature, students have a good understanding of the texts that they study. In one lesson they were able to discuss, with confidence, the way in which Iago gradually feeds Othello's jealousy in Shakespeare's play and made very precise references to the text to back up their views. Most have sufficient confidence to make an individual, personal response to literature. They have very good note-taking skills and this helps them to record and learn from each other's ideas. The highest attaining students can write about Shakespeare's use of imagery and the structure of the play in a confident, assured style. English language students are able to use the correct terminology when analysing grammatical structure. They discussed a letter from a soldier in the Crimean War and identified the writer's unusual use of adverbial phrases as a distinctive aspect of his writing style.

279. In Year 12, students are still at an early stage of their courses but are making good progress from the work that they previously studied for GCSE. They are currently studying Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. They understand the context of the novel and are developing a good insight into the relationships between the characters. The work of the higher attaining students shows a good understanding of Atwood's use of imagery, although most still find it difficult at this stage to discuss the themes of the novel and the author's use of language. English language students are able to explain some of the ways in which adults help children with language acquisition. They are beginning to use this knowledge well, to create and analyse transcripts of language interaction between young children and adults.

280. Each year, a small group of students works towards re-taking GCSE English. None of their lessons were being taught during the inspection as the students had just re-taken their examination. However, in 2001, all except one improved their results by one grade and five out of the seven candidates obtained a C grade.
281. Teaching is good overall. All teachers have good subject knowledge and this often enables them to add depth to students' own knowledge. For example, in a Year 13 lesson on *Othello* the teacher added to the students' understanding of the relationship between Cassio and Desdemona because he could explain how they were more socially sophisticated than Othello. They plan lessons well so that there is usually a good mix of whole class discussion, individual work and group discussion. As a result, students learn co-operatively and develop a personal response to the texts they read, but with support from teachers when necessary. Teachers encourage students to carry out research and to share their findings with each other and students respond very positively to this responsibility.
282. The English department has just begun to monitor students' progress more systematically and to set target grades for students. Students are now more aware of what they need to do to improve. Provision is well managed and this is partly reflected in the very good completion rates for students who follow English courses. For example, in the present Year 13 only one student has withdrawn from the courses which began in 2000.