

INSPECTION REPORT

THE EMMBROOK SCHOOL

Wokingham

LEA area: Wokingham

Unique reference number: 110060

Headteacher: Mr J Goulborn

Reporting inspector: Mr B. Jones

18462

Dates of inspection: 10th – 14th December 2001

Inspection number: 188393

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: Maintained

Age range of students: 11 to 18

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Emmbrook Road
Wokingham
Berkshire

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr I Tant

Date of previous inspection: 20th May 1996

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18462	B. Jones	Registered inspector		Information about the school The school's results and students' achievements How well are students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9132	J. Godfrey	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
22458	G. McGinn	Sixth form co-ordinator	History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
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12658	M. Beardsley	Team inspector	English	
22590	R. Castle	Team inspector	Geography	
17709	A. Giles	Team inspector	Physical education	
23324	S. Greenland	Team inspector	Sociology (sixth form)	
25551	A. Hodge	Team inspector	Business studies	
10385	K. Hopkins	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)	
3643	D. Jones	Team inspector	Mathematics	
231886	J. Maunder	Team inspector	Science	
17868	E. Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art and design	
5241	C. Millband	Team inspector	Biology (sixth form)	

15678	J. Radford	Team inspector	Provision for students with special educational needs Religious education	
2079	T. Slack	Team inspector	Design and technology	
3166	M. Young	Team inspector	Music (Key Stages 3 and 4)	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Emmbrook School is a large mixed comprehensive school in Wokingham with 1160 students in the 11-18 age range. There are 173 students in the sixth form. The numbers of boys and girls are roughly equal, although there are differences in some year groups. The students come from a wide area and nearly 50 per cent are brought to school by bus. Overall, students' attainment on entry to Year 7 is above average, but not in all subjects, and the intake represents the full range of ability. The proportion of students who are eligible for free school meals is below average. The school has a very small number of ethnic minority students, and the number of students who come from homes where English is an additional language (EAL) is very low. The proportion of students with special educational needs including statements is broadly in line with the national average. The school was recently awarded the Silver Arts Mark.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good and effective school and provides good value for money. The sixth form provision is cost effective. The leadership and management of the headteacher, senior staff and the governors are good. The teaching is good and students achieve well to attain above average standards in Years 7 to 9 and maintain those standards in Years 10 and 11. Students currently in the sixth form also achieve well. The school is well organised. Students develop positive attitudes towards their studies and they behave well. The school applies the principles of best value effectively to its use of resources and finances are managed well.

What the school does well

- Students achieve well through Years 7 to 11. They attain standards that are well above average in English, mathematics, art and design and drama.
- Good leadership from the headteacher, with support from senior managers and the governing body, ensures a clear educational direction to the school's development.
- Good leadership at faculty and departmental levels is having a positive impact on improving standards.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- The school provides very well for students' social development.
- The school works very well with parents to promote students' learning at school and at home.

What could be improved

- Students do not achieve well enough in science in Year 11.
- Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 7 to 11 are too low.
- Standards in religious education in Year 11 are unsatisfactory.
- Timetabling arrangements are unsatisfactory in the main school.
- The school does not provide well enough for students' spiritual development.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has shown good improvement in the main school since the previous inspection in May 1996 and satisfactory improvement in the sixth form. In the main school, National Curriculum test results in Year 9 and GCSE results have risen and been maintained at a level above the national average. The work seen in the inspection confirms these standards,

showing that students achieve well. In English, mathematics and science, students' levels of attainment are well above average in Year 9. Students' levels of achievement in the sixth form are satisfactory. The quality of teaching has improved. The school has responded effectively to the key issues in the previous report and other issues highlighted in the report. The school has improved its development planning and has good capacity and commitment to improve further. The school still does not meet the requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship and the provision of religious education in the sixth form.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by students 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	B	B	C
A-levels/AS-levels	C	C	N/A	

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

Results in the 2001 national tests for 14 year olds were above average in English and well above average in mathematics and science. Compared with similar schools, results were well above average in mathematics, above average in science and average in English. The attainment of boys and girls was similar. No data is currently available to indicate the trend in results, but above average levels have been maintained.

Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were above average. There is no information available at present to gauge a trend in results, related to the national trend. When compared with examination results achieved in similar schools, the results were broadly in line with the average. These results represent satisfactory levels of achievement. Challenging targets were set for these students and were largely met. However, the proportion gaining five or more A*-C grades was slightly below target. There was an unusually large gap between the results of boys and girls, reflecting a degree of under-achievement by boys.

The results in the 2001 examinations at General Certificate of Education Advanced level (GCE A-level) were broadly in line with the national average as measured by the average points score obtained. The results continue a trend that is broadly average. There were no significant differences between male and female students. The results represent satisfactory achievement overall and targets set on the basis of students' earlier performance at GCSE were broadly met. Retention rates are high and the large majority of students complete their courses.

In the work seen in the inspection, standards are now well above average by the end of Year 9 in English, mathematics and science. They are above average in modern foreign languages, history, art and design, and music and in line with the average in all other subjects except ICT, where standards are below average. This reflects good achievement overall in relation to students' starting points in Year 7. By the end of Year 11, students in nearly all subjects are now working at a level above average and in English, mathematics and art and design, standards are well above average. Standards of literacy and numeracy

are above average. Overall, students in Years 10 and 11 achieve well in relation to their starting points. Students in Years 12 and 13 reflect the range of prior attainment present and their levels of achievement are at least satisfactory, and in the majority of subjects are good.

Students with special educational needs generally achieve their individual targets. Students identified as gifted and talented make good progress and students with EAL achieve well. There are no significant differences in the levels of achievement between boys and girls.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Students show enthusiasm in their lessons and a positive approach to learning. They enjoy coming to school and taking part in out-of-school activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good behaviour, in and out of lessons. Students know right from wrong and show good understanding of the boundaries of acceptable conduct.
Personal development and relationships	Provision for students' personal development is good and relationships with each other and with their teachers are very good. The school provides students with good opportunities to exercise responsibility and they respond very well.
Attendance	Good. Levels of attendance are above the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	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.

The quality of teaching at the school is good overall. Teaching and the quality of learning it promotes are consistently good across Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form. The teaching observed was at least satisfactory in nearly all lessons. There is some unsatisfactory teaching in religious education, primarily in non-examination classes taken by teachers who are not specialists. There was a high proportion of good teaching and some excellent teaching was also seen.

- The class management techniques of teachers are generally good and they use the time in the lessons effectively to ensure good learning takes place.
- Teachers provide good role models and show commitment to the work they undertake.
- Across the wider range of subjects, teachers generally have a good level of knowledge and understanding of their subjects
- Teachers' expectations of students are usually kept appropriately high. This not only applies to students' behaviour and level of effort, but to the quality of their work.
- The quality of teachers' planning is good throughout the school, both in the longer term and for individual lessons.

- Teachers mainly use question and answer techniques well and the use of assessment is an improving area in the school. There are still some inconsistencies in the frequency and depth of teachers' marking.
- The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is good overall.
- The teaching of students with special educational needs, those with EAL, and gifted and talented students is good and these students learn effectively and achieve well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall and satisfactory provision of activities to extend and enhance the curriculum. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, except in providing access to the full programme of study in design and technology.
Provision for students with special educational needs	The curriculum provision for students with special educational needs is good throughout the school.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	There is a very low number of students with EAL. Provision is satisfactory and these students make good progress and achieve well
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Good provision overall. Students' social development is very good, cultural development is good and moral development is satisfactory. The provision for students' spiritual development is unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its students	The school takes good care of its students. The provision for health and safety and child protection are satisfactory. The personal support and guidance for students are good.
How well does the school work in partnership with parents	The contribution that parents make at home and school to their children's education is very good. The school is effective in promoting this partnership.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher ensures a clear educational direction for the school's work. Senior managers make an effective contribution to the running of the school. Key staff have good levels of commitment and energy in pursuing continued improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governors have a very good understanding of the school's work. They are effective in fulfilling their responsibilities. Requirements to provide collective worship and religious education in the sixth form are not met.

The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. This is an improving feature of the school's work.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Staffing, learning resources and accommodation are adequate. The school applies 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 • Teachers' expectations are high • Teaching is good • Children make good progress • The school is friendly and parents are comfortable with questions or problems • The school helps their children to become mature and responsible adults • The outdoor pursuits centre is a good facility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour in the school • Information about children's progress • The school's involvement of parents • The level of homework is either too high or insufficient. • The range of activities outside of lessons is limited

Inspectors agree that high expectations and good teaching results in students' good progress. The school is approachable and students' personal development is good. The school's outdoor pursuits centre contributes very well to social and moral development. Behaviour has improved since the introduction of the new positive behaviour policy this term. Students leave the school as mature and responsible adults. The school works closely with parents. There are a good number of information evenings for parents, but students' reports are inconsistent and do not contain a good level of information on progress. The level of homework is variable but generally it is satisfactory. There is a good range of activities outside lessons, but the alterations to the timing of the school day have caused some problems and have affected attendance.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM EMMBROOK SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form has 89 students in Year 12 and 86 students in Year 13. Both male and female students are well represented, though there are significantly more girls than boys in Year 12. There are very few minority ethnic students, none of whom have EAL. It provides a wide range of GCE Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and A-Level (A2) courses and two vocational courses, in General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) business studies. There are set criteria for Year 11 students wishing to enter the sixth form. These vary according to the courses taken up. Approximately half of Year 11 students stay on into the sixth form and a small number join from other schools. Nearly all of the students embark on two-year courses leading to A-level. Students enter with average attainment, as the intake includes some students with a GCSE profile that is below the school's normal requirements.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provision is good and cost effective. It caters well for its students through a good range of AS and A-level courses and provides many opportunities for their personal development. In 2001, results at A-level were broadly average and maintained a trend of satisfactory progress. In AS examinations, results were just above average. These students made satisfactory progress. In work seen in the inspection, standards amongst current students are improving. In nearly all subjects, students are achieving well in relation to their starting points. This is in response to the good quality teaching and the very good attitudes of the students towards work. There is a low drop-out rate at the end of Year 12 as they are suited to and satisfied with their courses. They receive very good support and guidance to ensure that the courses meet their needs and aspirations. The management of the sixth form funding is good and meets the cost of staffing. The head of the sixth form provides clear educational direction and sets high standards and expectations. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

Strengths

- Students are making good progress in both AS and A-level (A2) courses. Their levels of achievement are at least satisfactory and in the majority of subjects are good.
- In the work inspected, standards of attainment are high in mathematics, and above average in English and French.
- The sixth form benefits from strong overall leadership, and good leadership in most subjects.
- Teaching is good, and there is a significant proportion of very good teaching. Students are challenged and stimulated so that good learning takes place.
- Students are mature and well motivated in their attitudes to study and in the contribution they make to the whole school. This is promoted by the very good opportunities for their personal and social development.
- The school provides sensitive guidance and support to ensure that students' needs and aspirations are met.

What could be improved

- Procedures to monitor students' progress and to help them to improve through individual learning targets need to be more fully developed.
- The completion of plans to co-ordinate the delivery of key skills.
- Better timetabling arrangements for courses in GNVQ business studies to improve teaching provision.

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.

Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Very good. Standards are high as a result of very good teaching and learning. Students achieve very well as they receive very good support. The department is very well led.
Biology	Satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory and standards are in line with the national average. Students make satisfactory progress and achieve satisfactory standards.
Design and technology	Good. Teaching and learning are good and students make good progress and achieve well. They work hard and have positive attitudes. Standards at A-level are in line with the national average.
Business studies	Satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory and the learning is good as students work well independently. Attainment is broadly in line with the national average
Information and communication technology	Good. A well-led department with good teaching and a strong commitment by all staff to raise standards. Learning is good and students achieve well. Standards are in line with the national average.
Geography	Good. Standards are average among a group with below average GCSE results for entry into the A-level course. Students achieve well as a result of good, challenging teaching.
Sociology	Good. Good teaching, learning and management are leading to improving standards of attainment from a below average base.
English	Good. Teaching and learning are very good and so students make good progress and achieve very well. They reach standards that are above average.
French	Good. Standards are above average. Teaching and learning are good. Students show very positive attitudes.

In other work seen across the sixth form, a similar pattern emerged, where students studying on GCE AS and A2 courses are making good progress and are achieving well in nearly all subjects. This is as a result of the good quality of teaching and the keen enthusiasm, strong motivation and good study skills of the students. Teaching is often very good and in art and design, excellent in two of the three lessons observed.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The school provides very good support and guidance for students in the sixth form. Very good relationships exist between tutors and students. Tutors know students very well and give good advice and guidance on personal as well as academic issues.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good. The governors, senior management and head of sixth form have made the development of the sixth form a priority in the school's development. It is very well staffed. Accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory. The head of sixth form gives a clear educational direction to tutors and students. Good procedures are being developed to monitor and evaluate the performance of students and teachers. Equality of opportunity is effectively promoted in line with the school's aims. The sixth form is cost effective.

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"> • School has helped them settle well • Teachers are accessible for help • They are treated as responsible young adults • They enjoy the sixth form and recommend it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about progress • Advice about future options • The range of activities and enrichments

Inspectors feel that students receive very good care and guidance. Students completed the questionnaires early in the term before they had received advice about future options and most now agree that they get good guidance. Students receive a monitoring review each term, which grades effort and performance and gives targets for improvement, but annual reports are rather brief and do not give good information on progress. There is a good range of enrichment activities, but the alteration to the timing of the school day and attendance at period six has limited the accessibility of some of the extra-curricular activities to the sixth form. The sixth form has a very friendly and comfortable atmosphere and is conducive to good work.

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 students' achievements

1. Overall, the attainment of students when they enter the school is above the national average. The results of students in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were above the national average and the average of schools deemed to be similar on the basis of the proportion of students entitled to free school meals. In 2001, Year 11 students' results in their GCSE examinations were above the national average and in line with the average achieved in similar schools.
2. In the 2001 National Curriculum tests for Year 9 students, the proportion of students reaching level 5 and above was above the national average in English, and well above in mathematics and science. Similarly, the proportion reaching level 6 and above was higher than average in English and well above average in mathematics and science. Overall, results were above average in English and well above average in mathematics and science. Compared with similar schools, results were well above average in mathematics, above average in science and average in English. The results obtained by boys and girls are not significantly different overall. Because there is not a complete set of national data available, it is not possible to judge the trend in results over time, or to compare such a trend with the national trend, but results have been consistently above or well above average in recent years.
3. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, the average points score per student was above average, and the results over the past five years have been consistently above the national average. There is no information available at present to gauge a trend in results, related to the national trend. When compared with examination results achieved in similar schools, the results were broadly in line with the average. This group of students made sound progress through Key Stage 4, achieving satisfactory standards in relation to their prior attainment. The school set targets for the group that were challenging and realistic, based on good quality information about their attainment levels and the progress they were making. The targets set for the proportion gaining one or more GCSE grades A*-G and the target average point score were exceeded. However, the group did not quite reach the target for the proportion gaining five or more grades A*-C.
4. There was a very marked difference between the results gained by boys and girls, and an unusually wide gap between their performances. The school's earlier analysis of attainment levels indicated that there was a significant difference to be expected, but the gap was wider than anticipated. This reflected some under-achievement amongst the boys who reacted unfavourably to a number of changes to teaching staff through their two years of studying for GCSE. It is to the school's credit that this under-achievement has been identified and successful measures put in place to tackle it. There was some variation in performance at GCSE between subjects within the school. Students performed better in English literature, statistics, history and drama. In some areas, the results were significantly worse, including ICT, design and technology, art and design and business studies.
5. The work seen in the inspection showed that students are making good progress in Years 7 to 9. The work of the current Year 11 group demonstrates that they too are making good progress. Throughout Years 7 to 11, current students' levels of achievement are good in relation to their prior attainment.

6. In the work seen in the inspection, standards are now well above average by the end of Year 9 in English, mathematics and science. They are above average in modern foreign languages, history, art and design, and music, and in line with the average in all other subjects except ICT, where attainment levels are below average. The students currently in Year 9 have made good progress through Years 7 to 9 and achieved good standards in relation to their prior attainment. There are some variations between subjects. Students make good progress and achieve well in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, modern foreign languages, history, art and design, music and physical education as they respond to good teaching. In ICT, geography and religious education, students' levels of achievement are satisfactory. In ICT, students are now achieving satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment in response to new, improved teaching, but the standards of work seen are still below average. Standards of literacy and numeracy are above average.
7. In the work seen in the inspection, by the end of Year 11, students in nearly all subjects are now working at a level above average. In English, mathematics and art and design, standards are well above average. Overall, students currently in Years 10 and 11 achieve well in relation to their starting points. In design and technology, modern foreign languages, history and music, students make good progress in relation to their starting points and achieve well. In science, students maintain standards that are above average and achieve satisfactorily. In geography and physical education, students are achieving satisfactorily and attain broadly average levels of attainment. In business studies, attainment levels are above average and students achieve very well. In ICT in Years 10 and 11 and in religious education in Year 11, students' levels of achievement have been unsatisfactory to date. In ICT the school has identified the problem, and in the work seen in the inspection, students are responding to improved teaching and making better progress and achieving satisfactorily. In religious education, achievement in Year 10 is satisfactory but students in Year 11 are not achieving the levels they should, particularly in the non-examination classes.
8. Students with special educational needs usually attain satisfactory levels of attainment in relation to their prior attainment. Most students make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans and they achieve well in small group and individual lessons where specialist teachers and learning support assistants focus on students' identified learning needs in literacy and numeracy. Progress is generally good in whole class lessons; there is usually no difference between the progress of students with special educational needs and the progress of other students. The very small numbers of students with EAL make good progress in developing their fluency in English and in subjects across the curriculum.
9. The school has recently identified students in each year who are gifted and/or have specific talents, particularly in music. The school is developing its policy and its practices to ensure that these students are catered for and are stretched and challenged. The systems are developing well; these students are producing high standards and they are achieving well. There is a small proportion of students of different ethnic background. Within this group there are no students whose English is at an early stage of acquisition. The progress made by these students and their levels of achievement are good and in line with their peers. Overall, there are no significant differences in performance between boys and girls throughout the Years 7 to 9. In the GCSE examinations, apart from the unusual results of 2001, differences in performance have been broadly in line with differences nationally. There is a

strong focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning in order to improve the performance of all students and reduce any inequalities.

10. Students throughout the school have standards of literacy that are above average. Standards of speaking and listening are above average. Students of all levels of attainment express their views clearly and confidently, and they listen well as shown in their responses to questions. Most departments emphasise the use of technical language and students use it accurately. Reading standards are above average, as students read, understand and analyse texts of increasing complexity as they mature. Students who have weak reading skills on entry receive extra help, which enables them to make good progress. Writing is well above average. Students write for a range of purposes, with increasing fluency and confidence. They write at length and in a variety of forms. The work of higher ability students is generally accurate and fluent. Middle and lower ability students' work is lively and imaginative, but often marred by basic spelling errors. Work is usually well presented.
11. The standard of numeracy by the end of Year 11 is above average, particularly in those subjects which use numeracy skills regularly in their teaching, for example design and technology, ICT, geography and science. Opportunities are missed in a number of subjects, such as in history where little was seen in the inspection apart from basic statistics, which were used well in Years 10 and 11 in the study of unemployment figures. Standards in mathematics are high. In mathematics there is a good numeracy policy and plans are well formulated to disseminate the good practice that exists.
12. The school set targets for the 2001 GCSE group that were realistic and challenging. The target for the proportion gaining one or more grades at A*-C was reached, as was the target for the average points score per student. The target for the proportion gaining five or more A*-C grades was not quite reached, because there was some under-achievement on the part of a number of boys.

Sixth form

13. The results in the 2001 examinations at A-level were broadly in line with the national average when compared to all maintained schools as measured by the average points score obtained. The results are a little higher than those of 2000, but continue a trend that is broadly average.
14. Comparatively few undertook the AS course. In these examinations, results were below average in biology, German and music. They were above average in English and physics. At A-level, boys performed slightly better than girls, with a difference in average points score of one and a half points. This is a change since the last inspection when girls performed better than boys. Targets set on the basis of students' earlier performance at GCSE were broadly met. The school undertook some analyses of data to establish the amount of value added to this group of students. The highest attainers scored well and amongst individuals there were some good performances. Overall, the analysis showed that students mainly progressed to expectations and achieved satisfactory standards. The school has identified that students in the predicted A/B grade categories did not achieve to expectation. The main reason for this was the lack of precision in determining predicted grades and the lack of precise assessment data to guide students' progress through the sixth form. The school has since invested in a commercial scheme to obtain better quality data and has improved assessment and review procedures for sixth form students to help them to chart their progress more closely. Retention rates are high and the large majority of students complete their courses.

15. In the 2001 A-level examinations, results were well above average in art and design, communication studies, history, mathematics and music. Results were above average in French, design and technology and physics and in line with the average in English literature, economics and geography. Results were below average in biology, sociology and German and well below average in computer studies. In other subjects taken, the numbers in the groups were too small to make valid comparisons.
16. In 2001, students sat examinations for the first time in AS subjects. National data for comparing performance is not available, but average points scores have been published. This allows some meaningful comparisons to be made and while there is no overall figure for comparison, subject-specific comparisons reflect an improving picture in the school's sixth form performance. Students gained above average points scores in mathematics, home economics, English, German and general studies. Results were broadly in line with the average in biology, computer studies, history, sociology, art and design, media studies, French and music. Results were below average in chemistry, physics, psychology, design and technology, business studies and geography. In these latter subjects, none were well below average. In theatre studies, all five students gained a grade A, and achieved maximum points scores. It should be emphasised that in the absence of national comparative data, the categories have to be treated with caution. The overall picture is one that confirms the rise in standards observed in work seen during the inspection. In the nine subjects focused upon, current students achieve well overall in relation to their starting points on joining the courses.
17. In the work seen during the inspection in the subjects focused on in the sixth form, the standards that students are now attaining are very high in mathematics in GCE second year Advanced level courses (A2). They are above average in English, French, and at the average in biology, geography, ICT, business studies, sociology and design and technology. In the main, students enter the sixth form with average levels of attainment for AS and A2 courses. While the school has a policy for minimum qualifications overall for entry into the sixth form, some subjects such as geography accept students with lower GCSE grades than the norm and those taking sociology and business studies had no previous experience of the subjects. Current standards reflect the range of prior attainment present and in all nine subjects, the level of students' achievement is at least satisfactory and in the majority of subjects is good. The school has resolved past staffing difficulties, for example in biology, computer studies and geography, and standards in these subjects are rising.
18. The provision for the development of students' key skills is satisfactory. Key skills are mainly taught through the students' main subjects and, for a small number of students in Year 13, separately in 'additional studies'. These students have successfully produced portfolios of work as required. Standards overall in the sixth form are above average in application of number, communication, study skills and working with others, and average in ICT. However, the school has only just begun the process of developing a more co-ordinated system of teaching and monitoring of key skills. A co-ordinator has recently been appointed, though not yet fully trained. An audit of subjects has been started in order to identify their contribution to key skills with a view to making subject staff responsible for tracking students' progress. Support and reinforcement are planned to take place through additional studies and general studies, but this will not begin until the spring term.
19. Students' skills of communication are above average. Students' oral skills are above average. They display confidence in discussing or offering their opinions to the whole class. This is encouraged by the good opportunities provided for discussion in

most subjects, especially English, history, geography, sociology, mathematics and ICT. Students also express their views clearly and articulately in additional studies, as when they hotly debated capital punishment or presented their findings from newspaper cuttings on educational issues. Students are also skilled in the use of the computer program, *PowerPoint*, to enhance their confident presentations, as evinced in history and additional studies. In English, students display good research skills, which they use effectively to provide material for written work. They work effectively in groups in all subjects and very well in most. Dialogue is particularly important in art and design and positively contributes to the very high standards achieved in that subject. Problem solving is also tackled well in nearly all subjects, especially mathematics, the science subjects and ICT. Students' writing skills are good, and in many subject areas they use word-processing skills effectively to enhance their work. They are particularly well developed in English, biology, and history, where there is a good use of language and where arguments are well presented. In English, students' essay writing is mature and fluent, but sometimes marred by errors of spelling and punctuation which better developed proofreading skills would correct.

20. The standard of numeracy in the sixth form is high. Standards are very high in mathematics and physics. Scientific calculators are used very well. In biology the quality of students' statistical work is well above average. In modern foreign languages, students read graphs well as these are used as a stimulus in discussion. In geography algebraic formulae are used well in the calculation of river velocities, erosion of material and load-carrying capacity. Students' ICT skills are good. Most students have at least satisfactory and more often good or better skills in communicating information using a computer. In almost all AS and A2-level courses, students' use a range of presentation software to present their coursework. In biology and mathematics, students have good skills in using a spreadsheet to present findings from surveys in graphical or chart form. In almost every subject, students use the Internet well to research their topics and are very successful in using search engines to identify the appropriate website for their needs. All students have good practical skills in using the network, selecting the appropriate software program and in managing their work files on the network system.
21. There are no sixth form students with learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties on the register of special educational needs. Some students have impaired hearing and their individual needs are met. Because of staff awareness and individual support, they make good progress within lessons and their levels of achievement over the longer period are similar to their peers. There is no significant difference in the rate of progress between Year 12 and Year 13 students. There is no significant overall difference between the progress of male and female students.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

22. Students have good attitudes to learning. They behave well in lessons and around the school. They like coming to school and attendance is above the national average. This is similar to the previous inspection.
23. In lessons, students usually have good and often very good attitudes. They listen well to teachers, respond well to questions and settle quickly to work. Students are interested, well motivated and in most activities there is a high level of application and enjoyment. They persevere until tasks are complete and their confidence in their own ability is evident. In a Year 10 English lesson, students made assured presentations to a combined class group on controversial issues including abortion

and the death penalty. As they go through the school, students develop their learning skills and take increasing responsibility for their own learning. Only rarely, when students do not value a subject, is their application satisfactory rather than good, such as in personal and social education, and in religious education in Year 11 it is unsatisfactory.

24. Behaviour in lessons is nearly always good and sometimes very good, especially in subjects students enjoy, such as mathematics, French, art and design, and design and technology. Students behave well at break times and can be trusted to carry out responsibilities around the school with minimum supervision. Students look after resources and equipment well but show a lack of respect to their school environment by dropping a great deal of litter despite the adequate number of bins. There were 63 fixed term exclusions and two permanent exclusions last year, involving 34 boys and 8 girls, which is higher than the previous inspection. The reason for this was the larger than average turnover of staff that led to the appointment of temporary staff. These teachers did not succeed in managing the behaviour of some difficult students. Behaviour has improved this term with the introduction of a new positive behaviour policy and the use of a supervised room for students whose behaviour in class is deemed unacceptable. The staffing situation has also improved. So far this term there have been no permanent exclusions and a reduction to 13 fixed term exclusions. Students are excluded for a variety of reasons, including physical assault on another pupil.
25. Relationships across the school are very good. Students like most of their teachers and form very good and constructive relationships with each other. They co-operate very well in pairs and groups, listen considerately to each other and respect each other's feelings, values and beliefs. They offer sympathetic and constructive criticism to each other when asked, for instance in drama and English. Students are polite and trustworthy and very courteous to visitors and teachers. Students appreciate the friendly working atmosphere in the school. High achieving students in Year 7 offer help willingly to slower students in their class. Students share resources very well in science and design and technology, for example, and co-operate very well in practical activities, whether in friendship groups or those dictated by teachers. Staff are aware of some bullying and monitor situations constantly. The school's response to bullying is generally effective.
26. Students' personal development is good. They enjoy opportunities to show initiative and take responsibility. Students represent each other on the year and student councils. Each form has house captains who wear their badges of office with pride. Students in Year 8 enjoy their turn of reception duty each day and willing volunteers from each year group man the library at break times. Students support the wide range of extra-curricular activities well, especially dance and music, and this has a good impact on students' personal development. Changes in timing of the school day have caused organisational problems in attending extra-curricular activities for some students. These difficulties and an occasional lack of motivation in sports sometimes make it difficult to raise teams for house competitions. Students represent the school well on visits to theatres and curriculum field trips. A good proportion of students enjoy the residential visits to Tirabad, the school's outdoor pursuits centre in Wales. Students enjoy their charity week, organising a wide variety of activities to raise significant sums of money for local, national and international charities, such as the Carl Adebowl Fund for leukaemia research, the Anthony Nolan Trust and Comic Relief. Non-uniform days are popular ways to raise funds.
27. The majority of students with special educational needs have positive attitudes to learning and to school life. They respond well to the support they receive and make

good progress in building up the self-confidence to make friends and to take part in school activities. They are polite and welcoming to visitors and work co-operatively with their teachers and learning support assistants. However, students with behavioural difficulties do not always benefit as they should from the help available to them because they often have negative attitudes towards school.

28. Students like coming to school. Attendance is above the national average and unauthorised absence is below. Attendance in Year 11 is lower because students take study leave before their examinations in the summer term. Attendance was adversely affected last year when the school was closed for two days due to floods. Punctuality is generally good but is sometimes affected by the late arrival of the buses used by a large proportion of the students. A significant number of Year 11 students are late for school each day. Punctuality between lessons is good and lessons start promptly.

Sixth form

29. Students in the sixth form have very good and often excellent attitudes towards learning. Their behaviour is exemplary. They are very keen to take responsibility for and participate in activities. Relationships with one another and staff are very positive and constructive and students show a high level of respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. The additional studies course enhances spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Students have strong perceptions of their role as members of the school and society. They assist in curriculum areas and organise a large number of extra-curricular activities and charitable events for younger students. Many of the Year 12 students have trained as counsellors and enjoy mentoring Year 7 students. A good number participate in the Young Enterprise Scheme and 15 students participated in a World Challenge trip to Venezuela last summer. Attendance in lessons is very high. Students are developing a good degree of independence and the vast majority have good skills to enable them to continue their learning in adult life.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

30. The quality of teaching overall is good. Nearly three quarters of teaching is good and in around a quarter of lessons, very good teaching was observed. There was some unsatisfactory teaching seen in five lessons. Almost all were in Year 11 and mainly took place in non-examination subjects where the students' poor attitudes contributed significantly to their making unsatisfactory progress. The impact made by the good teaching is seen in the levels of achievement among current students and the good quality learning that is taking place. In nearly all subjects, students now achieve well. Only in religious education in Year 11 were students judged not to have achieved well enough. The overall teaching provision made for students with EAL and those students with special educational needs is also good and ensures that they make good progress and achieve well.
31. In Years 7 to 9, the quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in all but one lesson observed, good or better in 72 per cent of lessons and very good in 28 per cent. The overall quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is also good. It follows the same pattern, but with more unsatisfactory teaching at around six per cent. Some 73 per cent of teaching was good or better and 22 per cent was very good. Excellent teaching was seen in two lessons. In Years 7 to 9, the quality of teaching is very good overall in art and design. It is good in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and most other subjects. In geography, ICT and religious

education, the overall quality is satisfactory. The proportion of good and better teaching ensures that students achieve well through these years.

32. In Years 10 and 11, students receive very good teaching overall in art and design, mathematics and music. Teaching is good in most other subjects and satisfactory in science, ICT and geography. While it is the case that students currently in Year 11 have not achieved well enough in religious education, the situation is now improving and satisfactory levels of achievement were seen during the inspection in Year 10. There is still some unsatisfactory teaching in non-examination classes in religious education, taken by teachers who do not specialise in the subject. Students achieve well in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, history and music. In other subjects, students are achieving at least satisfactory standards.
33. The highest attainers and those students identified as gifted and talented receive good teaching and achieve well. The initiative to further extend the learning opportunities for these students is relatively new, but increasingly effective. The provision made for teaching students with special educational needs is good and they achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. There are very few students with EAL, and none at an early stage of acquisition of English. The small proportion of students at the school who are of different ethnic minority backgrounds achieve well in response to the good teaching they too receive.
34. The school is careful in applying principles of equality of opportunity to ensure that different groups are not disadvantaged. Their progress is reviewed and care taken to ensure that the school's inclusion policy is effective in ensuring that all have equal chances to learn well and achieve their potential. Despite this approach there are occasions where timetable constraints have led to some inequalities. In Years 7 to 9 in particular, non-specialist teachers are responsible for teaching in a number of areas. In the main, this does not have an adverse effect upon students' achievement. However, where classes receive more than one teacher for a subject, there is a lack of continuity and sometimes standards are adversely affected. The problem is compounded where students have unequal numbers of lessons in a subject in each of the weeks of the two-week timetable cycle. For example, some Year 11 students receive four lessons of mathematics in week one and only one lesson in week two, and some students taking drama have two lessons in week one and no lessons in week two. In such cases, the teachers work hard to maintain some continuity, but students' learning is affected and such timetabling is unsatisfactory.
35. The class management techniques of teachers are generally good and they use the time in the lessons effectively to ensure good learning takes place. The school has adopted a common approach to dealing with inappropriate behaviour. This goes a long way towards ensuring that students consistently receive a firm but positive approach in an effort to keep them in class and keep them learning and the school is enjoying a good measure of success in this respect. However, where there is unsatisfactory teaching, it mostly has its root in inappropriate behaviour or students' negative attitudes towards their work, allied to weak class management. In these few lessons, the unsatisfactory behaviour does have an adverse effect upon the progress made by the class as a whole.
36. Teachers provide good role models, and students and parents express their admiration for the teachers' commitment and the work they undertake. Across the wider range of subjects, teachers generally have a good level of knowledge and understanding of their subjects. In the best lessons, across most subjects, this subject knowledge is used to good effect to allow teachers to be flexible and respond

to the students' needs as they arise. For example, in a Year 11 mathematics lesson, excellent subject expertise and planning provided the firm platform for students' learning. Previous work was consolidated throughout the lesson and then revision in preparation for extending the work in the next lesson took place to provide a solid platform for progress. Problems were set that were appropriate to individuals within the class and students were made to think hard and to come up with the solutions that were shared with the class. Students were engaged, they concentrated well and their overall learning was very good.

37. Teachers' expectations of students are usually kept appropriately high. This not only applied to students' behaviour and level of effort, but in the best teaching, to the quality of their work. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson, the teacher was insistent that students were specific in their use of vocabulary. On hearing a student's answer, the question was posed, "Do you mean childish or child-like?" The teacher went on to give accurate explanations of the two and thus develop the students' vocabulary. The process reinforced the teacher's demands that answers should be thought through and the best the students could produce. This was not lost on the class and their learning skills were enhanced as they pondered the accuracy of the answers they made.
38. Much of the good teaching in art and design results from the teachers' high expectations of students, the effective ways in which they manage their classes and their insistence on good standards. For example in a Year 9 class, students' behaviour was very good and they showed very positive attitudes. The class was enthusiastic, interested and attentive. They obviously enjoyed their work as the techniques and skills of different decorative forms were explained and demonstrated. They responded to teaching that was skilled, enthusiastic and demanded that they produced their best work and took some responsibility for how they went about their tasks. In this case the boys were a little less dedicated than the girls, but a few achieved high standards and all students made good progress. Where teachers' expectations are not set high enough, students' responses are mostly passive but sometimes unsatisfactory. In some non-examination religious education lessons, for example, the teacher did not set firm enough boundaries as to what is an acceptable level of effort and students were disruptive and prevented others from learning.
39. The quality of teachers' planning is good throughout the school, both in the longer term and for individual lessons. In the best lessons, the teachers' detailed planning ensured that students were clear about what should be learned in a lesson. Where teachers described these objectives to students, it gave them a shared purpose to the lesson. This approach was seen in a Year 7 design and technology lesson. The teacher had planned the lesson in detail. Brief, frequent inputs were followed by students completing tasks to a strict time target. This gave pace to the lesson and an element of enjoyment as students worked towards a set goal. Students' levels of efforts were sustained throughout the lesson and individuals benefited from close individual support where needed. The students learned well in this lesson, improving their technical vocabulary and coming to better understand what it means to take responsibility for producing the best they can. This group joined the school with levels of attainment in the subject that were below average. Already they are achieving well and making up lost ground in response to the good teaching they receive.
40. Teachers mainly use question and answer techniques well to consolidate students' knowledge, keep all students involved and inform their own judgements as to how well students understand new work and make progress. In a Year 8 science lesson some very good learning took place. Here students responded to the teacher's very

effective questioning that led them to explore the difference between heat and temperature and where heat 'goes' when a cup of tea cools. The lesson developed very effectively to consider the process of scientific enquiry and what may constitute a fair test. In this lesson, as in many observed, the very good relationships engendered between students and with their teachers enabled a relatively informal atmosphere to promote very good learning. The students played their full part in this by behaving very well and showing their good attitudes towards learning.

41. The use of assessment is an improving area in the school. There are still some inconsistencies in the way teachers mark students' work, and the frequency with which marking is undertaken. In the best practice, students' work is marked thoroughly and to a pattern that all teachers use and students know. In English for example, this helps to take students' work forward. The closer monitoring of marking practices is an area that is currently under consideration in order to establish a common approach that students and their parents understand. Overall, this aspect of teachers' work is currently satisfactory. The setting of homework is satisfactory overall, but the same sorts of inconsistencies still occur in a minority of cases. There is some very good practice where homework is set regularly and to a timetable to extend the work of the classroom. In other cases, homework is not used effectively and the homework timetable is not followed closely enough.
42. Students with special educational needs are well taught in their small group and withdrawal lessons, where they benefit from the individual help given by experienced specialist teachers and support staff. The quality of teaching is also good in whole-class lessons where teachers have a clear knowledge of their students' needs and are skilled in matching their teaching styles and learning materials to students' requirements. For example, in a Year 8 drama lesson, students with a variety of special educational needs were effectively integrated into the lesson and achieved successfully. The teacher was mindful of the targets on students' individual education plans and had taken these into consideration in the lesson planning. However, not all teachers are confident in behaviour management and some have difficulties in engaging the attention of students with behavioural difficulties. Where students receive individual support in lessons, the subject teachers and the support assistants work closely together so that potential problems are usually foreseen.
43. The teaching of basic skills is effective. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy is generally good. Some teachers include literacy objectives in their planning. There is some good practice in developing the range of writing styles, for instance in history and religious education. Some teachers also encourage the development of reading skills, giving guidance on how to read aloud, but this is not widespread. Most teachers emphasise the use of appropriate technical language, and often correct spelling errors in written work. The teaching of literacy skills is undertaken by other subjects in addition to English in a well-planned approach and is an improving feature. The impact is clearly seen in the high levels of literacy seen across the subject areas. Similarly, the overall teaching of numeracy skills, in addition to the contribution made by the mathematics department, is good. For example, skills with number are taught and used well in geography in relation to latitude and longitude in Year 7, and all students measure accurately in their learning in design and technology, geography, science and mathematics. The standard of numeracy by the end of Year 11 is above average in those subjects that use numeracy skills well in their teaching, for example in design and technology, ICT, geography and science. However, opportunities are missed in a number of subjects, such as in history where little was seen in the inspection apart from basic statistics, which were used well in Years 10 and 11 in the study of unemployment figures. Standards in mathematics

are high. The mathematics there is a good numeracy policy and well-formulated plans are in hand to disseminate good practice.

44. The teaching of ICT that takes place in other subjects is not planned, monitored or evaluated systematically enough and this is a weakness. Standards have also been adversely affected up to now by insufficient resources, a lack of provision for students to use computers in subjects across the curriculum, too many staff changes, and teaching by non-specialist teachers. Standards at the end of Year 11 are below average both in the GCSE course and in the Year 11 key skills course which all students follow. Standards and progress in the subject have been adversely affected by frequent staff changes and teaching by non-specialists in Years 7 to 9. There have been positive changes made to the teaching staff in ICT and students are now benefiting from improved provision, and are achieving satisfactorily. Whilst some subjects, particularly English, mathematics, art, and modern foreign languages provide some opportunities for students to use computers to help in their learning, the provision is uneven in these subjects and not yet as comprehensive as it could be.
45. The work undertaken by the headteacher, governors and senior staff to introduce and consolidate performance management in the school has made a clear impact. The systems and strategies to monitor and improve teaching are effective in raising standards. Areas identified as weak have improved as teaching quality has been raised and staffing recruitment problems have been resolved. This is the case across a number of subjects in the main school, including English, science, ICT, and design and technology. For example the quality of teaching is now satisfactory in science, where up to this year students' achievement in Years 10 and 11 has been unsatisfactory, and in ICT the level of achievement is now satisfactory, which is an improvement compared to recent years. There is a clear indication of good capacity to tackle other unsatisfactory teaching, for example in religious education, and benefit from the very good practice that does exist in a number of subjects. The school has improved its teaching quality since the previous inspection and there is now a greater proportion of good and very good teaching and less unsatisfactory teaching.

Sixth form

46. The quality of teaching is now good overall in the sixth form. Until this year, a number of subject areas have been disadvantaged by a relatively high turnover of staff as the school struggled to recruit suitably qualified and experienced teachers in this expensive locality. As a result, students' levels of achievement in some areas were lower than may have been expected in the two-year courses leading to the 2001 A-level results. The quality of teaching has improved over the past academic year in those subjects where results were below average, or, in the case of computer studies, well below average, as the recruitment of suitable teachers improved. The impact of this better teaching was reflected in the one-year courses leading to the AS-level examinations taken in 2001, where results were higher and in line with or above the average points score nationally.
47. Teaching observed was good or better in 84 per cent of the lessons and very good or better in 39 per cent. Of the 61 lessons observed, none were unsatisfactory. The overall quality of teaching in the subjects that were focused upon for the inspection was good. In mathematics, teaching is very good. It is satisfactory in business studies and biology, and good in the other subjects. Other subjects in the sixth form provision were sampled and in music the teaching observed was very good and the quality of teaching observed in theatre studies was excellent. In psychology it was satisfactory.

48. There are no students in the sixth form on the register of special educational needs. Some students who have specific needs, for example some hearing impaired students, make good progress in line with their peers because their teachers know them and cater for their needs. The highest attainers too, make good progress and attain high results in their A-level examinations. Students from different ethnic minority backgrounds make good progress in line with their peers. The progress made by male and female students is not significantly different.
49. As is the case in the main school, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching are well established and the school is in a good position to identify and disseminate the excellent practice that exists in the school. This process is needed to offset some teaching that relies too heavily upon an approach where students sit and take notes and are rather passive learners. It is to their credit that in such lessons students continue to work hard and make progress.
50. In the best lessons, teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan lessons with a clear structure that focuses on building up students' knowledge and understanding and leads them on to extend this process to studying independently. For example, in Year 13 pure mathematics lesson, the teacher started with a clear, concise and accurate presentation. This was followed by a very effective process that required individuals to answer questions, pose their own questions and then work on the board to show their understanding of the topic. They took a mature approach in the lesson, demonstrating very positive attitudes towards learning new work. A harmonious working atmosphere was thus engendered by the very good relationships existing. A feature of this lesson, and of others that stimulate the students in the sixth form to achieve as well as they do, was the excellent quality of the course and lesson planning.
51. Assessment is now used more effectively to chart students' progress and give them an accurate picture of where they stand in relation to course requirements and what they need to do to improve further. This is an area of developing strength in the teaching of sixth form students rather than one that is firmly embedded in the school's working practice. The employment of a commercial programme to inform the process has just started. This shows that systems and strategies have been put into place to raise standards of teaching further by providing students with well-informed intermediate targets and projections of the grades they are capable of attaining. This is the area that was previously lacking and was in part responsible for some students not realising their full potential and achieving as highly as they could.

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

52. Overall the quality and range of the curriculum are satisfactory in Years 7 to 11. The school has made considerable improvements since the last inspection and nearly all the concerns raised then have been successfully addressed. The length of the taught week has recently been extended to provide more curriculum time. It is in line with national recommendations, but the new timetable arrangements have had some adverse effects on the take-up of extra-curricular activities. The curriculum now mainly fulfils statutory requirements in the National Curriculum subjects, with improvements made in art and design and physical education to meet requirements. Religious education is also now provided in Years 10 and 11. Students do not currently receive their full entitlement to all the programme of study in design and technology because of the lack of facilities for studying computer-aided design and manufacture. The school still does not meet the statutory requirements relating to

the provision of a daily act of collective worship through the school, and religious education in the sixth form.

53. The curriculum provided for students in Years 7 to 9 is broad and well balanced. It includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and personal and social education. Separate provision of ICT to support learning, criticised in the last report, is now provided in Years 7 and 9 and delivered satisfactorily through other subject areas in Year 8. The curriculum is broadened with the provision in Years 8 and 9 of a second language of German or French. A small minority of students with literacy difficulties are given additional help with their general language skills instead. Religious education is provided for all through cultural studies, which has been established in the social sciences area to plan for the introduction of citizenship next year.
54. The issue of split classes shared by different teachers has not been addressed. In order to retain eight teaching groups in Years 7 to 9, while the school is funded as a seven-form entry, much shared teaching of classes exists. The situation is exacerbated by the school's policy to staff the new AS and A2 classes in the sixth form with subject specialist teachers. The situation is particularly acute in mathematics, design and technology, history and geography. Although it does not always lead to unsatisfactory learning, students' progress in some lessons is not as good as it could be and teachers are inconvenienced by problems of managing the continuity of study. The situation is made worse where lessons are not evenly distributed over the two-week timetable. This is offset by smaller classes and enhanced provision for lower attaining students. In a period of change, the initiatives that have led to this situation are being carefully monitored by the senior management group with a view to making modifications for the next academic year.
55. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 provides a wide range of subjects and is well matched to the differing needs of students. The concern raised in the last report of a limited option choice for Year 9 students has been effectively addressed. All students follow a broad common core of subjects for the great majority of their time and express a preference for two other subjects that match their interests and aptitudes. Religious education is now effectively provided as a short GCSE course for all students through cultural studies. Most students study English literature as well as language. Personal, social and health education is provided as a separate subject for all students.
56. The school has made a strong effort to address the needs of all students according to their abilities. A small group of students for whom a full range of GCSE subjects would be inappropriate take an alternative curriculum. They drop one GCSE subject and specialise in others, including a vocational education course in a local further education college and courses leading to the Certificate of Achievement in English and mathematics. These provide an appropriate level of challenge and promote the students' personal and social development. Higher attaining students of mathematics can also do an additional GCSE subject in statistics.
57. The provision of extra-curricular activities to enrich the curriculum is satisfactory overall and has a number of very positive features. There is a good range of opportunities for students to participate and develop their personal and social skills. There is a range of visits abroad to widen students' cultural awareness and to reinforce their studies: modern language visits to France, Germany and Spain; a combined English and history visit to the World War I battlefields and a history visit to Russia for 40 Year 10 and 11 students. All students have an opportunity to stay at the school's outdoor pursuits centre at Tirabad in Wales. The performing arts

provide a good range of activities with an annual drama production and dance show and high quality musical concerts. However, attendance at school clubs and take-up of activities has been adversely affected by the change in the school day. The short 25-minute lunch break and the problems of students travelling home if they stay after school have particularly affected music and physical education. There is a good range of team clubs in sport and individual practice occurs at lunchtime, but numbers have been affected by the shortage of time and the continuing problem of students having to catch buses after school.

58. The aims of the school show a strong commitment to promoting equal opportunities for all. There is also a comprehensive equal opportunities policy, which has to be considered when other policies are being drawn up; it covers equal access to the curriculum, the promotion of issues of equality, and the challenging of stereotyping and inequality. The school has in place good monitoring procedures; the senior management team monitors the policy and exclusions for racial bias. Students have some good opportunities to discuss equality issues. In the curriculum, the school promotes awareness in lessons in personal and social education and cultural studies; students discuss discrimination, tolerance of others, individual rights, racism, sexism and bullying. Overall, there is a broad and balanced curriculum provided for all students. However, there are some examples of unequal access; there is irregular access to computers across and within subjects, because there are insufficient computers in the school; in art and design, standards and progress are adversely affected for some students who do not have access to specialist teachers or specialist rooms; in music, the change in the timing of the school day has prevented some students from extra-curricular activities because they are unable to make alternative arrangements after school. The school has made good plans to try to raise boys' achievement. There were significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls in GCSE examinations in 2001. The school is actively involved in looking at research into boys' learning needs by adapting teaching styles where appropriate, mentoring, and adapting schemes of work. The students with EAL attain similarly to their peers. The school monitors students' attainment and achievement well and has a great deal of data on individual performance and is aware if groups of students are under-achieving. The governors' annual report to parents meets statutory requirements with regard to equal opportunities.
59. The school has a policy of inclusion for students with special educational needs and provision is good. The curriculum is accessible to all students on the special needs register, although a very small number of students are disapplied from modern foreign languages after Year 7, with their parents' consent. Learning opportunities are good. Setting arrangements, for example in English and mathematics, enable students to achieve successfully because the well-targeted teaching and withdrawal lessons give students good opportunities to improve their basic skills through individual tuition and also through the use of interactive learning programs such as *Starspell*. Intensive specialist teaching is available for students with specific learning difficulties. Individual education plans are effective in presenting a clear assessment of students' strengths and weaknesses and in giving advice to subject teachers on appropriate ways of supporting students' academic and social development. Students take GCSE examinations, and they can also follow courses in English, mathematics and basic technology leading to the Certificate of Achievement. The school works hard to ensure extra allowances of time, and support for formal examinations where necessary. Good arrangements are in place to support students when they transfer from one phase of education to another.
60. The school makes satisfactory provision for gifted and talented students and they make good progress and achieve well. Developments in this area are comparatively

recent, but the school has a good tradition of ensuring that its most able students are challenged well. There is a sound policy now in place; individual departments have a teacher responsible for this aspect of work and specific provision is improving. The area has an established leader in place and there is a commitment and good capacity for this aspect of the school's work to flourish.

61. The school has a satisfactory programme for personal and social education that has a good impact on students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It includes sex education, drug education, human rights and careers education. Form tutors, who have had no formal training, do much of the teaching with support from specialists. Teaching is always satisfactory and often good. The programme has appropriate support from outside speakers, for example in health education and careers. There is a good programme in Year 7 that helps students to settle in well and develop constructive relationships with one another. The use of 'circle time' in Year 7 and 'the real game' in Year 9 has a positive impact on students' self-confidence. Tutors begin to specialise in particular areas from Year 10. Personal and social education is supported in many other areas of the curriculum, such as sex education in science, healthy eating in food technology and healthy lifestyle in physical education. The school does not yet teach citizenship, but has an action plan for its introduction, and an audit of current delivery in other subjects is planned. There is little written work in personal and social education; it is not reported on in students annual reports and students tend to undervalue the subject. Messages about healthy eating have yet to be translated into students' choice of food at break times.
62. Provision for careers education is satisfactory. It is unfortunate that the school has not had regular professional support from the careers service this term because of a shortage of staff, but students are encouraged to visit the careers office if they need extra help. There is a well-planned programme of careers guidance that currently begins in Year 9 with the choice of GCSE options when students are sensibly encouraged to make their own choices. Untrained tutors deliver the guidance with support from the educational guidance manager and visiting speakers. Parents and students are encouraged to attend careers and information evenings aimed at raising awareness of the range of post-16 options available. This rightly includes alternative educational establishments and vocational courses as well as sixth form studies in the school. All students who wish to study in the sixth form are given individual interviews to assess their commitment and suitability for particular courses. Students have sound opportunities to explore options for their future education. The school's good links within the community support the careers programme well. The school has enlisted representatives from local industry to assist with interview training. Nearly all students in Year 11 attend one week of useful work experience at the start of the autumn term. Many of the placements are arranged privately with the help of parents and local industry. The programme is well organised, monitored and evaluated. There are a good number of professional placements and students find it a valuable experience in their choice of future career. All students, including those with special educational needs, are well prepared for the next stages in their education.
63. The school has good links with the community and these contribute positively to students' learning and personal and social development. The school makes good use of the local and wider community to support the curriculum, for example visits to a local theatre help learning in English and drama, and there are field trips in geography, history trips to France to look at World War I trenches, and trips to France and Germany to develop foreign language skills. Year 9 science students visited the *Tomorrow's World* Road Show. Community links in mathematics, design

and technology and art are not well developed. Visits to the Tirabad outdoor pursuits centre play an important role in developing students' social and team skills. Strong links with the local church enhance students' spiritual and moral development. The Impact theatre groups provide Year 10 with a good introduction to careers choices. The good links with parents and local industry support the work experience programme well. A local company sponsors the school's newsletters. The school's hall and sports hall are well used by community groups.

64. The school has a good relationship with partner institutions. Links with primary schools and gathering of information ensure that students are placed in the correct tutor groups in Year 7 and that individuals receive the right support to help them settle well. There is good liaison for students with special educational needs. Staff visit all prospective students formally in their primary schools in Year 6 and past students frequently return to primary schools to give informal feedback. There has been no formal grouping of schools since the establishment of a unitary authority. Curriculum links with primary schools have declined over the last year since the introduction of AS-levels and the change in timing of the school day, and are weak, although the mathematics department runs a master class for Year 5 students and there are plans to re-energise links, especially in the arts.
65. The school has good links with other secondary schools who share the Tirabad outdoor activities centre facility. These are used very positively to support gifted and talented students develop social and team-building skills. The school has good links with colleges of further education and universities and this contributes positively to students' personal development.

Sixth form

66. The curriculum provided in the sixth form is good and designed well to build on the experiences of earlier years. There is a wide range of 25 AS and A-level (A2) courses on offer and GNVQ courses in intermediate and advanced business studies. There is a good choice of traditional subjects and a variety of new subjects have been introduced since the last report to address the criticism of narrow choice and to meet students' needs and aspirations: media studies, psychology and, this term, sports studies. Students receive good and impartial advice about the sixth form provision. Particular care is taken to ensure that school programmes match the requirements and aspirations of the students. The school has reviewed the student demand and costs, both financial and in terms of staff expertise, of extending the vocational educational courses. It has fully considered the good provision of vocational and work-related courses in a local further education college. In deciding to increase the range of academic subjects, but with a more flexible entry requirement and strong academic support, it has been successful in meeting the needs of the majority of Year 11 students, who go on to achieve well. The school is responsive to local circumstances and successful in meeting external requirements.
67. Sixth form students are also able to take GCSE courses in English and mathematics and a certificated beginners' course in Italian. All students are offered the option of gaining qualifications in general studies and key skills. The provision for students with particular individual educational needs in the sixth form is good. Teachers are aware of their needs and make appropriate arrangements for them to be met through adapted learning materials and sensitive individual support. They are following courses that meet their individual aptitudes and needs, achieve progress similar to others in their class, and have a very good attitude to learning.

68. Students have equal access to all aspects of the enrichment programmes in the sixth form. Within their individual programmes, students have a good balance of taught and individual study time. The school ensures that students gain a breadth of experiences by providing additional studies, which incorporate general studies, physical education, careers guidance and a range of topics covering art, culture, politics, education, and moral and environmental issues. The well-taught three-week units provide good opportunities for students' moral, social and cultural development. These include moral and ethical subjects, such as genetics and cloning, the death penalty, and advertising, as well as politics and citizenship, curriculum support, key skills (mathematics, ICT and communication) and recreational activities. Students actively participate through presentations and discussions. This provision is well received by the students and provides considerable relevant enrichment to their chosen courses. Students in Year 12 also follow a general studies course and many continue this into Year 13. Students can take part in the Young Enterprise Scheme, New Futures, and last summer students had the opportunity to participate in a World Challenge trip to Venezuela.
69. Students are expected to participate in the community life of the school and all are very involved in organising school activities. They lead house activities such as inter-house poster, master chef and dance competitions. They organise extra-curricular activities for younger students and help teachers in some areas of the curriculum. Many Year 12 students have trained in counselling skills, and mentor students in Year 7. The head boy and head girl represent the school well. The sixth form also organise the school's charity week, which raises considerable sums for a wide variety of good causes. Each year a few students are selected to accompany special school students to the outdoor pursuits centre at Tirabad. Competition for places is fierce and students are selected for their potential to develop spiritually. All students are involved in fund-raising activities to support this initiative. The good opportunities offered to sixth form students to take responsibility, encourages them to become independent, caring and responsible citizens. They make good role models for younger students.
70. Sixth form students are offered good careers guidance. There is no formal programme of work experience, although students who wish to follow professional careers are helped to find suitable work experience. Otherwise, students are encouraged to find their own and many have part-time jobs out of school. Two of the sixth formers are paid to run the sandwich bar at break times. Students take part in the Young Enterprise Scheme, which made a profit for the first time last year. Outside agencies are used to support GNVQ students, and careers' workshops are organised for students in Year 12. Students are given appropriate advice on gap years and university courses.
71. Personal development in the sixth form is well supported by links with the community and other schools and colleges. Community links provide strong support for the additional studies programme and have a good impact on students' spiritual, moral and social development. The Rock Mass in the local church was attended by many of the sixth form and there are good links with local charities. A local information technology company sponsors a sixth form software programming course and members of local industry support the Young Enterprise Scheme. Industry links in the sixth form are not well co-ordinated and could be better developed. A local high street bank provides good financial support for the students' trip to Tirabad with students from a special school. Students studying German go for a week's work experience in Wokingham's twin town in Germany. The school has satisfactory links with colleges and universities to help students with their choice of course on leaving

school. Students are encouraged to attend a limited number of university open days before completing their Universities Central Admissions System (UCAS) forms.

72. The sixth form is open to all students who wish to pursue the courses, which the school offers as long as they have a desire to learn and succeed and the appropriate grades. There are students who join the school in the sixth form from other schools. The school embraces inclusion and promotes it through its practice. Guidance for all students on to courses is thorough. Entry into the sixth form is well planned and retention rates are generally high. Monitoring of performance is now well planned for every student, regardless of the course. The school monitors, supports, encourages and organises every student regardless of gender, race or physical disability. Current timetabling arrangements are having some adverse effects on the opportunities for learning and personal development. The combining of students on intermediate and advanced GNVQ business studies courses, and clashes of the subject in Year 12 with design and technology, are having adverse effects on teaching and learning. The combining of classes in music and music technology at AS-level is also having a negative impact on learning.
73. There is inadequate provision for the students' spiritual development. The additional studies programme does not include the statutory requirement of a course in religious education for all students, although some moral issues such as capital punishment are examined. This was criticised at the time of the last inspection. Although a weekly assembly takes place there is not an act of worship, nor do the sixth form tutorial periods include a 'Thought for the Week' or period for reflection.
74. The school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good overall, but provision for students' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. It has not improved sufficiently since the last inspection. The school has not yet made an audit of provision to find out how much each subject of the curriculum contributes to the development of students' spiritual awareness. Subjects such as geography and religious education include some well-planned opportunities in their schemes of work but the majority of subjects have yet to do so. Formal assemblies with carefully planned and recorded themes are held regularly, but not enough time is allowed for quiet reflection. There is still very little promotion of spiritual awareness during tutor periods and the school does not provide a daily act of worship for all its students. However, the local vicar is a frequent visitor to the school and his chaplaincy work and discussions with sixth form, together with his talks each term to the whole school, help to raise students' awareness of the spiritual dimension to life.
75. The school's provision for students' moral education is satisfactory. Teachers provide appropriate role models and have clear expectations of good behaviour. The school introduced a new positive behaviour policy this term and the clear expectations of behaviour have a high profile around the school; however, not all staff yet use systems of discipline consistently. Students understand the rules but have no sense of ownership. There is a sensible system of sanctions and a good reward system, but older students do not value merits and certificates highly enough. The school rightly celebrates success and students' achievements are acknowledged. Themes for assemblies reinforce moral messages, such as racial awareness, World Food Day and perceptions. There is satisfactory provision for moral development across the curriculum including personal and social education, which has modules on redundancy, abortion and ethics, for example. In English at Key Stage 3, students learn about euthanasia and abortion, in geography they learn about global warming, and in history students study the rights and wrongs of going to war. The Key Stage 4 cultural studies course has good provision for moral education and good attention is given to environmental issues in geography. In physical

education, students learn about fair play, honesty and playing by the rules. Students have good opportunities to demonstrate their awareness of those less fortunate than themselves through good charitable initiatives.

76. The school's provision for social development is very good, as it was in the previous inspection. Students are given very good opportunities in lessons and extra-curricular activities to work in pairs and groups. They are encouraged to help each other's learning in some subject areas, for example in English and biology. This has a very positive impact on learning and personal development. There is good range of visits out of school where students can develop social skills, for example day trips to the theatre, field trips and residential visits to the continent. The school encourages students to take responsibility both collectively and individually, especially in the sixth form. Students have very good opportunities to form relationships across the age groups within their house groups. School council, reception and librarian duties encourage students to accept social responsibility. The lunchtime dining arrangements are unsatisfactory and provide little opportunity for social interaction. The good range of extra-curricular activities provides well for social development, especially in music and dance. The changes in timing of the school day have resulted in some logistical problems in the provision of extra-curricular activities to all students, especially those in the sixth form who attend lessons in period six.
77. Provision for cultural development is good. There is a teacher in charge of cultural education to ensure that this aspect of students' awareness is given due attention. Students are made aware of other cultures in art and design, music, history, geography, mathematics, science, and religious education. In religious education students are presented with artistic images of Christ from a range of cultures including India, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Africa, Germany, Austria and Australia. There is a Mexican crib on display for Christmas that encompasses elements of Mexican culture. Students learn about the festivals of the major world religions at the appropriate times of the year. In history, students visit a cathedral, Ironbridge and the Flanders battlefields, and study black people's America. Every other year, students visit America, and more recently, Russia. In mathematics, display work relates to other cultures, for example, mathematicians across the world. In science, students learn about scientists from other cultures and their work. In music, multicultural education is linked to other subjects such as history and geography, as in Samba music. Students are well prepared for life in a multicultural society. The school broadens students' cultural and multicultural awareness through visits to galleries, museums and theatres at home and abroad.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

78. The school provides a satisfactory level of pastoral care for students, which has a positive impact on achievement. There is good educational support to monitor students' achievements and enable them to make further progress with their learning. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are satisfactory. Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' personal development are good.
79. The school takes satisfactory care of students' welfare. Measures to ensure the health and safety of all students are satisfactory. First aid procedures are good and good records are kept. The community nurse is available on a regular basis for confidential consultations. Teachers take care to follow safe procedures in lessons, but it is unsatisfactory that there are no formal written risk assessments for whole-school situations. Inspectors noted a number of health and safety issues:

procedures for emergency exits are not posted clearly in all rooms; emergency exit doors are not labelled in the mathematics block; the positioning of electric plugs adjacent to sinks in science laboratories is dangerous and great care should be taken to avoid dangers while waiting for the laboratories to be refurbished; the floor in one of the food technology rooms and in the adjacent corridor is deteriorating and the tape used to patch them is a trip hazard. The registration of students in the sixth form is haphazard and the school would have difficulty in accounting for them in the event of an emergency. Child protection procedures are appropriate and the school maintains good links with appropriate outside support agencies.

80. The tutorial system aims for students to remain with the same tutor throughout their time in school. Good relationships are established between tutors and students that enable tutors to monitor progress effectively and provide an appropriate level of academic and personal support, but tutors have insufficient time to offer all students one-to-one support. Movements in staffing have resulted in changes in form tutors and some tutors have not yet had time to build a trusting relationship with their form groups. Most students are happy to ask staff for help and are confident that their problems will be sorted out, but some students in Year 11 find difficulty in approaching staff. The heads of years have a good overview of academic progress and personal development. There is a good mentoring programme for targeted students in Year 11 aimed at improving motivation and academic results. Support for a group of Year 8 girls last year improved their self-confidence. A few disaffected students are offered an appropriate alternative curriculum.
81. Students with special educational needs generally respond well to the opportunities for personal development. They grow in confidence through taking part in activities aimed at improving their social skills, such as class and group discussions, paired reading and games. They also benefit from activities such as the early morning exercise session, and from the friendly atmosphere of the learning support room where they can talk to staff about the work they are doing and the progress they are making in the different curriculum areas. Students are strongly encouraged to have a positive view of their potential and to achieve success in the different areas of school life.
82. The school has effective systems for identifying and supporting students in need of extra help. Students' academic and pastoral progress is monitored on a regular basis and students are well aware of their personal targets. Teachers and support staff know their students well and the detailed written assessments made at the time of annual reviews provide a very clear picture of students' strengths and weaknesses. A strength of the provision is the quality of the learning support. Support staff have a strong commitment to promoting the well-being of students in their care so relationships are good and students gain in confidence as a result. The efficient liaison with the local specialist services ensures that students benefit from a wide range of support for their different needs.
83. Good liaison with primary schools at whole-school level and a good induction process help new students to settle well in Year 7. Year 6 pupils from primary schools are given appropriate opportunities to visit the school. There is a good exchange of information with primary schools, especially for students with special educational needs, and students are placed in appropriate form tutor groups. Each form group is allocated mentors from Year 12 and very good attention is given to their pastoral care, which has a good impact on confidence and learning. There is a satisfactory programme of personal and social education throughout the school, to guide students and support their personal development. Students have careers lessons from year 9 and are offered appropriate guidance on option choices in Year

9. There is good guidance for students wishing to enter the sixth form, and individual interviews are given to each student to assess their suitability for their chosen course.
84. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are good in the main school. Registers are marked effectively using an electronic system, and registration is efficient, but registration periods are not used effectively to promote personal development or extend learning. The attendance of individual students and groups of students is well tracked. Registers are taken at the start of each lesson and subject teachers investigate successive absences. The response of the school to students' absences varies according to individual circumstances. Parents give good support to the school's expectation of good attendance. There is good support from the educational welfare service. Good systems are in place to monitor lateness and encourage students to be punctual.
85. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are satisfactory. A new positive behaviour policy has been introduced this term and is given a high profile around the school. Training in behaviour management was given to staff last term, but disciplinary systems are not yet used consistently. Most teachers have high expectations of behaviour and students respond accordingly. Rules are simple and students know what is expected of them, but have no ownership of the rules. Many students believe sanctions are not used fairly. A supervised room is used effectively for students whose behaviour in class is deemed unsatisfactory. Students are given appropriate work and are well supervised. All students appreciate the financially lucrative rewards, but younger students appreciate merits and certificates more than older ones. Good records are kept of all incidents of poor behaviour, but there is no record of rewards. Incidents resulting in exclusions and all racist incidents are properly recorded. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are good in Years 7 to 9. Younger students have a good awareness of bullying and are happy that reported incidents are dealt with effectively, but students in Year 9 and Year 11 are reluctant to report bullying. Insufficient attention is given to raising the awareness in Key Stage 4 of the serious consequences of bullying and the methods with which it can be dealt.
86. Assessment is good overall. There is some very good practice, in music, for example. Good assessment procedures are in place across a wide range of subjects. The use of assessment is good as faculty performance is reviewed on a yearly basis and targets are set for the following year. The planned improvement to the school's database will make this process more rigorous as far as standards are concerned. Faculties use data well in guiding the planning of students' work.
87. Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress are now good, but not yet fully embedded in the framework of the school's activities. The school is rich with assessment data. Results at the end of Year 9 are analysed well, looking at the achievement of different groups of students, boys and girls, ethnic minorities, those for whom learning in English is an additional language and the high and low attaining students. Monitoring is not as rigorous in Years 7 and 8. Records of students' standards on entry to the school are incomplete, but more up to date this year due to the helpful intervention of the local education authority. Results at the end of Year 9 are used to predict outcomes at the end of Year 11, and reconsidered at the end of Year 10. The integrated support of students in pastoral and academic progress is good, with the result that a significant number of Year 11 students enjoy good personal and individual support of a teacher as GCSE approaches. The Year 11 parents' evening organised by the school to discuss help for students by parents

at home was supported well. Procedures are good in most subjects, very good in music and satisfactory in geography.

Sixth form

Assessment

88. Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress are good. Diagnosis of, and support for, individual learning needs are now very good due to the regular assessments made throughout Years 12 and 13, and the personal support of students by their individual teachers. The school has a good grasp of students' attainment and this leads to well-organised support for students as they prepare for the next stage in their learning. Progress is now being made with the wider sixth form focus, particularly looking at faculties' performance through the extended use of statistical analyses of data relating to students' achievement. Procedures are generally good in most subjects, very good in biology and music, and satisfactory in geography. The modern foreign languages department uses very good statistical techniques in its analysis of students' achievement. Although reports lack quality in terms of what students have to do to improve, the marking of students' work and discussions with teachers make these matters clear to students and parents.

Advice, support and guidance

89. The school provides very good support and guidance for students in the sixth form. Very good relationships exist between tutors and students. Tutors know students very well and give good advice and guidance on personal as well as academic issues. The head of sixth form and his deputy have a good oversight of students' academic progress and personal development. Appropriate advice is given for GNVQ students on their future career path. The additional studies programme supports guidance very well. Students are well advised on work experience in the sixth form and helped to find placements where necessary. Very good assistance is given to students in the completion of their UCAS forms and students are also given good advice on gap years. Procedures for monitoring attendance are satisfactory overall but registration procedures need to be followed more rigorously. Sixth formers sign in and out of school in the sixth form block and subject teachers monitor attendance in lessons and follow up individual absences. There are no other health and safety issues specific to the sixth form.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

90. The school has a good partnership with parents. Parents are very pleased with the school and their involvement has a very good impact on the work of the school and on their children's education. They know their children like school, expectations are high, teaching is good and they make good progress. Most think the school is approachable and that it helps their children to become mature and responsible adults. A significant number of parents are concerned about behaviour in the school and many do not feel well informed about progress, or believe that the school works closely with parents. A significant number of parents think that the range of activities outside of lessons is limited and that there is either too much or too little homework.
91. Inspectors agree that high expectations and good teaching result in students' good progress. The school is approachable and students' personal development is good. Inspectors believe that behaviour has improved since the introduction of the new positive behaviour policy this term. The level of homework is variable but is generally satisfactory. The school works closely with parents. There are a good number of

information evenings for parents. Annual reports to parents are issued in line with statutory requirements. The quality of these reports is variable, lacking National Curriculum levels in some subjects in Years 7 and 8, for example, and they do not contain a good level of information on progress. There is a good range of activities outside of lessons, but the alterations to the timing of the school day have caused some logistical problems that have affected attendance.

92. The school provides a good level of information to parents and welcomes them into school. Newsletters and letters are informative and the prospectus and governing body annual report contain useful information. They do not contain a description of the arrangements for the admission of students with disabilities or the steps taken to prevent disabled students being treated less favourably from others. The omission of national comparisons for public examination results from the prospectus and governing body annual report to parents last year was an acknowledged oversight and a breach of statutory requirements. The school invites parents to a good number of useful information evenings and parents were consulted about the change in timing of the school day. Students' reports are very variable and better in English than in other subjects. The school has improved the targets for development since the previous inspection, but there is insufficient information on progress. Some subjects give National Curriculum levels and the school plans to introduce this across all subjects this year. There is no report on personal and social education and this undervalues the subject in the eyes of students and parents.
93. The school has a good partnership with parents of students with special educational needs. Parents usually contribute to the annual assessments of their children's progress and help their children at home. They are appreciative of the work done by teachers and support staff.
94. Parents make a very good contribution to children's learning at home and at school. They take a keen interest in their children's education and provide them with appropriate equipment, such as dictionaries, calculators and Internet access at home. Some parents provide extra tuition. Many parents support the work experience programme well by helping to find placements for their child and others. Parents appreciate the value of good attendance. They monitor homework well through the planners, which are used very well by students and checked regularly by tutors. Tutors and heads of years develop good relationships with parents. Parents enjoy school performances and attendance at consultation and information evenings is high. Parents provide good support for extra-curricular activities by contributing donations to the school's Amenity Fund and by organising extra transport for students at appropriate times. The Parent Teachers Association (PTA) makes a very good contribution to the social and financial life of the school. They organise a very good variety of events including dinner dances, quiz nights and car boot sales and raise a substantial amount of money that is used to enhance school resources. The PTA has its own newsletter.

Sixth form

95. Students are great advocates of the sixth form. The sixth form pastoral team has helped them settle well and gives good guidance on future options. Students find teachers accessible and helpful and are treated as mature young adults. In their responses to the questionnaire, many students felt they had insufficient advice on future options, but this was early in the term and they now feel that guidance is good. A third of them do not feel well informed about the progress they are making. Students receive a monitoring review each term, which grades effort and performance and gives targets for improvement, but annual reports are rather brief

and do not give good information on progress. Some students feel that there are too few opportunities for competitive sport in the sixth form. There is a good range of enrichment activities, but the alteration to the timing of the school day and attendance at period six has limited the accessibility of some of the extra-curricular activities to the sixth form.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

96. The leadership provided by the headteacher is good overall and very good in ensuring a clear educational direction to the work of the school. He is supported well by the senior management team and the governing body. The priorities established in the school development plan are carefully thought through and appropriate. Good systems and strategies have been put in place to monitor and evaluate the success in meeting these priorities. A good level of improvement has taken place since the last inspection, for example in the quality of teaching and learning provided. The school's procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of its work are good. For example, the school monitors the quality of teaching and learning well and this has led to an improvement in both areas. Areas for further improvement in teaching have been identified and effective measures have been taken to address weaknesses, for example in improving the quality of teaching in ICT. As a result, the overall quality of teaching is better and standards in this area are rising.
97. There are good systems and strategies in place for the evaluation of the school's work and there is good capacity and commitment to improve further. Senior managers, heads of faculties and subject departments and year heads demonstrate energy and a strong commitment to raising standards further, and their overall contribution is good. The school has taken a positive approach to performance management. Procedures are satisfactory and the processes for identifying and spreading good teaching practice are developing well as a result. The school is well organised, and deals effectively with the bureaucratic demands made upon its administration. Targets for whole-school improvement are realistic and challenging and are increasingly based upon accurate information about students' attainment levels. Increasingly, individual targets for students are being established to good effect in raising standards. At present, this aspect of the school's work is developing well but is not yet embedded in the day-to-day practice of departments.
98. The school has undertaken a number of initiatives recently. Some have been in response to government initiatives, for example in setting up and teaching an expanded GCE AS-level curriculum. Others have been as a result of consideration as to how the quality of education offered at the school may be improved. For example, the school changed the structure of the school day in September 2001. There have been costs involved and there have been benefits. The senior managers anticipated the results in their carefully drawn plans and continue to monitor and evaluate the adverse as well as the positive effects. Governors too are centrally involved in the decision-making processes and make a good contribution to the plans and to evaluating the effects.
99. The school's approach to the previous inspection report was positive and the school has, in the main, responded successfully to the key issues identified in that report. A new headteacher has been appointed since and has identified other issues central to the development of the school and raising standards. For example, information about the school's performance is now judged using better quality data, leading to more precise targets. Teaching and learning are now more rigorously monitored and evaluated and the quality of both have been raised. A dip in the school's results after the last inspection has been arrested and under-achievement is now identified and

addressed more successfully. The process of continued improvement is guided by a school development plan of good quality. The plan is a good working document. It gives appropriate levels of detail about how the school's priorities are to be met and how financial and staffing resources are to be used to meet these priorities. The cycle of school development planning is good, effectively taking in three years by a process of reviewing the past year, planning the next and listing in outline future areas for consideration. It now ensures full consultation with staff and the governing body. It provides an effective framework for evaluating the success of initiatives taken. The plan needs to be further strengthened by expanding the brief longer-term intentions that introduce into the document a more formal strategic plan that looks beyond the next year.

100. The relationship between the governing body and the staff of the school is good. Governors take an active role in the leadership of the school and make a positive contribution to the decisions that are taken. There is a link governor for special educational needs, and for the newly formed group that has developed provision for the gifted and talented students in the school. Governors are mainly effective in fulfilling their statutory duties. However, the school does not meet fully the legal requirements relating to the provision of a daily act of collective worship throughout the school and religious education in the sixth form. The governing body and senior managers deal well with the bureaucratic demands made upon the school. A feature of their work is seen in the success they have made of appointing well-qualified teachers in shortage areas, and this in an expensive locality that generally has difficulty in appointing and retaining staff. Governors are in a good position to make informed judgements when holding the school to account for the educational standards achieved and the quality of education provided.
101. The school is administered well and good use is made of ICT, for example in monitoring attendance effectively. Daily routines operate smoothly. However, there are still some timetabling difficulties that stem from the staffing of the AS-level courses. The process of financial planning is good. Spending is controlled well and the principles of best value are applied well in the school's use of resources. The governing body's finance committee has a very good level of awareness of the financial implications of meeting the planned priorities and it plans the annual budget accordingly. Financial administration is sound and day-to-day accounting procedures are efficient. The small debit carried forward from the last financial year has been cleared in the current year. There is a satisfactory programme of external audit and the school has responded positively to the auditor's report. The strategic use of resources is good and specific grants are used appropriately.
102. The management of special educational needs is good. The school's aims and values are fully reflected in the work of the learning support department and the co-ordinator for special educational needs gives clear educational direction. Staff in the department form a strong team and the governor with responsibility for special needs brings enthusiasm, commitment and useful experience to her work. Staff have good opportunities for professional development and there is a wide range of expertise. Record keeping is efficient, and daily routines run smoothly. Resources and accommodation are good overall and have a positive impact on students' academic progress and personal development. However, the room used for the teaching of students with specific learning difficulties is too small for the requisite resources. The specific grant is used effectively for its designated purpose.
103. Good progress has been made since the previous report in extending and developing the provision for special educational needs. Most teachers now plan their work well to meet the diverse needs of students with learning difficulties, and teachers and

support assistants work together effectively in the classroom. Individual behaviour plans have been introduced and teachers have been given guidance on positive behaviour strategies. The school has recently appointed a specialist teacher for specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) and students who have been targeted for individual lessons are making good progress in improving their literacy skills. Arrangements for the regular assessment of the attainment of students with special educational needs have improved. However, although the record keeping is efficient and comprehensive within the department, information is still too limited on the amount of added value that the school contributes to the overall achievement of students with special educational needs. The immediate priority for development is the implementing of the amended special educational needs Code of Practice.

104. Resources for learning, including books, equipment and materials, are satisfactorily provided in departments. Resources are very good in modern foreign languages and drama. All students have language textbooks that they can take home and classrooms are well resourced with cassette players, overhead projectors and whiteboards. There is a good selection of French and German translations of popular English fiction in the library. This is in addition to the more traditional works of Goethe, Kafka and Sartre. There is a well-equipped drama studio including a range of technical equipment for students' use. The weakness is in the number of computers in subject areas. For some departments, including design and technology, history, geography, music and modern foreign languages, access is barely adequate. The school is working to remedy this through considerable investment in its ICT strategy to bring the ratio of students to computers in line with the average. Resources in design and technology are unsatisfactory. There are no computer-aided design/computer-aided manufacture (CAD/CAM) facilities and the capitation allowance is insufficient to meet the present curriculum and to fund developments. This means that the full programme of study cannot be taught. There are only four computers in the library. These are particularly well used. The library is a good resource centre. It is regularly used during lesson times during the week. The school is justifiably proud of Tirabad, their shared outdoor centre in Wales. Students use it regularly in order to develop skills that contrast and complement those learnt in the classroom.
105. Overall, the match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is satisfactory in the main school and very good in the sixth form. There have been 18 teaching staff appointed and 20 who have left in the last two years. This has improved the balance of staff and there is now a good mixture of experienced longer serving teachers, recently appointed experienced staff and those more recently qualified. Very good arrangements are in place for the induction of newly qualified teachers. They receive effective departmental support and mentoring, and a formal programme of seminars and visits is organised by the school. The school has very strong links with Reading University and is a very good provider of initial teacher training. This provision is very well organised and managed by a senior member of staff who is an advanced skills teacher.
106. The school has effective procedures for supporting the professional development of teachers. Evaluation and feedback systems ensure that the school receives value for money from the courses attended by its teachers. Priority is appropriately given to training linked to performance management, the school improvement plan and departmental development plans. Technical staff undertake a valuable role in assisting and supporting the teaching of the curriculum in science, art and design, ICT and design and technology. The secretarial, clerical and site management staff make significant, positive contributions to the smooth day-to-day running of the school.

107. Accommodation is satisfactory and provides an atmosphere conducive to learning. It is well managed and organised, clean and free from graffiti, but there is a litter problem. Accommodation for most subjects is satisfactory. It is very good in mathematics. It is good in art and drama and for students with special educational needs. Several of the science laboratories and technology rooms are in need of refurbishment. The sports hall is good and well used by community groups, but the pitches are poorly drained and liable to flooding. The hard courts are unsatisfactory. Accommodation for ICT is barely sufficient, but three new suites are planned for next year. Students have their own lockers in form rooms, which helps to keep the school tidy. The reception area is welcoming as is the library, which is well used by students. There are good displays around the school, which celebrate achievement. There is a toilet for the disabled and access to the ground floor for wheelchairs. The external decoration of the school has been neglected and the flat roofs are liable to leak, especially in the administration area.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

108. The governors, senior management and head of sixth form have made the development of the sixth form a priority in the school's development. The head of sixth form gives a clear educational direction to tutors and students. Good procedures are being developed to monitor and evaluate the performance of students and teachers. Equality of opportunity is effectively promoted in line with the school's aims. There is a low drop-out rate at the end of Year 12 as students are suited to and satisfied with their courses. They receive very good support and guidance to ensure that the courses meet their needs and aspirations. The management of the sixth form funding is good and meets the cost of staffing. The head of the sixth form provides clear educational direction and sets high standards and expectations. The quality of leadership and management provided by subject leaders is generally good. There is still work to do, for example in developing more precise target setting to chart the progress of students. The sixth form is cost effective.
109. The governors have a good understanding of the issues facing sixth form provision. The curriculum committee of the governing body has been centrally concerned in the school's development of sixth form courses, and through this committee the governing body as a whole has developed a good understanding of the strengths and areas needing further improvement in the sixth form provision. The senior managers and governors recognise the problems that staffing the sixth form has meant for staffing subjects in the main school. In this first year of operation of the extended AS courses the impact is being monitored and evaluated with a view to modifying timetable arrangements next academic year. The governing body does not fulfil its statutory duties in ensuring that the entitlement for all students in religious education in Years 12 and 13 and the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students are fulfilled.

Resources

110. Resources for the sixth form are adequate. Learning resources, books, equipment and materials, are satisfactorily provided in departments. Resources are very good in modern foreign languages and drama. The library is a welcoming and efficient resource for independent learning; it has a very good stock of books. There is a separate section for the sixth form with reference books for all subjects. Students,

especially those in the sixth form, appreciate the series of folders containing newspaper cuttings. These are well used by them when researching and preparing presentations.

111. Overall, the match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is very good in the sixth form. Throughout the school, there have been 18 teaching staff appointed and 20 who have left in the last two years. This has improved the balance of staff and there is now a good mixture of experienced longer serving teachers, recently appointed experienced staff and those more recently qualified. The school has improved the teaching provision in the sixth form in areas where results at A-level were lower than they should have been in 2001. These include biology, sociology, business studies and geography. Improvements to the staffing of these departments have seen improved achievement in the most recent AS results and in the standards seen in the inspection.
112. Accommodation for the sixth form is satisfactory. Students have their own common room and have recently redecorated it themselves. There are some small teaching rooms dedicated for sixth form use, but most teaching is in the main school. The sixth form has its own ICT room, but it is too small.
113. The headteacher and governors have taken appropriate action to create a strong and effective senior management team for the sixth form. There is good teaching provision in the sixth form by a committed group of teachers. The current leadership has good capacity to improve further the provision for sixth form students. Most students state that they are able to follow the courses they wish to from the existing options. This results in a good retention rate, with the large majority of students completing the courses they start. The school's sixth form is cost effective and gives good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

114. In order to improve standards further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

1. Raise the level of Year 11 students' achievement in science by:
 - Improving the overall quality of teaching they receive;
 - Improving marking to give students clear information on the standard of their work and how they can improve further;
 - Tracking students' progress more precisely;
 - Improving some areas of the accommodation.(Paragraphs: 141, 144-149, 151)
2. Raise standards of attainment in ICT by:
 - Consolidating the improvements made in the current academic year;
 - Ensuring positive contributions from all departments in developing ICT skills, and monitoring and evaluating those contributions;
 - Increasing ICT resources available to all subjects.(Paragraphs: 44, 192, 194-197, 199, 200)
3. Raise standards of attainment in religious education in Year 11 by:
 - Providing a structured programme of study for current Year 11 students;
 - Improving the quality of teaching.(Paragraphs: 220, 223-226)
4. Improve timetabling arrangements in order to ensure that:
 - Students receive regular lessons over the two-week cycle of the timetable in all subjects of the curriculum;
 - Teachers are deployed in such a way as to minimise the occasions when subjects are taught to classes by more than one teacher.(Paragraphs: 34, 54)
5. Enhance spiritual development by:
 - Planning more effectively for a spiritual input in form tutor periods and assemblies;
 - Monitoring and evaluating the contribution made by all subjects to the development of students' spiritual awareness.(Paragraph: 74)

Sixth form

1. Improve procedures to monitor students' progress by:
 - Consolidating and developing the work currently started to review students' progress regularly;
 - Making best use of the data collected about students' starting points on joining their courses and using individual learning targets to chart their progress.(Paragraph: 88)
2. Complete plans to co-ordinate the teaching of key skills.
(Paragraph: 18)
3. Improve timetabling arrangements for courses in GNVQ business studies to ensure that classes are taught individually rather than combined with other classes.

(Paragraph: 254)

In addition to the areas to be improved above, the school needs to:

- Meet fully the requirements relating to providing a daily act of collective worship for all students. (Paragraph 52)
- Attend to health and safety issues brought to the notice of the school. (Paragraph 79)
- Meet fully National Curriculum requirements in design and technology by providing facilities for using computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture. (Paragraph 170).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	155
	Sixth form	61
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		65

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 - 11							
Number	2	38	72	38	5	0	0
Percentage	1.3	24.5	46.5	24.5	3.2	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	6	18	27	10	0	0	0
Percentage	9.8	29.5	44.3	16.4	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 - 11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	995	174
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	55	0

Special educational needs	Y7 - 11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	28	0
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	134	3

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	6

Student mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	38
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	69

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.8
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	109	91	200

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	75 (77)	89 (78)	94 (68)
	Girls	66 (89)	72 (82)	73 (71)
	Total	141 (166)	161 (160)	167 (139)
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	71 (90)	81 (87)	84 (76)
	National	64 (63)	66 (66)	66 (60)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	37 (45)	62 (65)	50 (47)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	33 (20)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	82 (71)	95 (80)	86 (68)
	Girls	69 (88)	75 (79)	69 (71)
	Total	151 (159)	170 (159)	155 (139)
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	76 (90)	85 (87)	78 (76)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	46 (45)	62 (65)	49 (47)
	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 students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	85	96

GCSE results		5 or more grades A*-C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	38 (44)	78 (73)	83 (80)
	Girls	72 (66)	92 (92)	94 (103)
	Total	110 (110)	170 (165)	177 (183)
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	61 (57)	94 (90)	98 (94)
	National	49.8 (47.4)	88.6 (91)	94.5 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	School	43.1 (42.0)
	National	39.1 (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 students who achieved all those they studied	School	0
	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
		2001	48	31

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	17.5 (14.6)	16.0 (17.2)	16.9 (15.6)	0 (6.6)	2 (10)	1 (7)
National	N/A	N/A	16.3	N/A	N/A	N/A

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

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

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	1
Indian	3
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	1122
Any other minority ethnic group	37

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	59	2
Other minority ethnic groups	3	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	71.38
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.4

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	228.75

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.1
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – 11

Key Stage 3	23.9
Key Stage 4	22.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	3028831
Total expenditure	3071197
Expenditure per student	2687
Balance brought forward from previous year	22916
Balance carried forward to next year	-19450

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	20
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	18
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
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)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1500
Number of questionnaires returned	237

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	32	56	11	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	31	57	6	1	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	13	60	13	5	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	15	59	18	8	1
The teaching is good.	19	68	6	1	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	20	51	23	5	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	41	46	10	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	36	54	8	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	21	51	21	4	4
The school is well led and managed.	23	54	7	5	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	26	57	9	3	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	19	52	17	7	6

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths:

- In three quarters of lessons, teaching is good or very good, and leads to good learning.
- The curriculum and the units of work are well planned.
- The head of department provides very good leadership for the work of the department.
- There is a strong commitment by the staff to improving standards.

Areas for improvement:

- The performance of high attainers in English language.
- The performance of boys at GCSE.
- Spelling, punctuation and proofreading skills.

115. When students enter the school, their standards in English are above average. Students respond well to the good teaching and make good progress, achieving standards that are well above average at the end of Year 11.
116. In the 2001 National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds, the students' standards were above average. Standards were average in comparison with schools with students of similar backgrounds. This was not a typical result for the school, where attainment in the national tests in the previous two years was well above the national average, and well above that of similar schools. To some extent this dip in attainment can be attributed to staffing problems experienced by the school during the year. Also there was some improvement in the grades awarded, after the school contested the results with the examining board. There was no significant difference between the boys' results and the girls', which constitutes a considerable achievement for the school. The school has worked hard to improve the performance of the boys; consequently, the gap has narrowed each year as standards overall have risen.
117. In the GCSE examinations in 2001, results were above average in English language and well above average in English literature. Although the boys did better in literature than most of their other subjects, their overall performance was well below that of the girls, especially in the higher grades. A particular anomaly is that very few of the students who gained A*/A grades in literature achieved similar grades in language. The school has initiated a plan of action to deal with this issue.
118. During the inspection, the standard of work seen was well above average. This constitutes good achievement since they entered the school. Higher attaining students and students who have special educational needs also achieve as well as their peers in relation to their prior attainment, as confirmed by their successful performance in examinations at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Last year all students gained a grade in the GCSE and all the students who took the Certificate of Achievement gained the highest grade.
119. Standards of speaking and listening are above average. Students of all levels of attainment have good listening skills. They listen well when the teacher is reading to them, and they easily recall details from the text, and are able to draw conclusions. Oral skills are developing well. Students ask and answer questions in class articulately and with confidence. Younger students talk about the books they have

read and give short, prepared talks to their peers on various topics, such as their hobbies. This prepares them well for the oral examination in Year 11, where the students attain standards that are above average. Most students show an increasingly wide vocabulary, and use technical language well; for instance, in Year 9, students speak of 'euphemisms', 'rhetorical questions' and 'hyperbole' when describing a political speech. The skills of discussion and debate are developing well, as shown by students in Year 10, preparing for a debating competition.

120. Standards of reading are above average throughout the school. Students read a range of texts with understanding and insight. They are able to recognise inferences and to draw conclusions and they respond sensitively to the language that the writer uses. When given the opportunity, they read aloud confidently and with expression. Some lower attaining students in Year 8 read extracts from 'Romeo and Juliet' quite well, and clearly had a sound understanding of the main points of the plot and of the characters, as they enacted parts of the play. By Year 11, students have developed good analytical skills, and many show a clear insight into the themes and characters in the novels they read. For instance, they understand the symbolism in 'Lord of the Flies'. They recognise satire and irony in poems such as 'Icarus Allsorts' by Roger McGough. Their knowledge of literary terms is very good, and the higher attaining students understand the effects of literary devices. Research skills are good, and students use the well-stocked library well to find information to support their writing or their oral work.
121. Standards of writing are well above average. By the end of Year 9, students have a good grasp of the conventions of writing literary essays. For instance, in a thoughtful and sensitive response to the novel 'Talking in Whispers', students use quotations aptly to support their comments. The work of higher and middle attaining students is fluent and reasonably accurate, and shows a wide vocabulary. Some middle attaining students could reach higher levels if their work were more analytical and more accurate. The work of lower attaining students is only just below average, and there are some good, creative responses to literature; however, spelling and punctuation errors mar the overall quality. The range of writing is good, from research to persuasive essays to poetry writing. Students experiment with literary forms in their poetry, often very successfully. Students in Year 8 write amusing sonnets influenced by Shakespeare's 'Shall I compare thee to a summer's day'; students in Year 9 use alliteration and simile effectively. For example, one student wrote in a poem entitled 'Sea', "large pebbles bash beneath my battered feet, like hammers pounding deep in a rock". They use computer technology well to present their work.
122. In Year 11, the work of the highest attaining students is impressive in its maturity and the sensitivity of their responses to literature. For instance there was a very good analysis of the spiritual nature of Simon in 'Lord of the Flies'. Generally, most students' writing is fluent and essays are well constructed. An essay by lower attaining students on 'Equality', exploring gender issues in society, made good use of evidence to support the points being made. Literary essays show a good understanding of the texts, although lower attaining students' work is less analytical. Original writing is imaginative and lively, as, for instance, when writing about their work experience; however, there is a tendency by some higher attaining students to be inappropriately colloquial in some of their more formal essays. There are errors of punctuation and spelling to a greater or lesser degree in most students' work, some of which lowers the overall standard. Improved proofreading skills would eliminate some of the more obvious mistakes.

123. Students with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school. The English teachers are well informed of their needs, and support them well in the classroom. The good results that these students achieve in examinations bear testimony to the progress they have made.
124. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is never less than satisfactory. In three out of every four lessons it is good or very good. Because students respond well to the effective teaching, learning is also good. A strength in the teaching is the very good subject knowledge that the teachers have. This means that their lessons are well planned, and they give thorough coverage of the topics, building up students' skills and understanding step by step. Some lessons, however, would benefit from a more carefully planned plenary session to reinforce what has been learned. Teachers' expectations of students are high. The work given to lower attaining students is no less rigorous in its intellectual demands than that given to higher attaining students. Because teachers have high expectations of all students, including those who are gifted and talented and those with special educational needs, students learn well. Teachers enable this by modifying work, or by giving tasks that are sufficiently open ended to allow students to work at their own level. They offer support materials which students can use to guide their writing if needed. During lessons, teachers continually offer support to students whilst they are working, by checking that students understand, or by helping them develop their thinking through carefully directed questioning. They provide gifted and talented students with extension work; consequently, students make good gains in knowledge and understanding. The marking of students' work is generally good, and much of it is detailed and helpful in showing students how to improve the content of their essays. However, not all teachers are assiduous enough in correcting technical errors, which would improve the overall quality of the work of higher attaining students.
125. Students show very positive attitudes in their lessons and their behaviour is good. These very good attitudes to learning make an important contribution to their achievement. They enjoy English and concentrate well in lessons. Relationships between students and their teachers are good. This results in an ethos in lessons where students expect to work hard and teachers are able to easily encourage them to their best efforts. A good climate for learning is engendered and students benefit by making good progress.
126. The curriculum is well planned, with units of work designed to take into account the literacy strategy, giving a wide range of learning opportunities. The basic skills of literacy are well taught, and there is good provision for students with special educational needs. Good assessment procedures are effective in building a picture of what students can do, and what they need to improve. Students are set targets after assessment so they have a good knowledge of their own learning. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities provided by members of the department, from competitions and theatre visits to examination revision sessions, all of which enhance the learning opportunities for the students.
127. The head of department gives a clear direction for the subject with her very good leadership. She leads a team of experienced teachers who are very committed to improving standards. She has already taken steps to deal with the problem of the lack of high grades in English language at GCSE, and the boys' under-achievement. Since the last inspection, standards have risen and improvement has been good on all the areas suggested for development. There is still more work to be done on improving students' spelling.

DRAMA

128. Drama is very well taught in the school and is a popular and very successful subject at GCSE, with students reaching standards that are well above average. Students enter the school with little or no experience of drama. They achieve very well, making very good progress throughout the school in developing a range of dramatic skills and techniques, creating and performing drama with imagination and conviction. They enjoy drama greatly, evidenced by the high levels of concentration and willingness to work that they bring to the lessons. The department is very well led and improvement since the last inspection has been good. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular visits and activities, including professional workshops, theatre visits, a drama club and school productions, all of which enhance the educational experiences of the students. The school also benefits from links with external organisations such as the BBC and the 'Learning Through Action' company.

Key skills: literacy

129. The contribution made by other subjects to the development of the key skills in literacy is satisfactory and in many cases good. There has been good progress so far in developing a strategy for the whole school, linked to the national framework for literacy and there is some very good practice in the school. It is particularly good in religious education and art and design where literacy targets are specifically planned for. In art and design, for instance, students have a literacy task to complete before each unit of work. The development of speaking and listening is promoted well in most subjects as students are expected to give extended answers to open-ended questions, or to evaluate their own and others' work. Students are encouraged to discuss their ideas and thoughts on various issues in religious education. They are encouraged to use technical vocabulary in most subjects, and this is aided in departments by word lists or glossaries. In history, for instance, key words such as 'democracy', 'segregation', and 'militarism' are displayed prominently. In art and design, students are tested at the end of the lesson in the key words used.
130. The skill of reading aloud is promoted in a few subjects, for instance, in history and in geography, and errors are often corrected, but there are insufficient opportunities generally to develop this skill fully. Research skills are promoted well in most subjects. In history, for instance, students in each year group carry out a research project on a particular period such as the Romans in Year 7 and World War I in Year 9. In art and design, research is the first essential in all units of work.
131. Standards in writing are well above average. Several subjects contribute to the development of a range of writing skills. In history, for instance, students are encouraged to write in different forms, for example, letters and diaries of soldiers in the trenches. There are good opportunities for writing at length, such as in religious education where students in Year 8 write a formal assignment on 'People of Faith'. Students in design and technology write evaluations of practical or design work, and in art and design, students write explanations of how they developed their ideas. Mathematics provides support to lower attaining students in the form of writing frames which help students structure their writing. There is appropriate emphasis on presentation, punctuation and spelling, with many teachers correcting spelling errors, although they rarely correct errors of grammar or punctuation.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths:

- The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching are very good, raising the quality of teaching since the previous inspection.
- Levels of attainment are well above average by Year 9. Students achieve very well in Years 10 and 11 and maintain high standards.
- Very good subject expertise and the very good planning of lessons provide a good framework for students' learning.

Area for improvement:

- The timetabling arrangements in Years 7 and 8.

132. The proportion of students reaching the standard expected for their age in the 2001 national tests at the end of Year 9 was well above the national average for all maintained schools, and for similar schools. Boys and girls did equally well. There is no significant difference in the performance of different ethnic groups or in the performance of those with EAL. Results matched those in science but were higher than those in English. Standards have risen in line with national trends in the last three years.
133. In 2001, the proportion of students gaining a GCSE A*-C grade was well above the national average for all schools. All students earned a GCSE A*-G grade. High attaining students also earned a GCSE A*-C grade in statistics. Performance in mathematics compares well with other subjects in the school. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls, the different ethnic groups or those with EAL.
134. The standard of work seen in the inspection in Year 9 is well above average, reflecting the results of 2001. Most students achieve well as they progress through to Year 9 as a result of good teaching, and maintain high standards. High attaining students know their formulae, the area of a trapezium, for example, and how to re-arrange them. They make up neat tables of data in statistics and draw accurate graphs. Average attaining students have a secure knowledge of basic algebra. Low attaining students solve simple equations accurately and simplify abstract expressions in algebra with positive terms.
135. The standard of work seen in the inspection in Year 11 is also well above average. Students make very good progress to maintain well above average levels of attainment through Years 10 and 11. They are achieving very well in response to very good teaching. High attaining students practising past GCSE papers for the higher level of entry have already achieved well. Further study of statistics is widening their mathematical experience. Coursework is of a high standard, with extended writing explaining graph work in an excellent fashion, to calculate the area under a curve in a variety of different ways, for example. Average attaining students on the intermediate course have a sound grasp of basic mathematics such as solving simultaneous equations accurately in algebra. Coursework is complete, lacking only the quality of algebraic skill to summarise the hypotheses made. Low attaining students' coursework is restricted to well set out tables and drawings defining their investigation. The standard of literacy is well above average and contributes significantly to the quality of students' coursework.
136. The provision for students with special educational need is good, enhanced through the teaching arrangements and their support within classes. Together with students from different ethnic groups and those with EAL, they progress well throughout the

school. All students have above average skills in ICT, using computers well for graph work, for example.

137. The standard of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Approximately half the teaching is very good or better; there is no unsatisfactory teaching. The satisfactory teaching seen was in some lessons in Years 7 and 8. Despite good planning and expectations of students in lessons, progress in a few lessons is slowed by the teaching arrangements, which make difficulties for teachers in meeting students' needs. On these occasions, students in some classes have more than one teacher and there are some adverse effects upon their rate of progress. Nevertheless, the progress they make is always at least satisfactory. The standard of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Mental work is a feature at the start of many lessons, showing the benefits of innovations from the National Numeracy strategy. In other lessons, work is ready for students as they arrive in the room. Subject expertise and planning facilitate excellent learning at times, as in a Year 10 lesson on quadratic sequences. In this lesson students enjoyed the very good challenge of algebraic proof in their work, and the satisfaction of success. Computers are used appropriately in the teaching, giving good opportunities for visual learning. Teachers' marking is very good overall, with helpful, written examples to improve learning. Students' attitudes have improved since the previous inspection and are now very good. They behave very well. Relationships in lessons are very good, fostered by the excellent management of students by the teachers and the enthusiasm shown for mathematics. Sometimes students work in silence and at other times co-operatively in pairs, discussing their work quietly. Most students do their homework. It is set regularly and complements class work well.
138. The standard of leadership and management is very good and is the main reason for the good improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers work hard and well as a team, shown through their coherent approach to marking students' work. The monitoring of the subject's performance is very good; it is responsible for maintaining standards well above the national average. The curriculum satisfies the requirements of the National Curriculum.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths:

- Attainment at the end of Year 9 is well above the national average.
- Good teaching underpins the good progress which students are making in their knowledge and understanding of science in Years 7 to 9.
- Assessment is used effectively in some classes in Years 7 to 9 to set targets and monitor students' progress.
- Good attention is paid to the development of students' literacy skills, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

Areas for improvement:

- The rate of progress made by students currently in Year 11.
- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning.
- The range of teaching and learning strategies and creative written work in Years 10 and 11.
- The guidance given to students through marking, on what they need to do in order to improve their work.

139. Levels of attainment are well above average at the end of Year 9 and above average at the end of Year 11. Students' achievement in relation to their previous attainment is very good in Years 7 to 9, but slows in Years 10 and 11. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Learning reflects closely the quality of teaching. There is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching with older students where they make unsatisfactory progress.
140. Results in the Year 9 tests in 2001 were well above the national average for all schools and similar schools. Between 1996 and 2001, test results have fluctuated from year to year, before rising to their peak in 2001. During this period, results were consistently well above the national average. Results in science were not as good as those in mathematics, but were better than those in English in 2001. In the past few years, girls have achieved better results than boys at this stage.
141. GCSE results in 2001 were above the national average for all schools. The proportion of students gaining the higher A*-C grades was well above the national average. When compared with similar schools, the results were above average. Girls' performance was much better than that of boys' overall. The 2001 results show a substantial improvement from those of 2000, at which time they were just above the national average for all schools, and below average for similar schools. In the two Years 10 and 11, students do less well in science than they do in most of their other subjects in terms of the progress they make.
142. Inspection evidence shows that students in Year 9 are achieving well to reach similar standards to those obtained by students last year in the national tests for 14 year olds. Standards are well above those expected for students of the same age nationally. Most students have a very good knowledge of the topics they are studying. For example, students at all levels of attainment have a good knowledge of how igneous, sedimentary and metamorphic rocks are formed, whilst more capable students appreciate that the rate of cooling and crystallisation affects the crystal size in igneous rocks. A Year 9 group made very good progress in understanding the difference between respiration and breathing, and in finding out and explaining, how our lungs are adapted for gaseous exchange. Though students make satisfactory progress overall in developing experimental and investigative skill, these skills are not as well developed as other knowledge-based areas of science. This is a consequence of there being too few opportunities for them to make their own predictions, define problems based on scientific knowledge and understanding, or plan their own investigations. Students are generally good at carrying out experiments planned by the teacher, are able to record observations, take accurate measurements and present data in the form of charts and graphs.
143. By the end of Year 9, most lower attaining students, and those with special education needs, are achieving good, and often very good, standards. The small number of students for whom English is an additional language also make good progress. The department helps students to develop their literacy skills by giving them confidence in using basic scientific terminology and in developing writing skills to improve science teaching. Numeracy skills are generally good overall with graphical skills being satisfactory. Students' ICT skills are not well developed, but are improving as a result of using recently acquired computer and data logging equipment.
144. In the work seen in the inspection, students attain levels above average in Year 11, but the achievement of many is less than it should be and this is unsatisfactory. The current group of students in Year 11 and, to a lesser extent, students in Year 10 have made slower progress than students in Years 7 to 9. The current Year 10 are achieving slightly better. Students in Year 11 were affected by staffing problems

prior to September 2001, which led to weaknesses in the quality of teaching that students received at the time. The difficulties have not as yet been totally resolved, though it is expected that staffing will stabilise in the near future.

145. Another factor that restricts students' progress in Years 10 and 11 is inadequate planning by some teachers that provides too few opportunities for students to think for themselves, and to relate their science to everyday application. Where teaching is good, students invariably learn well because they are positive towards the subject. For example, a Year 10 class showed a good understanding of electrical circuits and understood the relationship between resistance, voltage and current. In another Year 10 class, students made good progress in finding out the uses of limestone through the practical activities of making glass and concrete. In this lesson, students' personal development was encouraged well, as it is generally. Students prepared for an imaginary public enquiry, concerning the possible extension of limestone quarrying in the Peak District National Park. Students for and against the extension used their research skills well, as they represented the views of a wide range of local community, and commercial users. They considered the beauty, balance, order and fragility of environments and how these can be damaged or destroyed by human beings. Practical skills improved and students were able to draw conclusions that were consistent with the evidence seen, explaining them using scientific knowledge and understanding.
146. Investigative skills such as making predictions, and planning and evaluating their own investigations, are not as well developed. Overall, attainment in investigative work is below that in other areas of science. Middle and lower attainers, including those with special needs, reach the standards expected of them. However, a significant number of higher attainers achieve less well than they should because the tasks they are given are often insufficiently demanding.
147. Students' attitudes and responses to science and their behaviour are good overall. Students in the 11 to 14 age range are enthusiastic experimenters and most see science as a journey of discovery. They are willing to try out new ideas and techniques and keen to pose questions. Good relationships lead to effective collaboration in practical groups. Students in the 14 to 16 age range have less positive attitudes and behaviour, and some lack real enthusiasm, though the will to broaden their knowledge and skills is high. Most are good listeners, but their responses often lack fluency and they are short on scientific questions. In a small number of lessons, the behaviour of a minority of students is poor and the work of the class is disrupted. When teachers provide challenging tasks, students respond well, use their initiative and show good commitment to their work.
148. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 to 11. Where there was unsatisfactory teaching it was in Years 10 to 11. The differences in teaching quality between lessons produce marked differences in the students' responses and their achievement. In the most effective lessons, teachers' good knowledge and expertise are combined with high expectations, enthusiasm and effective planning. These give the students confidence and they respond positively and try hard. In the better lessons, teachers challenge the students with carefully constructed questions to make them reflect and think critically. Through such questioning, teachers check how well students understand the work. This happened in a Year 8 lesson, where there was a very good range of activities and the pace was quick, so that learning was effective. Students made very good progress in understanding the relationship between heat and temperature, of the principles of conduction of heat energy, and of some of its applications in everyday life. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, time was wasted in trying to control the class, the pace

was slow, and insufficient learning of any depth took place. However, even in some satisfactory lessons the students were too passive, so they did not learn through experience and their progress was slow.

149. Overall, learning is good. It is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 to 11. The reasons for learning not being as good in Year 10 to 11 are that teachers' expectations are not always sufficiently high and planning by some teachers provides too few opportunities for students to think and work things out for themselves, and to relate their science to everyday application. Also, in some classes, students put in less effort into their work.
150. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The head of department has introduced a number of initiatives recently, which indicate that further improvements can be made. There is a good understanding of the department's strengths and weaknesses, and he is working to overcome them. Some staffing difficulties that have clearly had an adverse effect on teaching and learning have been resolved. While planning, monitoring and evaluation have until now been insufficiently rigorous to raise standards, particularly in Years 10 to 11, this is now changing. A new and better scheme of work has been introduced for 11 to 14 year olds, but that for 14 to 16 year olds needs some refining to make it more relevant to everyday life and the needs of current students. Marking is regular, but does not always give students a clear enough indication of what they have got wrong and what they need to do in order to improve. Reports to parents, although containing details about students' attitudes, do not give sufficient detail about their scientific skills, knowledge and understanding, or about how these can be improved. The day-to-day management of the department runs smoothly, assisted by an effective team of technicians. In general there is adequate basic laboratory equipment, but there are shortages of some larger pieces of equipment and there is a shortage of textbooks for 11 to 14 year olds that restricts the progress of some students.
151. The provision of laboratory accommodation is inadequate overall, and impacts on the quality of teaching and learning in science, for many students. Whilst there are sufficient laboratories, two are in need of major refurbishment, with one being too small for the size of class currently using it. The poor layout of services and/or facilities in these laboratories provides little flexibility and restricts the range of teaching styles that can be used, and activities that can be attempted. Four other laboratories are in need of more minor refurbishment. The quality and quantity of students' work on display enhance the learning environment.
152. The department has responded positively to the last report, and there has been satisfactory improvement since then. Most of the developments have taken place fairly recently, and have yet to be reflected in terms of improved examination results at the end of Year 11. However, there has been improvement in test results at the end of Year 9. Assessment is used effectively in some classes in Years 7 to 9 to set targets and monitor students' progress, and this is raising standards further. This needs to be extended to all classes. Use of ICT is improving with the recent acquisition of data logging equipment and computer hardware. Staffing is stabilising; the quality of teaching has improved for 11 to 14 year olds, though for 14 to 16 year olds it is much the same as at the previous inspection. Four of the laboratories have been refurbished providing an attractive working environment, but there is still further work to be done in this area.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths:

- Very good teaching and learning that leads to above average standards in Year 9 and well above average standards in Years 10-13.
- Leadership and management, including planning and assessment of work.
- The technical skills of art are taught formally and to a high level.
- Students are taught where and how to research for ideas.

Areas for improvement:

- Make further use of ICT in the creation and development of students' work.
- Reduce the number of non-specialist teachers.
- Extend displays of students' work to encourage and inspire students further.

153. Levels of attainment are above average at the end of Year 9 and well above average at the end of Year 11 and at AS and A-level. Students' achievement in relation to their previous learning is very good. The quality of teaching of art is very good in the majority of lessons. This is a key factor in enabling the quality of learning and students' responses to the subject to reach equally high standards. This also represents very good improvement since the previous inspection.
154. GCSE results were well below the national average over the past three years. This can be attributed to very significant staffing problems. There were insufficient specialist teachers and also frequent long-term intermittent staff absences. This resulted in students being taught by a wide range of non-specialist teachers who were covering art lessons on a day-to-day basis. This situation was partly rectified 18 months ago with the appointment of a full-time specialist teacher. There is a further improvement this year with the appointment of a new head of department.
155. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards overall are now above average at the end of Year 9 and well above average in GCSE, AS and A-level. Students' achievement is very good, especially from Year 9 onwards, where all lessons are taken by specialist teachers. In Year 7, students studying the Pre-Raphaelites find inspiration for their own designs for stained glass windows. They learn effectively how to overlap animal and bird images to create dramatic effects. In Year 9, students can demonstrate well the techniques of still-life painting. The higher attaining students can use line and shading well to achieve three-dimensional effects. They learn colour theory formally in this exercise and apply it well. Students in Year 11 showed that they have researched well for the topic 'Tangled and Twisted'. They used a wide range of ideas and styles very well. Their work on pop art, masks and photo-realism shows that they understand the development process well.
156. Girls attain higher levels than do boys in Year 9 largely because they spend more time on their homework and they concentrate with more composure in lessons. However, this difference is no greater than the average found nationally. All students on the special educational needs register get individual attention in lessons. The language used is modified where necessary so that all students understand the teaching points. In most cases these students have average and above average standards in art. They achieve as well as other students. There are few students who have EAL. These students get individual help as needed. Only one of these students was observed in lessons and this student spoke fluent English and was making as good progress as the other students. All units of work are designed so

that there is infinite scope for higher attaining students and the gifted and talented to extend their studies. There is very good support for students to do independent learning in all years. There are clearly structured guidelines on how and where to do research. This is exemplary at GCSE, AS and A-level, where planning includes lists of almost every source of art information in this country and abroad.

157. Art supports students' literacy very well. All lessons in Years 7, 8 and 9 begin with an introduction to the art movement or the history of the period being studied. Students are given the correct vocabulary. These words are displayed and students do a short written exercise. There is close attention to spelling. This work is modified to support students' learning at all levels. It is always at a realistic but demanding level. Students' numeracy is also well supported; for example, they are taught to scale up work. They also use measurement in design and gain an awareness of shape and space. All students in the first three years do a specific unit of work that is designed to teach them the various ways in which ICT can be used to research and develop work in art. However, this work is limited in scope because of the insufficient number of computers available. National Curriculum requirements are met.
158. Overall, teaching and learning are very good with a significant amount of excellent teaching in the sixth form. There are excellent features in almost all the lessons taken by the two specialist teachers. The strengths are the imaginative and creative ideas presented by the teachers and the lively links to the works of major artists and art movements being studied. The vast majority of lessons are taught by two specialist teachers whose specialist areas cover the two and three-dimensional aspects of art. Students learn the correct skills and techniques of drawing and painting, design and ceramics. These skills are taught formally and to a high level from Year 7 onwards. Both teachers give very good demonstrations of these techniques and this contributes to high achievement. Overall planning is very good. The teachers plan their work separately at present but it forms a very coherent whole programme of work for the students at all levels. Work is well structured in all projects to enable all students to build on their skills step by step. Teachers maintain firm discipline and create a good climate for learning. They have cheerful and friendly relationships with their students, which leads to enjoyment and success.
159. There are eight non-specialist teachers teaching art in Years 7 and 8. In these classes progress is good. These teachers are given excellent support by the head of department. They are given very detailed lesson plans, illustrations and visual examples including reproductions of the work of relevant artists. The work done in these lessons is returned to the head of department for marking. In most cases these students have one of their two fortnightly lessons taken by the specialist teachers. This helps to support their learning, especially in acquiring the skills and techniques associated with art. Assessment is very good. It is ongoing in all lessons. Students are involved in their own assessment and are guided on how to improve.
160. Students in all years enjoy art. They are attentive and show respect for their teachers. They behave very well in almost all lessons. The only exception was in a lesson taken in a non-specialist room where the lack of resources and visual stimulus made the work less exciting. A few students made little effort and so made unsatisfactory progress. There is good provision for extra-curricular activities. The art rooms are kept open for students to finish work. There is an art club. There are visits to London galleries and abroad. Art makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by studying the elements in the work of artists from a wide range of cultures.

161. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The new head of department has worked very hard in the first term to ensure that all aspects of the subject are covered in good depth. There is very good teacher expertise in ICT and there are plans to improve this aspect when resources become available. Both specialist teachers work very well as a team, and together create a lively and attractive department that is stimulating for the students. This inspires the students to work hard and successfully. Although there are high quality displays of students' work in the art rooms and surrounding areas, these do not extend sufficiently to the whole school. There are plans to do this as soon as there is provision to protect the work. After the difficulties of the past there is a need to give art a higher profile across the whole school.
162. There is very good improvement since the previous inspection. Teaching and learning have improved very significantly. Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 have improved from below average to good and very good. There are now very good opportunities for students to work in three dimensions, particularly in ceramics. There is very good use of sketchbooks for research and experiment in all years. All students have high quality sketchbooks and work is done to a good finish. Schemes of work are revised and implemented and are now very good. Although there is some improvement in opportunities for students to use ICT, this is still curtailed by the lack of convenient resources.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, provision for design and technology is **good**.

Strengths:

- The consistently good teaching in all areas of the subject.
- High expectations of students and the challenge in the work.
- The very positive attitudes of the students and their interest in the tasks set.
- Good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement:

- The attainment of boys, especially middle attainers.
- The timetabling of the subject to reduce the large number of classes taught by more than one teacher.
- Provision of facilities for computer-aided design (CAD) and computer-aided manufacture (CAM).
- Curriculum provision for electronics and control up to GCSE level.
- The accommodation, furnishings, décor and display areas across the department.

163. At the end of Year 9, teacher assessments in Year 2001 indicated that standards of attainment were in line with the average in the proportion of students achieving level 5 or above. The attainment of the girls was higher than that of the boys. In 2001, the proportion of students obtaining GCSE grades A*-C was above the national average. Results in textiles, resistant materials and graphic products were above the average, and in food technology were well above the average. In all the courses except graphic products, the proportion of students achieving grades A*-G was above the national average. Overall, the students achieved results in design and technology at levels below those in their other examinations. The attainment of the girls at the grades A*-C is higher than that of the boys. Results in 1999 and 2000 were broadly in line with these most recent results.

164. On the evidence of the work seen during the inspection, attainment at the end of Year 9 is average. This represents good achievement as the majority of students enter the school with levels of attainment that are below average. A majority of students have making skills which are above the national average in a range of materials at the end of Year 9. For example in a Year 9 resistant materials lesson, the students were handling a range of tools and equipment with accuracy and confidence to make cams and followers for a mechanical toy. They also showed good knowledge of the types of cams and the range of movements they produce. Subject knowledge and the technical vocabulary which underpins it are at average levels for many middle and higher attaining students. Graphical skills improve rapidly over Years 7 to 9 for the majority of students. The design skills of the highest attaining students, boys and girls, are well developed, but the middle attaining boys' skills are weaker than those of the girls in this area of the subject. The design skills of the lower attaining students and those with special educational needs are below average and their practical making skills are better developed than other areas of the subject.
165. Standards of work by the end of Year 11 are above the average and students achieve well. The progress made by the majority of students continues to be good, building effectively on the firm foundations laid in Years 7, 8 and 9. The pattern of attainment in the various elements of the courses is very similar to that at the end of Year 9. Practical making continues to be the strongest element of the subject for a majority of the students and is of good quality. They handle tools and materials with care and increasing precision. In the textiles and graphic products courses, graphical skills are at a higher level than on other courses, with the students using a range of techniques and media with care, accuracy and skill. Subject knowledge and understanding is at levels expected for a majority of students. For example, in a Year 11 food lesson the students were undertaking a product analysis exercise on commercially produced hand-held snacks with particular reference to the different types of pastry and ingredients used. This research and knowledge was then to be used to write a product specification for a snack item they were to produce in the following two lessons. Design skills are above the average for the middle and higher attaining girls and the higher attaining boys. For lower attaining students and those with special educational needs, practical making skills continue to be better developed than other areas of the subject. Students with EAL and those with special educational needs make good progress, in line with that of their peers in all years in the main school.
166. Throughout the school, the students handle tools, equipment, machines and materials with increasing confidence, accuracy and skill, and work with due regard for safety and hygiene. Over the Years 7 to 11, graphical communication skills are progressively developed to a good level for many students and they use a range of drawing and projection methods to model, record and communicate their design ideas. Progress with design skills is good for the higher attaining students who undertake research, analyse, draw up specifications and evaluate with increasing depth and rigour. Lower attaining students and those with special educational needs make good progress in relation to the prior attainment especially in making.
167. The quality of teaching is consistently good in all the years of the main school and is a strength of the department. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons effectively. The work set is challenging and extends the students' learning and their acquisition of skills. In the lessons observed, the teachers used a range of methods and learning activities appropriate to the level of students' attainment. For example in a Year 11 graphic products lesson, the students were learning about different printing techniques that they may use and also those used more widely in

industry and commerce. The teacher's explanation and questioning demonstrated very good subject knowledge and this input was illustrated and summarised on the overhead projector. Information handouts had also been prepared for future reference by the students. The students took notes, which they then incorporated into their project folders, some using ICT for this. As a result of these activities and the individual support given by the teacher, the students have a deeper knowledge and understanding of 'mass', 'batch and 'one-off' print production methods. There was good pace to the learning and such teaching approaches ensure that the students learn and make good progress, work hard and achieve good productivity in lessons.

168. In all lessons the teachers gave high levels of individual support to the students and the well-informed feedback encouraged them to value their efforts and raise their level of motivation. In some lessons the teachers shared the aims of the lesson with the students so they were aware of what they should achieve by the end, but this was not a consistent practice. Rarely did the teachers review the progress made at the end of the lesson with the students, or set time targets for the completion of intermediate tasks and this contributed to the loss of pace in some lessons.
169. Students' attitudes to learning are very good overall. They are keen and interested to learn in design and technology lessons in Years 7 to 11. They collaborate very effectively when given the opportunity to work together and relationships are very good. They listen carefully to their teachers and respond readily to their questions. Classroom routines are well established and teachers manage students' behaviour very well and ensure an excellent working atmosphere in lessons.
170. The leadership and management of the department are good. The departmental handbook is an effective document covering policies and practices, and gives good guidance to the staff. The departmental development plan has appropriate priorities but they could be more sharply focused on raising the attainment of the students. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum except in the provision of facilities to use computer-aided design and manufacturing (CAD/CAM) due to lack of resources for these activities. Students' experiences of electronics and control lack depth. The timetabling of the subject in Years 7, 8 and 9 is unsatisfactory as there are significant numbers of teaching groups which have to be taught by two teachers. Staff try to minimise the impact of this, but the continuity of learning and progress made by these students is affected. The level of specialist accommodation is generally satisfactory although some food lessons cannot be taught in specialist rooms. However, benching and tables are in an unsatisfactory condition in many rooms and unhygienic in the food rooms where the table and wall bench surfaces are chipped. Display facilities are poor and the rooms are in need of redecoration.
171. Overall the progress made since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. The last report identified a small number of areas for development, most of which have been dealt with. Design skills for many students are now at nationally expected levels and the products made by the students are of a good standard. Appropriate courses are in place at GCSE, AS and A-level but progression for some students is easier depending upon the GCSE course followed in Years 10 and 11. Facilities for ICT generally and for CAD/CAM in particular, continue to be a weakness.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths:

- Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and use this well to enhance learning.
- Good teacher/student relationships, inclusion of students and positive students' attitudes assist learning.
- Teachers show enthusiasm for the subject; they show a good commitment to improve standards further.

Areas for improvement:

- The need to increase the range of tasks and activities in order to cater for the whole range of abilities within sets.
- The deployment of teachers to minimise the sharing of classes by more than one teacher.
- The monitoring of teaching in a consistent and systematic way in order to share good practice.
- The marking and monitoring of students' work to give a greater consistency of approach.
- Greater access to computers is needed for investigative elements of geographical work.

172. Levels of attainment are average at the end of Years 9 and 11. Standards have fluctuated since the previous inspection; however, but are now at the level of the previous inspection. Students' achievements in relation to their previous learning are satisfactory. Overall, the quality of teaching in geography is satisfactory. Students have very positive attitudes and respond well. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection.

173. By the end of Year 9, students reach standards that are average. This represents an improvement, since the teachers' assessments of Year 9 students in 2001 judged standards then to be below average. Students, by the end of Year 11, demonstrate standards that are broadly average; this reflects the 2001 GCSE examination results. The proportion of students gaining grades A*-C in the 2001 GCSE examination was broadly average; all students entered in 2001 gained A*-G grades. These students achieved at a satisfactory level in relation to their level of work when they were in Year 9. Students obtained similar GCSE results in geography as those they reached in other subjects. The results in GCSE examinations over the last three years show levels of attainment have remained at a similar level. There was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls.

174. In work observed during the inspection, the students' standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 are at the national average; their achievements in relation to standards at entry are satisfactory. Year 7 students, including those with special educational needs, understand the differences between weathering and erosion. Many understand some of the physical processes of weathering, like a freeze and thaw action. The majority of Year 7 students have a secure knowledge of coastal erosion and the associated formation of caves, arches and stacks as being part of the process of headland erosion. High attaining students, studying photographs of the Dorset coast, successfully identify chemical erosion. However, there are occasions, especially in Year 7, when students spend too much time copying work directly from the board or from textbooks. All students know the importance of titles, frames and labelling in geographical presentation and make use of them to produce good quality work. However, skills of annotation are only just developing. In map work, they understand the significance of contours and four-figure grid references; many use six-figure references successfully; the students' work shows good evidence of this.

175. Year 9 students show sound understanding of the factors needed for the successful location of industry, for example, flat land for building, ease of access, markets and labour force. They can successfully compare and evaluate Northern and Southern

Italy and draw conclusions as to the preferred siting for different industries. High attaining students start to link aspects of human and physical geography, for example hydro electricity produced in the mountains to meet the high-energy needs of industries like the car industry. At the end of Year 9, students show a good understanding of deforestation and start to understand different ways in which areas under threat could be conserved; the moral issues of conservation and sustainability are successfully explored when studying Brazil during Year 8. Students' work demonstrates good understanding of the rainforest.

176. Students' numeracy and literacy skills support work in geography. For example, Year 8 students successfully use data to draw graphs and bar charts representing features like temperature and rainfall in the Amazon rainforest. Use of key technical words is well shown through each year group. Overall, both boys and girls, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make satisfactory progress in map work, use of keys, scales and observational skills. All students learn the basic skills of geography and achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, reaching standards at the end of Year 9 that would be expected from their attainment on entry.
177. Standards in work seen by the end of Year 11 are average, and all students across the ability ranges achieve at a satisfactory level in relation to their work in Years 7 to 9. Students choosing geography for their GCSE course successfully build on the basic skills, knowledge and concepts learnt in Years 7 to 9. For example, Year 10 students studying the St Andreas fault know that two tectonic plates are very slowly moving apart and that this movement, at times, causes earthquakes in Californian cities like San Francisco. Different video extracts visually demonstrate very successfully to students the awesome power of the earthquake and the horrific consequences for people living in the area. As a result all students have learned to successfully link physical, human and economic geography. Low attaining students, though, do not always see the long-term consequences for re-building and re-settlement whereas high attaining students can take a long-term view. Students successfully collect data in order to compare earthquakes in developed countries and less economically developed countries; they are developing the skills of observation and evaluation and many draw appropriate conclusions. Sketches and diagrams are better labelled by students in Years 10 and 11. Year 11 students who are involved in decision-making activities successfully evaluate, for example when considering water supply problems in Senegal. They evaluate well the conflict over cattle farming and groundnuts production and make good cogent arguments for choosing a realistic and economic scheme to resolve the issue. High attaining students understand the need for a sustainable water solution for both types of farming.
178. Literacy and numeracy skills support the students' work in geography; they make use of a range of charts and graphs in order to successfully plot data and show good use of technical words in their correct context. Access to computers in lesson time is restricted and so students make limited use of computers to enhance presentation and to represent and evaluate data except when working on their home computer. Concepts and the linking of different aspects of geography are developing well for most students in Years 10 and 11. All students, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, are well integrated into lessons and receive good support by teachers, classroom assistants and their peers. All students make satisfactory achievement.
179. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall throughout Years 7 to 11; however, there are occasions when there are shortcomings, especially in teaching methods and the range of activities used by teachers. Overall, teachers show a good

knowledge of geography and apply their knowledge well to develop students' learning, for instance, as seen in Year 11 lessons on the water schemes in Senegal. Where there are probing questions, students respond well and give good responses. However, there are occasions where challenge and rigour are insufficient and as a consequence students, especially the high attaining students, are not fully extended. This was seen in a Year 7 lesson about coastal erosion and a Year 9 lesson on location of Italian cities.

180. Teachers usually have good expectations of students' work as they respond well to challenging questions. For example, Year 10 students studying earthquakes and Year 9 students looking at the location of industries give good answers and show good understanding. Throughout Years 7 to 9, students successfully learn the basic geographical skills and these are successfully developed and extended in Years 10 and 11. Work is supported by literacy skills development and number work; however, there was less evidence of the use of computer both in lessons and in their work.
181. Overall, students' behaviour and attitudes are very good; relationships are also good. This ensures that the day-to-day class management is good, enabling students to get on with tasks quickly. These features underpin teaching and enhance the learning environment. At times, however, there are insufficient strategies of a practical nature to involve students in their learning; this constrains students' learning. The range of tasks is often too narrow, and does not meet the needs of the range of abilities within a class. Partner work, group work, oral presentations, practical work and problem solving are under-used, especially in Years 7 to 9. Teachers are usually sufficiently flexible in their teaching to meet the needs of students with special educational needs.
182. The new head of department has been in post for six months; he is providing satisfactory leadership for the subject and he has identified areas for development. There is a lack of access to computers, which constrains the investigative elements of geography and presentation of work. The deployment of teachers means that some classes in Year 7, 8 and 9 are taught by two teachers; the consequence is to constrain learning in these classes. The monitoring of teaching is developing; however, it needs to be undertaken in a more consistent, regular and systematic way in order to share good practice. Curriculum and the assessment procedures are in line with the curriculum 2000 update; however, improved use of assessment is required in order to inform curriculum development. Marking and monitoring of students' work need to be more consistent within the team of geography staff.
183. The progress made since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. There has been sufficient improvement in the curriculum and resources for Years 7 to 9 and the linking of assessment to National Curriculum levels. Since the previous inspection there have been several changes of geography staff, including the recent appointment of head of department. The new head of department has identified areas for development of the subject but, as yet, has had insufficient time to implement many of them. He is already having a positive impact and has a clear vision of how to improve the subject. He is supported by a team of geography teachers who show enthusiasm for the subject and a good level of commitment to improve standards further.

HISTORY

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

Strengths:

- Standards of attainment are above average and have improved since the last inspection.
- The quality of teaching is good and more opportunities are now provided for students to do more work on their own and to develop oral skills. This results in good learning throughout the school.
- Students are well motivated, enthusiastic about their work and have a very good relationship with their teachers.
- The department is well led and considerable improvements have taken place since the last inspection.
- There is an ambitious and stimulating programme of outside visits.

Areas for improvement:

- To raise the standards of boys in Years 10 and 11 to the high standards achieved by girls.
- To make the progressive development of history skills a stronger focus in schemes of work and in regular assessments in Years 7 to 9.
- The systematic use of ICT, which is under-developed.
- To ensure that the examples of good teaching practice are shared through more regular classroom observation and evaluation of teaching.

184. Standards of attainment are above average at the end of Years 9 and 11. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when standards were judged to be average. Students achieve well in relation to their previous level of attainment. The quality of teaching is good. This is the main reason why the quality of learning is also good throughout the age range. It also encourages a good response from students, whose attitudes to work and relationships with teachers are often very good.
185. In GCSE examinations for 2001, the proportion of students attaining A*-C grades was well above the national average and all passed. The subject was one of the best in the school in terms of examination results. There has been a significant improvement in standards over the last three years. Over that time, girls have consistently performed better than boys at a greater difference than that nationally. In 2001, although boys attained in line with the national average, girls were very well above, especially at the highest grades A* and A. The department's positive effort to address the gender difference by teaching in separate gender groups had accentuated the boy-girl divide.
186. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards overall are above the national average. Students enter the school in Year 7 with history skills that are average. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average and higher than indicated by the teachers' assessments, which were too severely marked and not a fair reflection of the students' ability. Students, therefore, achieve well by Year 9. Students of all abilities have a good knowledge and understanding of the key events and chronology in history. They select and record evidence from written sources competently. Teachers give good support to lower attaining students and to those with special educational needs by using well-prepared and appropriate materials. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Skills of extended writing are well developed. Students write well in various forms, often with strong empathy, as instanced by sensitive diaries on the Black Death by Year 7 students or vivid letters home from the World War I trenches by higher attaining students in Year 9. Students have a good understanding of different causes, though few prioritise them well. Students are developing good skills of enquiry, organisation and discussion, points criticised in the last report. This is due to a strong emphasis now being given in curriculum planning

to studies in depth involving group work, such as of the Romans in Year 7 and of World War I in Year 9. Skills of analysing and evaluating source work and interpreting evidence about an event or person are well developed in higher attaining students. Year 8 students, for instance, effectively examined the conflicting views of Mary Tudor's reign. Evaluative skills are less well developed in lower attaining students as opportunities for such work are not frequently provided.

187. Standards in work seen in Years 10 and 11 are above national expectations. Students achieve well compared with their average level of attainment on entry to the GCSE course. Students have a good understanding of the key features under study and well-developed note-making skills. Higher attaining students and most average attaining students have particularly good skills of identifying and analysing sources, such as when Year 10 students thoughtfully weighed up cartoon evidence on Roosevelt's New Deal before coming to a balanced conclusion. Such skills are less developed in lower attaining students. Most students write at length with clarity and fluency, often based on thorough research and good organisation, as in the depth study on Stalin. However, lower attaining students and those with special educational needs do not always support their ideas with sufficient evidence, despite good support from teachers. All students display good oral skills and higher attaining students articulate their views especially well, although boys in Year 10 are less ready to join in the discussions than the girls.
188. Overall, teaching and learning are good. They are best in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form, where there is a greater proportion of very good teaching. Teaching is never unsatisfactory. This is better than at the time of the last inspection. Teachers have high expectations and set students challenging tasks that actively involve them in enquiry work and problem solving. For instance, students in Year 9 eagerly involved themselves in examining the effectiveness of the Versailles Treaty as if they were the peacemakers, using the department's own well-prepared evidence. Materials and strategies are now being used to match the needs of all students. A Year 8 class of lower attaining students, two-thirds of them with special educational needs, made good progress and worked well in studying the Spanish Armada. This was the result of using appropriate resources and good support from two learning support assistants. Homework is challenging, regularly set and generally thoroughly marked with clear advice for improvement. Teaching is now almost exclusively undertaken by subject specialists, who use their good knowledge to plan lessons carefully. Consequently, students make good progress in nearly all lessons in acquiring secure knowledge and learning important new skills of enquiry, organisation and source analysis.
189. Monitoring students' progress during the lessons is a strength. Teachers question effectively and move around in support. Teachers generate enthusiasm for work and promote good attitudes, especially in the sixth form. This is encouraged by their very warm relationship with students and their very good classroom management. Students listen carefully to instructions and co-operate well with each other and with the teacher. Most students in Years 10 and 11 are aware of their predicted grades. There is regular monitoring of their current performance and constant reminders of how to improve. Support is readily available after school to help students to catch up.
190. Learning is less effective and students' attention falters when there is a slow pace to the lessons or when time is not used effectively. Most teachers manage time well, but learning is constrained where strict deadlines are not set for tasks, the teacher talks too long, or time is not provided to review progress at the end of the lesson.

191. The subject is effectively led by an enthusiastic head of department who has a clear educational direction for history, with priorities for raising achievement strongly reflecting those of the school. Overall, there has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection. He is well supported by the head of faculty and the enthusiasm of other staff, especially in arranging visits to USA and Russia in recent years to promote the understanding of students in Year 10 and 11. Teachers are beginning to use data to set individual targets in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form, but not in Years 7 to 9. Although history skills are generally taught well, they are not systematically tracked through the schemes of work or assessed sufficiently frequently to give more accurate final judgements by the end of Year 9. The use of ICT is not integrated into the schemes of work or developed in the teaching. The sharing of good practice through systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching through classroom observation is under-developed.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Strengths:

- Good leadership and management of the subject are improving provision for students within the limits of resources.
- Good relationships between students and teachers are resulting in good attitudes to learning, good behaviour and good progress being made.

Areas for improvement:

- Raise standards in Years 7 to 11.
- Ensure better assessment procedures.
- Track students' progress more rigorously.
- Ensure that the most gifted and talented students are suitably extended and challenged by the work set.
- Establish that all subjects contribute to the development and assessment of students' ICT skills.

192. Levels of attainment in ICT are below average at the end of Years 9 and 11. This represents unsatisfactory improvement since the previous inspection when standards were judged to be above average. Although there are some strengths, for example in communicating information using word-processing software, students' overall achievement in relation to their previous learning is unsatisfactory. This represents unsatisfactory teaching and learning in the subject in recent years, but this has now been dealt with. Teaching by newly appointed specialist staff is never less than satisfactory and is good or better in almost half of the lessons. This is a key development and is enabling all students to make satisfactory progress in lessons and improve their achievement over the longer period. Standards have also been adversely affected by inadequate resources, a lack of provision for students to use computers in subjects across the curriculum, too many staff changes and too much teaching by non-specialist teachers.
193. GCSE results have been significantly below the national average over the past two years and show a downward trend. Students do not achieve as well in the subject as they do in their other subjects. Very few girls take the subject at GCSE which makes a comparison between the attainment of boys and girls less meaningful. Students with special educational needs make sound progress and achieve appropriate levels for their capabilities. There is no significant variation in the attainment of students

from different backgrounds or in relation to ethnicity or for whom English is an additional language.

194. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards overall by the end of Year 9 are below average. Teachers' assessed students at the end of Year 9 in 2001 to be well above average but this is not supported by inspection evidence. Students enter Year 7 with varying degrees of competence but overall with average attainment in the subject. For example, most students have used computers at primary school to word process, do mathematical exercises, and many have used 'presentation' software but overall only for short lengths of time and on less sophisticated equipment than is available in this school. There are strengths in students' attainment in word-processing and spreadsheet work to calculate values, especially in the work of the higher attaining students. However, there are significant weaknesses in all students' understanding, skills and knowledge in control technology, data logging and measurement.
195. Students' use of the technical language of the subject is under-developed. The teaching by newly appointed specialist staff and the greater stability in leadership and management in the subject are now enabling good progress in lessons and satisfactory achievement over the last term. In the current Year 7, most students have good practical skills. They use the mouse and keyboards effectively although a very small minority of students who have difficulties with literacy are slow to pick out the keys they need and are less likely to use short cuts to speed up their work. Students' know how to log on to the network, use passwords, call up programs and use them to search for information. Their word-processing work is good but desktop publishing skills are less well developed. Students can successfully alter the style of letters to make words more attractive to the reader, and add suitable illustrations in their texts, called up from clip art files. In one Year 7 lesson, most students showed good skills in using 'presentation' software to create slides to tell a story. Work with the Internet is satisfactory; for example, most students in a Year 9 lesson know how to use search engines to find information, but some of the lower attaining students are often overwhelmed by it and cannot always decide which search engine best fits their needs.
196. Standards at the end of Year 11 are below average both in the GCSE course and in the Year 11 key skills course which all students follow. Standards and progress in the subject have been adversely affected by frequent staff changes and teaching by non-specialists in Years 7 to 9. However, in the timetabled GCSE lessons observed in Year 10, students make satisfactory progress. Their achievement since the beginning of term is satisfactory. However, due to a variety of factors beyond the current teachers' control, achievement by the end of Year 11 is unsatisfactory. In the GCSE courses, few boys and girls are achieving at the highest levels, with no significant difference in the attainment between them. Most students are developing their skills in the use of a good range of computer programmes, and are competent at word processing, accessing the Internet and in using spreadsheets. Most students, with help, use a spreadsheet successfully to show what happens to figures when variables are changed, although only the higher attaining students understand about how to create the more complex formulae expected and can use their good mathematical skills to build macros i.e. identify suitable short cuts. Almost all students have good practical skills, readily logging on to the network, using passwords, loading the required program and their saved work files. Most students can use a range of search engines to browse the Internet but do not always effectively identify the most useful information to retrieve and use.

197. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in the timetabled ICT lessons in Years 7 and 9. They are more often good in the GCSE courses in Years 10 and satisfactory in Year 11. Teachers' planning is thorough. For example, the tasks set in the 'presentation module' in Year 7 are topical and interesting, are well matched to students' interests and very well related to the subject requirements. This means that students are interested in their work and almost always focused on completing work within the sharply targeted time-limits. Although some extension tasks are written into lesson plans for the more gifted and talented students, little use was made of these tasks in lessons seen. The teaching is successful in generating a positive attitude to learning and good behaviour in most lessons. Despite a display of key ICT words on classroom walls, teachers do not always effectively reinforce the development of the technical vocabulary in the subject. Students' show much enthusiasm in their work and are very supportive of one another, readily helping each other to overcome problems. Worksheets that are produced to guide students in their work support the higher and most of the average attaining students well but are not always sufficiently modified to meet the needs of lower attaining students and those with special educational needs. However, teachers provide students with high levels of individual support, working with them at their computers, which ensures that all students are clearly aware of what they need to do.
198. Effective use is made of software to enable teachers to demonstrate concepts on all computers simultaneously thus ensuring that all students can see the demonstration. This facility is not, however, available in all teaching rooms which restricts its usefulness. Good oral assessment techniques provide students with a clear direction for their work and in identifying areas for improvement. Students' are not sufficiently aware of what National Curriculum levels they are working towards. Students' capabilities are well known by the teachers, who are sensitive to individual needs. The planned work in all timetabled lessons covers the requirements of the National Curriculum although provision for control technology is significantly under-developed. The newly appointed ICT technician is providing a good contribution to students' learning by ensuring the efficient operation of the equipment.
199. The level of improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory to date. However, improved staffing and a new head of department reflect a good capacity for improvement. Already within the discrete timetabled ICT lessons, good leadership and management by the new head of department have established improved teaching and new assessment and reporting processes. The processes still lack sufficient rigour in the use of attainment predictions to track and monitor whether all students are achieving to their full potential, but a good start has been made. Whilst some subjects, particularly English, mathematics, art, and modern foreign languages, provide some opportunities for students to use computers to help in their learning, the provision is uneven in these subjects and not yet as comprehensive as it could be. The hardware and software provided is now very modern and powerful and funding has been established to substantially increase the below average provision of ICT resources over the next two years.

Key skills: ICT Years 7 to 11

200. Recent appointments to the teaching staff in ICT and current further training have improved what was an unsatisfactory situation in terms of provision of ICT as a key skill. As a result, students are now achieving satisfactorily in their acquisition of ICT skills. Students' ICT skills are generally satisfactory in terms of word processing but their skills in presenting information to a broad range of audiences are under-developed. The great majority of students have little more than a basic knowledge and understanding of how to use the computer to control another machine, or to

capture data, log changes and measure outcomes. Most students can use a spreadsheet to carry out basic mathematical calculations, although only the higher attaining students can set up and use formulae without too much support from teachers. Research skills using the Internet are satisfactory but few students are selective or discerning in what they search for and use. Few students use the technical vocabulary of the subject with any degree of confidence. Almost all students have good practical skills, readily logging on to the school network, using passwords, loading the required software programmes, their saved work files and using the keyboard and the mouse to successfully negotiate the required menus and functions.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall the quality of provision in French and German is **good**.

Strengths:

- Standards are above average in both languages.
- Teachers' planning and knowledge of the subjects are very good.
- Students show great interest and sustained concentration in both languages.
- Behaviour and relationships are excellent.

Areas for improvement:

- Increase opportunities for reading and writing at length in both key stages.
- Improve the cohesiveness of the course for lower attaining students.

201. Levels of attainment in French and German are above the national average at Years 9 and 11. The department has maintained a good performance over several years. Students' achievements in relation to their previous learning are good. The quality of teaching in French and German is good throughout Years 7 to 11. This enables the students to learn well and make good progress. Students respond well to both languages. They are keen to speak the foreign language and are consistently focused on their work. Their behaviour is excellent.
202. In 2001, teachers' assessments of students in both French and German were above the national average and boys' results were well above, compared to the level expected nationally. At GCSE over the past five years, French results have consistently been above the national average at grades A*-C. In the previous four years, German results were above the national average; in 2001 performance at A*-C was below the national average because a disproportionately large number of lower attaining students were in the group. At A*-G, results in French and German were in line with national figures. There were no significant differences in girls' and boys' results compared to the national average.
203. In French and German, work seen during the inspection shows that standards overall are above the national average. Students have good listening skills because of the extensive and skilful use of the foreign language in the lessons. In both languages, students speak confidently and fluently. They read short texts with good understanding but have few opportunities to read at length; they write well but the development of writing at length in French and German needs more detailed planning and greater consistency. In French and German, high attaining students make good progress in lessons and achieve well; they have a good basic knowledge of previously learned language, which they can transfer to new situations. Some lower attaining students do not attain as well as they should in both German and French; they make good progress during the lesson but do not have a secure basic

knowledge and do not achieve well over time. Students with special educational needs achieve at least satisfactorily and some achieve well. Gifted and talented students achieve very well. Intonation and accent are good; students can be easily understood. The above average levels of attainment of the previous inspection have been maintained.

204. Teaching and learning in French and German are good throughout Years 7 to 11. Teachers' knowledge of language is very good; explanations are very clear enabling the students to learn well. Planning is a strength in both languages; teachers plan lessons thoroughly, and sequence activities well, gradually increasing the demand on all students so that good learning takes place. There is a good balance of direction by the teacher and independent work by the students but the number of open-ended activities should be increased. Teachers hold students' attention, organise the students well, and teach at a brisk pace so that the students sustain concentration, know what they are doing and learn quickly. Teachers correct errors sensitively and the students learn well from this. High expectations and good support challenge the high attaining and the gifted and talented students who make very good progress. Homework is consistently given and reinforces learning. Lower attaining students need a more cohesive course so that their learning of basic language is more secure. Students with special needs learn appropriately and some learn well, especially in understanding and speaking activities. ICT resources are available in both languages, but access to computer rooms is very limited.
205. The department is well managed. All staff work hard for the benefit of the students and teach in a similar style, ensuring a consistency in approach that helps learning. Assessment of students is thorough and data for evaluating teachers' and students' work are used well. The timetabling of split classes is reducing progress where three staff teach a class. The department has made good improvement in the curriculum since the last inspection. Pace in lessons is brisk, but does not leave the students behind; language is often used to discuss opinions and for personal needs; and a portfolio of assessed work has been created.

MUSIC

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

Strengths:

- Well above average results are achieved by GCSE students.
- There is a large proportion of good and very good teaching.
- Very good leadership and management, and commitment and support from other music staff.
- Very good monitoring and assessment of students' progress.

Areas for improvement:

- Access to sufficient and appropriate ICT for all students.
- A need to improve the quality and appearance of the music department room.

206. Students on entry to the school have experienced a variety of musical skills and knowledge but generally their attainment is below average for students in Year 7. They progress well and attainment at the end of Year 9 is overall in line with the average. Performing skills, both by individuals and ensembles, are high compared to students' oral and written evaluations, which are less well developed. The teacher assessments undertaken at the end of Year 9 indicate that students are in line with the national average of 63 per cent achieving level 5+ but with boys' achievement

significantly lower than that of girls. This was, however, not mirrored by the work seen during the inspection where boys' and girls' achievement was similar. The difference is due to changes to national assessment criteria and the assessment done by department staff was too harsh in some cases. The results for both boys and girls in GCSE examinations in 2001 were significantly above national expectations, a high proportion gaining A*-C grades. For many students, music is their best subject result. Examples of very good performing standards among students who choose to study GCSE music were seen during the inspection. These skills assist them in their GCSE work.

207. From work seen in the inspection, girls do achieve better than boys; however, all students including those with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well. By the end of Year 9, students attain levels that are broadly in line with the average. In a lesson in Year 9, students showed above average levels of attainment when working in small groups to contribute a variation to the whole class ensemble. Students played tuned percussion and keyboard instruments fluently, listening carefully to maintain good rhythmic awareness and sense of pulse. One group of boys incorporated a rising ostinato sequence and obligato melodic pattern to the original theme. Students used techniques learnt previously and memorised their parts; concentration was high to ensure performance was of the highest quality. Some groups repeated their work so that the teacher could demonstrate and explain a musical point. Students are helped to use their knowledge and understanding of popular music as part of their examination work; this helps them to remain committed to the course and to make progress. Students continue to achieve well in Years 10 and 11 and by the time they reach year 11, their attainment is above average. This was seen in a Year 11 class where students' good performance skills and clear understanding of the structure of blues music ensured that this knowledge was developed to create effective ensemble improvisations.
208. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11, where teachers are dealing with enthusiastic students who have opted to study music. Teaching is a major strength of the music department and during the inspection was never less than good and often very good, especially for students in Years 10 to 13. The musical knowledge and enthusiasm by staff ensure that students want to learn, take pride in their work and are well motivated to reach high standards. Clear, detailed and effective planning develops musical skills regularly and is linked to careful monitoring, assessing and recording of student progress. This means that a careful musical picture is developed. Activities are linked together and student management is very good. Good questioning helps students develop their answers and give justifications for them. Lessons enable those students who learn instruments to use them in practical work. Vocal work, which is good when students arrive in Year 7, is developed paying attention to dynamics, diction and breathing. Students derived great enjoyment from their scat singing work and used this technique when composing a short song with vocal ostinato.
209. Current planning has focused more on practical and creative skills and needs to give more time for evaluations so that students can improve their use of technical language. Students in Years 10 to 13 benefit from individual help and support. There are good challenge and high expectations. Opportunities to develop literacy and to some extent numeracy are taken when possible. However, the development of ICT is restricted for all students because the provision for equipment is at present unsatisfactory. There is an urgent need to ensure appropriate programs are available so that examination students can store and refine their compositions.

210. Students enjoy music and benefit from performing in concerts where high standards are usual. The repertoire chosen is challenging and varied in style. Students are very tolerant and supportive of each other. In one lesson a student tactfully pointed out a mistake made by another to ensure they did it correctly. This ensured that the students used 2nd and 7th intervals and created effective mysterious music. Sixth form students' attitudes are excellent, exemplified by their support for the extra-curricular activities. Choral singing is strong and students are confident, performing and rehearsing unaccompanied. This shows good teaching, developing aural and vocal techniques.
211. The leadership and management shown by the head of department are very good. There is a strong sense of team spirit amongst staff where individual strengths are used to good effect. This is achieved successfully in the planning and organisation of the examination groups. Assessment is very good, clearly and effectively managed. Since the previous inspection the issues raised have been addressed, apart from the quality and appearance of the music rooms. Despite efforts to brighten using posters and other display material, rooms are dowdy and do not present a bright and stimulating learning environment. Resources, apart from ICT, are sufficient and enable students to access research materials. One teaching room lacks an effective stereo system and examination students would benefit from having their performances recorded on better quality digital equipment.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall the quality of provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- A high proportion of good teaching.
- A wide and balanced curriculum, which includes good links with the community through sports clubs.
- Students make good progress in Years 7 to 9.

Areas for improvement:

- The progress made by students in Years 10 and 11.
- The use of assessment to inform students of their progress and set targets for improvement.

212. Levels of attainment are average at the end of Years 9 and 11. This demonstrates good progress since the previous inspection. The standards at the end of Year 9 represent good progress in relation to their prior attainment on entry to the school. Overall teaching is good. Whilst satisfactory, these good levels of progress made are currently not being maintained by students who do not take the GCSE option.
213. The proportion of students reaching A*-C in the 2001 GCSE examinations is well above the national average. The percentage achieving the higher A and B grades is also above the national average. This represents very good progress when compared to the well below average results in the previous year. Present GCSE students are making very good progress. Students in Year 12 studying the new AS-level in physical education are making progress in line with course expectations
214. The work seen, in Years 7 to 9 and in non-examination physical education classes in Years 10 and 11, shows that standards overall are in line with the average. Both teacher assessments and standards observed during the inspection show an

absence of higher National Curriculum levels of achievement at Year 9. However, the majority of students have a good understanding of the principles of preparation for exercise and games playing and specifically can name muscles and joints that relate to particular activities. By the end of Year 9, standards are average and match assessments made by teachers. At this stage, this represents good progress when compared with attainment on entry and students have achieved well. They achieve these standards across all the National Curriculum areas. Relevant skills and techniques are acquired in a good range of activities. In dance, students performed an Indian harvest celebration using appropriate technique and in badminton students successfully linked their selection of shots to increase the lengths of rallies as they sought to outwit their opponents. The tasks given were effective in improving their understanding of tactics and decision making. Their knowledge and understanding is enhanced further by structured analysis of performances that helps refine practices. There are high expectations for students to describe their learning and they have a good understanding of specialist vocabulary.

215. Overall, students' levels of achievement in Years 10 and 11 are satisfactory. Standards of work seen in the non-examination groups are in line with the average. The most talented of performers make good gains in their knowledge, understanding and levels of skill across a number of activities and some go on to attain local and national representative honours. Their progress is helped by training and performing at a range of external clubs that are linked and accessed through the school. The general level is at the average because students do not extend and improve their performances to reach higher National Curriculum levels. They often lack an understanding of how both their physical and intellectual effort needs to alter in order to improve performance. Thus, in netball lessons there are long periods of inactivity because students do not fully appreciate how they can contribute by evaluating their own progress in acquiring skills and that of their peers. Similarly in badminton, many students clearly do not focus enough on the tactical requirements of play to make good progress and achieve higher levels of understanding and skill.
216. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is of a higher standard in Years 7 to 9 and for students following the GCSE option in Years 10 and 11. For those students in Years 10 and 11 who do not follow the examination course, the overall quality of teaching is satisfactory, but there is a significant proportion of good teaching. At all stages, teachers use their good specialist knowledge to help students improve their techniques and to widen their understanding of key terms used to describe skills and techniques. Teaching methods used enable all students to develop their planning skills and to collaboratively perform and evaluate performances. Year 9 groups, for example, made good progress in choreographing an Indian dance routine. Year 7 and Year 11 students can use pre-determined criteria to observe and evaluate peer-group performances in athletics and volleyball and help the performers to improve. Performances recorded using video cameras are used effectively to help students to identify priorities for improvement.
217. The management of lessons is consistently based on positive behaviour strategies, which result in good relationships and good responses from the majority of students. Teachers intervene sensitively and very successfully to assure the progress of students who have special needs, for example a student with restricted sight flourished with one-to-one instruction. Older students with severe co-ordination problems make good progress with badminton tasks as the teacher's encouragement maintains their enthusiasm and involvement. On occasion, the organisation of lessons is not always successful in maintaining the necessary pace and rigour for all levels of ability. Over-long periods of consolidation of previous work and of talk by the teachers result in a significant number of students losing focus and interest.

218. There is not enough study time and this is the reason for higher National Curriculum levels not being consistently achieved in non-examination classes in Years 10 and 11. In addition, teachers are not consistently planning and distinguishing tasks and challenges relevant to all abilities in these classes. However, students studying for the GCSE examination have a clear expectation of both their present achievements and next stage targets. Planning and teaching for these lessons present greater challenges and the progress during the lesson and over time improves.
219. The head of department provides good educational direction for the subject through relevant developmental planning, which has resulted in a good level of improvements since the previous inspection. This includes better curriculum provision, allowing students access to a more relevant syllabus. Similarly, assessment procedures have been adapted so that profiles can be compiled using National Curriculum levels, resulting in increased teachers' knowledge of their students' achievements. The impact of these profiles has not yet worked its way through to ensuring that teachers plan with precision for the differing needs of individual students in their classes. There is no formal monitoring of teaching standards across the department to lead to consistency in teaching and opportunities for sharing best practice. However, informal teacher appraisal and support by the head of department have proved helpful in monitoring and improving the non-specialist teaching input to the department. The department has expanded the opportunities for the students who achieved very high GCSE results in 2001 by introducing AS studies in the sixth form. There is good capacity for further improvement.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Reorganisation of the department has resulted in clear educational direction.
- The quality of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 has recently improved.
- A GCSE short course has been introduced in Year 10.
- Most students have positive attitudes to learning.
- Accommodation and resources have improved.

Areas for improvement

- The curriculum and standards for students currently in Year 11 non-examination classes.
- The unsatisfactory teaching in non-examination classes.
- The negative attitudes of a minority of students.
- Provision for religious education in the sixth form, which is unsatisfactory.

220. After a period of discontinuity in teaching and management, there is now clear educational direction for the subject. As a result, provision in Years 7 to 10 has improved significantly, students are achieving satisfactorily and the majority of students in these years have positive attitudes to learning. However, there is still some unsatisfactory teaching, which results in below average standards and disaffection on the part of a minority of students, particularly in Year 9 and in Year 11 where students are not following an examination course and under-value the subject. The present curriculum in Year 11 is not sufficiently rigorous, and there is no provision for religious education in the sixth form.
221. The standards reached in Year 9 meet the requirements of the local agreed syllabus and work seen during the inspection shows that students are achieving satisfactorily,

despite the lack of continuity in the teaching in the previous year. Students with special educational needs and those with EAL achieve as well as other students. Most students have a sound knowledge and understanding of the main beliefs and practices of Christianity and they make thoughtful responses to moral issues such as the stewardship of natural resources. They use technical terms accurately in discussion. Written tasks are generally well presented. Students of all levels of attainment produce information clearly in a variety of ways and write at reasonable length. Higher attainers produce very well researched pieces of work such as the assignment on the beliefs and religious practices of American Indians.

222. Standards of work of the present Year 11 students are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory. This is partly because the recent staffing problems have resulted in some of this group of students forming negative attitudes to the subject. In addition, the non-examination course is not well structured and lacks appropriate challenge. However, the achievement of students in Year 10 who have just started the GCSE examination course is satisfactory. Most students understand how religious belief motivates people to help others who are in need and they can give examples of ways in which help is given in different faith communities.
223. The majority of students have positive attitudes towards the subject. They listen attentively and are keen to take part in discussions. They respond well to opportunities for research and independent working, making good use of the Internet and library resources. However, a minority of students, especially in Years 9 and 11, are disaffected because of the unsettled conditions prevailing in the previous year. They find difficulty in concentrating and their lack of co-operation can disrupt the lesson.
224. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. There are weaknesses. They are mainly found where non-specialist teaching is taking place with students in Year 11 who are not following an examination course in religious education. In the unsatisfactory lessons seen, teachers were not sufficiently well prepared and lessons were not structured with the result that students lost interest and became uncooperative. The attitudes of these students to the subject had been adversely affected because of staffing problems in the previous year, and the students' apathy and negative attitudes were difficult to manage. In these lessons students made little progress and their attainment was below average.
225. These weaknesses were offset by strengths in the teaching provision. The major strengths lie in teachers' good grasp of the subject, the interesting lesson activities, the emphasis on developing students' skills of speaking, listening and writing, and the good relationships between teachers and students. In the most effective lessons, students achieve successfully because they know what is required of them, and they enjoy what they are doing. For example, in a very good Year 8 lesson on people of faith and vision, the teacher's effective recap of previous work enabled students to concentrate on the key requirements of the task, namely to explain how the religious beliefs of the people such as Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Teresa of Calcutta were instrumental in their vision for change. Students in this top set were full of enthusiasm for their work and were using a wide range of resources in their research. Their initial drafts showed that most were able to handle their information effectively, selecting the essential points and expressing them clearly in their own words. Similarly, in a lesson on festivals, the teacher's open approach encouraged Year 7 students to talk about their attitudes to Christmas. In an extraordinarily deep discussion, made effective through the teacher's adroit management and commitment to high standards, many fundamental questions about the religious significance and commercial exploitation of Christmas were raised. Students listened

very attentively and took up ideas from each other. All students contributed and were not afraid to voice their personal beliefs. Attainment was above average. Because of the very effective teaching, students made very good progress in learning about different religious and cultural viewpoints and in developing their speaking and listening skills. These students are achieving well.

226. The department has recently been reorganised and leadership and management are now good. A great deal of work has been successfully accomplished in a short time, and there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The introduction of comprehensive, coherent schemes of work for students in Years 7 to 10, in conjunction with the refurbishing of the accommodation and the upgrading of resources, is having a positive impact on achievement. Students have good opportunities to discuss ideas and to produce their findings in a variety of ways. Good procedures are now in place for the regular monitoring and assessment of students' progress. The development of the GCSE option has given a new impetus to the work in Year 10, but provision for the students currently in Year 11 is unsatisfactory. The scheme of work for these students is unsatisfactory because it is not sufficiently challenging. It requires a clearer purpose and a tighter structure. In order to improve further and to raise standards, teachers need to adapt their techniques to sustain students' interest and concentration and to become confident in behaviour management so that they are more firm with students who misbehave.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

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

Strengths:

- Students obtain higher than average GCSE results in the A*-C range in business education.
- Teaching is very good, and this is contributing to continued improvement in standards and in the quality of students' learning.

Areas for improvement:

- There is a need to cater better for low attaining students taking the GCSE examination.

227. Four subjects are currently offered in Years 10 and 11: in Year 10, business and communication systems, and economics and business studies, in Year 11, business studies and economics. From September 2002 the department will move fully to the current Year 10 pattern of provision.
228. The GCSE business studies results in 2000 were above the national average at the higher grades of A*-C, and this was further improved in 2001. Across all other grades, the results were broadly in line with national figures in both years, and there was no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. In terms of their standards on entry to these courses, students of high and average previous attainment did as well at GCSE in business studies as expected, but a large proportion of those with lower previous attainment did less well.
229. The overall standard of work seen in the inspection is above average and students achieve very well. A majority, both boys and girls, work at a level above average and higher attainers show very good analytical understanding and an ability to think ahead. At the highest level, the understanding shown by several students in an

economics class, who were discussing the balance of payments, was of a standard appropriate to Year 12 students. They made sophisticated use of economic concepts and techniques and were very impressive in their confident grasp of theory and in their willingness to push the boundaries of their knowledge further. Oral skills in class are good. Standards of written work are at least satisfactory and frequently good. Files are presented well and assignments neatly done, although the sequencing of work is sometimes disorganised. Note-taking skills are good by the majority and ICT is used well throughout.

230. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is very good overall, and is a strength of the department. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is excellent, and this is used to bring out confident, well-informed responses which enhance learning. Teaching is challenging, brisk and varied, with an appropriate mix of whole-class, group and individual work. Assessment of students' knowledge and progress is continuously made through question and answer, and there is careful attention to the need to involve everyone. Materials used are appropriate to the range of students, for example in a Year 10 class on specialisation in production. Here, the group discussion on survival needs was accessible to lower attaining students, while higher attainers were stretched with questions on Maslow's motivation hierarchy. Similarly, in a Year 11 class, questions on the impact of foreign direct investment in Britain were skilfully varied to suit particular students. The management of students is very good, and a productive working atmosphere encourages students to take risks in their answers and extend their knowledge.
231. Overall, learning proceeds at a good pace and to a high standard. As well as the impact of the quality of teaching, students bring very positive attitudes to their studies. With few exceptions, they co-operate fully with their teacher and defer to fellow students, are keen to participate and respond to questions, and generally act in a very responsible manner. Their motivation is high, they are attentive, and they work throughout the lessons. They carry this approach through to their written work. Progress is particularly good amongst high attaining students.
232. Leadership of the subject in Years 10 and 11 is good. The department is responding to the requirement made at the last inspection to enhance the learning experiences of lower attaining students. Assessment data has been used to plan the introduction of new courses and particular attention is paid to the quality of teaching. There is a very good mix of experience and expertise in the department, and all teachers are well qualified. More might still be done to extend links with local business, as recommended in the last report, and this forms part of the department's plans for development. Overall, progress since the last report has been good.

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.

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
<i>GCE Advanced Subsidiary level courses</i>							
MATHEMATICS	36	94	70	50	31	2.7	2.2
CHEMISTRY	14	79	86	29	41	2.3	2.8
BIOLOGY	11	82	83	46	34	2.8	2.6
HUMAN BIOLOGY	16	75	N/A	38	N/A	2.7	N/A
PHYSICS	17	71	85	35	40	2.3	2.8
OTHER SCIENCES (Psychology)	31	68	83	26	29	1.9	2.4
DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY	11	82	83	0	25	1.4	2.3
HOME ECONOMICS	4	100	88	75	33	3.8	2.6
BUSINESS STUDIES	29	86	86	14	27	2.1	2.4
COMPUTER STUDIES	17	94	78	24	20	2.1	2.0
ART & DESIGN	5	100	78	80	20	3.0	2.8
MUSIC	2	100	93	0	42	3.0	3.0
MEDIA STUDIES	18	100	91	22	35	2.8	2.8
THEATRE STUDIES	6	100		100		5.0	
GEOGRAPHY	13	85	90	31	39	2.4	2.9
HISTORY	18	100	93	39	42	3.0	3.0
SOCIOLOGY	17	94	82	35	30	2.3	2.4
ENGLISH	32	100	93	31	36	3.2	2.9
FRENCH	27	93	90	48	46	3.3	3.1
GERMAN	13	100	90	54	43	3.5	3.0
GENERAL STUDIES	60	90	80	30	26	2.7	2.3
<i>GCE Advanced Supplementary level courses</i>							
BIOLOGY	1	100	52	0	2	1.0	0.79
PHYSICS	1	100	52	0	4	2.0	0.9
MUSIC	5	60	84	0	29	1.0	2.4
ENGLISH/LANGUAGE	6	100	96	33	28	3.3	2.9
GERMAN	3	100	82	0	13	1.0	1.9

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
MATHEMATICS	38	95	87	53	43	6.8	5.8
CHEMISTRY	4	100	90	75	43	7.5	5.9
BIOLOGY	15	47	88	40	34	3.7	5.3
PHYSICS	20	95	88	40	40	6.1	5.7
DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY	8	100	91	38	30	6.3	5.4
HOME ECONOMICS	2	100	83	50	28	5.0	4.7
ECONOMICS	21	100	89	19	36	5.2	5.5
COMPUTER STUDIES	16	63	86	6	23	2.5	4.6
ART & DESIGN	5	100	96	80	46	8.4	6.6
MUSIC	5	100	93	80	35	8.0	5.7
GEOGRAPHY	11	91	92	27	38	5.3	5.7
HISTORY	8	100	88	50	35	7.0	5.5
SOCIOLOGY	18	78	86	22	35	4.3	5.3
ENGLISH LITERATURE	22	100	95	32	37	5.6	5.9
COMMUNICATION STUDIES	9	89	93	67	31	6.7	5.5
FRENCH	5	100	89	20	38	6.4	5.6
GERMAN	6	100	91	0	40	4.0	5.8

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business Studies		100	N/A	0	53	N/A	N/A

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on biology and human biology, but chemistry was also sampled. In **chemistry**, A-level results in 2001 were above average and students achieved well. AS examination results were below average. Two Year 12 chemistry lessons were observed. Both were good; students supported and helped each other well, so increasing their competence in practical skills. In one, the teacher's strikingly expert knowledge about chemistry and clear lesson plan illustrating good understanding about what students need to know, led them to gain secure understanding about reactions of halides in solution and make good progress in learning more about the halogens. Overall, teaching and learning were good, promoted by the students' very good attitudes to work. Students showed good levels of understanding and standards are in line with course expectations at this early stage in the course.

Mathematics

The inspection covered modules in mechanics, pure mathematics and statistics. In addition, further mathematics was also inspected. Students on this course achieve well, standards are at GCE A-level grade A.

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

Strengths:

- A-level results in recent years have been well above the national average.
- The standard of work seen in the inspection is high and students achieve very well.
- Teaching is very good overall as teachers have very good expectations of students and very good subject expertise.
- The faculty is managed very well.
- Students have very good attitudes and work hard.

Areas for improvement:

- There were no areas needing significant improvement.

233. The mathematics faculty does very well for its students. Over recent years they have gained results well above the national average, varying slightly from year to year. Notable features are the high proportion of A and B grades and overall pass rates above the national average, and in some years, 100 per cent. This represents very good achievement given the standards of students when they started the course, which are generally above average. Male and female students achieve equally well. Students' performance compares well with other subjects in the school. Thirty-five students started the course in September 2000. Standards in the AS-level examinations at the end of Year 12 in 2001 were well above the national average. Approximately two-thirds of these students continued their study of mathematics into Year 13.

234. The standard of work seen in the inspection is very high, confirmed by the work in students' files and test papers. Male and female students are doing equally well. They have a very good understanding of mathematics, enhanced by the very effective use of past knowledge in the understanding of new work, such as the comparison of partial fractions in algebra to fractions in arithmetic. Students sketch curves with understanding, knowing how to determine when a function becomes very

large, or very small. Students can recognise how to differentiate functions, and do so in a variety of different ways.

235. Teaching is very good and results in very good learning, thus maintaining high standards. Over half the teaching is very good or better. No teaching is less than good. Teachers have very good subject expertise, structure their lesson very well and provide very good levels of challenge in their teaching. Students work hard as a result and have developed very good study skills. There is good emphasis in the teaching on small details, so important to students' accuracy, focusing very well on students' concerns. Communication between students and teachers is very good, improving students' thinking skills through the very good use of questions. The marking of students' work contains written details that are very helpful to students in their learning.
236. The mathematics faculty is managed very well. Teachers are enthusiastic and work together very well as a team to maintain high standards. The monitoring of the subjects' performance is very good. This ensures very good use of target setting in the review of students' progress. Students have easy access to teachers outside normal lessons. The work of the faculty is very thorough. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

Biology

Overall the quality of provision in the biological sciences is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Increasing development of statistical analysis to chart progress of students.
- A head of department who is very keen to develop the management role to improve progress.
- Students' diligence and group spirit, supportive of each other.
- Centralised record of data whereby achievement can be monitored.

Areas for improvement:

- Standards in both biology and human biology need to be raised.
- Students' skills in argument and essay writing need to be developed.
- Improving the quality of teaching further, including greater consistency in guiding students' development of investigative methods and more constructive marking.
- Closer analysis of examination and test data to identify sharply focused learning targets.

237. A-level examination results in 2001 in the biological sciences were well below average. They were better in biology than in human biology. In biology, within a group of eight students, three attained grade A and three grade B. Almost all passed the examination. This was an improvement on the previous year where only two students attained the highest A/B grades and two failed out of a small group of six students. Results in human biology in 2001 were poor. Only two students out of eight passed the examination, attaining D-E grades. This shows a decline since the previous year when six out of ten students attained pass grades C-E.
238. Year 13 assessments in biology, so far, show that in terms of predictions based upon their work and AS results, all are likely to pass the examination and most to attain the higher grades. This improvement, seen in the work of current students, is explained by the resolution of past staffing difficulties that have adversely affected standards. The work seen in the inspection is already of a higher standard due to recent staff appointments and the consequent improvement in teaching. Analysis of work shows

that current standards are now average and achievement overall is satisfactory. The very best work makes hypotheses explicit, conclusions consistent with a raft of results and good, critical evaluations. Generally, there is good, accurate use of statistics, for instance in work supporting the hypothesis that there will be a significant difference in the length of marram grass growing on the seaward and landward side of a fore dune. On the other hand, a notable number of students have difficulty clearly justifying the methods they use to solve problems.

239. Current attainment in human biology is average in Year 13. Predictions, based upon their current performance and previous AS grades achieved at the end of Year 12, show that all students are likely to pass the examination. The quality and quantity of their work also show this. Analysis also illustrates competent application of statistics, for example in deepening learning about inheritance. Increasingly their technical vocabulary is widened, particularly in dealing with the complexities of scientific concepts like meiosis and mitosis. In biology and human biology, work is usually highly organised reflecting a high degree of commitment and diligence from students, which helps reflection and raising of standards. However, in both subjects, essay writing is under-developed; they lack sharp structure, sustained argument and deep penetration of the topics.
240. Numbers choosing to study the biological sciences in Year 12 are still low, with seven studying biology and six studying human biology. Students have in previous years experienced several different teachers, which affected the speed of their progress through Years 10 and 11 and, in turn, underpinned decisions about further studies. Current attainment in biology is average. Based upon their GCSE grades and recent test results, students are achieving well in biology but too slowly in human biology. Analysis of their work clearly shows that how well they increase their knowledge and understanding is linked directly to the quality of teaching. For example, teachers' substantial specialist knowledge clearly pervades explanations about a 'semi-conservative' DNA and the molecular structure of mussel adhesive protein. However, the depth at which topics are treated varies between teachers. Often the output of work is very thorough but the standards of work and response by students are also seen to be clearly associated with the expectations teachers have.
241. On balance, taking account of strengths and weaknesses, the overall quality of teaching seen was satisfactory. There are some notable examples of good and excellent teaching, which was reflected in the quality of students' learning. However, this is not the case with all teaching in the subject. Some is still satisfactory but unstimulating, and not bringing out the best that students can achieve. For example, a comment made by a student on a review sheet about, "too much copying from the board and overhead transparencies", gives clear clues about a teaching style which does little to promote good learning. Attainment is significantly affected by the variable quality of teaching. Where strategies in preparing students for assessed practical work are clearly planned, then standards in practical skills are raised and students succeed, as seen in a Year 12 class investigating the effect of osmosis on plant cells. On the other hand, students do not achieve as well when they are not given sufficient guidance and practice beforehand, for instance, in planning and measuring variables when finding out about the effect temperature has upon apple juice yields. Some students had problems in accurately describing the method of changing independent variables and in clearly generating reliable quantitative data. Too few obtained full marks in this exercise.
242. The best teaching has high expectations of what students are capable of achieving, has clearly planned stimulating activities and is imaginative in the choice of activities used to explain complex ideas. Although initially finding it difficult to recall the term

'genotype', effective questioning soon moved a Year 13 class into accurately defining the Hardy-Weinberg principle, which deals with the frequency of alleles (genes) in a population. An enjoyable activity using red and white sweets from 'male' and 'female' socks certainly 'sweetened the pill' of having to calculate the frequency of dominant and recessive alleles. Those needing help with calculations were anticipated and supported well by prepared sheets and generous help from strong mathematicians in the class. Thus everyone learnt much more about factors determining the presence and nature of alleles, in subsequent generations.

243. Analysis of work highlighted weaknesses in the checking of understanding through the quality of note taking and in marking work. Most teachers mark work in encouraging ways but clear indications about how well students are progressing are not given often enough. The best practice gives students 'cause for thought' in encouraging further progress, and checks that comments have been acted upon. Occasionally students pass back comments about their understanding or misconceptions but this is not a consistent practice.
244. New to the position, the head of department is keen to develop the management role. Good improvements have already been made in a short time which are positively affecting standards: new textbooks have been purchased, each student has an explicit handbook and, although not all schemes have been fully reviewed, key skills have been interwoven into them. There is a clear commitment to raising standards, which has a positive effect upon progress and levels of attainment. Recent results reflect unsatisfactory improvement since the last inspection. However, the new staffing appointed in the last year has brought improvement in standards and achievement and there is good capacity for further improvement. The department is beginning to more actively evaluate its own performance, although is not yet used to identifying learning targets for students. The department plan is well prioritised but is not fully costed and omits specific time deadlines and crisp success criteria. The curriculum is not overly enriched by additional activities, but fieldwork has been reintroduced and ecological study is developing well.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus was on design and technology, but home economics was also sampled. In **home economics**, examination results were above average in 2001. Two lessons were observed, one in each of Year 12 and 13. The teaching was very good in both lessons with the teachers' planning and subject knowledge and resources provided ensuring that the students made very good progress.

Design and technology

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

Strengths:

- The consistently good level of teaching by all four staff involved.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and skills.
- The excellent attitudes of the students to the subject and their work.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement:

- Links with industry to broaden the curriculum and students' experience.
- Provision of ICT facilities, especially those for computer-aided design (CAD) and computer-aided manufacturing (CAM).

245. The A-level results in 2001 were above the national average with all eight students achieving pass grades, three at B, three at C and two at D. These results were above the average for the school. At AS-level the results were adversely affected by staffing difficulties and ten students achieved lower level grades and three were ungraded. The achievements of male and female students were at similar levels. As a direct result of the staffing difficulties, only six of 13 have continued into the second year of the programme. Some students left school and others, for whom design and technology was their weakest subject, decided not to continue. These staffing difficulties have now been resolved and students are achieving well as they work towards A-level.
246. Standards of work seen during the inspection were broadly average. For the Year 13 students, this represents good progress in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE and AS-level. In the lessons seen, they are doing well as a result of effective teaching that is well planned, sets high expectations and uses the staff expertise available in the department to the benefit of the students. The making skills of the students are at levels expected in Year 13 and they use a range of graphical skills and techniques to communicate and record their design ideas. Subject knowledge and specialist vocabulary are broadly average. In one lesson, the students' knowledge was being extended effectively through a practical investigation into the case hardening of mild steel as part of a module of work on the heat treatment of metals. They are also using their design, graphical and modelling skills to finalise their designs for their individual major projects.
247. In Year 12, the students are only one term into their AS course, but are achieving well. They are developing further their design, making and graphical skills and broadening their subject knowledge and understanding. In a theory lesson the students were extending their knowledge of mass production as they were introduced to the concepts of 'one off', 'batch', 'mass production' and 'continuous production', and the types of product that may be manufactured by these methods. In another lesson they were undertaking progression planning for their practical projects and identifying research sources to aid their design activity. In both instances, students were making good progress and achieving well. Overall, the students, male and female, are working at the levels expected in the early stages of an AS course.
248. Students in both years are very attentive and work productively in class. All the students are enthusiastic about the subject, concentrate well and respond readily to their teachers' questions. They respond well to and enjoy the different methods their teachers use to engage them with the learning. Behaviour was very good or excellent in all the lessons observed. Relationships between the staff and students, and between the students, are very good, as they support each other very effectively when working in groups.
249. Teaching is good overall, and very good in some lessons, and the students learn well as a result. A significant feature of the teaching is that four teachers are used and deployed to their specialist strengths. They teach specific aspects of the course and the students' learning benefits from this very good provision. The teachers have clear lesson objectives and the methods used are matched well to the subject material to be taught. Very good use is made of small group work. The students are encouraged to take an active part in discussions and to ask questions, and this valuing of their ideas and knowledge contributes to the good level of progress made and the learning of all. The lessons are well planned and the teachers provide appropriate resources to support the learning. Very effective support is given to individuals, often including evaluative comments aimed at raising levels of

achievement and the rate of progress. The pace of learning is good and teachers use time deadlines effectively for the completion of intermediate tasks and activities.

250. The leadership and management of the sixth form courses in design and technology are good. The teaching team is deployed to make the most effective use of their subject skills and expertise, and teamwork is very well developed. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Documentation has been updated recently and schemes of work are constantly under review. The lack of facilities for computer-aided design (CAD) and computer-aided manufacture (CAM), creates a significant weakness in the curriculum. In addition, the department should further develop its curriculum by providing opportunities for students to undertake visits to local companies and experience first hand, commercial and industrial practices in designing and making.

BUSINESS

The focus was on business education. No other courses were sampled.

Business education

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

Strengths:

- Students' levels of attainment are above average, and learning seen during the inspection was good.
- The curriculum is well planned to cater for the needs of the full range of students entering sixth form business education courses.

Areas for improvement:

- Improvement should be made to the timetable arrangements for the GNVQ (intermediate) and AVCE courses.

251. The department offers economics and business studies at AS and A2 levels, and one-year GNVQ (intermediate) and two-year AVCE business studies. A-level results in 2000 and 2001 were broadly in line with the national average overall, but there was under-attainment at the top two grades A/B in each year. This is a pattern similar to that seen in GCSE business studies. The first year of AS results in 2001 showed an average points score slightly below the national average, but students did better than predicted. Most of the AS students have chosen to continue at A2 level. In the intermediate GNVQ course, all students passed, but there were no merit or distinction grades, which is below the national average, and not as good as the results in 2000. The first AVCE course has yet to finish. There was no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
252. The overall standard of work seen in the inspection is above average, and students' achievement levels are good in relation to their previous attainments. For example, AVCE students in Year 13 working individually with teacher assistance, pursued their research into aspects of human resource management with interest – they knew exactly what to do, could link information with the portfolio criteria, and could conduct Internet searches and word process their findings with confidence; students taking intermediate GNVQ showed sound understanding of the use of business documents and all had made very good attempts at a complex cash flow problem. ICT is successfully used across the sixth form to enhance learning, as in a Year 13 A2 group writing *PowerPoint* presentations on stakeholder involvement in the decision to

build a fifth Heathrow terminal. Here students also showed good understanding of theory and were able to integrate it into their analysis of this applied economics project. Written work seen is very good at higher levels, with clear progress being made in the use of technical language and diagrams. Presentation is generally good. There is some evidence, however, of uncritical use of source material (particularly in the AS course) amongst some students and an inability fully to bridge the gap between AS and A2 in their files. The portfolio work of some of the intermediate GNVQ students fails to reflect the requirements of the course, but their teachers have been very forthright in pointing this out.

253. Teaching overall is satisfactory, and in some lessons it is good. Where it is good, there is patient and clear teaching of basic skills, including numeracy; teachers' knowledge is accurate and detailed, there is constant feedback, and assessment takes place continuously through protracted question and answer. Attention to individuals is an important feature, as in the Heathrow exercise, where the teacher spent time with each pair of students discussing their approaches and checking their use of theory. Encouragement is given to independent work and for students to take responsibility for their own progress, and this has a very positive effect on their motivation and learning. The teachers are flexible in their approaches – as much at home with an active, whole-group session as they are as facilitators or consultants where students are working alone at computers. Although generally classes are well planned and of a good pace, sometimes they lack a sharp focus and proceed slowly, making insufficient demands on the students, as in a Year 13 A2 lesson on the Shell Oil Company in China, where students were not pushed beyond a passive response to good materials.
254. Typically, students learn well. This is still the case where the teaching they receive is satisfactory because students are well motivated and keen to learn. This leads to good achievement because they are quite willing to work on their own without constant assistance from their teachers, and this approach has very positive results. For example, in the Year 13 lesson on human resources research, the teacher's participation was minimal, but learning proceeded very constructively – the students were involved, alert and motivated. There was quiet, purposeful activity, with excellent relationships with each other and the teacher, and this collaborative atmosphere was characteristic of most of the lessons seen. However, one feature which has a negative impact on learning is the unsatisfactory timetabling arrangements for intermediate GNVQ and AVCE – all intermediate classes are shared with AVCE in Year 12; intermediate students share some classes with Year 13 AVCE; some AVCE students have a clash with another subject and have to miss lessons.
255. The head of department leads a good, well-qualified team in the sixth form, and has developed a coherent set of course options at this level which makes a good fit with the new GCSE provision. This vision for the sixth form and for the department as a whole is coherent and is leading to higher achievement. Closer links with local business should be pursued – this was a recommendation of the last report, which has not yet been fully realised. Overall, progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The overall quality of provision is **good**.

Strengths:

- Teaching overall is good. Lessons normally are well planned and well structured, enabling students to effectively build up a secure knowledge and understanding in the subject.
- Leadership and management by the new head of department are good.
- Very good relationships between teachers and students enable good learning to take place and work in lessons to be completed successfully by all students.

Areas for improvement:

- Results in the subject at the highest grades.
- The continued development and improvement in staff expertise in the teaching of A-level computing.
- More rigorous target setting at the individual student level.
- More rigorous strategies for monitoring and reviewing students' progress against set targets.

256. The focus was on the AS and A-level ICT course and A-level computer studies. In total, 24 students study the subject, 13 in Year 12 and 11 in Year 13. This year fewer students than average have opted to complete an A-level in the subject after taking the AS-level examinations in the summer term 2001. The AS-level results this summer were broadly in line with the average. Not all students who took the examination gained a pass grade although the proportion gaining an A or B was broadly average. There is no difference in the attainment between male and female students, but few female students take the subjects. The subject was not offered at A-level at the time of the previous inspection, which means that a comparison of standards then and now, and trends over time are not possible.

257. In work seen during the inspection, standards are broadly in line with the average at the end of Year 13. Most of the Year 12 students show satisfactory research and planning skills and presented well the results of their surveys on the merits and disadvantages of online shopping as opposed to high street shopping. They used *PowerPoint* presentation software to produce slides to support their arguments but few students use imaginative animations to add impact to what they say. In some instances slides were overcrowded and lost the effect required. Year 12 students are developing their understanding and use of algorithms effectively to design a system with good confidence and competence levels. The initial research work carried out by Year 13 on the A-level computing course shows a clear understanding of system specifications and requirements. They have a good understanding of commercial applications and how to respond to clients' needs through system and acceptance testing in designing their systems. Almost all students can identify the major hardware components that make up a system but few are confident about cabling and volume transmissions or the need to ensure proper termination to data flows across networks. Most students produce well-organised folders of work showing good effort over time and clearly most students achieve the target dates set for each piece of coursework.

258. Students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment on entry to the course. A significant proportion of students have either not studied ICT to GCSE level or achieved grades in the region of D and E, which is below the usual entry level to study an A-level ICT course. In lessons seen, through discussion with individuals and

a review of students' work folders, students are achieving well in the subject in relation to prior attainment and considering the higher level of mathematical and scientific skills required.

259. The overall quality of teaching is good. Good achievement is directly attributable to this teaching. The teachers responsible for the subject have good planning skills and structure the work in lessons well, achieving the set objectives effectively. The pace of work in lessons is brisk and purposeful although occasionally over-brisk with insufficient consolidation of key points. The two teachers involved in delivering the course have individual teaching styles which complement each other well. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and enable good learning to take place in lessons. Target setting for individual students, based on their prior attainment in the subject, is not as rigorous as it should be although the teachers know their students' work well. Constructive comments made by teachers to individuals in discussions and during the course of lessons also give students a clear direction about what they need to do to improve work. As a result, 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 co-operative work and they show very good levels of maturity in responding to one another and to their teachers.
260. The new leadership and management of the subject are good. Larger groups of students than usual opt for the subject and are well provided for in terms of resources and accommodation. There is a clear educational direction by the head of department and good management of a small team of dedicated and committed staff. Considering the popularity of the subject and the larger than usual numbers of students studying the course, there is an over-reliance on the expertise of one teacher in the specialised A-level computer studies course. Continued development of the expertise and skills of other ICT staff is essential to maintain the provision. There is no evidence to make a judgement about improvement since the last report. There is a sense of pride in the achievements of students, and a clear recognition of what needs to be improved and developed, which gives the department a good capacity for further improvement.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education at AS-level was sampled. It is a new course, introduced in September 2001. All students are making satisfactory progress towards their target grades. The teaching and learning are satisfactory. The department is working hard to develop resources to improve opportunities for extended research.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

No courses were inspected in this area.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

There was no specific focus in this area of the curriculum, but art, music and media studies were sampled. In **art**, standards in both A and AS examinations in 2001 were very high and students achieved very well. Teaching was excellent in two of the three lessons seen, two in Year 13 at A2 level and one in Year 12 at AS-level. Standards are very high, with very good technical skills in drawing and painting. Students' research is thorough and they work well in a wide range of materials.

In **music**, examination results at A-level in 2001 were very high. They were in line with the average at AS-level. In the three lessons sampled, teaching was very good and well planned to develop musical skills and knowledge. Students made good progress, especially in the quality of their performances. Students' attitudes are excellent, especially in the support they give to extra-curricular activities. Students of music technology have limited equipment to use, especially computers.

The **media studies** course was examined for the first time at AS-level in 2001. Students attained in line with the national average and in line with their prior attainment. Teaching was good in the two lessons sampled, reflecting teachers' very good subject knowledge and their use of challenging activities. Consequently, learning is also good, promoted by the students' very good attitudes to work. Students are continuing to attain in line with the average on the A2 course. Although lower attaining students find analysis of sources difficult, overall students are achieving well. Year 12 students on the AS course are attaining above the average and have good skills of analysis and discussion.

HUMANITIES

The focus for the inspection was geography and sociology, but history and psychology were also sampled. In **history**, standards in A-level examinations in 2001 were well above the average, representing good achievement compared with the students' earlier GCSE results. AS results were in line with the average and achievement was satisfactory. In the three lessons sampled, teaching was good with teachers showing very good subject knowledge and using challenging tasks, which led to good learning. Students, in Year 12 particularly, displayed much enthusiasm and talent for group work and discussion and standards were above average.

Psychology was examined for the first time at AS-level in 2001 and standards were below average. Two lessons were seen, one in Year 12 and one in Year 13, and work was scrutinised during the inspection. In Year 13, students have a wide range of attainment levels. Similarly, in Year 12 a large group of students have attainment levels ranging from below average to well above. Students in both years receive satisfactory teaching and are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their starting points.

Geography

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

Strengths:

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Teaching strategies are good and interactive; they ensure students research aspects of their work, sharing their findings with one another.
- Teacher/student relationships are very good; students' attitudes and behaviour are also very good, which enhance the learning environment.

Areas for improvement:

- Teachers need to raise levels of attainment in sixth form courses.
- There is a need to increase the challenge for high attaining students, including talented students.
- Greater access to computers is needed for investigative work.
- Feedback to student needs to reflect more closely how their work relates to examination grades.

261. Over the last three years a similar number of students have studied geography in the sixth form. This is a small proportion of Year 13 students (ten); two students left the course early during Year 12. A fifth of this group do not have A*-C grades at GCSE; this represents a low level of entry qualification to the sixth form course. The recruitment of students in 2001 has almost doubled and overall they reflect an average standard of entry for sixth form study on AS and A-level courses. Teaching seen in Years 12 and 13 is good and often very good and consequently students achieve well. This reflects an improving situation.
262. A-level results in 2001 were below the national average, with one quarter gaining A/B grades against one third nationally. However, almost all students gained A to E grades. This represents satisfactory achievement for this group of students whose level of entry was below the national levels expected for entry to the A-level course. There has been small fluctuation in results over the last three years. The 2001 AS results are below average. However, these students achieved well in terms of their transition from GCSE work. There are no significant differences between male and female attainment. The students starting their courses in geography normally complete them and retention rates are good.
263. Students' work seen in the inspection in lessons and observation of their files and books shows work to be average, reflecting a good level of achievement from their starting points on the course. Students in Years 13 have a positive approach to their work and find the work challenging. For example, students studying population growth and considering the four stages of the demographic transition model needed time to absorb and comprehend the concept of this model. However, they were able to begin to link social events, such as the industrial revolution, adult literacy levels and improvements in health care in order to understand the model. Some of the Year 13 students successfully link a range of knowledge and start to place different countries like UK, Kenya, Bangladesh in the different stages. High attaining students evaluate the model and see its inconsistencies and weaknesses; low attaining students find such analysis difficult.
264. Many of the Year 13 students show a secure knowledge of atmospheric circulation and the effect of the Hadley, Ferrel and Polar cells. They successfully present work on atmospheric circulation to their peers; high attaining students do this with confidence and without reference to notes showing thorough understanding of this circulation. Most students use good technical words like Coriolis effect and Rossby waves. Students' coursework is well presented, showing good understanding of river environments and their ability to use mathematical formula for different hydraulic calculations. Students in Year 12 are only a term into their course, but are adapting and responding well to the challenge of higher levels of work, showing a good level of maturity. When studying global warming, they can explain the consequences of rising sea levels in the Maldives, Venice and East Anglia and make plausible hypothetical solutions that reflect a good grasp of the issues. Students in both Years 12 and 13 achieve well. They clearly understand the extra demands of the new courses and show good achievement.
265. The quality of both teaching and learning in geography are good and at times very good. The good teaching is characterised by very good subject knowledge evident in the good explanations, which teachers give to students, for example, describing the effect of global warming and the complex issues that are involved. Teachers are very confident and enthusiastic about geography, which they transmit to their students. Tasks provided for students indicate good planning of sixth form work; teachers have a clear understanding of the needs of the AS and A2 modules. The learning objectives for each lesson are very clear and shared with the students. In

most lessons, there is an opportunity for students to work individually and in small groups and to use their initiative. This leads to increasing confidence as they progress through the course. Teachers have high expectations of students, which was evident, for example, in the enthusiastic way in which the Year 12 class worked on the soft and hard solutions to constrain damage from rising sea levels. Good knowledge, good planning and very good expectations lead to good and confident learning by the students as they try to improve their evaluative and analytical skills. A very good feature of lessons is the increased participation of students in determining the pace and depth of their own learning in order to secure higher grades. Students are encouraged to give oral presentations and engage in open debate with each other in order to improve the depth of their learning. Students are very attentive in lessons and show a keen interest in the subject. Their attitudes towards geography are very positive which also contributes to a good learning environment. Students all show a positive approach to their studies, and are clearly enjoying the course. They develop a very good and confident working relationship with their teachers. They listen well to the teacher and to one another.

266. The post-16 curriculum in geography is well led and well managed by the head of department. The new AS and A2 courses have been appropriately resourced and teachers have received appropriate training. Students are successfully tracked through their AS and A2 courses; the department also analyses data, constantly checking on progress. However, students do not always know how well they are doing in relation to examination grades and what they need to do to improve. Literacy and numeracy skills successfully support work within the AS and A2 courses; access to computers constrains some of investigative work in school although many get access in school and at home.
267. Good improvements have been made since the previous inspection; however, the improvements are recent and are not yet sufficiently embedded to be reflected in improved standards. The numbers studying geography, and their GCSE grades, have improved. Teachers involved in the courses are working very hard to improve the quality of the geography courses and show a good capacity for further improvement and the raising of standards.

Sociology

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

Strengths:

- Good quality of teaching, which leads to good learning and progress by students.
- Good leadership and management, which have put in place sound strategies for improvement.
- Students' positive attitudes, which lead to a good atmosphere for learning.

Areas for improvement:

- Standards of attainment, particularly at A2 level.
- Challenge for more able students so that they achieve their full potential.
- Use of ICT as an integral part of teaching and learning.

268. Sociology currently provides for 14 students at AS-level and 15 at A2 level. Only three students dropped the subject after AS-level, which is an 80 per cent retention rate. The majority of students opting for the subject are female.

269. In the 2001 examinations, A-level results were below the national average, as they had been the previous three years, showing no improvement over that time. This was the result of problems with long-term staff illness that spread over two academic years and prevented many students from reaching their full potential. Results in AS-level in 2001 were in line with the national average, which represents good achievement for this group of students, many of whom had no previous experience of the subject discipline before joining the sixth form.
270. Standards of work seen are average overall, which again represents good achievement from a low baseline of subject knowledge. Students' folders show a steady development of understanding about sociological perspectives and an ability to apply sociological analyses to everyday concepts such as level of income, gender, socialisation and the influence of media images. Year 12 students, who have only studied the subject for a few months, already have a sound grounding in the bases of sociological theory and investigation; for example, they know how to conduct a reliable survey and understand the nature of stereotypical viewpoints. By Year 13, students can discuss the opposing views of leading sociologists using appropriate references and vocabulary. They discuss these views with maturity and perception, listening well to what others have to say so that their understanding of society is developing all the time.
271. No students with special needs, minority ethnic students or students with English as a second language were seen. Extension work was planned for several gifted students but it was not used well and these students were progressing at the same rate as the rest of the group.
272. Students' attitudes to the subjects are very good. All made a positive choice to study the subject, either through interest in society or because it complements their career choices. Relationships with teachers are friendly and positive, which leads to a very good atmosphere for learning.
273. The quality of teaching and related learning is good overall and no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of the subject topics are used to good effect in stimulating students to objectivity in their arguments. Good planning led to effective work tasks that ensured students had to think for themselves rather than be passive listeners. For example, in a lesson dealing with inequalities of income in Britain, students had to estimate on the board the sizes of different proportions of the population in different income brackets and when they were given the actual proportions to compare with their estimations, this made a profound impression on them. In another good lesson they worked in groups with a range of newspapers to seek evidence for or against the view that the press manipulates society, and this led to a growing understanding of how far their own views and preferences are influenced by the media. There was, on occasion, some slowing of the pace during discussions and in one lesson there was too much opening information and not enough thought given to the best way to structure discussion which left students confused as to what was expected of them. Work was marked well, with lengthy comments to guide improvement. Assessment during lessons was planned for but inconsistently carried out, with insufficient evaluative questioning at the opening and close of some lessons, so that students were not always aware of the progress they had made. Some good strategies were seen for the development of literacy and numeracy and students' oracy skills were utilised well. Use of ICT as part of the teaching and learning is weak, with little reference to websites to garner up-to-date social statistics and other information. Good use is made of homework, giving students the task of summarising the discussions that took place in lessons.

274. Management of the subject is good. It was restructured in September, as part of the faculty of cultural studies and social sciences, under a newly promoted head of faculty, positively supported by the senior management team. Areas for improvement have been identified and suitable strategies put in place to raise attainment and enhance the status of the subject, for example strategies to improve the quality of teaching and for better assessment and monitoring of students' progress. A new action plan reflects well the issues in the school development plan, but it contains no clear financial planning or long-term vision for the development of the subject. Schemes of work are not well focused and have not yet had the benefit of an audit of the delivery of key skills, personal development and citizenship. As the subject was not mentioned in the last inspection report it is not possible to assess improvement since then. There has not yet been time for the new management to have an effect on standards but it is clear that this is an improving department with a good capacity for further progress.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

275. The inspection focused upon English and French. Work was also sampled in German and Italian. In **German**, standards in Year 12 are average because some students are still coming to terms with the difference in demand from GCSE to AS-level; high attaining students are reaching above average standards. In Year 13, standards are above average and achievement is good. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers' knowledge of German and lesson planning are very good and students learn well. Students' attitudes to German are very good. They come to the lessons well prepared and sustain concentration, and their behaviour is excellent.
276. One lesson of **Italian** was seen. The course is modular and enables the students to gain the preliminary grade awarded by the Awarding Body Consortium (ABC). The standards attained in the lesson were well above average. Teaching and learning are very good. The students are all good linguists and have made very good progress. The teacher's good subject knowledge, the well-graded sequencing of activities and the excellent management of resources assure very good learning by the students. Students have excellent attitudes and demonstrate their enthusiasm for the language by doing their best at all times.

English

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

Strengths:

- Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average.
- Achievement is very good because of the very good teaching that prepares students well for their examinations.
- The head of department provides very good leadership and a clear direction for the work of the department.
- A new course in language and literature has been successfully introduced and is popular with the students.

Areas for improvement:

- Students need to improve their proofreading skills in order to eliminate minor errors from their work.
- The marking of students' work needs to be more consistent in showing students how to improve their work, and in correcting spelling and punctuation errors.

277. Both courses, English literature and English language and literature, are very popular subjects, both at AS and A-level. Very few students who study AS-level do not go on to study A-level when they remain at the school.
278. In the 2001 examination, results were average in A-level English literature, and just above the average at AS-level in English language and literature. There was a slight fall in results in 2001 at A-level from the previous year, when results had been above average, which has been the usual trend in the school. To some extent this can be attributed to the fact that there had been some difficulties with staffing during the year. These have now been satisfactorily resolved. The standard of work seen in Year 13 during the inspection is above average and supports the previous year's good standards. Coursework shows that many students are improving their grades from AS-level and achieving very well.
279. Students are skilled in extended, critical writing, handling the language of literary criticism very well, and much of the work is of a very high standard, showing perception and insight into the texts. Some of the work of lower attaining students is less analytical, and there are occasional problems with expression; nevertheless, they usually have a good knowledge and understanding of the texts. Their work in the English language component is equally skilled. Students often write stories inspired by other authors, adapting the style and genre for various audiences. For instance, one student wrote an excellent story inspired by Oscar Wilde and Edgar Allen Poe. He captured the language and the gothic atmosphere brilliantly, and his commentary on the story showed a very clear understanding of the features of the gothic novel.
280. Students' writing is generally mature and fluent, displaying a wide vocabulary used effectively. However, the quality of the work, including that of some of the highest attainers, is often marred by errors in spelling and punctuation, some of which could be avoided by improved proofreading skills.
281. Students' oral skills are good. Students answer questions and make their own observations clearly and with a growing degree of confidence. For instance, when studying the play 'Translations', students explained confidently how the roles of characters were determined by their language. In another lesson, students gave confident presentations to the groups on the imagery and symbolism in the play 'The Duchess of Malfi'; and there was a particularly good exchange of ideas between the teacher and students in a Year 12 lesson when analysing a poem by T.S. Eliot, showing that students not only have a good command of English, but they also understand the conventions of discussion and debate.
282. Reading is well developed through the analysis, interpretation and evaluation of complex texts, and they use their good research skills to advantage when seeking background information, for instance, for a study of Oscar Wilde.
283. Students have very positive attitudes to their work, which is particularly noticeable in group work when they share ideas or collaborate on joint tasks. This, together with very good teaching that takes place, results in a climate where students learn very well.
284. Teaching is very good. In the best lessons, teachers use very good questioning techniques, which also enable them to use their very good knowledge of the subject to best effect. Teachers skilfully extend students' ideas by taking their responses and moving them further forward by more questions, which go deeper and deeper

into the topic, thus guiding them to a greater understanding. This effectively moves the lesson forward at a stimulating pace, resulting in good gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. Most students respond well to the high level of challenge of the work, and their intellectual effort and acquisition of new knowledge are good, as witnessed by their written work. A few students tend to be too passive, preferring to make notes rather than join in the oral element of the lessons, and teachers are not always assiduous enough in targeting these students to answer.

285. Teachers make good use of homework, not only to consolidate and extend work that is introduced in the lesson, but also to encourage the development of independent learning skills, as students research background information to inform their essays. The day-to-day marking and assessment of students' work vary from satisfactory to very good. Much of it has detailed comments that show students clearly what they need to do to improve their work and how to do it, but this is not always the case. Sometimes, there is insufficient attention paid to the technical errors in students' writing, particularly at the higher levels. Students have a clear idea of how well they are doing as each essay is graded. They also know the criteria for each grade so that they can evaluate their own progress.
286. The head of department has a clear view of the strategies needed to improve attainment, and provides very good leadership for the department. There is a strong commitment by the whole team to improving standards by raising achievement for all students. The staff have worked very hard to implement the new AS courses successfully, and by introducing the language and literature course and a media studies course, they successfully meet the needs and aspirations of an increasingly large number of students. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. The high standards have been maintained, and new courses have been introduced successfully.

Modern foreign languages

Overall the provision for French is **good**.

Strengths:

- Standards in examinations at A and AS-levels are above average.
- Attainment at Year 13 is above average. Students make good progress and achieve well and higher attaining students achieve very well.
- Teaching is good overall and often very good.

Areas for improvement:

- Students make too many basic grammatical errors in their written work.

287. Students can study A and AS-levels in French and are assessed on the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. In 2000, A-level French results were well above the national average at A/B and A-E grades. In 2001, A-level results were above the national average at A-E grades; AS results were above average and the numbers of students taking the AS exam increased substantially to 27, with 13 students gaining grades A/B. Students attained above the national average in writing skills. Retention rates are high.
288. The evidence from work seen in lessons and in students' files shows that standards are generally above average and, for some of the most capable learners, well above average. Standards in Year 13 are above the level expected nationally and students achieve well. They speak French confidently and express their views and opinions

effectively on such subjects as genetics, surrogacy and racism, but with a varying degree of accuracy. Pronunciation and intonation are good and all students make their meaning clear. Students can understand spoken and written French very well and can select important details from it. High attaining students produce written work of very good quality, but others make basic grammatical errors. They construct lively and interesting talks, which they present to the group.

289. Attainment at Year 12 is also above the average expected at this stage in the course. Students make good progress and are achieving well. Higher attaining students achieve an impressive level in speaking. All students develop a wide range of relevant vocabulary and complex expressions, which they use effectively when speaking and writing, but basic errors are made. The students can understand spoken and written French very well.
290. Teaching is good overall. In around half of the teaching seen, it was very good and there was some excellent teaching observed. The teaching is usually shared by two teachers for each group, who liaise well with each other to maintain good continuity of learning for the students. The teaching of the foreign language assistant has a good impact on students' progress. There was one excellent lesson where students conducted a formal debate on racism at the end of a module on racism and immigration. The two candidates who presented their manifesto used powerful persuasive language and the rest of the class were equally perceptive and dogged in their questioning of the candidates. Within each group there is a range of attainment but teachers have good strategies for matching the work well to the students' linguistic capabilities in order that the students make good progress; they pair the higher with the lower attaining students; they select groups containing students of differing attainment so that students can be mutually supportive; they question students at an individually challenging level; and they give personal support when needed.
291. High expectations encourage the students to give of their best with a constant emphasis on explaining complex ideas using previously learned language. Lessons have clear aims and students are quite sure of what they have to do. Teachers provide students with good strategies for success in reading and listening activities. They plan a rich and varied range of tasks, which encourage the students to practise language skills well. Good use is made of resources, which have been painstakingly gathered together on the topics in the new syllabuses. Teachers work hard to prepare challenging tasks and ensure that lessons proceed at a good pace. They also train the students well to work independently. Students come well prepared to the lessons. Teachers assess the work consistently and give helpful feedback on the students' performance so that good progress is ensured.
292. Students of French are mature, articulate and show great interest in the subject. All are keen to participate in discussions and develop their views well. Many have found the issues raised in the course, such as genetics and surrogacy, quite difficult but all have persevered in their learning and succeeded. Behaviour is excellent.
293. The department is well led and managed. All staff work hard for the benefit of the students and teach to a consistent style. Assessment of students is undertaken thoroughly. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection.